



Grow Back Better

**Our Food Future's 10-point recovery
plan in response to COVID-19**

May 2020





A word from Mayor Guthrie

Since Guelph and Wellington County won the Smart Cities Challenge and received \$10 million in federal funding in 2019, we've been working hard to meet our goals of increasing access to food in our communities, supporting food producers, and reimagining how we find value in waste. In recent months, COVID-19 has drastically changed our landscape, and challenged us to be agile and innovative in how we meet our community's complex and evolving needs. I'm proud to say that we've risen to the occasion. In the midst of this unprecedented public health crisis, we have redirected our attention to addressing food insecurity and economic instability head on. Grow Back Better is the plan our community needs to help us get through this crisis, not only for today, but in the weeks and months to come. The new programs and services outlined in the plan will allow us to support the people who need it most, and will help make our community stronger and more resilient for the future.

Mayor Cam Guthrie
City of Guelph

A word from Warden Linton

A year ago, the County and the City were awarded \$10 million dollars from the Government of Canada for our ambitious circular food economy initiative. A lot has changed in the last year. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our way of life. Access to affordable, nutritious food and supporting local food producers and businesses is going to be even more critical as we continue to navigate through, and recover from, this pandemic. Collectively, we agree that we need to shift our priorities and focus on supporting social and economic recovery efforts that fall within the longer term goals of the Our Food Future initiative. By allocating \$1.6 million in Federal Smart Cities funding over the next 18 months, we will continue to support our residents, community partners and businesses.

Warden Kelly Linton
County of Wellington



Grow Back Better: Our Food Future's 10-point recovery plan

In January 2020, we officially launched Our Food Future — Guelph-Wellington's ambitious initiative to create Canada's first circular food economy. Since March, COVID-19 has deeply impacted the ways people live, work and care for others in this community. The pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated many of the system-level challenges Our Food Future aims to resolve — from food insecurity for vulnerable residents to supply/demand mismatches and more.

In these challenging times, we need to find ways to support essential workers, vulnerable populations and businesses. Today, the Our Food Future's vision, goals and projects are more important and relevant than ever. By creating a sustainable and resilient food system that improves lives today, we are laying the foundation for an inclusive, green recovery from this current crisis and better positioning the community to respond to future emergencies.

To provide direct and immediate support to Guelph-Wellington's food system and our many collaborators as they shift from crisis response to recovery, we developed a 10-point recovery plan to guide our programming over the next 18 months. With Grow Back Better, no elements of the original proposal are being removed — just reprioritized or restructured to respond to the evolving landscape.

Grow Back Better will leverage \$1.6 million in funding from Infrastructure Canada's Smart Cities Challenge to address three core priorities:

Increasing access to affordable, nutritious food

1. Emergency Food Relief — immediate food distribution
2. Supporting vulnerable residents — identifying needs and coordinating action
3. Get Growing! — Urban Agriculture

Supporting new and existing food businesses

4. Seeding Our Food Future — micro-grant program
5. Launch Harve\$t Impact Social Finance Fund
6. Business Tools and Services for Food Sector to Reduce Waste

Taking action to strengthen regional food system resiliency

7. Connecting Food Producers and Consumers — accessing local markets online
8. Enabling Distribution and Delivery Models for Online Food Delivery
9. Leveraging Food System Data to Help Our Partners Innovate and Respond to the Changing Market
10. Community Steering Committee — Food Resiliency Table



Increasing access to affordable, nutritious food

1. Emergency Food Relief – immediate food distribution

The SEED's Emergency Food Home Delivery Program

The SEED—a community food project of the Guelph Community Health Centre—is rapidly shifting its programs to give those most impacted by COVID-19 immediate access to nutritious food. By leveraging technology, transforming their supply systems and mobilizing a community of cooks and delivery options, the SEED's goal is to distribute 100,000 nutritious food boxes between April and October (1200–4000 food boxes per week) including fresh foods, frozen meals and shelf-stable goods free of charge to community members in need via contact-free home delivery. Collaborations are key. The SEED is working with the University of Guelph, the YMCA–YWCA of Guelph and many other partners to produce frozen meals and coordinate distribution and delivery.

