



# "NUTRITION, EQUITY, AND JUSTICE" SCENARIO SUMMARY

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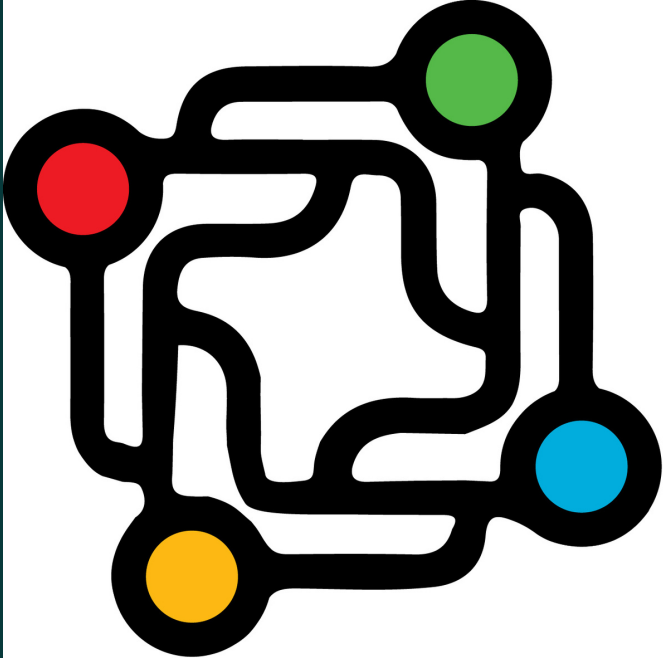
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LEVERAGE POINTS

**FLINT**

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# INTRODUCTION

Building on four years of participatory data collection with collaborators in Flint, the research team of the Flint Leverage Points Project (FLPP) hosted a scenario planning workshop in October 2022 at the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan. A scenario planning workshop is a place where community members and researchers work together to co-create scenarios for the future, based on previously community defined values and leverage points. A scenario is a narrative description of actionable pathways towards an equitable, sustainable and just food system in Flint, 20 years from now (2042).

This document summarizes one of the four scenarios that were co-created during the workshop. Each scenario uses a different Big Vision, or key finding from the research project as the starting point. The Big Visions is illustrated as an infographic and is followed by a summary of the co-created scenario. Here, we present the "Nutrition, Equity and Justice" scenario that was developed based on the "Emergency Response Loop" Big Vision.

To access the full report documenting the summary of all four scenarios, each scenario individually, or the workbook we used for workshop facilitation visit:

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/flintfood/resources-and-publications/scenarios-for-the-future-of-the-flint-food-system-visions-for-2042>

## Background on the Flint Leverage Points Project (FLPP)

The Flint Leverage Points Project (2018-2023) was a collaboration between community partners and researchers to find ways to change the food system in Flint so that it is more equitable, healthy, and sustainable. The Community Foundation of Greater Flint (CFGF) partnered with Michigan State University (MSU) to conduct this research. We were advised by a Community Consultative Panel (CCP) comprised of representatives from the Flint community who work with food in Flint. We conducted research on the food system in Flint (including production, distribution, preparing, eating and recycling food) to find improvements that can benefit Flint residents. We identified strengths and opportunities within the food system that could be built upon. This project produced an analysis of how community partners and other stakeholders can intervene in the Flint food system to create positive change.

This report is part of that work: an overview of four actionable scenarios.

