



Connected Support, Resilient Community

Bethel Area Food Shelf Resiliency Task Force Final Report

Developing Resilient and Sustainable Support Systems in Bethel Area Food Shelf Region

Bethel Area Food Shelf Resiliency Task Force

Over the past 9 months, the Task Force has worked to better understand and address the root causes of food insecurity in BAFS’s 5-town service area, while strengthening the systems that support Bethel Area Food Shelf (BAFS) services.

The Task Force used a multi-pronged approach combining research, community engagement, and systems analysis to identify gaps and develop actionable recommendations.

The three-part *Warm Up With Neighbors* dinner series created space for residents to share experiences and identify priorities, while the *Community Needs Survey* gathered 259 household responses (representing approximately 10% of the regional population). Together, these inputs provided critical insight into lived experiences, service gaps, and opportunities for impact.

[View this email in your browser](#)

Warm Up With Neighbors - Part 2!



JOIN US FOR A

Community Dinner & NeighborGood Conversations

Share a delicious meal, connect with neighbors, and prioritize community needs, challenges, and opportunities.

Wednesday, February 18
6-8pm
at the White Church Community Hall in Bethel

Dinner is provided, and all are welcome—bring a dessert to share if you’d like!

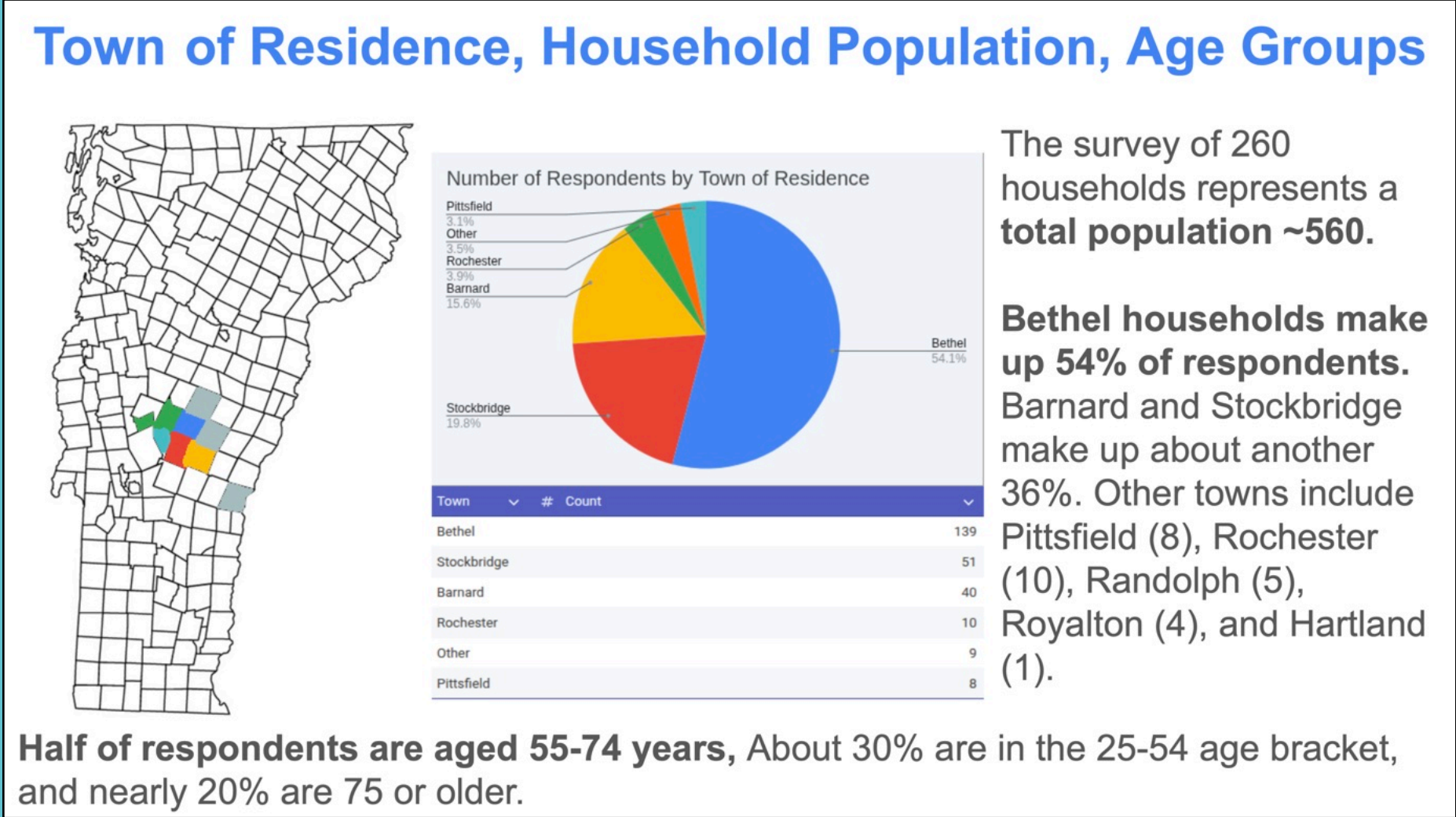
Hello Barnard, Bethel, Pittsfield, Rochester and Stockbridge Neighbors—

