



# City of Madison SEED Grants

Program Evaluation Report • 2024



CITY OF  
MADISON



Extension  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS



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## Acknowledgments

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Thank you to the tireless staff members who took time out of their schedules to participate in interviews and a Ripple Effect Mapping session about the SEED Grants Program. Thank you to George Reistad for his guidance and support throughout the project. We also extend our gratitude to Mark Fitzgerald for assistance with design and layout, and to the Madison Food Policy Council SEED Grants Program Work Group for their input on an earlier draft of the report.

# Executive Summary

## Context & Purpose

The City of Madison's SEED Grants Program administers small grants through the Madison Food Policy Council. The Program has been in operation since 2014 but has never undergone a comprehensive evaluation to understand the outcomes and impacts of the City's investment. In 2023 – 2024 the University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension Community Food Systems Program partnered with the City of Madison to evaluate the program's impact and to identify opportunities for improvement.

## Findings

The evaluation used a combination of methods including Ripple Effect Mapping and structured interviews. We also reviewed past project-level evaluations and information about past grants, such as award recipients, project type, and location.

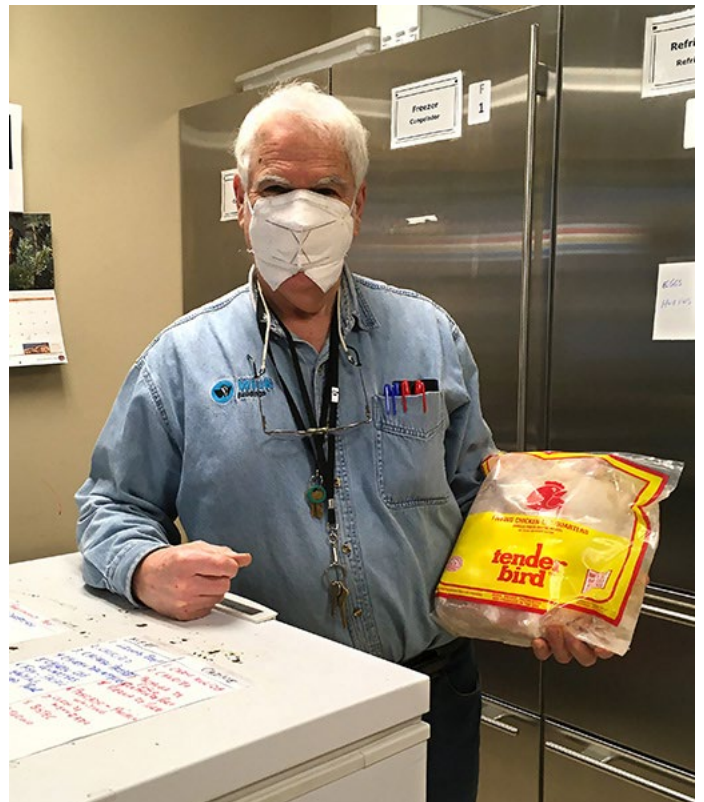
We found that the SEED Grants Program fulfills its mission “to support new and/or emerging projects or programs that support access to healthy food in our community.” It does so in the following ways:

- Bolsters emergency food assistance programs and increases food access to high priority communities
- Builds organizational capacity to implement new efforts or expand programs aligned with their organizational purpose and mission
- Enables organizations to strengthen their relationships with their target audiences
- Allows grant recipients to expand their reach to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) audiences, often directly empowering these audiences
- Helps grantees leverage additional funding
- Contributes to neighborhood vitality through investments in youth development programs and other community food projects
- Promotes interorganizational collaboration, contributing to a stronger community food system  
Minimizes application and reporting burden for applicants and grantees, with award values proportionate to grant administration requirements

## Recommendations

In general, grant recipients reported that SEED grants enhanced their abilities to serve their target audiences, and they were satisfied with the application and reporting requirements. Based on participant feedback and our broader analysis of the findings, we recommend the following strategies for expanding, enhancing, and maintaining the SEED Grant Program's strengths:

- Consider implementing a tiered grant structure to better support projects at different stages of development, and to invest in outcomes at multiple scales and time frames.
- Explore ways to improve language accessibility through collaboration with partner organizations and the language access line.
- Continue to prioritize organizations working in areas of highest need, this could be enhanced by minor updates to the grant review process.
- Continue to provide flexible funding and low-maintenance application and reporting requirements.



# Introduction

The City of Madison's SEED Grants Program administers small grants through the Madison Food Policy Council "to support new and/or emerging projects or programs that support access to healthy food in our community." Approximately \$50,000 are disbursed to applicants annually, with a maximum individual grant amount of \$10,000.

The Program has been in operation since 2014. Although evaluation data have been collected at the project level, the full Program has never been evaluated to learn about longer term impacts. The purpose of the evaluation is to understand program impact and make recommendations for program improvement.

## Methods Overview

The evaluation was designed by the UW–Madison Extension Community Food Systems Program in collaboration with City of Madison staff and with input from the Madison Food Policy Council. The evaluation focused on the following questions:

1. Is the Seed Grants Program fulfilling its mission of providing catalytic funding to support access to healthy food in our community?

2. What are the direct and indirect impacts of the SEED Grants Program on grant recipients and beneficiaries?
3. What would increase or improve program impact?

To answer these questions, the project employed two primary evaluation methods: (1) Ripple Effects Mapping (REM), and (2) structured interviews with past grant recipients. We supplemented these primary data with information about past grant recipients and project-level evaluation data provided by the City of Madison. For a more detailed discussion of methods, please refer to Appendix A.

## Limitations

Although this report includes input from a variety of organizations, project types, and Madison communities, it may have a slightly positive bias because organizations that had a positive experience may be more invested in the program and willing to participate in the evaluation. Nevertheless, there was strong convergence across focus group and interview data, which resulted in clear themes and recommendations. Lastly, due the scope and budget of this project, this evaluation captures the perspective of grantees but lacks input from project beneficiaries.