For more on the Flint Leverage Points Project, and project results visit: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/flintfood>

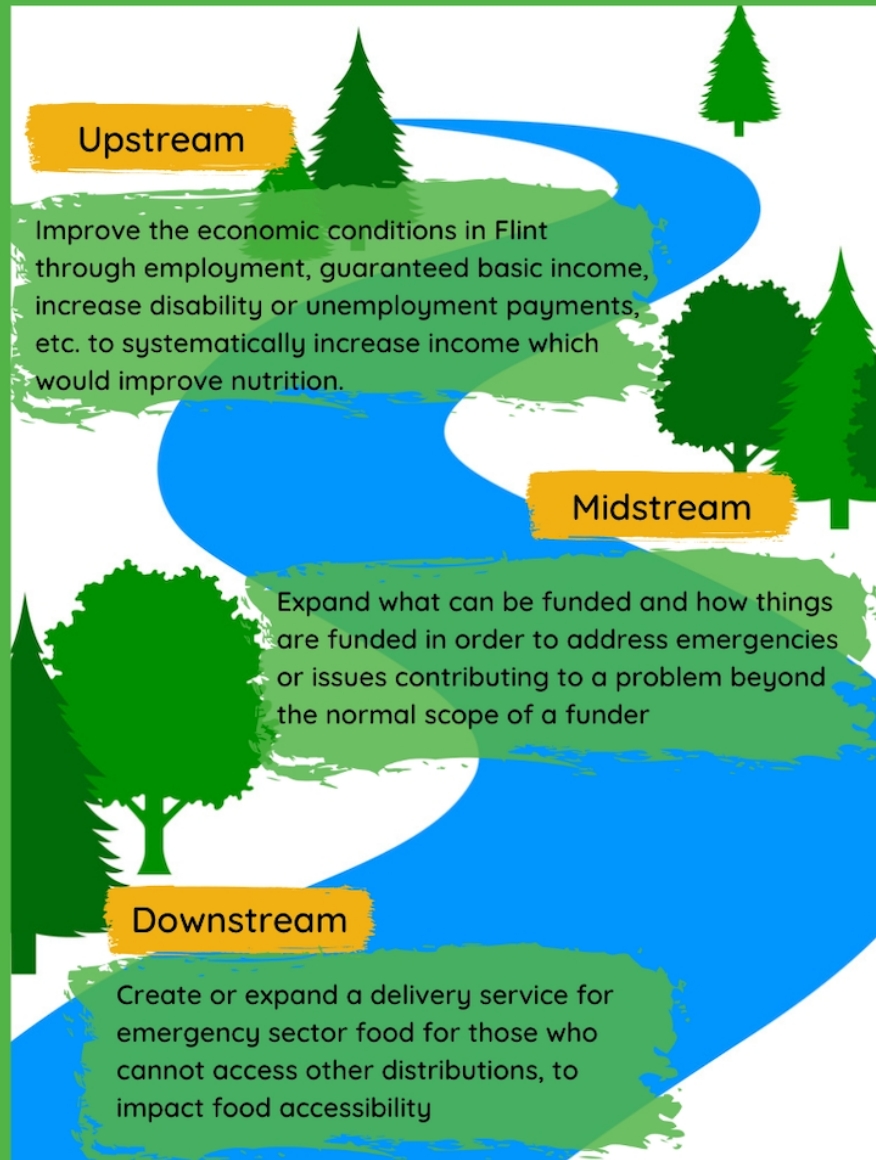


# BIG VISION: EMERGENCY RESPONSE LOOP

## "Emergency Response" Loop

**Desirable Future:** Food system changes reduce the need to access emergency food services like food banks and soup kitchens for greater food independence, and resident food equity.

Example leverage points defined by community members are listed below. Join the conversation--detailed lists of more leverage points can be found at: [www.canr.msu.edu/FlintFood](http://www.canr.msu.edu/FlintFood)



Each scenario uses a different Big Vision as the starting point: a community defined desirable future with example leverage points. Big Visions represent key findings from this research. For a full list of participant generated leverage points associated with this Big Vision visit

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/flintfood/resources-and-publications/key-lessons-synthesizing-research-results>

**Currently:** The food system is focused on supplying emergency food, rather than preventing need, due to current high demand and needs of community.

