

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Graduate Student Portfolios, Papers, and
Capstone Projects

Graduate School

Spring 5-2023

Community Food Security Strategies in Montana: Exploring Practices and Policies

Andrew T. Besser

andrew.besser@umconnect.umt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/grad_portfolios

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Besser, Andrew T., "Community Food Security Strategies in Montana: Exploring Practices and Policies" (2023). *Graduate Student Portfolios, Papers, and Capstone Projects*. 332.

https://scholarworks.umt.edu/grad_portfolios/332

This Portfolio is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Portfolios, Papers, and Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

Community Food Security Strategies in Montana: Exploring Practices and Policies

Presented by Tate Besser

B.S. Environmental Management and Protection

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

Graduate Portfolio in Fulfillment of the Master of Science in Environmental Studies

College of Humanities, University of Montana

Missoula, Montana

May 2023

Neva Hassanein

Professor, Environmental Studies

Acknowledgements

I would like to first thank my portfolio committee chair, Neva Hassanein, for supporting me and helping me complete this portfolio project and Master's degree. It is not common for students to switch advisors the last semester of their program and Neva was very gracious to take me as her student in what felt like the last five minutes of the 4th quarter of my Master's journey. I am proud of the portfolio project to follow and Neva's guidance and feedback have helped me reach this point. Neva, thank you for the opportunities you have pushed me to apply for and the connections you have helped me make with the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition, Grow Montana, and Missoula Food Policy Advisory Board.

Thank you to Robin Saha, my initial advisor, for all his guidance, free pizza, and 6-packs of beer... still waiting on that last one. In all seriousness, thank you Robin for being my advisor for the first year and a half, for pushing me to attend the EVST program right out of my undergrad, and for all the opportunities and support you have given me. I would not have embarked upon this journey if not for you and I am grateful for everything you have given me during this Master's degree.

Thank you to Ian Finch of CFAC, Ashley Clark of MFB&CC, and Maura Henn of Grow Montana. Each of you provided fantastic opportunities for me to work on different projects that eventually became components of this body of work. I cherish the time I have worked for each of these organizations and contributed towards increasing community food security through my work.

Fellow EVST cohort members, thank you all so much for your support, laughter, and dedication as we completed this journey together. I truly appreciate each and every one of you as we all dealt with feelings of impostor syndrome, shared tears and beers at the Union or Flippers, and accomplished incredible work in our fields of choice. I wish you all the best as we spread across the world and continue to do amazing things and spread joy and hope.

To my friends, thank you for dancing, shredding, and vibing with me as I completed the hardest project I have ever done. I appreciate everyone who has helped me decompress and relax amidst all the stress and climate anxiety this field of study carries with it.

Mom, Dad, Dane, Mimi, and PopPop, I love you all so much and thank you for your support these last two years. I couldn't have done it without you all.

Contents

I. Introduction	1
1) Portfolio Component 1: Expanding Double SNAP Dollars Equitably: A Technical Report for the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition	6
2) Portfolio Component 2: Missoula Food Bank & Community Center Internship Reflection	7
3) Portfolio Component 3: The Policy Arena: Grow Montana Internship	9
4) Professional and Career Goals	10
5) Works Cited	11
II. Component 1: Expanding Double SNAP Dollars Equitably: A Technical Report for the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition	13
1) Introduction	13
2) Background	15
3) Methods	19
4) Results	29
5) Discussion	31
6) Conclusion	34
7) Addendum	35
8) Appendix	38
9) Works Cited	42
III. Component 2: Missoula Food Bank & Community Center Internship Reflection	45
1) Introduction	45
2) Responsibilities	47
3) Reflection	48
4) Conclusion	51
5) Appendix	54
6) Works Cited	67
IV. Component 3: The Policy Arena: Grow Montana Internship	68
1) Grow Montana Internship	68
2) Political Advocacy: Visiting Helena	71
3) Testimony in Support of HB 276:	74
4) Letter to the Editor: House Bill 276 is a win-win	75
5) Conclusion	77
6) Appendix	79
7) Works Cited	88

V. Conclusion	89
----------------------------	-----------

I. Introduction

Food has always been important to me ever since I picked fruits and vegetables right out of my backyard growing up in Sunnyvale, California. My family had fences lined with olallieberries, stone fruit trees lining the driveway, a raised herb garden, heirloom tomatoes growing on our homemade trellis, and a gigantic, gnarled lemon tree. We had our own farmers market, right in the backyard and the only payment required was a couple of hours of yard work or picking up leaves every week. I learned how to cook on Boy Scout camping trips around California, but my parents showed me there is more to cooking than pre-packaged pasta sauces and oatmeal. My Dad taught me how to grill on long summer nights with friends and how to bake for winter holidays with the whole family. My Mom shared endless varieties of salads, pasta dishes straight from Tuscany, and scrambled eggs that are still the best in the world. Food was very important to me growing up as it brought my family together almost every night for a shared meal. I have the privilege of always having enough food on the table and parents who had the time to cook homemade meals. As I learned more about our broken food systems in my undergraduate and graduate education, I wanted to help others who have not had the advantages I grew up with and have instead faced food insecurity, hunger, and malnutrition. Food is a universal connector, is ingrained in every culture, and gives us the energy and nourishment to live.

