



Wheatbelt Food Community: Snapshot Report



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Wheatbelt Food Community Snapshot

We need good quality food, in sufficient amounts, to meet our dietary needs. Regular physical, social and economic access to healthy food is called **food security** [1]. **Food insecurity** arises when people cannot regularly or reliably obtain food in adequate quantities or in socially acceptable ways for good health and wellbeing [1].

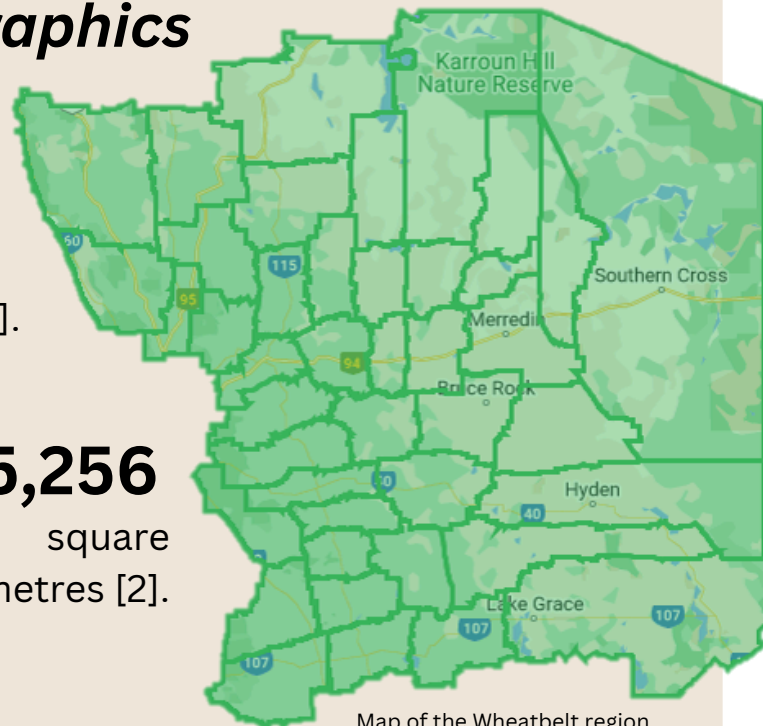
A snapshot of the Wheatbelt region demographics

A population of  **75,000** people [2].

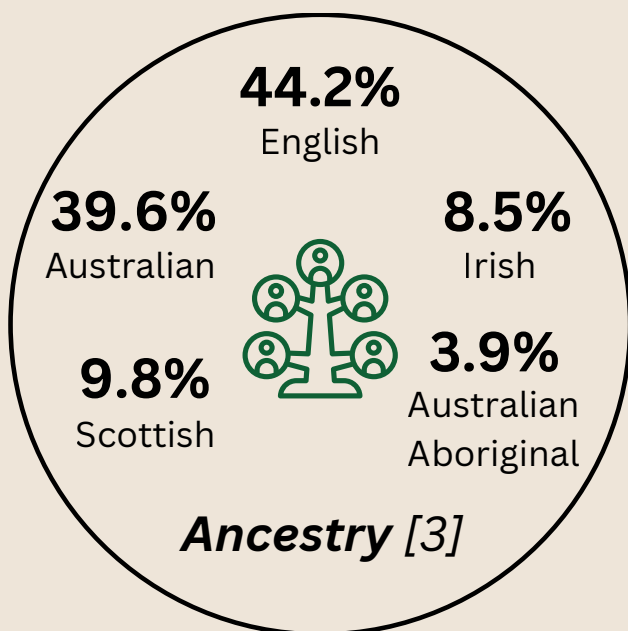


43 local government authorities [2].

155,256 square kilometres [2].