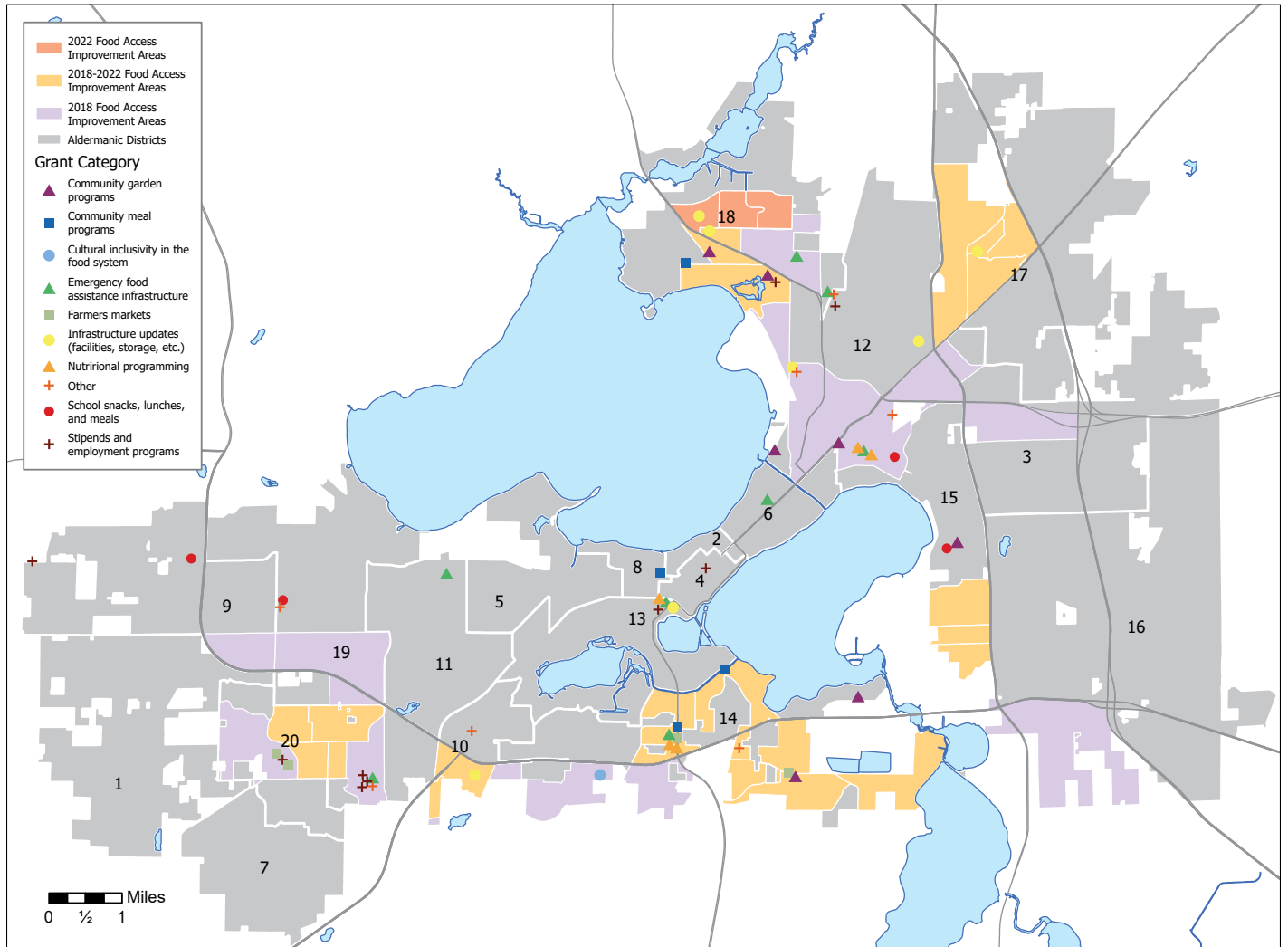


# Program Activity Summary

## Overview of SEED Grants

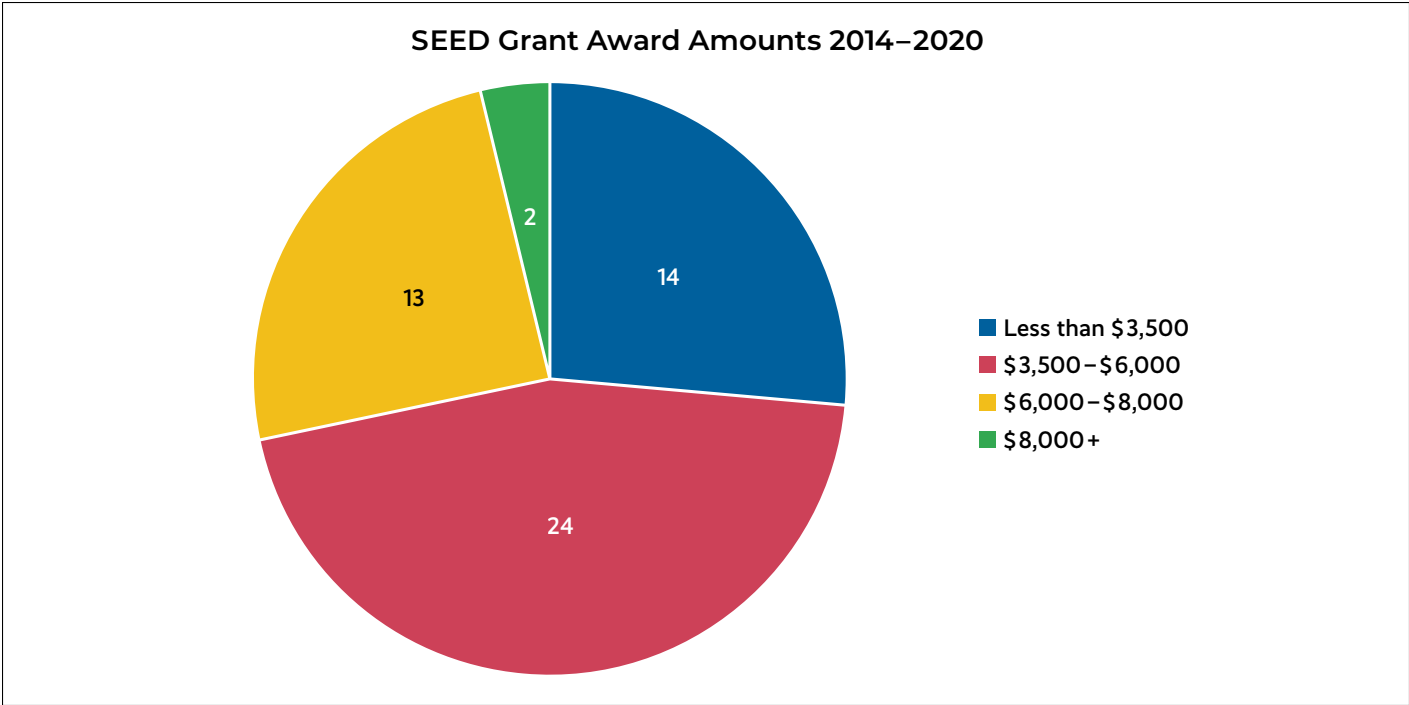
Our review of past SEED grant awards from 2014 through 2020<sup>1</sup> showed that organizations use SEED funding to bolster a variety of food projects throughout Madison with many fostering community development in addition to expanding healthy food options to underserved populations. For example, previously funded projects have offered summer employment opportunities for youth, incubated the development of a product now sold in grocery stores, provided physical infrastructure to

increase the storage capacity of food pantries, supplied fresh vegetables to elementary school cafeterias, and more. This section provides an overview of SEED project by topical category, award amount, and geography to provide context for the qualitative evaluation findings in the next section of the report. In the descriptions of the following figures, “N” refers to the total number of observations. For example, if we reviewed 53 funded applications, N = 53.

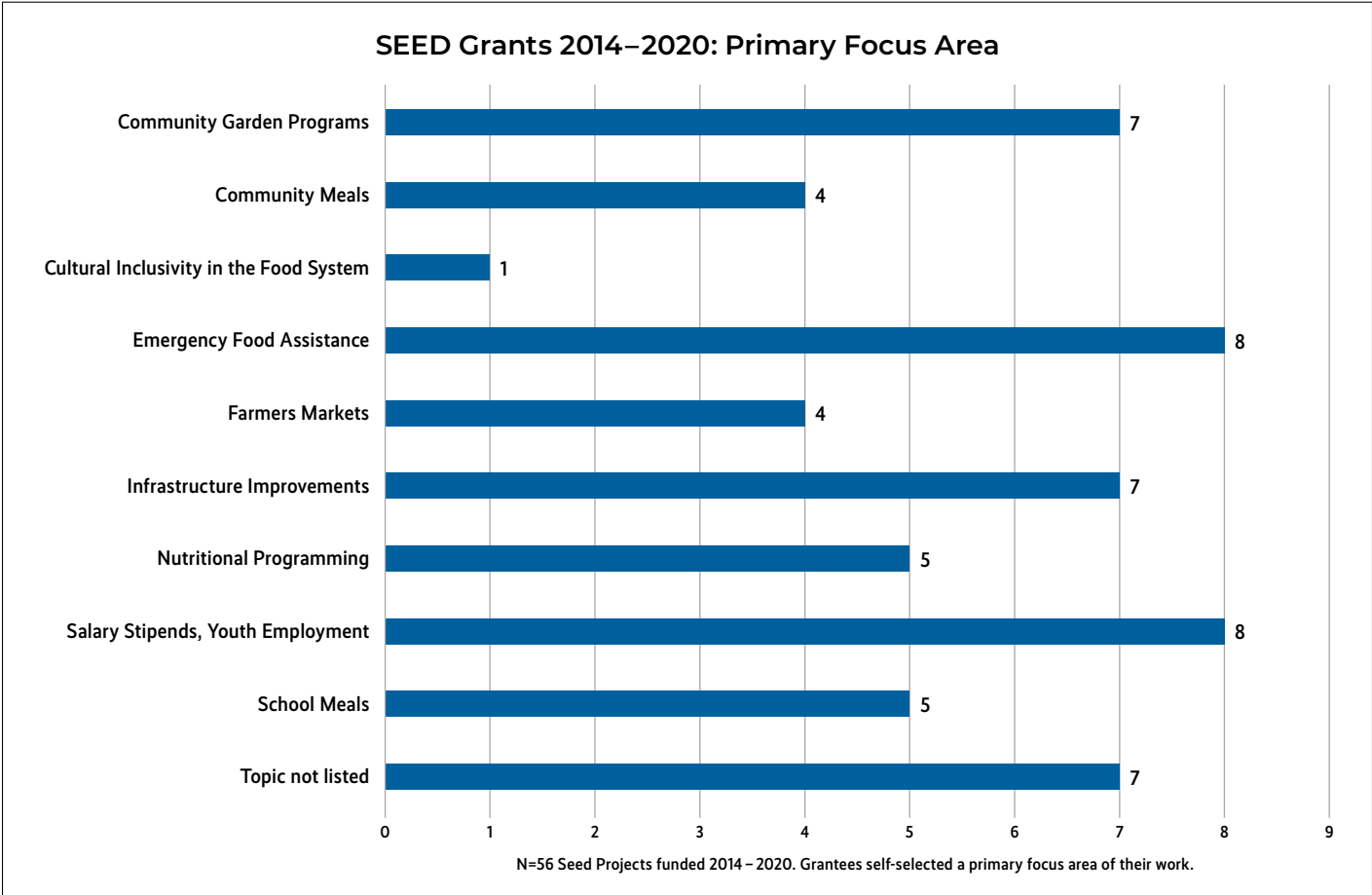


**Figure 1.** This map shows the spatial distribution of 2014 – 2020 SEED grant recipients (excluding 2015 data) in relationship to food access improvement areas in the City of Madison. The locations of the symbols indicate grant recipient headquarters rather than their service areas, which range from a single site to the entire metro area. This map shows 56 grants, which were awarded to 40 unique lead organizations.

<sup>1</sup> Data from 2015 grants was unavailable



**Figure 2.** 2014 – 2020 SEED grant awards (not including 2015 data) ranged from \$846 to \$9,500. The average grant amount is \$4,944. N = 53. This information is based on funded applications provided by the City of Madison. Due to missing data, this is a meaningful but not complete representation of the value distribution of past awards.



**Figure 3.** Organizations used SEED funding to address a variety of food related issues in the areas they serve. N = 56. Some projects had multiple focus areas, such as infrastructure development and community meals.

# Evaluation Findings

Our evaluation indicates that the SEED Grants Program fulfills its mission of supporting new and emerging activities that promote access to healthy food in Madison communities. There is also evidence to suggest that the SEED Grants Program contributes to indirect outcomes, such as helping organizations to leverage additional funding, develop stronger interorganizational collaboration, and contribute to neighborhood and metro food system resilience. Refer to Appendix C for information about the percentage of evaluation participants that reported each of the following outcomes.