Thank you to everyone who joined our first *Warm Up With Neighbors* dinner in January! We heard powerful stories about the challenges of accessing enough food while balancing housing, work, transportation, child care, and health care.

At our second dinner on February 18, we’ll share what we learned at the January dinner, celebrate what’s working in our communities, identify gaps, and ask you to help prioritize the most urgent issues so we can collectively consider what actions to take.

If you haven’t yet, please take our 10-minute Community Needs Survey, and share it with all your neighbors! It’s another great way to share your perspective.

[TAKE OUR SURVEY!](#)



3 Working Groups

Guided by the goal of reducing food insecurity across the region, three Working Groups developed coordinated, community-informed recommendations.

The Regional Impact Working Group examined how financial tools—particularly the existing Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) and a potential Community Trust—could better support households and small businesses. Through research, stakeholder engagement, and review of peer models, the group identified opportunities to expand access to flexible, locally-controlled financial resources that can prevent crises and strengthen long-term resilience.

The Resource Mapping Working Group assessed how neighbors access information about available services and evaluated best practices for resource navigation. After reviewing local and statewide models, the group recommended strengthening collaboration with VT 211 while developing complementary, locally-responsive approaches to ensure information is accurate, accessible, and widely used.

The Internal Systems Working Group evaluated BAFS's operations, governance, staffing, and data systems to identify strengths and gaps. Drawing on internal consultation and peer learning from partner organizations, the group developed recommendations to improve efficiency, sustainability, and the organization's ability to meet growing demand.



Addressing food insecurity in the BAFS service area will require a coordinated, system-level approach that integrates financial tools, resource navigation, organizational capacity, and community engagement. These insights directly inform the recommendation to establish the NeighborGood Community Resource Hub as a central organizing structure for this work.



Resource Hub



BAFS Food Shelf



Community Nurse



Bethel Area Community Trust



Neighbors Helping Neighbors

At NeighborGood, we look out for one another, and if you —or someone you care about— needs extra support, you're not facing it alone. Our community is full of neighbors and local organizations who offer non-judgemental support with respect and understanding.

The NeighborGood Community Resource Hub will be a centralized, community-driven system to coordinate services, partnerships, and resource navigation across the region.

NeighborGood will:

- Serve as a highly visible, single point of access for neighbors seeking support, in person and online.
- Address root causes of food insecurity through wraparound services designed to ease pressure on food shelf resources by reducing other financial stressors such as utilities, housing, job loss, childcare, transportation challenges, health issues, etc.
- Help our neighbors who are “on the edge” overcome small financial shocks that can lead to food insecurity. No person in our community should have to choose between rent and food.
- Provide direct aid to the many households which fall between informal supports and formal programs, with limited options for flexible assistance.



NeighborGood envisions a welcoming place where residents in need of concrete support services can sit and talk with a local guide who is trained on the VT-211 database search system and familiar with unique local services which aren't listed with 211. This role requires a paid staff member who can match each individual's need and eligibility with the best programs available to help, and connect them to the right resources before their situation reaches crisis level. This is a “no wrong door” approach, and its success depends on following up and staying with each individual until their issue is alleviated. The NeighborGood navigator will also be responsible for maintaining/refining our list of local (non-211) resources on the NeighborGood website, and working with the Community Trust and Revolving Loan Fund to distribute funds where appropriate – such as paying a utility bill or providing a gas card.



