

## Submitted Proposal

**Organization: Green Wheel Food Hub**

**Requested Amount: \$100,000.00**

**Proposal Title: (FS - Feed the Hunger Fdn) Local Food Empowerment Hui**

**1. Describe your organization. What is your mission and who do you serve? Highlight some of the most notable successes your organization has had in the last several years.**

GreenWheel Food Hub is a fiscally sponsored project of Feed the Hunger Foundation. Our mission is to increase access to locally grown food in the state of Hawaii with a focus on low-income and mobility challenged communities. We do this by shaping and implementing direct impact services in the Hawaii community based on “human centered design,” a methodology that focuses on co-designing services with the community they serve.

We help existing systems of distribution (farmers markets, CSAs) to expand their markets to include low-income communities by including services like EBT acceptance (Electronic Benefits Transfer for USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Acceptance Program SNAP fka Foodstamps). We also design new systems of distribution that meet the needs of specific communities.

Increasing access to local food means supporting the people who grow our food. We integrate support for local farmers into the design of our services by coordinating with them to develop or enhance existing direct marketing opportunities.

Notable successes include:

Development and implementation of the Kaiser Permanente-funded pilot Little Green Market with Kanu Hawaii. Whole Foods also dedicated 5% of one day’s sales to fund the pilot work. During the first quarter of 2012, we created the systems necessary to launch pop-up markets in food deserts with EBT accepted on site. Creating the first farmers market on Oahu to be both 100% EBT compatible and offer strictly locally-grown produce was a result of this prep work. We also created and tested systems to poll communities to optimally match farm offerings with community needs. On April 15, 2012, we popped up our first market at Kalani Gardens, a 116 unit affordable housing development managed by EAH. A pre-market community survey helped farmers optimize produce selection and cooking demos. Over 125 residents attended the market and participated in interactive cooking demos including “cooking for kids” and a “\$5 meal” with market ingredients. We have since received inquiries from other affordable housing communities that want to participate in our program.

Design and coordination for establishing “Greenbucks” EBT Service Booth in farmers markets. We have been authorized by the USDA and are preparing to launch this service at the weekly Wednesday Honolulu Farmers Market. This service has taken ten months to design and develop. We developed the Greenbucks model with feedback from a long time social worker and her network of social service providers, as well and farmers market managers.

Design, development implementation of initial phase of GreenWheel Food Hub social enterprise venture by successfully debuting a line of added value products made from surplus and off-grade produce purchased from local farmers at Honolulu Farmers’ Market. This component is being developed as a social enterprise to ensure financial sustainability for the organization and to support the ongoing growth of these projects.

**2. Please describe your innovation. Include the practical steps involved to take the innovation from the idea phase to implementation.**

KaBOOM! transformed the creation of playgrounds through the creation of a structured, scalable model of best practices. This empowered other organizations to create over 2,000 playgrounds in some of the country’s most

underserved communities. Our innovation follows this model through the creation of the Local Food Empowerment Hui, a program geared to creating greater access to fresh locally grown food for low-income communities. This program is comprised of both offline and online components that inform and are shared through a series of PlayBook guides, designed to help organizations accomplish:

1. EBT Acceptance: Farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and other farm produce delivery methods for low-income communities to accept EBT payments. This requires a combination of testing hardware, software, and documenting best practices to make it more convenient for organizers to adopt service.
2. Developing Customized Farm to Community systems: specialized for low-income and mobility-challenged communities. Guide community organizations through a process to determine the most efficient and convenient model for their own communities. Assessment factors include: produce needs, mobility challenges, payment models, level of volunteer commitment, strategies for sustainability. How to develop optimal vendor mixes, outreach, marketing, and vendor relations to ensure an economically viable and demand driven market.
3. Peer Support. Serve as a hub to educate, connect, and support a learning community centered around increasing access and consumption of fresh, local produce in food deserts and other disadvantaged communities. This involves creating, leading and fostering the hub including the lead role in content creation.

We have already pioneered the above processes and our funding request will allow our efforts to be refined in other Hawaii communities, and captured into PlayBook resources in our Local Food Empowerment Hui website.