Map of the Wheatbelt region (Adapted from REMPLAN MapBuilder, <https://mapbuilder.remplan.com.au/>)



Employment status [3]



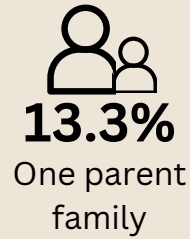
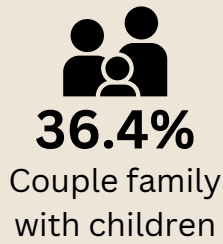
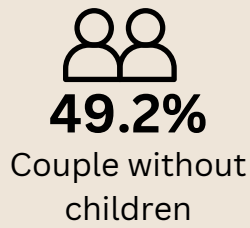
56.3% Worked full-time
32.4% Worked part-time
7.3% Away from work
4.1% Unemployed

Median weekly income [3]

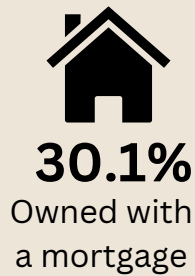
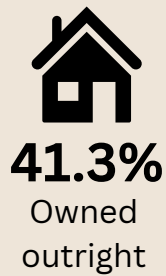
\$718 - Personal
\$1,757 - Family
\$1,339 - Household



Family composition [3]



Tenure type [3]



2.3
Average number of people per household [3]

Mortgage and rent [3]

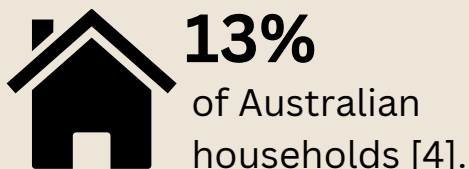


\$220
Median weekly rent repayments



\$1,300
Median monthly mortgage repayments

What we know about food insecurity across Australia



- Low incomes.
- Unexpected bills [6].
- Children whose families received government financial assistance are 2.6 times more likely to be food insecure [5].

Food insecurity impacts:

- Behavioural problems [7], impaired academic performance [8], low self-esteem and low self-efficacy [9].
- Compromised dietary intake, nutrient deficiencies like iron deficiency, and poor growth and development [10].
- Increased risk of heart disease [11].
- Diet-related diseases [12].
- Malnutrition among seniors [13].



Food in regional and remote areas is **expensive**, the **quality is often poorer**, **availability lower**, and **transport options reduced** [14].

Wheatbelt region food problems in 2023

Community and interest holder perceptions of Wheatbelt region food problems [15].



Education: children and families' mindset of food, origins, and knowledge of production.

High costs.

Few shops have monopoly on consumer access.

Don't have "core foods" produced in region.

No local processing.



Water and natural pest control are expensive.



'Junk food': convenience.

Waste in transport and selling system.

Lots of small towns: not going to travel large distances to buy cheapest foods.



How are existing initiatives supporting regional food security in 2023?* [16]



25 Addressing Food Availability

6 confirmed via an interview



43 Addressing Food Access

16 confirmed via an interview



16 Addressing Food Utilisation

10 confirmed via an interview



1 Addressing Stability

1 confirmed via an interview



2 Addressing Agency

2 confirmed via an interview



2 Addressing Sustainability

2 confirmed via an interview

Wheatbelt region response to food security issues in 2023** [16]

21



Emergency Food Relief and Community Programs

10 explored via an interview



18 Community Gardens and Food Swapping Groups

4 explored via an interview



10

Food Literacy and Health Promotion Initiatives

8 explored via an interview



6

Businesses, Networks or Alliances

2 explored via an interview



3 Farmers' Markets and Food Events

0 explored via an interview



2

Policies or Strategic Plans

0 explored via an interview

*some initiatives address multiple aspects

**some initiatives run across multiple regions and initiative types

Wheatbelt region Socio-Ecological Model of food security initiatives: Levels of intervention