## Direct and Indirect Outcomes

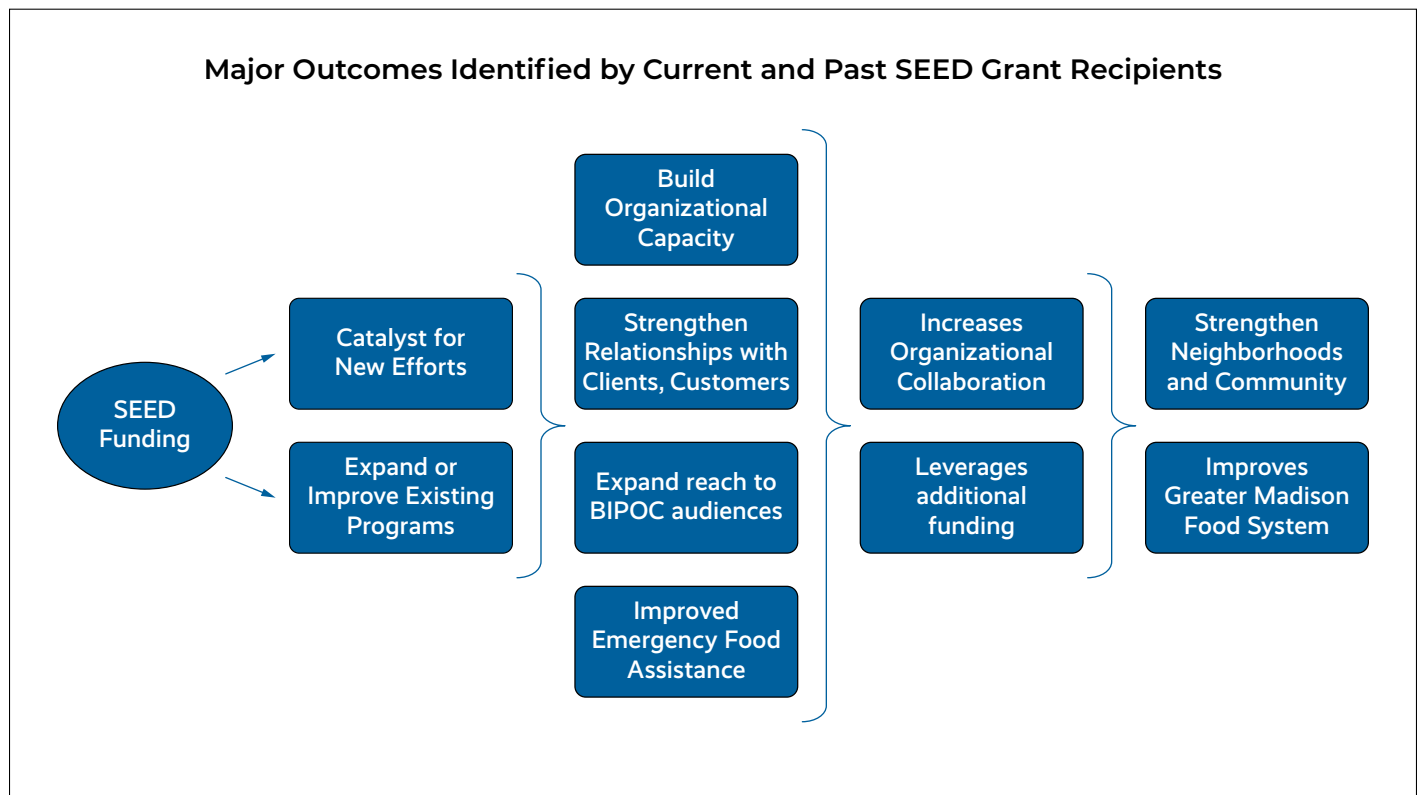
To capture program impacts at multiple levels, this section is organized into direct and indirect program outcomes. The diagram below depicts how these different types of outcomes connect to contribute to neighborhood and community level improvements.

## Direct Outcomes

There was clear consensus among grantees that SEED grants help launch new efforts and enhance already effective programs. Representatives of organizations with smaller budgets emphasized that the SEED grants are key catalysts. As one grantee put it, “SEED money was a small igniter for bigger things.” For more established organizations, SEED grants enhanced existing efforts and, importantly, offered flexibility in how funds were spent. All grantees we interviewed reported that SEED grants were meeting their primary purpose of catalyzing efforts to improve access to healthy food.

**“It’s a really nice dollar amount to kickstart something.”**

– SEED Grantee



**Figure 4.** Ripple Effect Mapping session and interview participants identified how SEED funding led to direct and indirect outcomes. They noted that the City’s investment built organizational capacity, strengthened relationships and ultimately contributes to improvements to neighborhoods and the greater Madison food system. N = 12. 12 individuals representing 11 organizations participated in our qualitative evaluation. Refer to Appendix D for sample REM maps developed during the evaluation.

In addition to determining whether the SEED Program is fulfilling its mission, the evaluation also sought to understand how it does so. Through Ripple Effects Mapping and key informant interviews, we found that the SEED Grant Program helps organizations to

- Bolster emergency food assistance programs
- Build organizational capacity
- Strengthen relationships with target audiences
- Help organizations reach and empower BIPOC audiences

Each of these key findings is described in detail below.



### **SEED grants bolster emergency food assistance programs and increase food access to high priority communities**

Most grantees shared that SEED funding helped to improve existing food assistance programs. In some instances, organizations used SEED funds to develop new food-based initiatives. Together, these initiatives contributed to improved food access in a myriad of ways.

For example, some awardees addressed gaps in existing emergency food networks by using SEED dollars to provide supplemental food to families during the summertime when their children weren't receiving free and reduced meals through the school system.

Other programs focused on improving the availability of culturally relevant and community-centered food offerings and distribution models, which often involved trial and error in response to partner and community feedback. As one awardee explained, their organization initially used

SEED funds to offer “culturally appropriate pre-packed [food] boxes” but shifted to “more of a market style, so people can pick what they want [ ... ] based on [participant] feedback.”

Other awardees emphasized how SEED funding contributed to improved coordination between local growers and emergency food assistance providers. As another awardee shared, their SEED project facilitated greater “collaboration with an emergency food system, like food banks, [by] seeing what they need, and then [ ... ] making a plan to grow a certain amount of whatever it was – greens or carrots or whatever – and [creating] a growing plan and [ ... ] a beginning of the season contract with them.”

By complementing existing food assistance programs, aligning product types and distribution modalities with community preferences, and strengthening farm to food assistance connections, SEED awardees used these funds to improve food access and food security for residents across the City.

### **SEED grants build organizational capacity**

Grantees noted multiple ways that SEED funding helped to build organizational capacity through the development of new projects or by improving or expanding existing efforts. Specifically, the SEED Grant Program’s small investments in resources such as staff time and physical infrastructure have made it possible for small organizations to respond to client needs in new ways, and in some cases, improve their operations. As one grantee explained, “These grants allow us to invest in staff time ... Our volunteers can take it to a certain point, right, but there is a bunch of paid time that’s required to get [a new project] off the ground. And that’s something that you all help with ... it lets us, as a staff, it lets us dream, right, it lets us listen and be responsive.”

Another grantee shared that a SEED grant enabled their organization to purchase a cooler and hoop house, which had measurable impacts on the efficiency of their operations: “Just having that cooler on site ... and an actual structure like a hoop house ... to be able to wash and process – that really enabled us to have a stable setup – something that we could regularly and consistently work out of, and it made our operation more efficient.” Notably, many evaluation participants shared that the SEED Grant Program allowed them to expand efforts without “mission creep.”



## SEED grants enable organizations to strengthen relationships with target audiences

Grantees shared that the flexibility of SEED funding enabled them to better serve their target audiences by devoting time to developing deeper relationships with beneficiaries and more responsive programs. In fact, grantees repeatedly observed that relationship-building was as, or more, important than food-related project outcomes. While perhaps a surprising finding, the community food systems<sup>1</sup> literature offers ample evidence of the synergies between food-focused projects and community development. This is because most community food projects are at once intended to increase a community's capacity to produce or access healthy food **and** they function as strategies for advancing various related social, economic, or environmental outcomes<sup>2</sup>.



For example, one grantee, who described their organization as “a kind of foodie” youth mentoring program said, “I tell our staff, ‘None of the food stuff happens until you build a relationship, until you mentor the kids.’ Right? Like, that’s the whole point. So ‘hook the kids’ is our motto.” And yet, while relationship-building is the foundation of its work, the organization has very effectively used food production and marketing as the focus of much of its youth leadership and entrepreneurship development programming.

**“We just built relationships. And I think that’s what it comes down to, is building relationships and communities.”**

– SEED Grantee



In other instances, SEED funding enabled organizations to show they were listening to client or community input by better responding to needs. One grantee, who works at a community center with a food pantry, shared that they were able to adapt the hours of operations to better accommodate school schedules once they understood that in some households, young people were responsible for picking up pantry items. As they explained, “We’re hearing that middle schoolers and high schoolers are sometimes the people who need to bring food home from the pantry. Let’s honor that by shifting our practice. Not asking them to shift theirs.” As a result, they worked with social workers at a couple of schools to make it possible for students to pick up food during a flex period in their school day rather than limiting access to the two days a week that the pantry was typically open. Reflecting on the project, the grantee commented, “While the number of kids who took advantage of it was low. The impact on those families was really high. And we are a place that wants to be responsive.”

## SEED grants help organizations reach and empower BIPOC audiences

The SEED Program helps garner community trust by addressing racial inequity in the food system and by entrusting community-based organizations and leaders to implement the strategies that will best serve their communities. Many interview participants said they appreciated that the SEED Grants Program prioritizes organizations focused on reaching and empowering BIPOC (Black Indigenous and People of Color) audiences.

<sup>1</sup> Community food systems are defined as food systems in which “food production, processing, distribution, and consumption are geographically integrated and benefit the environment, economy, and social and nutritional health of a particular community.”