### **Definitions:**

**Upstream:** Policies, laws, or regulations that improve community conditions, creating system-wide changes

**Midstream:** Barriers that need to be addressed in order for the system to evolve; and/or supports individual social needs

**Downstream:** Addresses individual needs and crisis management

# "NUTRITION, EQUITY, AND JUSTICE"

**Big Vision:** This scenario used the "Emergency Response Loop" vision and associated leverage points as a starting point. Use of quotation marks indicates a direct quote from workshop participants.

## Summary of "Nutrition, Equity and Justice" scenario

In Flint, there is a need to lift people out of poverty and out of the trauma caused by numerous crises (e.g., GM closures, Water Crisis, COVID-19). Lots of programs come and go, but still, they are "only scratching the surface on something that could be bigger". Therefore, there is a need to foster collaboration across the different groups and organizations working in Flint to achieve bigger, systemic results. To address this issue, this scenario proposes the creation of a working group (or several working groups) in the spirit of authentic collaboration. One of the participants describes authentic collaboration in the following way: "if you authentically collaborate, you don't give up ownership of anything. You leverage your ownership with somebody else's ownership to achieve a greater result." Although framed as a working group, this scenario is focused on using it as a starting point to go beyond and foster a movement and the creation of a community gathering point. The group summarizes the scenarios in the following way: "We gather the community in spirit of authentic collaboration to ensure nutrition, equity and justice across the underserved. The efforts must be informed and co-created by persons experiencing food insecurity and food injustice. We are going to invite people to be a part of the solution by building trust and capacity into actionable steps towards shared promising practices."

## Values: Community priorities that guide the scenario

This scenario centers nutrition, equity, and justice as foundational values that underlie all the components of the scenario. Based on this, the group decided that their scenario would encompass all the values that are noted in the report (p. 4) in a transversal way: education, community empowerment, quality of life, partnerships, nutritious foods, affordable foods, available foods.

**LOCATION:** Flint area, Flint Township, Genesee County

## Short-term actions: What steps should be integrated into this scenario in the next 0-10 years to help Flint reach this Big Vision?

Workshop participants frame this by emphasizing the starting point for enacting any action is building trust. In Flint, people are cynical due to the number of programs that come and go, while problems persist. To build trust, it is necessary to practice active listening, follow up, make that extra phone call or visit, and make yourself available. Further, it is also necessary to center the voices of Flint residents in co-creation roles to propose solutions, instead of advisory roles.

# "NUTRITION, EQUITY, AND JUSTICE"

Short-term actions, cont.: What steps should be integrated into this scenario in the next 0-10 years to help Flint reach this Big Vision?

## Actions at the municipal level

- Kicking off authentic collaboration: Form a working group and timeline. This working group needs "consistent learning sessions with actionable or accompanying action" with varying themes (e.g., nutrition education). During weekly learning sessions, participants identify cases of success, discuss how to leverage them, and foster collaboration. Inclusion is essential, so the learning sessions are open to all. The working group will focus on "learning together and we take action together."
- Training: To ensure authentic collaboration, local universities will offer cultural competency training. This will train working group members to exercise empathy to enable meaningful dialogue and partnership. The working group must be an inclusive, safe space for all.
- Coordinating actions at the municipal level: Convene food system stakeholders to connect different people and organizations. Working as a collective it "becomes easier to get large buckets of money instead of these little tiny logic model, grounded" type of grants. A participant explained, "if you can't coordinate things, what's happening in neighborhoods or in even by census track or zip code or whatever, it becomes repetitive and wasteful."
- Expanding and changing grant-based funding: Funders need different modes of evaluation that consider outcomes not easily measurable, like building capacity and changing people's relationship to food. Grants must focus on work "with humans," rather demographics (e.g., teens or elderly). For funding sustainability, long-term grants (e.g., 10-years), instead of the usual 4 years, will help organizations "tired of chasing money [and]...pilot programs."
- Eliminating stigma and building dignity: Access to emergency food services should be a dignified experience, free of 'hoops'. Residents need access to what they want to eat, while receiving education on recipes and ways to prepare new, unfamiliar foods.
- Food as medicine approach: A holistic approach towards health is required to alleviate physical and mental health issues associated with diets. A food as a medicine approach also supports the mental health service needs resulting from several crises impacting residents.
- Employment workshops: Provide training for people to access paid positions.
- Scaling out: Further leverage ongoing successful efforts and use them as inspiration. Provide training to expand, share out and invite other people to join.