Total funding: \$90,000

Launch: Underway, scaling up

Harve\$t Impact Community Donation Platform

To address direct food and logistical costs for the SEED's Emergency Food Home Delivery Program, the Harve\$t Impact Fund, led by 10C, will launch a new online community funding platform in May 2020 with a goal of raising \$100,000+ in cash donations as part of the SEED's \$1-million+ fundraising target. Our Food Future will match contributions up to \$90,000 and provide communications support to encourage donations. The funds raised will benefit several local emergency food agencies and help rapidly scale up emergency food provisioning to Guelph–Wellington's most vulnerable residents. Fundraising activities will be coordinated to augment campaigns already underway including the United Way/Guelph Community Foundation's COVID-19 Community Response and Recovery Fund.

Total funding: Goal of raising \$100,000+ in matching community donations;

Launch: Early May 2020

2. Supporting vulnerable residents – identifying needs and coordinating action

One of the foundations of Our Food Future is using data to work smarter and improve community outcomes. To this end, we will work with community partners to collect information about barriers to accessing affordable, nutritious food during the COVID-19 pandemic. This data will help us identify systemic challenges and leverage best practices to provide supports to residents who:



- face financial constraints,
- are self-isolating due to COVID-19 risk factors (e.g., age or underlying health conditions) and lack social supports,
- lack access to transportation, and
- live in remote or rural areas.

The Smart Cities Office, Toward Common Ground, and Our Food Future’s Nutritious Food workstream and Technology and Data workstream will collaborate on this project. All data collection, analysis and sharing practices will ensure the privacy of Guelph-Wellington residents is protected.

Total Funding: Existing resources

Launch: Underway

3. Get Growing! – Urban Agriculture

COVID-19 has inspired many community members to think about producing and consuming more local food—including growing their own in residential and community gardens. To support this movement, Our Food Future is building on existing urban agriculture programs to help residents in our city and towns take action on food security, get their “green thumbs” dirty and grow their own food.

Gardening at Home

Community members looking to grow their own food have varied interests and resources. Some will have access to large backyards. Others are limited to a small balcony. Meanwhile, the mobility, tastes and dietary needs differ from one person to the next. Embracing this diversity, Our Food Future will take a community-led approach that includes partners, community organizations and local suppliers. Together, we’ll safely distribute a series of gardening kits that include soils, seeds/seedlings and educational materials to help Guelph-Wellington residents produce food on their own patch of earth.

The first gardening kit, Kids Get Growing, will be launched jointly with YMCA-YWCA in May 2020. The kit will include educational resources, vegetable seeds and soils to help kids start their own home gardens. It will also provide materials to help connect budding gardeners to local gardening businesses and community resources.



We will be working with partners and not-for-profits in the urban agriculture space to develop future kits that could include:

- specialized vegetable kits for apartment dwellers,
- fruit tree saplings to expand urban orchards, and/or
- therapeutic and low-maintenance gardening kits for populations with limited mobility.

The intention is to provide all kits free of charge or at very low cost.

Total funding: Approximately \$25,000 in Smart Cities funding

Launch: May 2020

Urban Agriculture activation – a call for proposals

To incentivize larger community-led actions Our Food Future, in collaboration with 10C, will issue a call for proposals for projects that accelerate urban agriculture and its potential to increase awareness, access to food and local food production. Projects will align with other Our Food Future priorities related to sustainability, scalability and circularity.

Funding available

- \$ 70,000 for a visible high-impact community project that has a built-form component
- \$ 20,000 for a collaborative urban agriculture project that can scale community-wide
- \$ 2,000 each for five community projects or projects led by individuals that have shared community benefits embedded in their goals

Total funding: \$100,000 in Smart Cities funding and will seek to leverage an additional \$400,000 in public/private funding and in-kind contributions

Launch: June 2020, with a 2020-21 implementation window

Food from Home = Food for Home pilot

To support recent arrivals to the Guelph-Wellington community, the Food from Home = Food for Home pilot will use \$30,000 in Smart Cities funding to help new Canadians access and learn how to grow food from their home country.