<sup>2</sup> [https://nesfp.nutrition.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/ios\\_fy2018\\_final.pdf](https://nesfp.nutrition.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/ios_fy2018_final.pdf)

“SEED was one of our funders [that] really allowed us to do the work of finding ... under-resourced farmers, like BIPOC farmers, new farmers, and women farmers ... So more than half the dollars spent on our food initiative went to those [producers].”

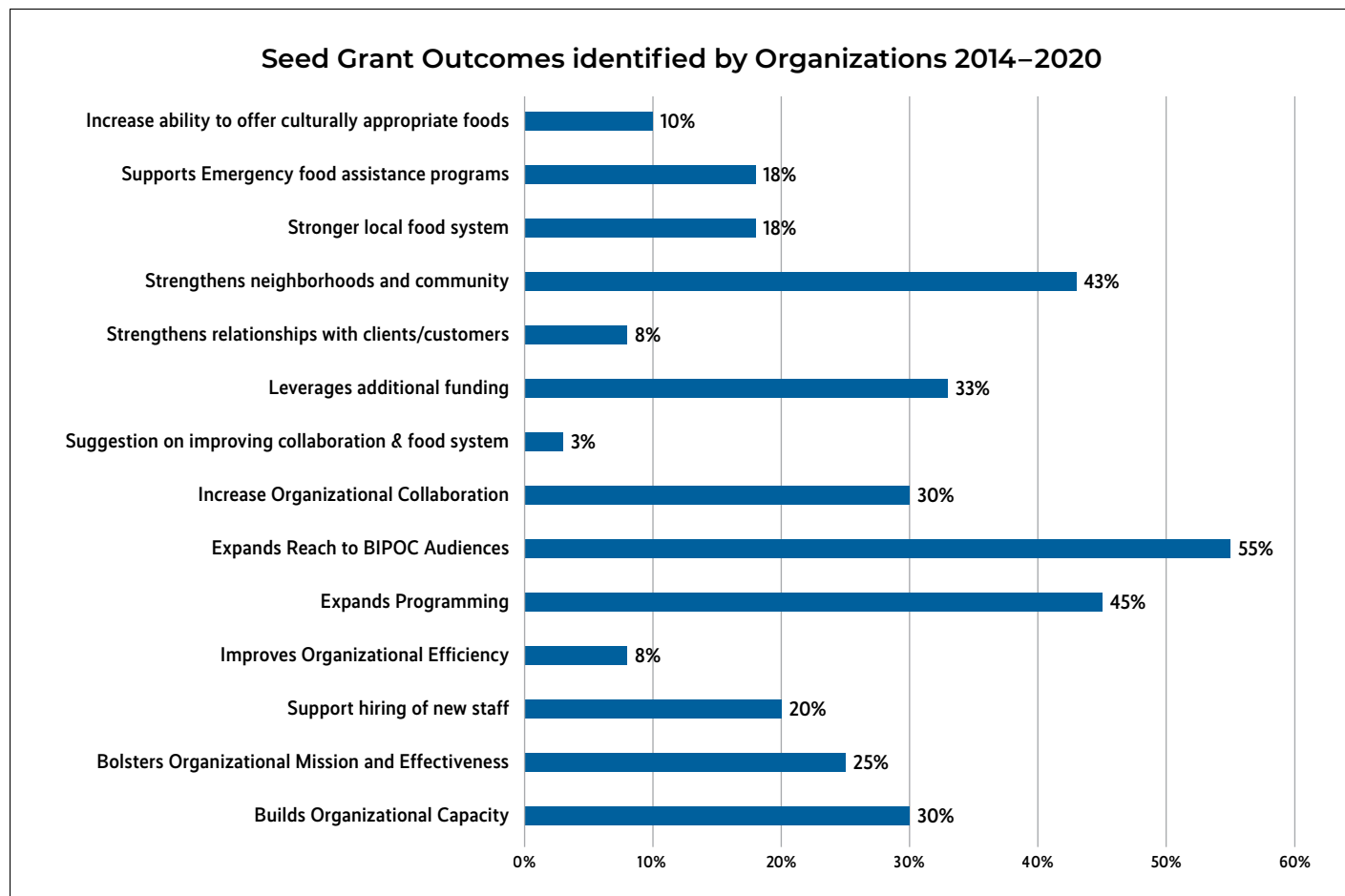
– SEED Grantee

This value is reflected in the SEED proposal scoring criteria, where reviewers are required to rate how well proposals “benefit communities of color and individuals with low income.” And our interview data suggests that the Program’s investments in this work have enabled grant recipients to expand BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving initiatives across a variety of contexts. Examples include

neighborhood-based youth development initiatives that pay stipends to BIPOC and low-income youth for their involvement in community improvement activities, market access initiatives that prioritize sourcing from BIPOC producers, and Latinx-led initiatives that introduce Spanish-speaking immigrants to all different aspects of the local food system.



### Seed Grant Outcomes identified by Organizations 2014–2020



**Figure 5.** The types of outcomes identified through our qualitative evaluation are consistent with the types of project-level outcomes evaluation findings and past project reports, we used our outcomes categories to code the responses in 47 self-evaluation reports completed by SEED grantees and collected by the SEED Grants Program manager from 2014 to 2020 (2015 data was not available). This table shows the various percentages that past project reports highlight the outcome themes we identified through our REM sessions and interviews.

**“My priorities have been to co-facilitate processes that are really democratically owned by the ones who are going to be involved.”**

– SEED Grantee

## Indirect Outcomes

The SEED Grants Program also strengthens grant recipients by helping them leverage additional funding, and in some cases, it fosters collective action by spurring or strengthening interorganizational collaboration. These outcomes, in turn, appear to contribute to stronger neighborhoods and a more vibrant Madison food system. We elaborate on each of these indirect outcomes below.

### **SEED grants help organizations leverage funding from other private and public sources**

Through direct investments in small-scale projects, SEED grants have made it possible for organizations to develop proofs of concept and establish legitimacy, which many grantees have used to secure additional funding. In some instances, this was in the form of match funding. Other times, SEED-funded pilot projects led to larger grants to scale up the efforts. In total, nearly 80 percent of interview participants reported that SEED grants helped them leverage additional funding. Past project-level evaluations also support this finding, though at a lower percentage, with roughly a third of respondents indicating that SEED grants helped them leverage additional funds.

**In less than a decade, “that small investment of \$3,600 blossomed into this \$167,000 [annual program] budget.”**

– SEED Grantee

One grantee described a remarkable story of how a fledging organization has grown exponentially as a direct result of SEED grant funding. According to the grantee, the small investment by the City resulted in improved organizational collaboration, which then led to improved relationships with local growers, consumers, businesses, and local government. The web of relationships fostered by a small grant improved all organizations, ultimately benefiting Madison’s food system more broadly. In sum, SEED funding has enhanced organizations’ ability to serve

their communities by expanding their programming or improving their operations through small investments in resources and materials such as staff time, stipends, physical infrastructure, direct programming, food, and others.

**“[SEED] definitely was that first [grant] helping leverage additional funding, because that’s how these things work, you start with a tiny bit of money to play something out. And if you’re successful, that leads to a bigger grant.”**

– SEED Grantee

For other grantees, the optics of City support and the opportunity to collaborate with local government was as, or more, important than the total dollar value of the awards. Some grantees explained that securing SEED funding was akin to getting the City’s “stamp of approval,” which contributed to their successful pursuit of larger grants. For example, one grantee shared that the SEED grant was a way to develop a relationship with the City and County, and to signal to other funders that it had the right partnerships: “For us, it was more important to secure



the support of the Dane County Food Council and the partnership of the City in an endeavor – more so than the absolute cash amount, because those are small grants for food systems work. So, for us, the reason to secure these grants [was] either as match, or to say, ‘we’ve got a broad base of support in the funding of a project, including the City and County Food councils.’”

**“In a sense, [the SEED grants program shows] the City is committed to the [project] idea and willing to put a little bit of skin in the game as well, because they believe in it and want to see it. [...] Knowing that the City truly supports what we’re doing, and wants to [ ... ] support the effort [ ... ] that’s important.”**

**– SEED Grantee**



### **SEED grants increase interorganizational collaboration**

**“[Because of SEED] we’re starting to really, as an organization, make more connections and build more collaborations with other organizations.”**

**– SEED Grantee**

One of the strongest themes that emerged from the evaluation is that SEED grants contribute to inter-organizational collaboration. Grantees consistently described how SEED grants led to new collaborations and strengthened existing organizational partnerships. Collaborations ranged from meaningful one-offs to enduring partnerships.

Grantees also shared that partnership development was a key component of both the proposal and implementation stages of projects. As one grantee explained, “You’ve got to successfully communicate the value proposition of what you’re doing [to your partners]. Because the city can’t give out many [grants]. So, the value goes both ways – like you’re each buying into each other’s partnership. I think that was a really important piece of the SEED grants.”

Project implementation also contributed to partnership development, especially in new collaborations where organizations were co-developing projects and/or working across language and cultural differences. As one grantee shared, “One of the top priorities with that partnership is we had to commit to sort of learning how to do this alongside them. And they trusted us enough to be able to tell us when we were screwing it up.”

Several interview participants shared that interorganizational relationships developed through SEED grants became important longer-term collaborations. Grantees that received multiple SEED grants also described how subsequent rounds of SEED funding helped their organization deepen partnerships over time: “This latest round of SEED grant money was to take that collaboration work to the next level because now we have five other organizations on the land, and that requires a little bit more infrastructure build out ... with all these different growers there.”