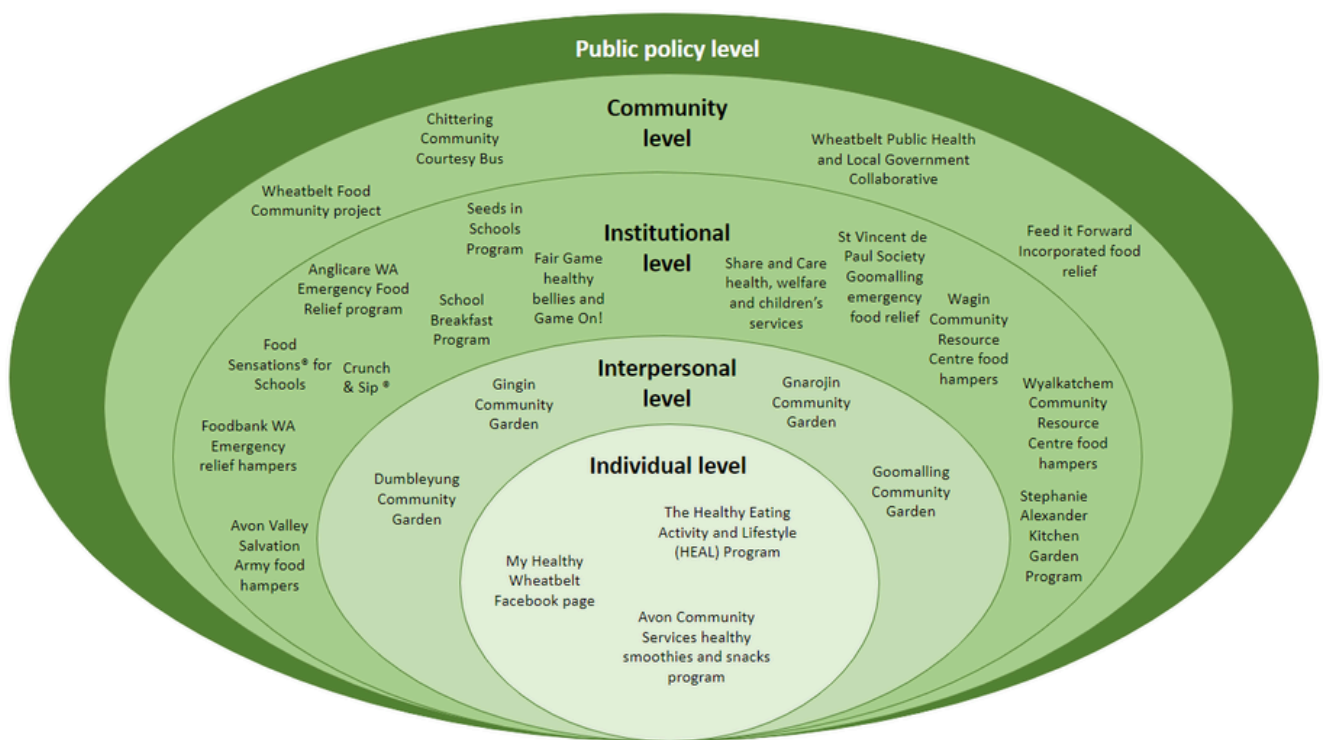


Figure 1: Wheatbelt region Socio-Ecological Model of food security initiatives. (Adapted from the model described by McLeroy et al. (1988) [17]).

The social-ecological model shows the different levels of intervention that these initiatives are focusing on (Figure 1). For example:

- The individual level focuses on knowledge, skills or attitudes of individual clients or people that they are working directly with.
- The interpersonal level focuses on relationships between family or social networks, or looking at the connection between them.
- The institutional level is often embedded within schools or other settings, like workplaces.
- The community level focuses on different partnerships between community organisations.
- The public policy level relates to supporting a variety of policy frameworks and initiatives.

Many Wheatbelt initiatives captured in interviews were operating at the institutional level, with few at a community level and none at a public policy level. It is important that all levels of intervention are represented for maximum impact.