Total funding: \$30,000

Launch: May/June 2020



Supporting new and existing food businesses

4. Seeding Our Food Future – micro-grant program

Working with Innovation Guelph's Circular Food Economy iHub, we will launch a new micro-grant program: Seeding Our Food Future. This program will provide non-repayable grants of up to \$5,000 to help individuals, businesses and social enterprises across the Guelph and Wellington County to promote a green economic recovery and enhance food security by:

- starting a new business that supports the sustainability and circularity of the food system,
- pivoting an existing food system business to a more circular/sustainable business model,
- implementing circular practices, systems or processes in businesses that are part of the food system,
- creating or pivoting to a business model that supports inclusive access to nutritious food,
- enabling businesses that are part of the food system to effectively use data and technology, or
- initiating a collaboration that contributes to a circular food economy.

Seeding Our Food Future will target 40 new and existing businesses, for a total investment of \$200,000. In addition to the micro-grant, selected companies will receive up to 30 hours of expert advice and access to a 12-week virtual course to build resiliency, sustainability and circularity (an additional value of \$6,000 value for each company). Partners from the City and County will help deliver, support and coordinate the program. These partners include Innovation Guelph, Provision Coalition, 10C, Wellington-Waterloo Community Futures, Business Centre Guelph-Wellington, LaunchIt Minto and the John F. Wood Centre at University of Guelph.

Recipients may also be able to access up to \$10,000 in interest free loans through Harve\$t Impact Fund (\$300,000 in total funding for loans).

Online applications will be available in May with the target of announcing initial grant recipients in June/July. Meanwhile, Our Food Future has an application for \$5 million in federal funding with FedDev to develop a further phase of the micro-grant program.



Total funding: \$200,000 for micro-grants, \$50,000 to support delivery partners and \$120,000 for business support/advisory services; \$300,000 leveraged for loans from local Community Futures Development Corporations

Launch: May 2020

5. Launch Harve\$t Impact Social Finance Fund

The Harve\$t Impact Fund is a core pillar of the Our Food Future initiative, focused on driving innovation to increase food security and circular business models in the community. To address immediate community needs and lay the foundation for a green recovery, we will accelerate the launch of the Harve\$t Impact Fund.

Beginning in June 2020, businesses and collaborations, including not-for-profits will be able to apply for \$10,000 in 0% financing. These will be structured as social investments to support early-stage innovations and will leverage \$300,000 in funds made available in collaboration with local Community Futures Development Corporations. An application process and business criteria will be available in late May.

Next, Harve\$t Impact will leverage \$500,000 from the Smart Cities initiative to pursue additional private and institutional investments, for a capitalization target of \$2 million. With the early launch of the fund, there will be an immediate call for private and institutional investment partners. The application process is targeted to launch in fall 2020, with investments in businesses and social enterprises beginning to roll out in January 2021.

Total funding: \$500,000

Launch: Applications Fall 2020; investments beginning January 2021

6. Business Tools and Services for Food Sector to Reduce Waste

Through Our Food Future, Provision Coalition is providing direct assessments and consulting services for regional food businesses, helping them increase efficiency, circularity and profits while reducing operating costs and waste. As part of our plan to promote green economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, Provision Coalition will provide services to eight businesses: three small enterprises, three medium enterprises and two large enterprises. Selected businesses will come from a cross-section of industry categories and will be split between Guelph and Wellington County. Key learnings from these assessments — including avenues to reduce waste and utilize waste as a resource — will be promoted to help other food businesses adopt circular practices in their operations.