### **SEED grants help strengthen neighborhoods and community**

Grantees observed that SEED funding had a variety of positive effects in the neighborhoods and communities where projects were based. These ranged from improved access to healthy and culturally appropriate foods to visible improvements to the built and natural environment. Several organizations used SEED funding to support components of youth development programs, which they described as having positive ripple effects, including job skill development, community-building, youth empowerment, and increased sense of neighborhood pride and safety.

For example, one grantee noted that “Because of the SEED funding and what followed in this food system, we have involved a lot of [neighborhood] kids ... there’s this history of kids that have come into this program and worked with us and we’ve gotten to know them around this food stuff that started with gardening, way back

when, ... and we've just been able to continue it." Of the same project, another interview participant shared: "All these things are happening in the [neighborhood] ... a lot of activities, family fun nights, handing food out to the people in the neighborhood, right? ... Just building community, you know? Probably a lot that we didn't put in our grant report!"

**"When you can ... invest funds into a [low-income] neighborhood, the ripple effects help everyone."**

– SEED Grantee

Other grantees commented on how projects grew beyond their original goals. For example, a grantee based at a community center with a food pantry noted how one SEED project contributed to more than food access and nutrition: "It wasn't just that it had a nutritional aspect. But it also had a social-emotional aspect that was way beyond what I knew about when we started thinking about the project." They went on to share "A big part of how we talk at the [community] center is, you know, we're advocating for a more just world, but then there's navigating the world that's right here in front of us." This sometimes means addressing immediate, foundational needs, like ensuring that people have access to enough food to eat so that they can turn their energy and attention to other things.



## **SEED grants strengthen the greater Madison food system**

A community food system is defined as one in which, "food production, processing, distribution, and consumption are geographically integrated and benefit the environment, economy, and social and nutritional health of a particular community."<sup>3</sup> Grantees widely agreed that the SEED Grants Program enhances Madison's robust food system through both direct funding for food access projects and indirectly by incentivizing inter-organizational collaboration, prioritizing projects that lift up leaders and organizations from BIPOC and low-income communities, and providing flexible funding that maximizes grantees' ability to be creative and responsive to their communities.



Multiple interview participants shared stories about how SEED projects strengthened communication between area growers and buyers. As one grantee explained, "The project lasted long enough that our recipients were able to start a dialogue with growers and food business to say what [foods] they would like, like what is culturally appropriate [ ... ] so by the next growing season, some of these farmers were growing specific things that they knew families sought out and couldn't find very easily. So, [relationships] were a very rich side effect of this project."

Another grantee shared a story about a time when a famous local chef provided feedback on a recipe their organization was developing as part of a food-based youth entrepreneurship program. On the one hand, this example is about accessing culinary expertise, but it's also about breaking down barriers between the trendy restaurant scene and community food projects in low-income neighborhoods.

3 USDA. (September 18, 2023). Community Food Systems. [USDA Office of Community Food Systems | Food and Nutrition Service](#)

Grantees also highlighted ways in which SEED projects, and the conversations they spurred, broadened stakeholders' awareness of the food system. One grantee remarked, "[The SEED Program] has helped break down the silos that exist in food systems. So, we have been able to think about [the] food system as something that cannot be separated from the health system, cannot be separated from the ecological system, that cannot be [separated] from the economic system."

**"[The SEED Program] has helped break down the silos that exist in food systems. So, we have been able to think about [the] food system as something that cannot be separated from the health system, cannot be separated from the ecological system, that cannot be [separated] from the economic system."**

**– SEED Grantee**

Similarly, another interview participant observed that people who are involved in different parts of the Madison food systems – food pantries, farmers, entrepreneurs, caterer, eaters – are "beginning to understand that interconnectedness of food, and how food builds community." Echoing the previous section, this interview participant also observed that, "while [these stakeholders] solve food issues for people, they're talking about other things as well, violence in their neighborhood, or housing ... "

While we don't want to overstate the impact of the SEED Grants Program, these remarks and the stories that accompanied them underscore the cumulative ripple effects of individual projects on the wider Madison food system.

## **Reflections on the Grant Award Process**

During the Ripple Effect Mapping session and interviews, we also asked grantees to comment on the SEED grant application process and the reporting and evaluation requirements. We also collected input on ways to improve the overall impact of the program. Through those discussions, we learned that grant recipients have a favorable perception of the current program design.

For example, grant recipients reported that they like how the current structure offers flexibility in how funds are spent and minimizes the reporting burden on applicants. In response to a question about reporting requirements,

one grantee responded, "I do recall it was blessedly not a lot of hoop-jumping!" One evaluation participant thought that the project-level reporting requirements overly emphasized quantitative data, and they suggested including the option of providing qualitative impact data in project reports. Overall, however, evaluation participants reported that the application and reporting requirements were reasonable and seemed proportionate to the grant sizes.

# Recommendations

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In general, we found that the SEED Grants Program is successful in fulfilling its mission, and that grant recipients, by and large, were satisfied with the application and reporting requirements. The following recommendations are based on participant feedback and our analysis of the broader evaluation findings. Refer to Appendix C for a full categorical summary of recommendations identified by current and past grantees.

## Consider implementing a tiered grant structure

Many grantees, especially repeat grant recipients, suggested implementing a tiered grant structure to better support organizations and projects at different stages of development. This would involve offering a wider range of grant sizes and implementation times frames, such as catalytic “seed” grants and larger “sprout” grants for implementation. One interview participant advocated for multi-year grants explaining, “if you really want a project to be community based with community input, it’s really slow ... If we get awarded late spring/early summer, and then we’re expected to deliver before the end of the year ... [that’s difficult].”

Others highlighted ways in which a tiered grant program could simultaneously support small scale, emergent efforts, as the Program already does, while also allowing the City to invest in deeper, longer-term projects in certain priority areas. Multi-year implementation grants could also be a strategy for incentivizing deeper inter-organizational collaboration and food systems level outcomes. For example, as Madison and Dane County move toward developing a food plan, food plan priorities could potentially help shape a second tier of SEED grants. This type of programmatic expansion would likely require additional annual program funding unless the program transitioned to a model where it offered fewer, larger grants some years and more, smaller grants other years.

## Explore ways to improve language accessibility

Several evaluation participants commented on language access barriers to the program, noting that the applica-

tion materials may deter non-English speakers. While this grants program is for organizations rather than individuals or businesses, stronger collaborations with organizations that serve immigrant populations may create more opportunities for non-English speakers to initiate or collaborate on SEED projects. Language access considerations should be evaluated in the context of limited programmatic capacity, but there may also be simple ways program leadership can more actively engage the City’s language access program.

## Continue to prioritize organizations working in areas of highest need

As discussed in this report, the SEED Grants Program excels at investing in community-based projects in high priority neighborhoods, and it has enabled grant recipients to expand BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving initiatives across many contexts. We suggest a few minor changes to the application review criteria to amplify the Program’s success in this area. First, we recommend providing reviewers with the option to give more weight to the population-served category than geography (i.e., the Food Access Improvement Area map), so that organizations and projects serving priority populations outside of food access improvement areas aren’t overly disadvantaged in the review process. The review committee also may consider adding a scoring category about whether the lead applicant is a minority-led organization.

## Continue to provide flexible funding and low-maintenance application and reporting requirements

Evaluation participants largely agreed that the application and reporting requirements are reasonable and proportionate to the sizes of the grants. The relatively low administrative burden of these grants combined with the flexibility of the funds were the two factors that made this relatively small grant program so attractive to applicants. Maintaining these program characteristics will help the program continue to attract a wide range of competitive applications in the future.

# Appendices

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**Appendix A: Evaluation Design and Methodology**

**Appendix B: List of Organizational Evaluation Participants**

**Appendix C: SEED Grant Evaluations & Outcomes by Impact Category**

**Appendix D: Sample Ripple Effect Maps**



# Evaluation Design and Methodology

This evaluation was designed by the UW–Madison Extension Community Food Systems Program with input from members of the Madison Food Policy Council and City of Madison staff. The evaluation focused on the following questions:

1. Is the SEED Grant Program fulfilling its mission of providing catalytic funding to “support access to healthy food in our community?”
2. What are the direct and indirect impacts of the SEED Grant Program on grant recipients and their target beneficiaries?
3. What would increase or improve program impact?

To answer these questions, the project employed two main evaluation methods: (1) participatory Ripple Effects Mapping with grant recipients, and (2) structured interviews with grant recipients to understand how and to what extent the SEED Grants Program is realizing its target outcomes. Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) is a participatory approach to evaluation in which program participants discuss, document, map and prioritize direct and indirect outcomes associated with the program they attended. REM is widely recognized as a method that helps understand outcomes occurring in complex systems. The method is also regarded as an effective strategy for identifying longer-term program impacts. As a participatory approach, REM also often builds a sense of participant ownership over the program and can strengthen the relationship between participants and the program administration. Another benefit of the REM method is it balances outcome and process evaluation approaches. As a participatory approach, REM often builds a sense of participant ownership over the program and can strengthen the relationship between participants and the program administration. This can lead to program adaptations that better meet the needs of program participants.<sup>1</sup>

Twelve individuals representing eleven organizational grant recipients participated in the evaluation. Four organizations were represented at an in-person Ripple Effects Mapping session. Following the REM, seven additional organizations participated in 1-hour one-on-one inter-

views that used a structured interview protocol. As part of those interviews, each organization was asked a series of questions that allowed the evaluation team to map their individual outcomes onto the REM map generated by the initial group. To our knowledge, this is a new adaptation to a traditional REM that allows for scheduling flexibility but results in a full Ripple Effects Map.