Wheatbelt food security systems change impact card

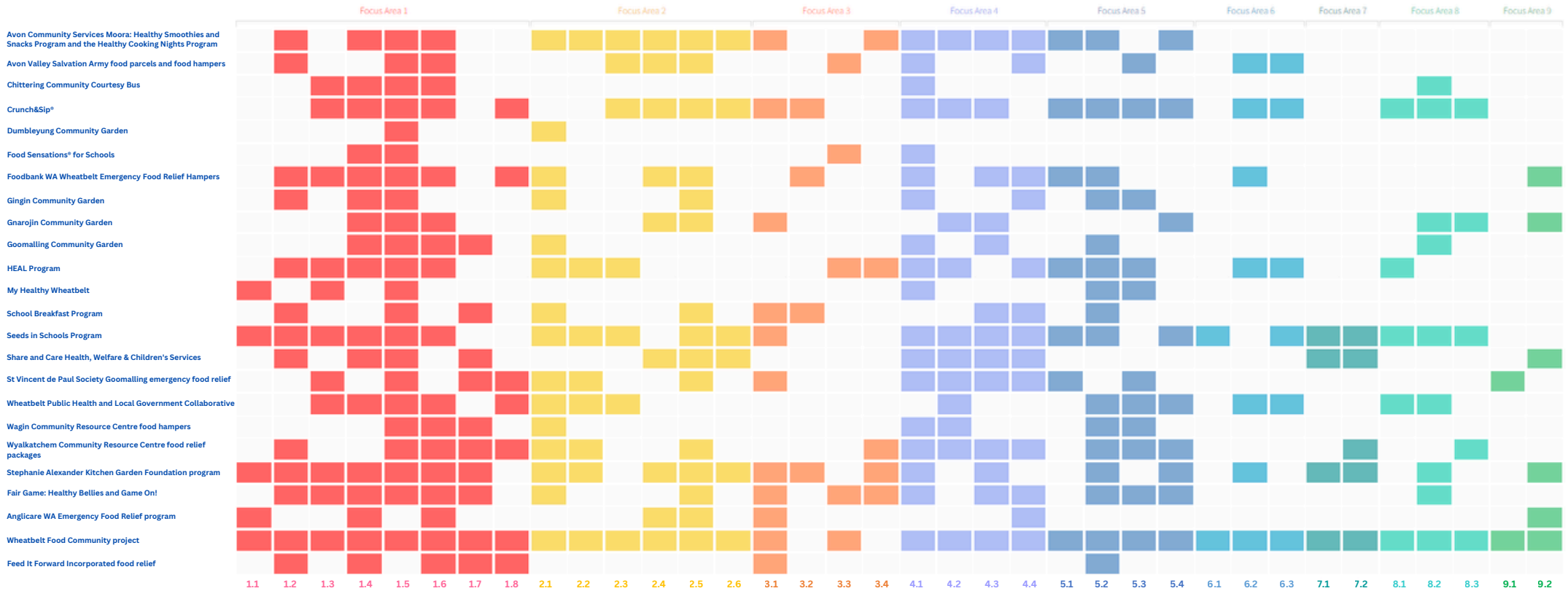
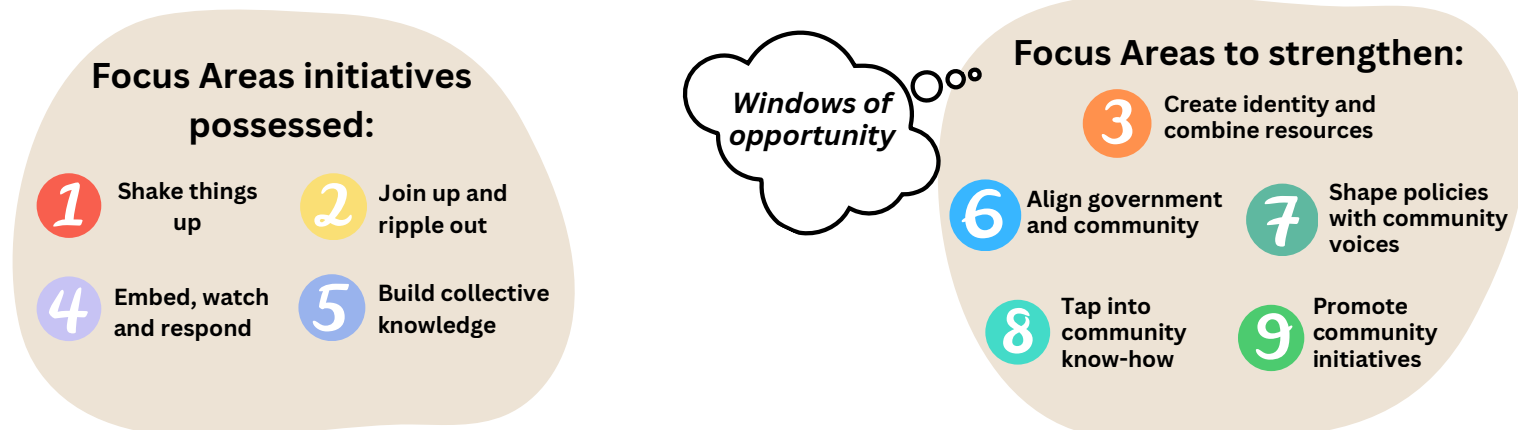