Our step by step process for building this service includes:

1. Publishing best practices for farmers markets, CSA programs, and customized farm to community local food delivery systems to accept EBT.
2. Create "PlayBooks" in both interactive online, printed and video formats. These PlayBooks will not only be informational but also practical, including forms, schedules, checklists, contacts, government requirements, and video demonstrations.
3. Community outreach to promote the PlayBooks and through parties targeted to scale up the program including SNAP outreach, community and health organizations, farms, and affordable housing complexes.
4. Seed the movement by working directly with 3 community food projects. Funding will help support a \$1000 startup budget and direct training and support. Using a Pay it Forward model, these organizations are expected to mentor another project once their project is established.

**3. Please explain how your innovation is a clear improvement over what already exists or what is currently meeting the needs of your clients, constituents, members, or customers.**

Hawaii's disadvantaged communities are acutely underserved when it comes to appropriate, cost effective access to nearby local fresh foods. The people best positioned to support these communities are often those with virtually no experience with starting and operating local market options. Our innovation cuts through all of the major impediments that a group would face in trying to create a financially viable local food access model for their community. Our innovation breaks down this financial viability into a series of win-win solutions that bring the right vendors, with the

right mix of products, to meet the community on convenient terms, armed with purchasing power through EBT. Our innovation uniquely proves the model through pilot projects and paves the way for others to follow suit.

Local Food Empowerment Hui dramatically opens up new distribution channels that are profitable for farmers and that deliver needed fresh local food to underserved markets, especially low-income, isolated, or mobility-challenged populations. These populations have buying power and demand, but current methods of distribution leave them isolated and cut out of the market.

Our innovation is also designed to be an improvement for farmers markets in Hawaii. Only 2 Oahu farmers markets currently accept EBT. 85% of respondents to our pre-market survey in the Kalani Gardens community said they would like to eat more fresh, locally grown food, but it is too expensive. Our model seeks to increase access, affordability, and convenience to connect low-income and mobility-challenged communities with locally grown food.

Independent projects are popping up around the islands to use EBT in farmers markets; however, these efforts are disconnected from each other - and out of the public eye. Our Local Food Empowerment Hui provides a central space for those working on, or interested in starting EBT local food options to collaborate with each other, and to better connect with customers and funders.

#### **4. What impact do you expect the innovation to have on your field or on other fields? Provide specific examples of how your innovation will benefit the public.**

The overall goal of the Local Food Empowerment Hui is to create a system to scale access to fresh locally grown food for low-income families in underserved communities through pilots and guides that chart viable paths to connect farmers and local agricultural products with these families.

##### Local economy and food security

An estimated \$33 million a month for food purchases are being made by Hawaii families using EBT. If just 1% of these funds, that's \$330,000 per month, can be routed directly to local farmers it would mean an unprecedented increase in revenue for our small family farms, leading to increase in production and the ability for our farms to reinvest in infrastructure. By helping communities design their own CSA-style delivery programs or mini farmers markets that focus on making it more convenient to purchase locally grown food directly from farmers, that 1% may very well be attainable. With simply a 1% shift, we are looking at \$3.96 million dollars per year invested in our local food system.

The state of Hawaii is currently operating in immense food insecurity, we are importing 85-90% of our food. At any given time, according to Hawaii Department of Agriculture, we have 4-7 days of food to feed our community should shipments from mainland U.S. and Asia be interrupted. Food dollars spent on locally grown food is a reinvestment in our own food system, leading to food security for our state.

##### Access to fresh, locally grown food and to right livelihood for food growers

Currently, the food distribution system in Hawaii is a reflection of a corporate-centered model that is designed to fit the needs of retailers and food manufacturers. The Local Food Empowerment Hui aims to assist in the reshaping our food distribution system into one that puts the needs of food growers and consumers (especially low-income consumers) at the center of the model. By grounding our methodology on human centered design and moving with the intention of creating a mutually beneficial system of exchange between local farmers and low-income communities, we will be helping Hawaii's citizens to build a food system that is more resilient, sustainable, and fair.