After coding the REM and interview data, we analyzed evaluations of past SEED projects (2014 – 2020, excluding 2015) through the lens of our thematic coding scheme as a means of data triangulation. In other words, by comparing our evaluation findings with past SEED project reports completed by grantees and submitted to the City, we were able to determine whether there was evidence of the same themes that we identified in our interviews and REM sessions in previous independent project-level evaluations. If we found similar themes, we could be reasonably confident that our findings are representative of the larger population of SEED grant recipients. Figure 5 in the report demonstrates that there was considerable thematic overlap.

## Limitations

This report encompasses input from grant recipients who represent a range of organization and project types and a variety of Madison neighborhoods and communities. However, we were more successful in engaging repeat grant recipients than one-time grant recipients in the evaluation. This is likely because organizations that were satisfied with the application and awards process have tended to develop stronger relationships with the City staff member who was involved in evaluation recruitment, **and** they were more motivated to provide program feedback in support of maintaining the program. As such, this report may have a slightly positive bias. To correct for this potential effect, we made sure to ask probing questions to solicit constructive criticism. With the exception of the one in-person Ripple Effect Mapping session, City staff members were not present for interviews, which created conditions conducive to more candid feedback. We also

<sup>1</sup> Chazdon, S., Emery, M., Hansen, D., Higgins, L., & Sero, R. (2017). *A field guide to ripple effects mapping*. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing.

reviewed project-level evaluations collected prior to this evaluation and found broad alignment between the various data sources.

The other primary limitation of this evaluation is that we did not interview project beneficiaries or participants in addition to the grant recipients. This would have dramatically increased the scope of the project and was incompatible with the project budget and timeframe. However, in many cases, the staff members of these mostly small community-based organizations are from or are closely connected to the communities and clients they serve. Consequently, we are confident that their feedback serves as a meaningful, if imperfect, proxy for community input.

## APPENDIX B

# List of Organizational Evaluation Participants

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- Bayview Foundation
- Darbo Pantry Project
- Good Food for All
- Kids Forward
- Lussier Community Education Center
- Mentoring Positives
- REAP Food Group
- Rooted
- Roots4Change
- The Mellowood Foundation
- The River Food Pantry Munch Mobile Meals

# SEED Grant Evaluations & Outcomes by Impact Category

<b>Slow Food Odyssey for Growing Community Power in South Madison</b>	2014	Margaret Nellis, Ph.D.
<b>Improving School Access to Fresh Produce via Salad Bars</b>	2014	REAP Food Group
<b>The Campus Kitchens Project at UW–Madison</b>	2016	Campus Kitchens
<b>Lindbergh Cafeteria Makeover</b>	2016	REAP Food Group
<b>Cooking Traditions at Centro</b>	2016	Centro Hispano, Inc.
<b>Growing Healthy Bayview Families</b>	2016	Bayview Foundation, Inc.
<b>Healthful Access Program</b>	2016	Goodman Community Center
<b>Processing and Distribution Capacity</b>	2016	Healthy Food for All
<b>Preparing Assets for Integration without Dependency (PAID)</b>	2016	Mellowhood Foundation
<b>Madison Urban Nutritional Children's Hotspot (MUNCH)</b>	2017	River Food Pantry
<b>Organizing Access to Food and Health at the Lussier Food Pantry</b>	2017	Lussier Community Education Center
<b>Elver Park Farmers' Market</b>	2017	Prarie Hills Neighborhood Assn./ Madison West Neighborhood Assn.
<b>Year-round Educational Greenhouse and Pantry Support</b>	2017	Sandburg Elementary School
<b>Neighborhood Covenant Alignment</b>	2017	Mellowhood Foundation
<b>South Madison Farmers Market – PEAT Youth Corp and Summer Camp</b>	2017	Neighborhood Food Solutions
<b>Community Compost Partners</b>	2017	UW Medical Foundation Union Corners – Green Team
<b>Healthful Access Program</b>	2017	Goodman Community Center
<b>Off the Block Pizza</b>	2017	Mentoring Positives, Inc.
<b>Healthy Food for All Farm Surplus Field Gleaning</b>	2017	Healthy Food for All
<b>Badger Rock Market</b>	2017	Center for Resilient Cities, Inc.
<b>Healthy Community Kitchen</b>	2017	Healthy Community Kitchen, Inc.
<b>Giving Garden Teen Summer Camp and Employment Program</b>	2017	Bayview Foundation, Inc.
<b>In-School Pantry and School-to-Home Grocery Program</b>	2018	Food 4 Thought Initiative
<b>Elver Park Farmers/Artisan/Community Market</b>	2018	Elver Park Farmers Market, Inc.
<b>Healthy Snacks and Fun Friday Food Projects for MSCR Nuestro Mundo Afterschool Students</b>	2018	Madison School and Community Recreation
<b>Pantry Improvement and Resident Access/Engagement to Healthy Food</b>	2018	Kennedy Heights Neighborhood Association, Inc.