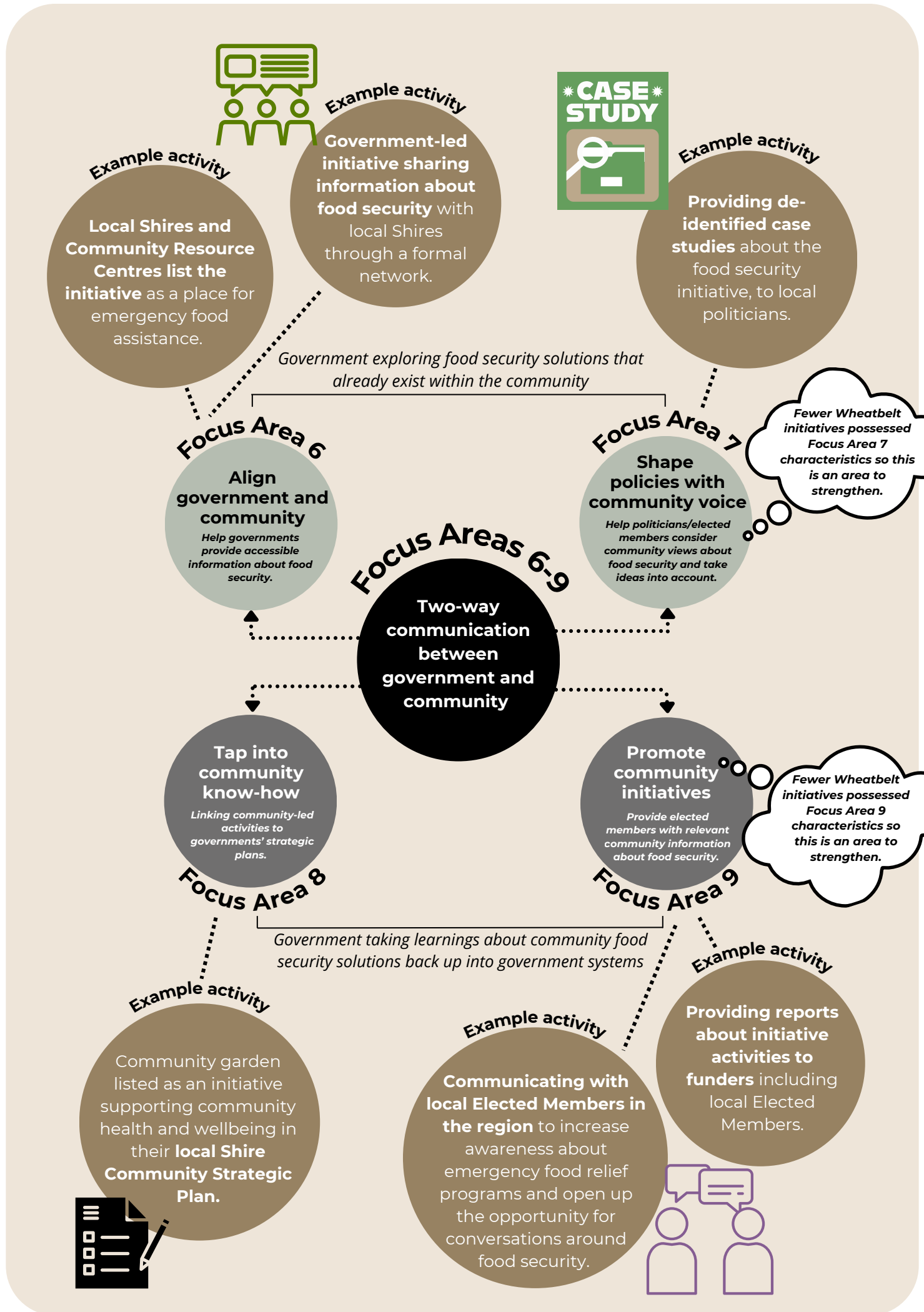
Figure 2: Wheatbelt food security systems change impact card. (Source: © 2023 Wicked Lab, © 2025 Eventide Systems. Tool for Systemic Change. <https://toolforsystemicchange.com>)

This impact card provides a visualisation of which systems change characteristics were most likely to be possessed by Wheatbelt food security initiatives in 2023. (Adapted from Godrich et al. (2025) [16]).