Total funding: \$250,000

Launch: Applications begin May 2020



Taking action to strengthen regional food system resiliency

7. Connecting Food Producers and Consumers – accessing local markets online

COVID-19 has disrupted many of the in-person channels local food producers depend on, including farmers' markets. To support local food producers, the Smart City Office will be partnering with the [Open Food Network](https://openfoodnetwork.ca) (openfoodnetwork.ca), an open source, not-for-profit e-commerce platform, to help farmers' markets across Guelph and Wellington County create online sales channels. The Smart City Office is making funding available to access this online platform for all interested Guelph-Wellington markets and vendors.

The Guelph Farmers' Market is aiming to launch its online market channel with participating vendors in mid-May. Our Food Future is working with Wellington County markets to determine their online approach over the coming weeks.

Total funding: \$10,000 to allow free access for 2020 for interested Guelph and Wellington markets

Launch: May 2020

8. Enabling Distribution and Delivery Models for Online Food Delivery

Working with partners, Our Food Future will support the development and testing of new distribution and delivery models that meet the needs of producers, businesses and consumers and align with evolving Public Health guidelines. Key components of online delivery include:

- online vendor shops,
- online demand aggregation platforms,
- common packing/distribution facilities, and
- last-mile distribution models, including approaches for home delivery and pick-up.

This project will seek to build on novel approaches currently underway in our Junction neighbourhood pilot. Our Food Future will also pursue additional funding from OMAFRA to help develop and scale a distribution pilot for local food producers.

Total funding: \$60,000

Launch: Neighbourhood pilot Summer 2020



9. Leveraging Food System Data to Help Our Partners Innovate and Respond to the Changing Market

Data Collaboration Platform

Our Food Future is currently funding a regional food flow and waste study aimed at identifying opportunities to grow the food sector and increase circularity. As more data on our food system becomes available, partners will look for opportunities to build on the resulting insights in order to address immediate needs.

We're also in the process of launching a data collaboration platform that will provide access to datasets related to food and waste from a range of regional partners. Through the platform, we will be able to share data, maps and stories; develop insights; publicize results; and flag opportunities across the region. In response to COVID-19, the initial use cases we focus on will pivot towards identifying immediate gaps.

Funding: \$150,000, in partnership and with matching funding Alectra GRE&T Centre
Launch: Summer 2020

Waste as a Resource

Planning is underway for finding new ways to turn waste streams into new business opportunities and finding the most cost-effective way to return waste into the natural regeneration cycle while reducing negative environmental impacts. One such project, leveraging combined data on organic business waste, the Recycling Council of Ontario in collaboration with the City of Guelph and Wellington County is proposing a pilot program that will test regional food waste collection for businesses and institutions that are currently underserved. The project aims to accelerate circularity, improve the collection/rescue of edible food, and source separated organic waste to increase local composting capacities. Increasing organic waste collection from the business community will reduce carbon emissions while increasing landfill diversion and the production of valuable compost. The pilot will also facilitate partnerships between businesses that generate edible food with vulnerable residents that are experiencing food insecurity.

Funding: Green Municipal Fund application
Launch: Fall 2020/Winter 2021



10. Community Steering Committee Food Resiliency Table

To assist economic recovery efforts, we will convene our Community Steering Committee to create a Food Resiliency Table. This group will support the development of a resilient regional food system that contributes to a green recovery from COVID-19. This group will include residents and key collaborators from the Our Food Future network. Together, they will gather intelligence on the regional agri-food sector, develop recommendations or programs to support short-term and mid-term needs, and champion this 10-point recovery plan.