[Order Online](#) [Donate](#) [BAFS Resource Hub](#) [Resilience Task Force](#)

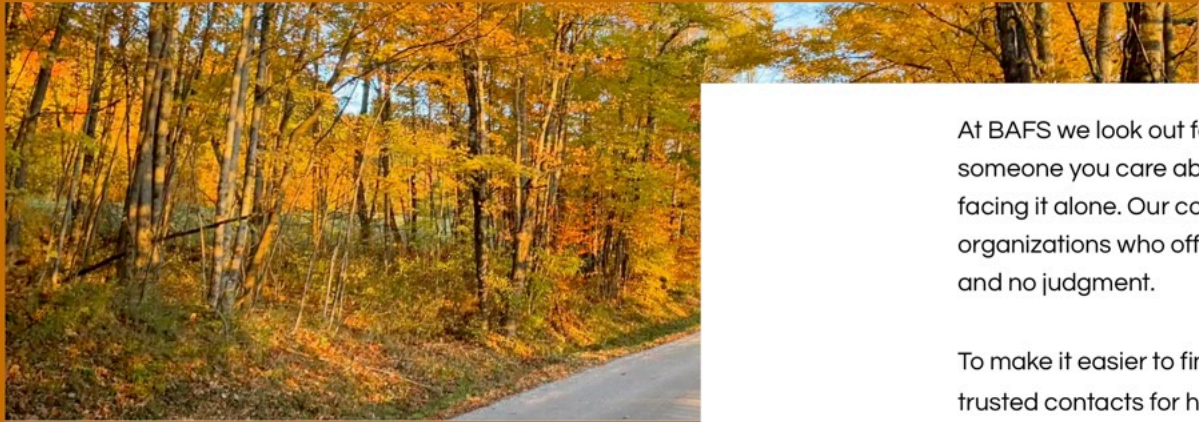


[Need Help with SNAP?](#)

Help is Just a Call Away.

Struggling to make rent after an unexpected car repair? Lost a job and finding it tough to afford groceries? Childcare costs rising or monthly bills piling up? The Resource Hub at BAFS is here for you.





At BAFS we look out for one another, and if you—or someone you care about—needs extra support, you're not facing it alone. Our community is full of neighbors and local organizations who offer support with respect, understanding, and no judgment.

To make it easier to find the help you need, we've gathered trusted contacts for housing, transportation, healthcare and mental health, childcare, and financial assistance. We're here to walk with you and help make things a little easier to navigate.

[Start with Vermont 211](#)

Vermont 211 is a free, confidential service of the United Ways of Vermont, making it



*GROW FOOD, FEED YOUR NEIGHBORS

GROW AN EXTRA ROW
Plant extra seeds and donate the produce. Commit now to grow an extra row!

LEARN AT THE COMMUNITY TEACHING GARDEN
It's next to the Bethel Rec. Center. Come learn how to get started and keep growing.

GET A FREE GARDEN KIT
New gardeners: Reserve your raised bed, soil, and seeds!

Got questions? Want a garden kit? Want to volunteer? How about a donation?
For teaching garden hours & more:
@gmail.com | 802-392-3060
y-aid group in Bethel, Vermont.



The other piece of the NeighborGood vision is to create a second paid position to focus on improving, enhancing and developing BAFS resilience through expanding donor relations, public communications and food-raising efforts that strengthen existing food shelf systems and programs. This role will be responsible for researching and writing grants, and developing new ways of bringing more food, and money for food, into the food shelf year round. This would include designing public events that will both showcase the work that BAFS is doing to encourage more residents to participate and support the work, and at the same time demonstrate that BAFS services are available to all community members who experience food insecurity on any level, without judgement or stigma.

Priority Actions & Next Steps

Launch NeighborGood Hub

Goal: Establish the NeighborGood Hub as a fully operational, community-driven system for coordinating services and resource navigation.