How Wheatbelt region initiatives are contributing towards food security systems change





Types of partnering organisations in the Wheatbelt region in 2023 [18]

32 

Non-government
or not-for-profit
organisations

11 

Businesses

6 

State government

6 

Community group

5 


Local government

1 

Federal government

1 

Education

1 

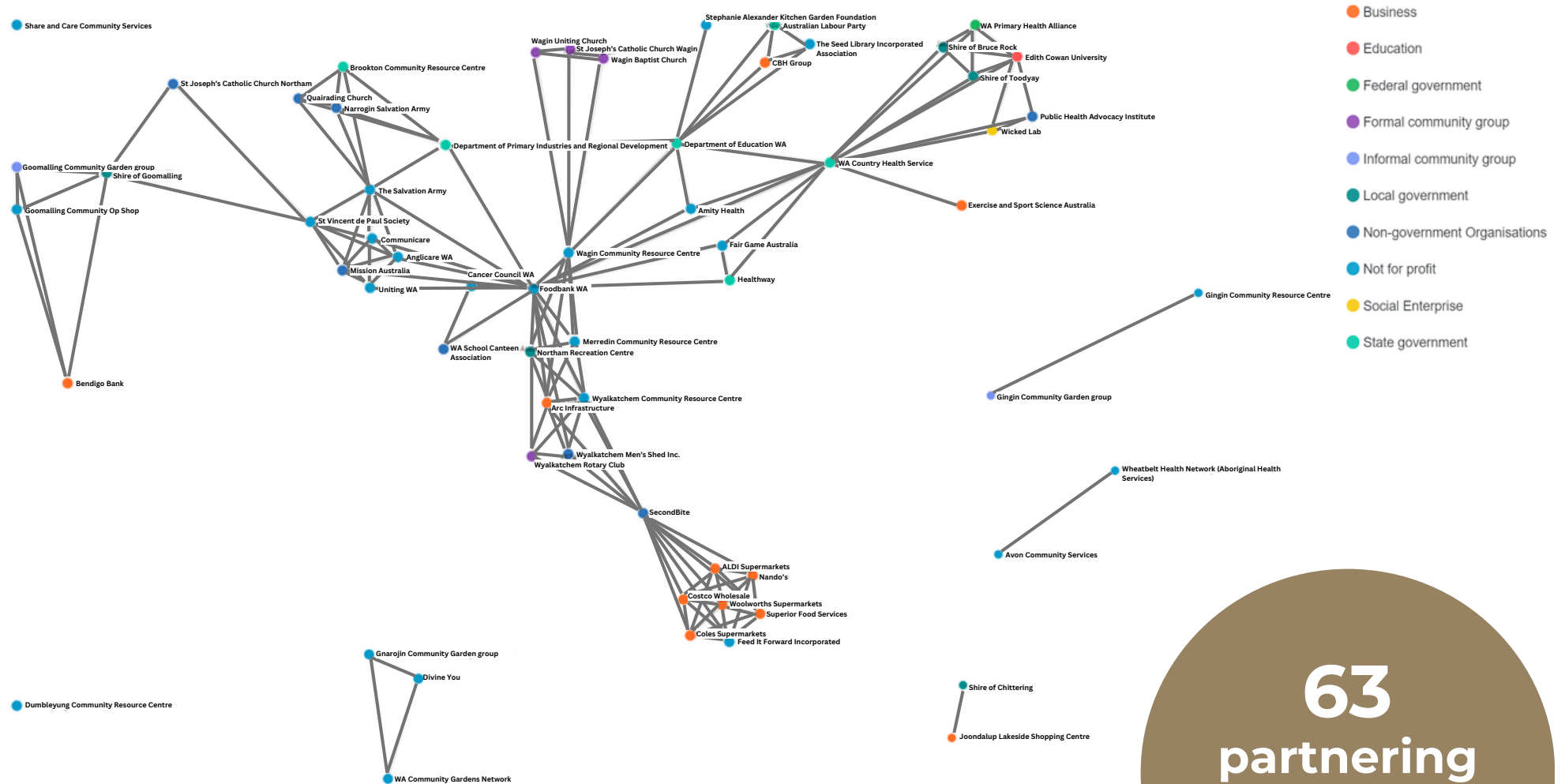
Social enterprise

Wheatbelt region partnership findings

- The Wheatbelt partnership map demonstrates a ‘**scattered fragments**’ model which indicates a siloed network in the early stages of development [19].
- **22 organisations were ‘hubs’** in the Wheatbelt network. These organisations connected with more than the average number of partners and were essential to spreading information throughout different parts of the network [19].
- **Two not-for-profit organisations** and **one state government organisation** were **critical for information sharing** [19].
- **38 organisations were connected components.** They used their partnerships to receive and share information throughout the network [19].
- **One local government organisation** was a **connecting node.** They were the connection between two partnership clusters [19].
- **Two organisations were unconnected** and they had no partnerships [19].

**See the next page for a visual representation of these findings.*

Wheatbelt partnership map