## Community health

Some of the primary findings that emerged from the community listening sessions conducted for Kaiser Permanente's "Hawaii Community Health Needs Assessment" (Dec 2010) include a deep connection between food, culture, and health.

"Having access to locally produced, affordable, and fresh and nutritious food rather than being primarily dependent on imported food would contribute to improving health. In addition to health benefits, social benefits include the increase of local pride, community pride, and community connectedness through local production."

The Local Food Empowerment Hui seeks to reestablish the connection between local communities and the local food system, by creating and supporting affordable, culturally relevant, and nutritious food access programs.

### **5. How have you tested demand or interest for your innovation? Have you developed a prototype of your product or pilot tested your new idea yet? Surveyed potential users? Please provide data and information from your early stage testing.**

GreenWheel Food Hub and Kanu Hawaii launched this effort with our pilot Little Green Market. During the first quarter of 2012, we created the systems necessary to launch pop-up markets in food deserts with EBT accepted on site. Creating the first farmers market on Oahu to be both 100% EBT compatible and offer strictly locally-grown produce was a result of this prep work. We also created and tested systems to poll communities to optimally match farm offerings with communities.

On April 15, 2012, we popped up our first market at Kalani Gardens, a 116 unit affordable housing development managed by EAH. The survey system was tested and drove farmer selection and cooking demonstrations. Over 125 residents attended the market. Feedback from residents of that apartment complex, surveys from participating farmers, and feedback from other community helped us to determine the following:

- EBT conversion for existing farmers markets: Residents of Kalani Gardens and other EBT users in the area indicated that they were interested in shopping at an existing farmers' markets if EBT acceptance were made possible. We are now following up on Kalani Gardens resident requests to assist the Mililani Farmers' Market to assess a need for this service, and the market managers have indicated an interest in a PlayBook to implement EBT access. This led us to expand our vision to include converting existing farmers markets into EBT-acceptance sites through our PlayBook model.

- Local food distribution customized for communities: Interest in a service that can assess needs and help residents to build their own customized fresh locally grown produce intake program that includes EBT acceptance. This led us to the decision to document our model and provide a PlayBook for community-driven customized local food distribution.

- CSA/Farm Direct Delivery Models: Maximizing Value for Farmers: This pilot also helped us to key in on refining the model to make most efficient use of farmers' time and maximize sales. This led us to expand our food distribution models to include CSA and other produce deliveries that reduce the amount of time farmers devote to sales, and maximize returns by assessing demand and taking orders before delivery. Testing our pilot program with additional communities including elder housing, we found this food delivery model is also more convenient for those with mobility issues.

- Interest in replicating the model: EAH Housing, which manages 12 affordable housing properties in across Hawaii, is interested in expanding the Little Green Markets to additional properties with the support and participation of their resident activities managers.

Helping Hands Hawaii, a nonprofit organization providing social services coordination including SNAP benefits and education, is interested in continuing partnership with the Local Food Empowerment project to help design for and outreach to SNAP recipients.

**6. Are you aware of others working in a similar way as your proposed innovation? Please describe these other efforts and describe how your innovation is different from theirs. Do you plan to collaborate? If so, how?**

We are not aware of any other group who is packaging a how-to guide for EBT acceptance and community-centered local food delivery programs. While there are 62 farmers markets operating on the island of Oahu, only 2 currently accept EBT payments. Additionally, the majority of farmers markets in operation in Hawaii currently offer imported produce. These markets originated with the intention of bringing fresh produce into neighborhoods, however with the current state of food insecurity in Hawaii, supporting more channels for local farmers to sell their produce is an important step in the recovery of our local food system. As transportation and shipping costs continue to rise, the prices of imported goods may surpass locally grown. Without a large-scale shift to purchasing produce that is locally grown we will continue to lose more farms and farmland, resulting in deepening food insecurity in Hawaii. Our Local Food Empowerment Hui will offer 100% EBT-acceptance for entirely locally grown produce. This is an important innovation to the current farmers market model in Hawaii that paves the way for greater food security and sustainable income for local farmers.