Key Actions:

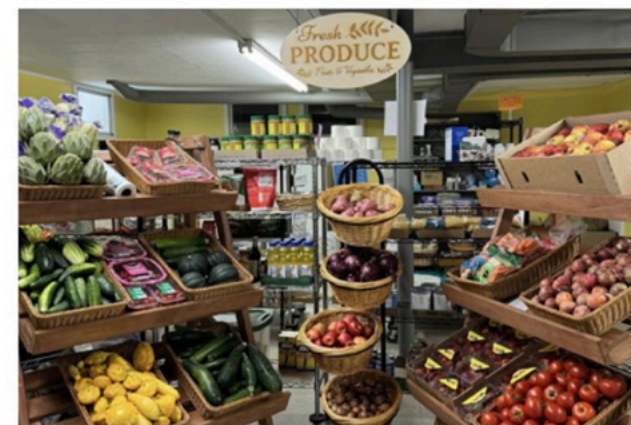
- Formalize partnerships with VT-211 and local service providers
- Establish web and in-person access points for resource navigation
- Recruit and train staff, volunteers and partner organizations
- Launch coordinated communication and outreach strategy

Success Indicators:

- Hub operational with clear access points
- 80%+ of local partners trained and engaged
- Increased utilization of services across the region



Resource Hub



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Resource Hub: To make it easier to find the help you need, we're here to walk with you and help make it a little easier to navigate the many local, regional and state services that can provide assistance with housing, transportation, healthcare and mental health, childcare, and financial support. Our NeighborGood Guide will work with you determine your eligibility for various services and financial aid, and connect you with the best programs for your specific needs.

BAFS Food Shelf: Here at Bethel Area Food Shelf (The Shelf), we know that sometimes all it takes to change the world is a little support. The Shelf is a volunteer-run organization supported by a consortium of Bethel area churches and public donations. We work to help alleviate food insecurity for our neighbors in Bethel, Barnard, Rochester, Stockbridge, and Pittsfield.

Bethel Area Community Trust: is a non-profit umbrella organization that empowers teams to carry out local projects to improve the quality of life in our community. We envision a healthy, vibrant and supportive community for people of all ages, identities, and walks of life.



Strengthen Financial Resilience & Economic Opportunity

Goal: Expand access to flexible financial tools that help households and small businesses avoid crisis.

Key Actions:

- Increase awareness and utilization of the Revolving Loan Fund
- Establish governance and structure for a Community Trust
- Secure initial capitalization (target: \$100,000+)
- Develop clear, accessible application processes

Success Indicators:

- Increased RLF utilization
- Community Trust established and operational
- Households being supported through loans and grants



Enhance BAFS Governance & Organizational Capacity

Goal: Strengthen organizational structure and internal systems to ensure sustainable operations and support future growth.

Key Actions:

- Clarify roles, responsibilities, and governance structure
- Develop succession planning and leadership pathways
- Document policies and standard operating procedures
- Improve data systems for tracking outcomes and impact

Success Indicators:

- Updated governance framework in place
- Documented procedures and roles
- Improved operational efficiency and continuity

Foster Community Collaboration & Engagement (Ongoing)

Goal: Strengthen partnerships and community participation to improve coordination and responsiveness.

Key Actions:

- Build at least five new partnerships with local and regional organizations
- Host quarterly community events and engagement opportunities
- Create ongoing feedback loops with community members
- Strengthen communication across organizations

Success Indicators:

- Increased partner participation
- Strong attendance at community events
- Improved awareness and access to services

Establish Replicable & Sustainable Practices

Goal: Document and share a model that supports and enables community-led initiatives in the Bethel area that expand equitable access to local, nutritious food, strengthen local food infrastructure, and reduce reliance on emergency food systems — advancing a resilient, sustainable, and non-charity-based approach to food security that can be sustained locally and adapted by other communities.

Key Actions:

- Document systems, processes, and lessons learned
- Develop a replication toolkit for other communities and Hunger Free VT's Food Security Networks
- Share findings with statewide partners
- Align with regional and statewide initiatives, including local and regional planning commissions.

Success Indicators:

- Toolkit completed and disseminated
- Interest or adoption by other communities
- Sustained funding and operational model in place