63
partnering
organisations

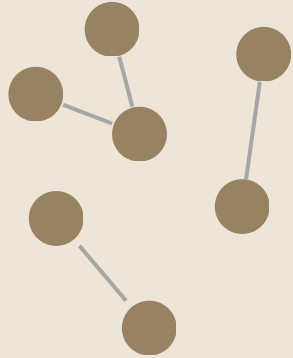
Figure 3. Wheatbelt Partnership Map. (Source: © 2023 Wicked Lab, © 2025 Eventide Systems. Tool for Systemic Change. <https://toolforsystemicchange.com>)

This partnership map shows all of the different partnerships and collaborations between the organisations working on food security within the Wheatbelt region in 2023. (Adapted from Godrich et al. (2026) [19]).

Partnership Typologies

The Wheatbelt partnership map demonstrates a 'scattered fragments' model.

Scattered fragments model



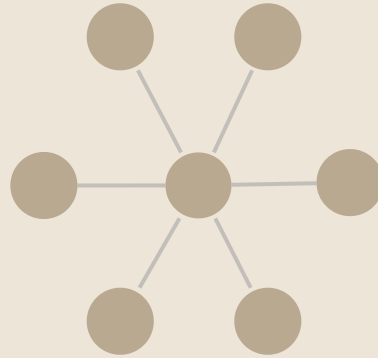
Characteristics:

- Multiple separate clusters of partners.
- No active leaders building network.

Suggestions to mature the Wheatbelt partnership network from a 'scattered fragments' model to a 'hub-and-spoke' model:

- Identify potential network weavers.
- Support unconnected nodes to connect into network.
- Develop inventory of partnering opportunities.

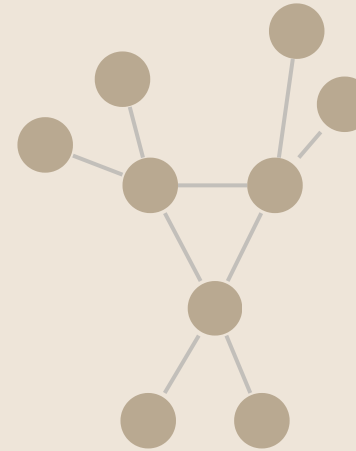
Hub-and-spoke model



Characteristics:

- Network weavers connect individuals/groups to create information flows.
- Should be temporary network type - power concentration in hub.

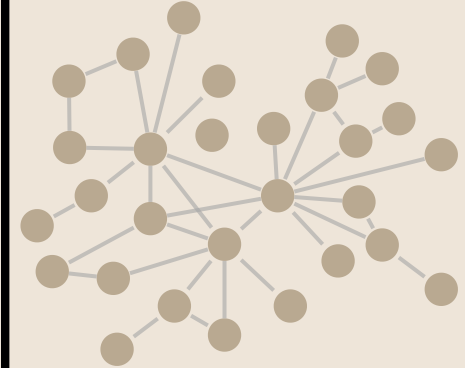
Multi-hub model



Characteristics:

- More than one hub.
- Multiple weavers connecting to each other.
- Short path lengths = fast information flow.