When I first began researching the possibility of going to graduate school at the University of Montana (UM), I wanted a deeper education in environmental justice. To me,

environmental injustice symbolized the worst aspects of climate change, pollution, racism, and other systemic problems in the United States. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) describes environmental justice being achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work (EPA). Environmental justice advocacy goes hand in hand with food advocacy. As the environmental justice slogan goes, the environment is ‘where we live, work, and play’ and can be extended to include ‘where, what, and how we eat’ (Gottlieb and Joshi, 4-5, 2010). What we put in our bodies is an extension of our environment and just as important as where we live. As my education at UM continued with courses in Food Justice & Sustainability and Politics of Food, I began to learn more about a host of terms related to food: food advocacy, food access, food systems, food justice, food democracy, community food security. My focus began to shift away from environmental justice and more towards food systems and projects working with local nonprofits working to increase people’s access to health, safe, and culturally-appropriate food.

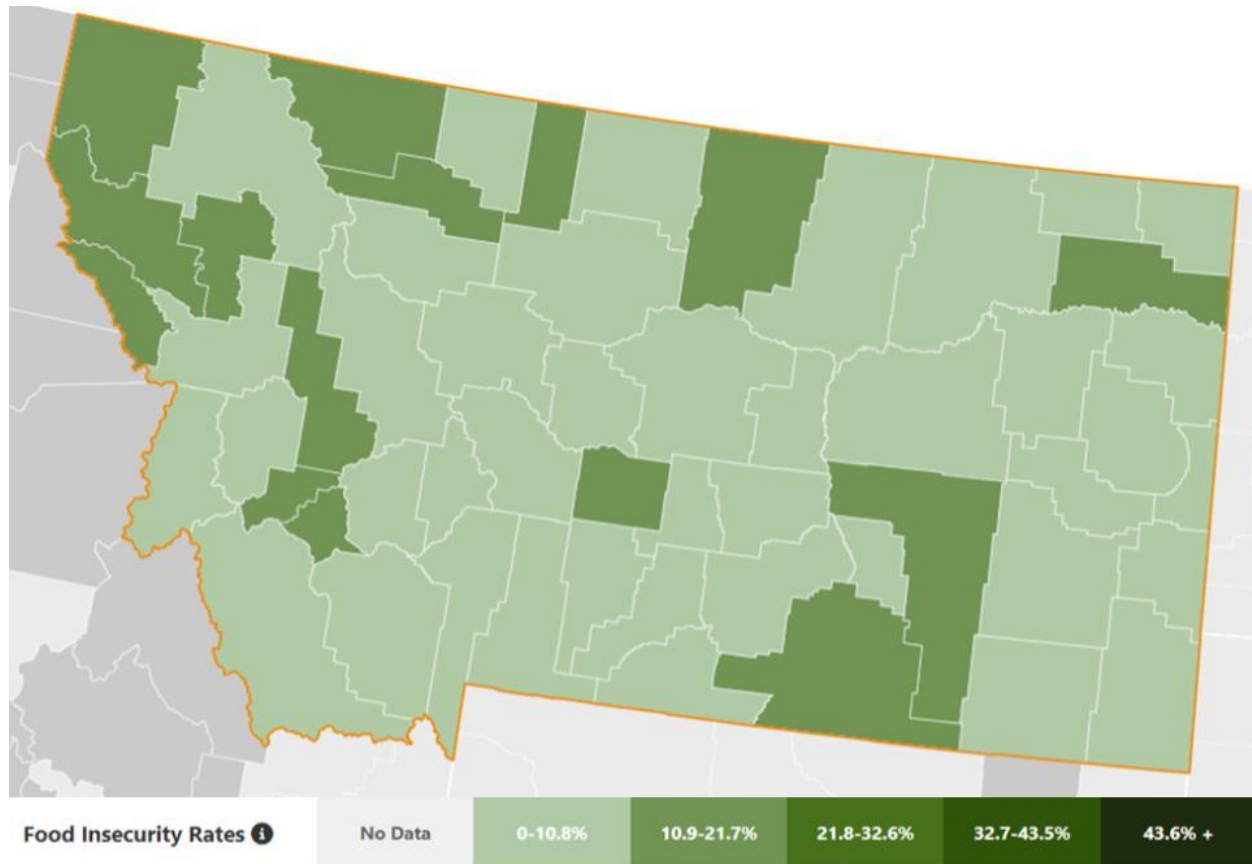
My portfolio consists of three elements centered on community food security in Missoula and western Montana. Community Food Security (CFS) exists when all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, and nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes self-reliance and social justice (Hamm and Bellows, 35, 2002). Each of these elements must be present for community food security to be achieved. Our food being safe to eat connects food to the environment in which it is grown, as food must be free from harmful pesticides, chemicals, and bacteria. Our meals being culturally acceptable recognizes the diverse communities we inhabit and the different foods that connect us to our heritage and our families. Our diet being nutritionally adequate recognizes that the content of our food matters and whole