Percent True	Builds Organizational Capacity	Bolsters Organizational Mission and Effectiveness	Support hiring of new staff	Improves Organizational Efficiency	Expands Programming	Expands Reach to BIPOC Audiences	Increase Organizational Collaboration	Suggestion on improving collaboration & food system	Leverages additional funding	Strengthen relationships with clients/customers	Strengthens neighborhoods and community	Stronger local food system	Supports Emergency food assistance programs	Increase ability to offer culturally appropriate foods
30%	25%	20%	8%	45%	55%	30%	3%	33%	8%	43%	18%	18%	10%	
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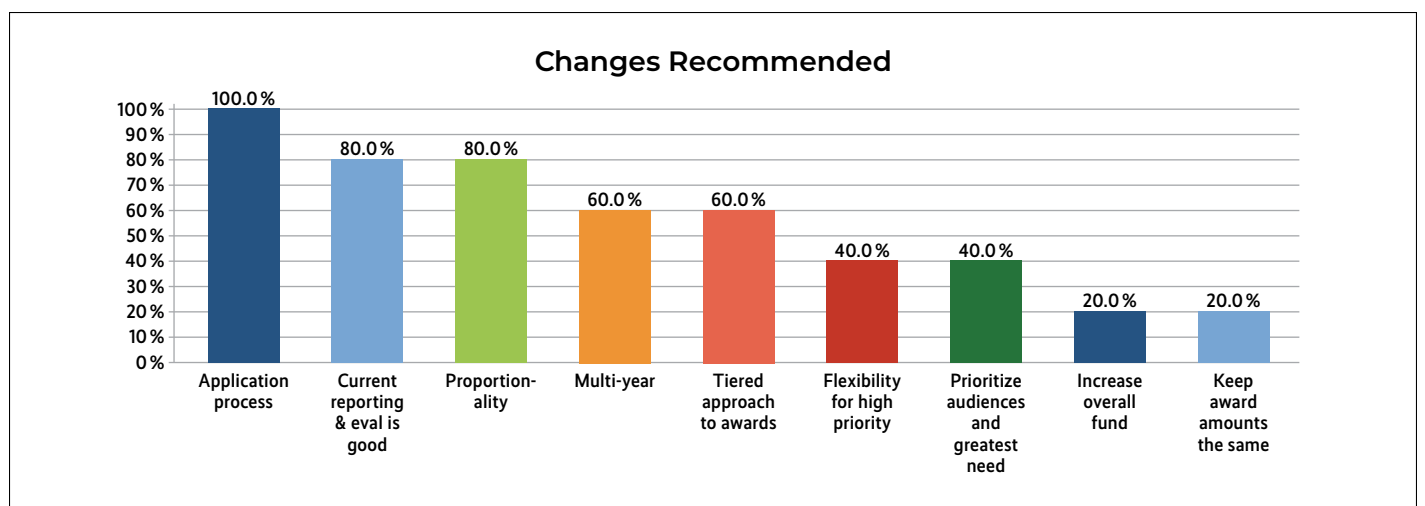
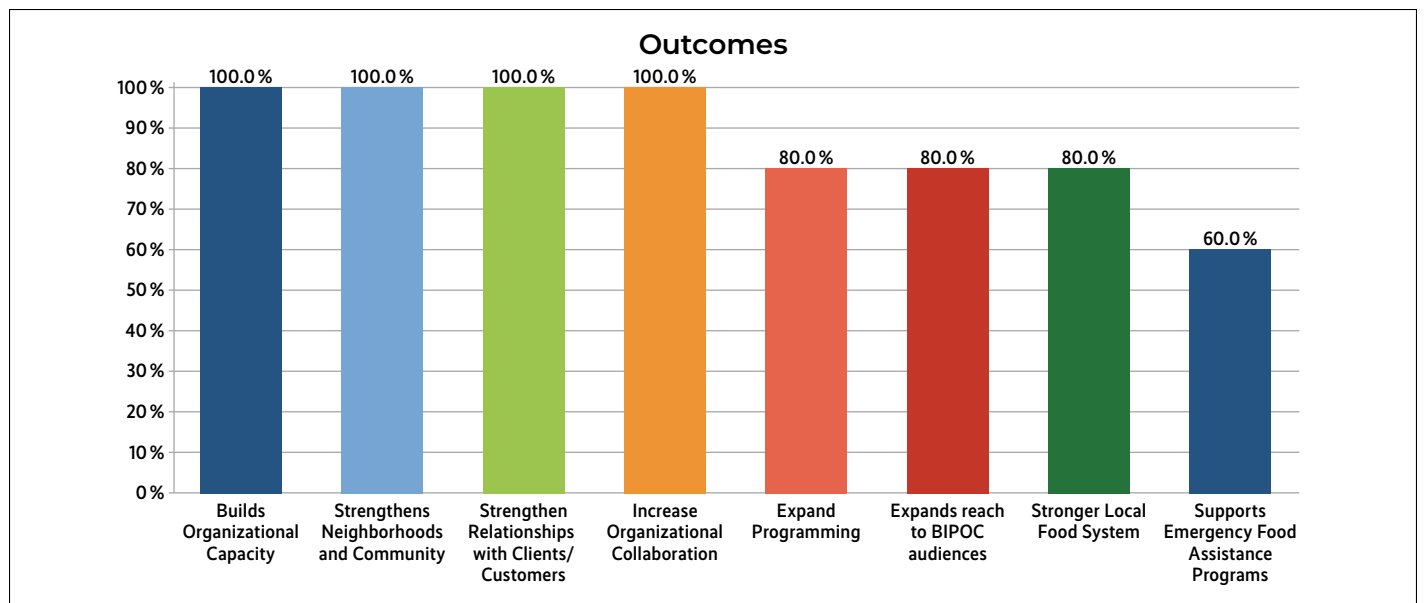
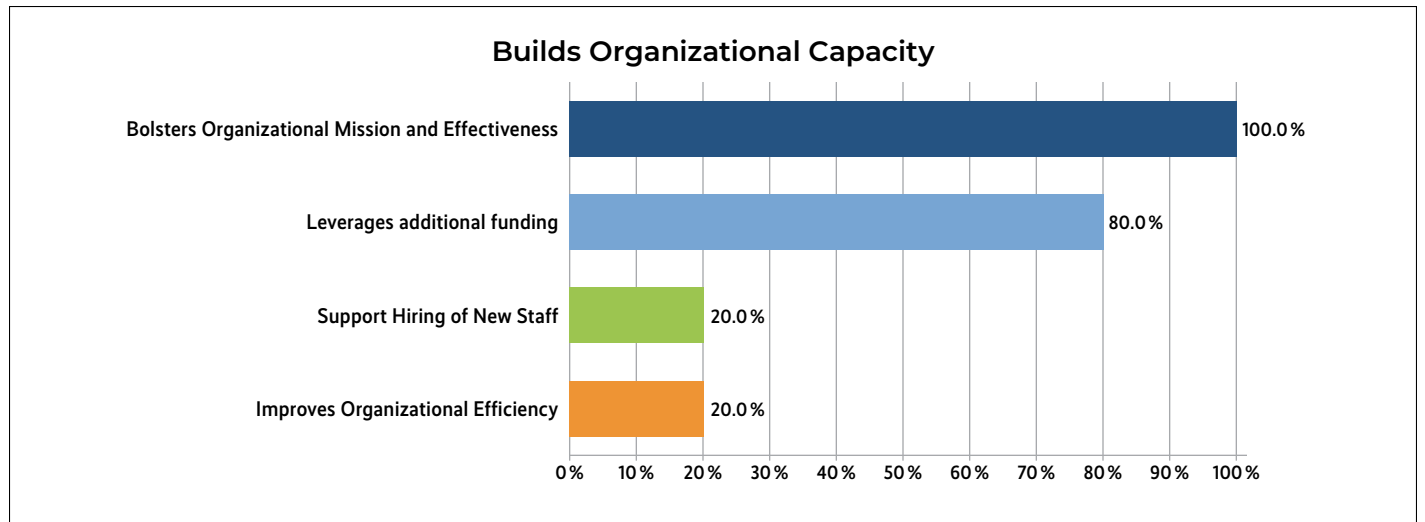
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<b>Healthy Gardens</b>	2018	Bayview Foundation Inc.
<b>Food System Sustainability and Engagement Project</b>	2018	East Madison Community Center Corporation
<b>Growing a Food Movement Led by Health Promotoras with the Madison Latino Community</b>	2018	Centro Hispano Inc.
<b>Growing Urban Leaders in Food Systems (GULFS) and Harvesting Ownership &amp; Outcomes to Develop Stability (HOODS) Initiative Summer Collaboration</b>	2018	Mellowhood Foundation & Michael Fields Ag Institute
<b>Volunteer with Food (“Allied Come ‘n’ Get It”)</b>	2018	Allied-Dunn's Marsh Neighborhood Assn
<b>Summer Bounty, Full Bellies</b>	2018	Lussier Community Education Center
<b>By the Community for the Community: Growing a food movement for Latinos through the Wellness Worker Model (CWWs)</b>	2019	Centro Hispano Inc.
<b>Elver Park Farmer’s Market and the Southwest Transitional Employment Program</b>	2019	Common Wealth Development Inc.
<b>Youth Employment Training Program (YET)</b>	2019	DSS Community Center
<b>Thea’s Table Weekend Food Program</b>	2019	Food 4 Thought Initiative
<b>Free to be Healthy</b>	2019	Freedom, Inc.
<b>Oak Creek Community Garden</b>	2019	Oak Creek Community Garden
<b>Harvesting Ownership &amp; Outcomes to Develop Stability (HOODS) Initiative</b>	2019	Mellowhood Foundation
<b>Enhancing Food Access and Establishing Healthy Eating Habit through Early Childhood Education</b>	2019	Today Not Tomorrow, Inc.
<b>Local Meal and Produce Delivery: Connecting the Northside to its Community Farm</b>	2020	Rooted, Inc.
<b>Providing Meals to Elders during COVID-19 Emergency</b>	2020	Independent Living, Inc.
<b>Just Feeding Madison</b>	2020	Madison Area Urban Ministry
<b>Enhancing Food Access and Establishing Healthy Eating Habit through Early Childhood Education</b>	2020	YMCA of Dane County
<b>Darbo Pantry Project Expansion Plan</b>	2020	Center for Community Stewardship & Darbo Pantry Project
<b>COVID-19 Bayview Community Food Access and Distribution Program</b>	2020	Bayview Foundation Inc.
<b>Food Emergency Initiative in support of Early Childhood Healthy Eating</b>	2020	Kids Forward, Inc.

Percent True	Builds Organizational Capacity	Bolsters Organizational Mission and Effectiveness	Support hiring of new staff	Improves Organizational Efficiency	Expands Programming	Expands Reach to BIPOC Audiences	Increase Organizational Collaboration	Suggestion on improving collaboration & food system	Leverages additional funding	Strengthen relationships with clients/customers	Strengthens neighborhoods and community	Stronger local food system	Supports Emergency food assistance programs	Increase ability to offer culturally appropriate foods
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The following graphs show what percentage of evaluation (REM and interview) participants reported specific project outcomes and recommendations (N=12).

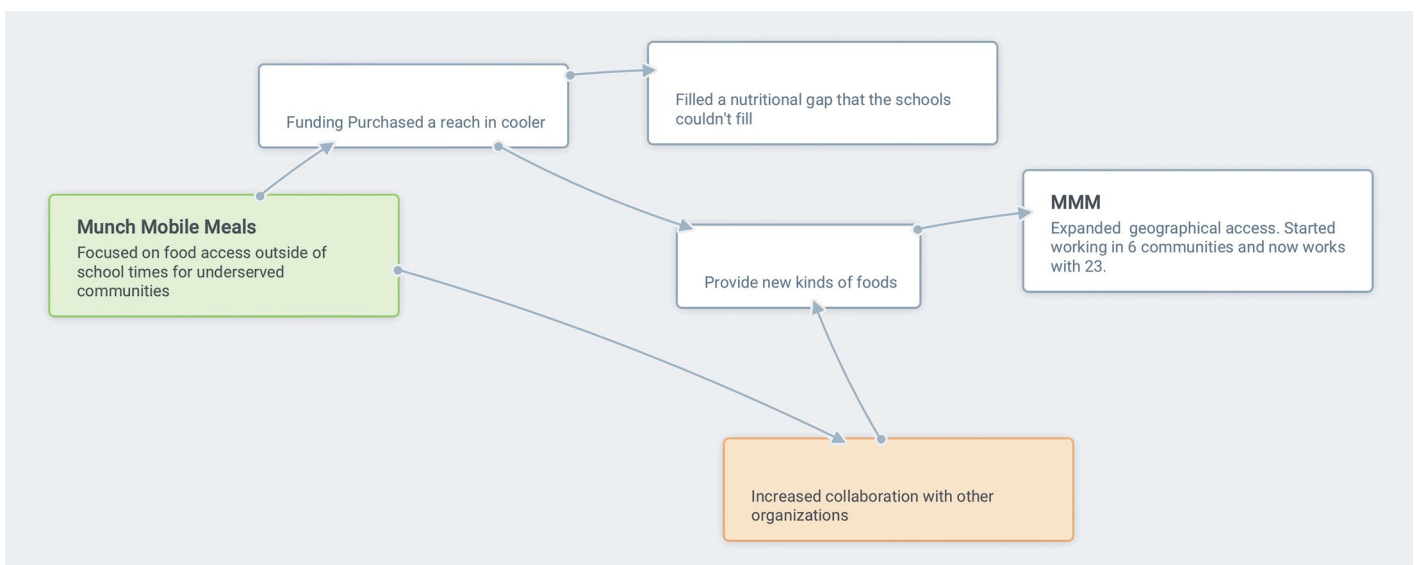
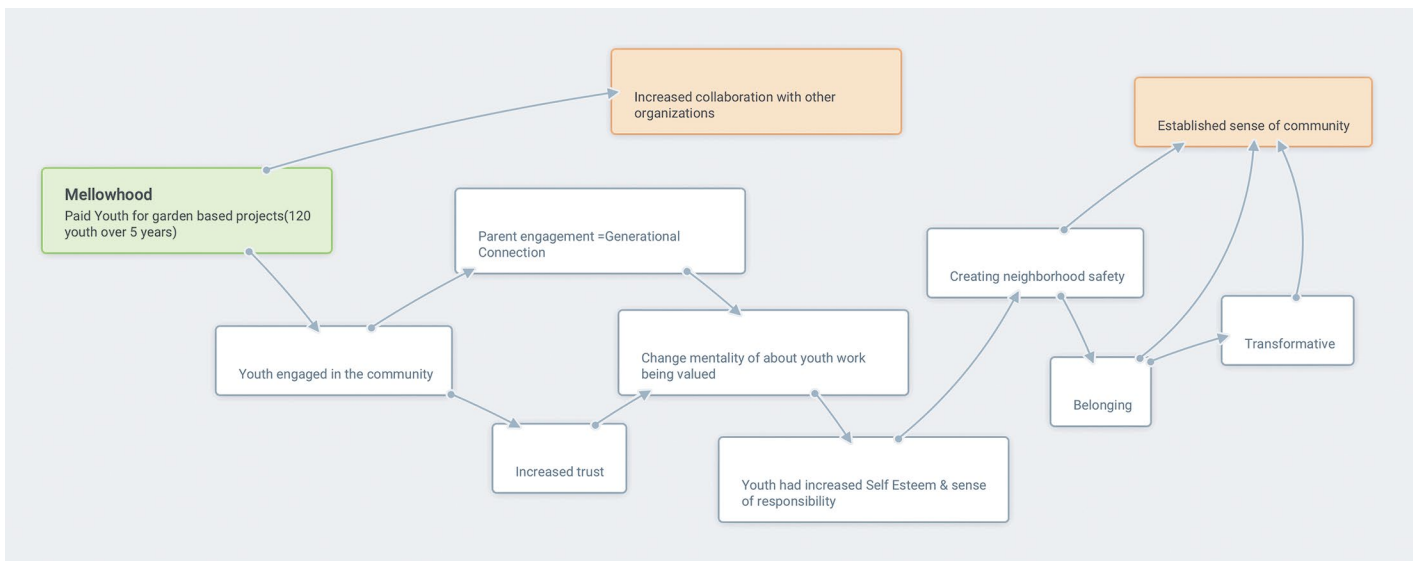
\* Smaller or newer organizations recommended increasing the fund or keeping the awards the same.