Core/periphery model



Characteristics:

- Central network core with strong ties.
- Periphery contains new network members, bridges outside of the network, actors/organisations spanning several communities.

Figure 4. Characteristics of network typologies and strategies to mature them. (Adapted from Godrich et al. (2026) [19], Krebs & Holley (2006) [20], Mohr (2016) [21] and Ehrlichman (2021) [22]).

Ways that Wheatbelt region organisations are working in partnership

Examples from initiatives across the Wheatbelt region:

Collaboration, coordinated action and capacity building [18]

Initiative leaders collaborated with other organisations working in the same field to coordinate service delivery. For example:

- A larger Perth-based organisation partnered with a local Wheatbelt initiative to increase emergency food relief reach.
- A food literacy program linked with relevant organisations to increase credibility and impact of their key messaging.



Funding and grants for program delivery [18]

Initiatives often received funding and grants for program delivery. Many initiatives received funding from multiple organisations at once. For example:

- A community bus that transported residents to large grocery stores was funded by the local Shire.
- A local government that provided an annual financial contribution to support the community garden.



On-ground program and service delivery [18]

Initiatives joined to support on-ground program delivery. For example:

- An initiative held their nutrition education program at local community hubs such as Community Resource Centres.
- An initiative that worked with the local Aboriginal Health Workers in the region to incorporate culturally appropriate practices, understand what is working and what needs to be changed.





Physical and human resources [18]

Initiatives regularly shared physical and human resources. For example:

- A community garden located on Shire land and supported by volunteers.

Food and financial donations [18]

Some initiatives received food donations. For example:

- A food relief initiative received food donations from larger not-for-profits and were funded by larger businesses.



New initiative ideas and actions for the Wheatbelt region

Community and interest holder ideas for new initiatives and actions needed in the Wheatbelt region to better support food security systems change [23].



Online food shops

Free internet and education for online shopping

Bulk group shopping to eliminate delivery fees



Government involvement

Government pays for water and land for people to grow their own food

Regional food security plan

Wheatbelt community garden network



Food security plans and networks

People have their own plots

Providing people with food that meets their taste preferences



Community gardens and food hampers

Using extra produce grown locally

Regenerative agriculture

Create surplus drop off points for farmers



Sustainable farming practices and waste reduction



Food education programs

Education on best before dates

Seasonal growing

Increase food growing skills

Recommendations from the Food Community project findings



Recommendations to support the current food security system to shift towards a more effective way of working [16]:

- Wheatbelt food security initiative leaders could **strengthen their food security impact by enhancing Focus Area 7 attributes**, in the following ways:
 - **Engaging government representatives** in program activities or speaking with them about their food initiative, **to increase their understanding of how it supports food security.**
 - **Sharing community member views about food security with government representatives.**
 - **Supporting government representatives to talk about food security** in a way that community members can understand and use.
 - **Undertaking government advocacy, to get food security on their agenda and actioned.**
- Wheatbelt food security initiative leaders could **strengthen their food security impact by enhancing Focus Area 9 attributes**, in the following ways:
 - **Advocating to local, state or federal government about addressing food security.**
 - Ensuring their **initiative is listed on the Food Community website ‘Initiative Directory’** – as a project register relevant to the local government area.
- **Food security initiatives should consider the ‘big picture’ of food security** (including broader political, social, technological, economic, national and international forces that affect local food security efforts) when sharing information with their networks and undertaking food security activities.
- Support **better collaborations between government and community organisations.**



Recommendations to strengthen WA regions’ partnership networks [18, 19]:

- **Organisations should identify and document (through adaptable formal partnership agreements) clear partnership purposes, roles, and actions.**
- If desired, **the two unconnected organisations should be supported to connect into their partnership network.** This could be achieved through creating a bank of region-based partnership opportunities e.g. the Food Community website (www.foodcommunity.com.au) and interagency networking groups.
- **The Wheatbelt region network should be supported to shift across the network stages.** E.g. by connecting organisations, increasing collaboration on small food security projects, bringing in new organisations, and implementing ways to share information.

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