## Actions at the federal level

- Gather stakeholders to discuss and implement advocacy to change harmful policies and create new, beneficial policies

# "NUTRITION, EQUITY, AND JUSTICE"

Long-term actions: What steps should be integrated into this scenario in the next 11-20 years to help Flint reach this Big Vision?

This scenario involves allowing room for the emergence of novel actions, initiatives, projects etc. Therefore, the group decides that they would not like to be prescriptive towards long-term actions. Rather, the scenario focuses on the elements that are necessary for long-term actions, regardless of what those actions are. These include:

- Ensuring replenishing of the core team that carries the implementation of this scenario
- Building of institutional memory
- Providing paid positions and/or stipends to those involved that are fair
- Formalizing the work of scenario implementation "into an organization that's sustainable"

## RESOURCES AND STAKEHOLDERS

What resources are needed to complete these actions?

- Money
- Authentic, genuine commitment
- Community capital: human, social, political, natural, built, financial, cultural capital

Who should be involved? Which community partners and organizations are needed to do this work?

- Diverse community members: residents, families, adults, seniors, disabled people, people from marginalized groups
- Community clubs and neighborhood groups
- Food Policy Council
- Faith-based organizations
- Food emergency services (e.g., Food Bank)
- Business sector
- Philanthropic sector
- Schools
- Funders (e.g., Feeding America, GusNIP, American Heart Association, Michigan Health Endowment Fund)
- Universities

### Broader impacts

- Cascading effects on health
- Reducing racism and white privilege by working on equity and justice
- Breaking intergenerational poverty
- The scenario can serve as a model for authentic collaboration
- Increasing employment and education
- Reducing immediate concerns about food access



# "NUTRITION, EQUITY, AND JUSTICE"

## Pros and Cons

### Pros

- Transformative scenario that will bring about deep, systemic change
- Food security and nutritional justice
- Structural sustainability embedded within scenario
- Diverse participation of people and groups
- Opportunity for everyone to participate and have a say
- Time-wise: Scenario is mindful of spending time wisely and ensuring progress

### Cons

- Not everybody is going to be interested and show up
- Some people might want to collaborate only for their own self-interest
- Contrasting perceptions: since the scenario is open to everyone, there might be people involved with very different ideas
- Time-demanding: Scenario requires people's time and commitment

## CHANNELS

- Interconnected networks based on authentic collaboration
- Grounding the work in the big picture
- Moving to reconcile and heal
- Improved healthcare

### **SURPRISES:**

Natural Disasters

## WALLS

- Resistance to change, especially from stakeholders who profit from the current conditions of the food system
- Allies can switch and/or change their minds as the scenario evolves
- Intergenerational poverty and insecurities
- Fear of failure
- Fear of success

## Evaluation

- Characteristics of the evaluation: spatially explicit; formal and informal; emergent; quantitative and qualitative; culturally sensitive; usage of data that comes from experience
- Indicators: number of people using the food bank; quantity of incoming and outgoing food in the food bank

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**We thank you for your participation and ongoing work to improve the food system in Flint, Michigan!**

## Contact

For questions about the FLPP, contact Damon Ross (CFGF) at [dross@cfgf.org](mailto:dross@cfgf.org) or Chelsea Wentworth (MSU) at [wentwo21@msu.edu](mailto:wentwo21@msu.edu)



*Photo Credit: FLPP Research Participant*

## How to Cite this Report

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