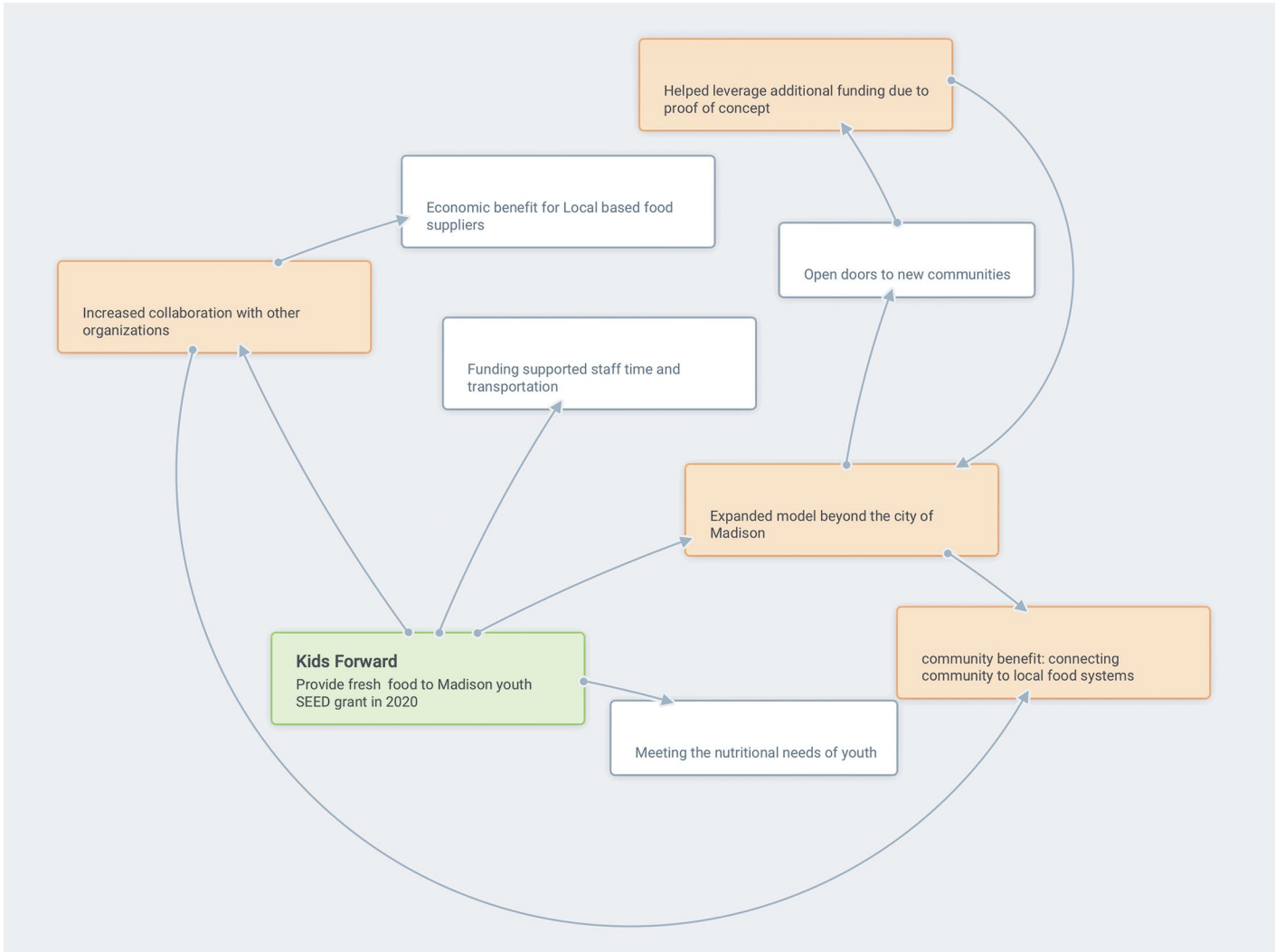
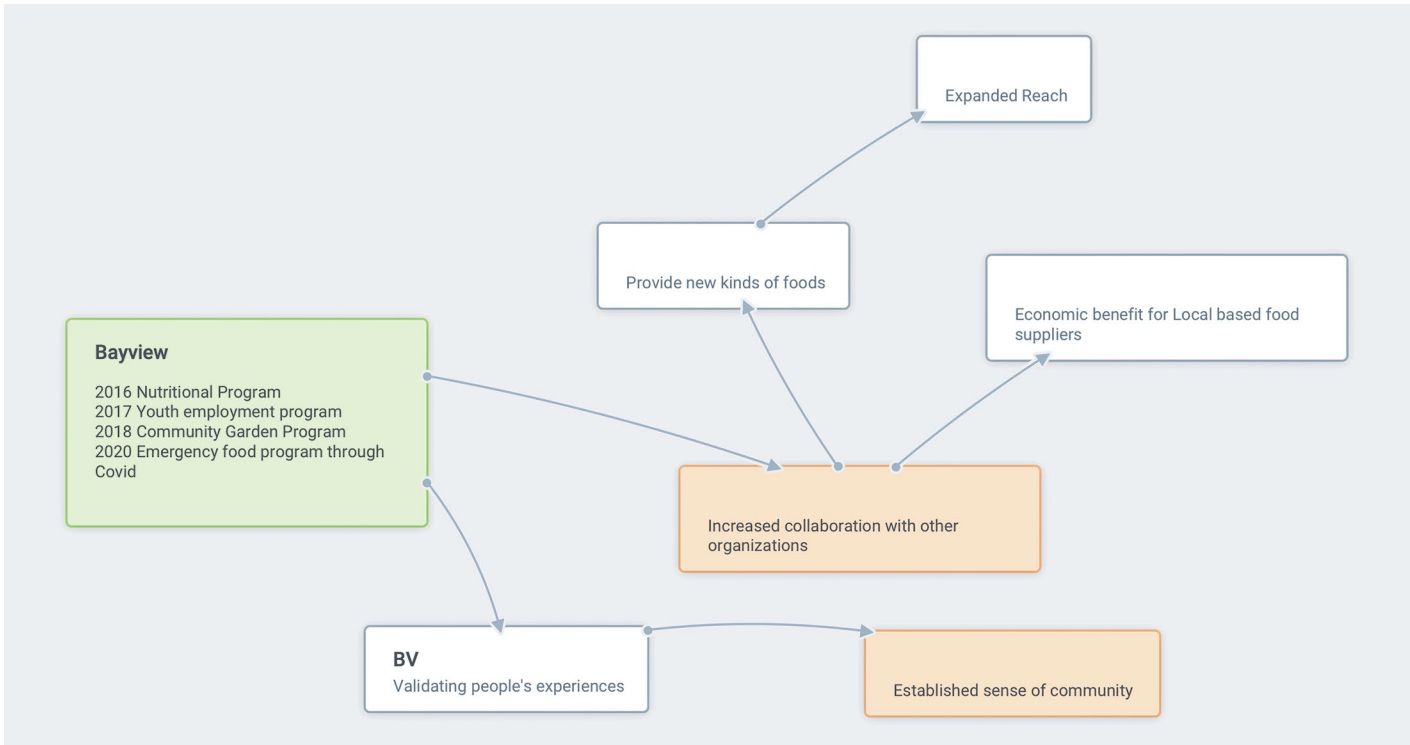




# Sample Ripple Effect Maps

In Ripple Effects Mapping groups and interviews, SEED grantees identified key outcomes and impacts the funding had for the organization, for individual community members, and on neighborhoods or the community at large. The following Ripple Effect maps depict the causal linkages articulated by REM participants and interviewees during the mapping and interview processes.









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