We have reached out to several groups who are coordinating EBT acceptance at farmers markets on Oahu, Kauai, and Hawaii Island, we will be working with them collaboratively through the Local Food Empowerment Hui to document and promote their efforts.

**7. Please describe the background of your primary innovation team. If your innovation is a collaboration or partnership, please provide information about each partner's role and responsibilities. (e.g. Who will be the lead? Are key staff in place or will you hire?)**

The program leads are GreenWheel co-founder Lisa Asagi and Kasha Ho of Kanu Hawaii.

Lisa has been a farmers market manager for Hawaii Farm Bureau's five Oahu farmers markets for the past three years, in this time developing two new farmers markets for HFBF and helping with the start of Wahiawa Farmers' Market. Her two decades of non-profit community work includes working within the new media and agricultural communities. She has extensive experience in Hawaii developing projects with farmers through her role as co-founder of She Grows Food, an agency driven to support local food growers with strategic marketing campaigns, marketing/distribution and production strategies. She also has past experience working in the senior and mobility-challenged communities through her work with Lanakila Pacific (Lanakila Meals on Wheels) as their Development and Marketing Coordinator. Lisa's responsibilities will be managing the design of PlayBook, directing website design and build, development of tutorial videos, integrating food growers into community models, liaison with USDA, and assisting farms with development of direct delivery systems.

The program lead for Kanu Hawaii is Kasha Ho. Kasha has ten years of organizing experience with communities in Hawaii and across the U.S. working for social and environmental justice. At Kanu, Kasha led the Eat Local Challenge, which has engaged thousands of people over the past 3 years and developed a statewide network of businesses, organizations, and individuals committed to supporting Hawaii's local food system. Kanu Hawaii is a recognized leader in developing dynamic community engagement through online network space. Kasha will lead the

outreach, community connections, and publicity efforts of the Local Food Empowerment Hui. Her responsibilities include outreach and coordination with existing EBT local food programs, new program development, and assessment and documentation for PlayBooks.

**8. How will you grow the impact of your innovation? Describe how your innovation has potential to scale up and expand benefit beyond just your organization. Be specific about expansion plans and targets for making that increased impact. (e.g. increase in users, replication at other sites/communities, etc.)**

The potential to scale our efforts is the primary motivator for this next phase, building upon our Little Green Markets program to expand into the Local Food Empowerment Hui. Recognizing the need for greater EBT access in existing farmers markets and CSA programs, and the demand for additional channels of local food distribution that are customized to serve low-income and mobility-challenged communities, has led us to “open source” what we’ve learned through developing these models and provide the tools and support necessary for others to replicate.

By developing a web-based PlayBook we will be creating a resource sharing device that will be accessible and of use to a global audience. Programs who participate will constantly be adding to the resources of this PlayBook by documenting their processes and sharing it on the site. The site can will also be scaled into a networking platform for various groups working on food access programs to find each other to exchange advice, share resources and collaborate.

Careful consideration has been taken to integrate documentation (especially video documentation) in all components of this program. This “documentary” approach helps to provide a video-based and story-based information sharing platform that can be more easily accessible to the widest audience possible.

Intentionally integrated into this program is the concept of “convenience”. We believe that creating ways to buy fresh local food that are even more convenient than going to the corner store is a key solution to both challenges of helping people to eat healthy and ramping up demand for locally grown food. We opened our most recent survey, created for an affordable housing senior village in the Ewa Plain, with this:

Aloha. Do you want more fresh locally grown fruit and vegetables at an affordable price? Do you want to support local farmers? We are hoping to save you time, energy, and money with this fruit & veggies home delivery program. Please help us customize the program to fit your needs.

We also believe that the spirit of fun and friendly competition (think “Amazing Race”) will help to motivate participation and engagement. Our outreach phase will accomplish this through a contest in which 3 groups who apply and initiate programs will be chosen to receive start up funds and mentorship in exchange for documenting their process on the website and an agreement to mentor the startup of another EBT-accessible local food program. By taking this approach, our efforts will be quadrupled - by the end of the second year, four new community managed programs will be in existence and each will be mentoring another one. This pay-it-forward policy will help to insure the sustainable propagation of more community programs.