Reporting and measuring success

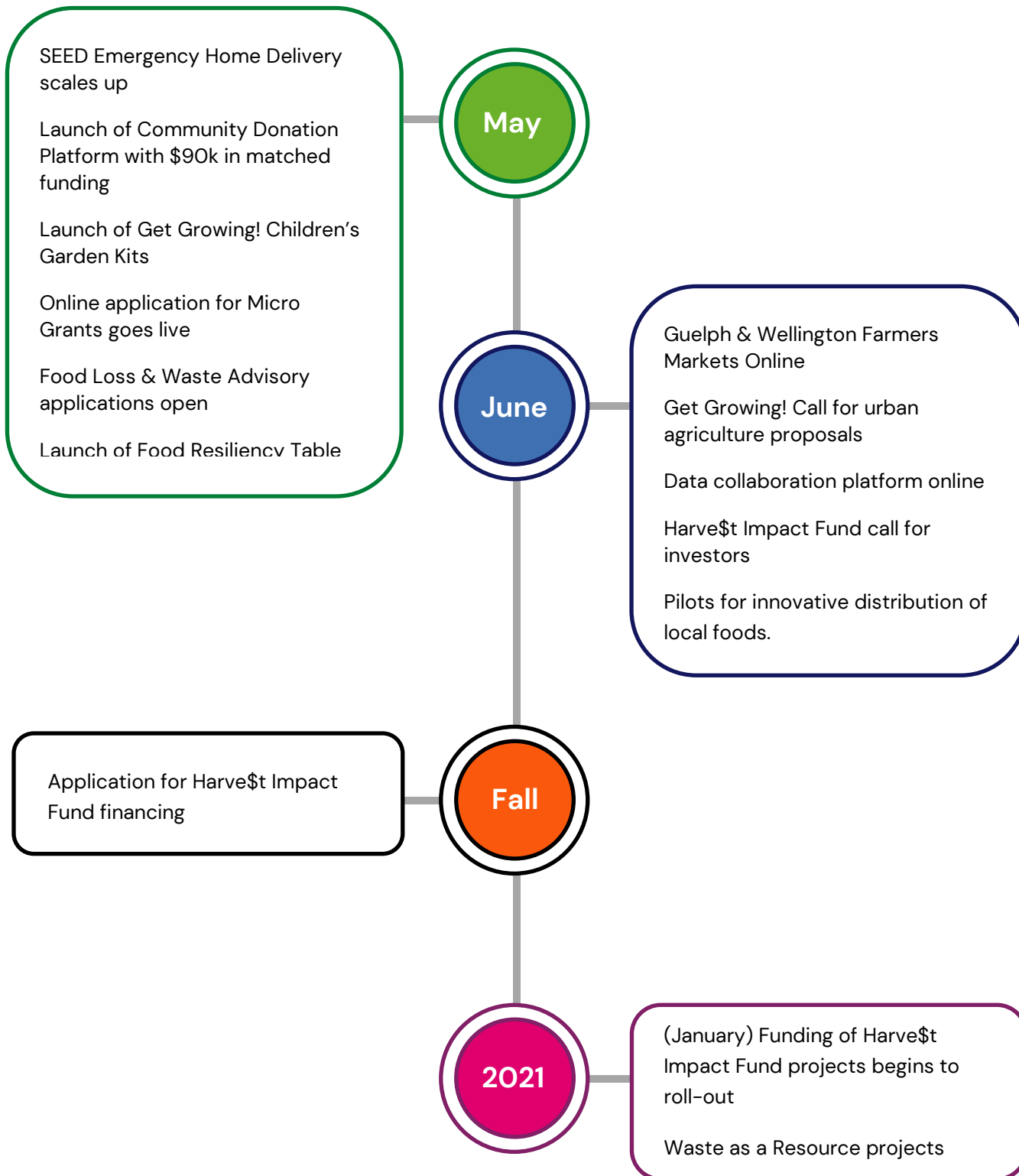
Although Grow Back Better shifts the short-term focus of Our Food Future, the core success metrics will remain the same, and projects led by collaborators are continuing. By 2025, we will:

- increase access to affordable, nutritious food by 50 per cent,
- launch 50 new circular businesses or collaborations, and
- increase circular economic revenues where “waste” becomes a resource by 50 per cent.

The Smart Cities Office is also participating in established City and County economic recovery tables and will report periodically on the progress of our 10-point plan to those tables.



Implementation timeline





For more information

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