foods--fruits, vegetables, and unprocessed items-- are key to feeding our bodies all the nutrients they need. Hamm and Bellows' definition grounds CFS in food available to a particular community and the food systems connecting that community to food, land, and people working the land. Community food security describes comprehensive strategies to address systemic issues in the food system that result in food insecurity and hunger. A person is food insecure when they lack regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development to live an active and healthy life (FAO, 2023). Hunger is the uncomfortable/painful feeling that results from not consuming enough dietary energy (Feeding America, n.d.). Chronic hunger can have long-lasting consequences including:

- Individuals experiencing food insecurity have increased rates of both physical and mental health challenges;
- Children experiencing food insecurity are more likely to have impaired cognitive development, lower math and reading scores, and higher rates of absenteeism;
- Food insecurity among older adults leads to a variety of health problems including an increased chance of being hospitalized, a worsening of chronic conditions, a weakened immune system; and
- Hunger has a significant economic impact on our state [Montana] due to preventable healthcare costs, lower educational attainment, and lost productivity in the workforce (Montana Food Bank Network, 2023).

The repercussions of hunger are severe and can significantly affect the lives of people who are food insecure, especially children. Approximately 8.5% of Montana residents are food insecure, but this varies greatly by county which is shown in figure 1.

Figure 1. Food Insecurity by County in Montana, via Feeding America, 2023.



In Montana, half of the 56 counties are considered food deserts: low-income areas where at least 500 people and/or 33% of residents must travel more than ten miles to the nearest supermarket or 1 mile in urban areas (Montana Food Bank Network, 2023). More than 58,000 individuals in Montana (around 5% of the population) live in food deserts and therefore have limited access to grocery stores and fresh food. The USDA defines *food deserts* as low-income census tracts (subdivisions of cities or counties that typically consist of 1,200 – 8,000 residents) that lack accessible supermarkets or large grocery stores (Papanek et al, 2023). Such disparity in the food environment often has roots in systemic inequities and historical factors dating back to the early as white flight in the early 1970s and 1980s to the community disinvestment that followed.

Community activist Karen Washington argues the term “food desert” does not adequately describe the systemic targeting of specific groups of people, particularly black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) who live in low-income communities (Schlangen, 2021). Food desert implies a region with no food available and does not acknowledge the human decisions and actions to create the inequitable food system (Schlangen, 2021). Instead, the term “food apartheid” describes the whole food system along with race, geography, faith, and economics to get to the root cause of problems around the food system (Brones, 2018). Food apartheid includes hunger, poverty, and social inequalities due to systemic racism and discrimination which BIPOC communities have faced throughout American history.

Community food security addresses *communities* of households and individuals facing food insecurity and hunger, and utilizes community infrastructure and the local food system to achieve food security (Hamm and Bellows, 2003). Community food security involves prioritizing low-income food needs, addressing broad problems affecting the food system, maintaining a community focus, empowering individuals within the community to meet their own needs, supporting local agriculture, and using systems-oriented approaches to achieve these goals (Community Food Security Coalition, n.d.). This portfolio demonstrates my work with organizations promoting community food security through increasing the buying power of SNAP dollars, providing free food via a food bank, and advocating politically to support initiatives that help food insecure communities gain access to healthy, fresh, nutritious food. Increasing community food security is important in the face of crises Montana’s food system is facing, for example climate change and the rising cost of food due to inflation.

1) Portfolio Component 1: Expanding Double SNAP Dollars Equitably: A Technical Report for the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition

The first component of my portfolio is an update to a research paper from ENSC 501: Scientific Approaches to Environmental Problems (Fall 2021), originally titled “CFAC Research Project: Expanding Double SNAP Dollars Equitably”. This research project was undertaken for the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition (CFAC) to provide information beneficial to expanding their nutrition incentive program, which increases the value of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) with healthy fruits and vegetables. SNAP provides benefits to low-income households to obtain a more nutritious diet through increasing food purchasing power (US Food and Nutrition Act, 2008). CFAC coordinates the Double SNAP Dollars (DSD) program, where retail locations (farmers markets and grocery stores participating in DSD) allow participants to purchase items worth double the value of their SNAP vouchers up to \$30 a day for fresh fruits and vegetables (Double SNAP Dollars, 2023). Currently the DSD program is grant-funded and has 27 locations, the majority of which are farmers markets located in Western Montana.

This element of my portfolio involved designing a tool to aid CFAC in prioritizing expansion of the DSD program across Montana as funding dictates. The Growth through Equity Tool is a set of two Microsoft Excel matrices, one to rank different counties in Montana based on demographic factors, and one to rank potential DSD locations based on characteristics of each retail location. CFAC used the tool in 2022 to prioritize DSD locations for inclusion into the program and provided technical assistance to locations not currently SNAP authorized. I build upon this research through a reflection of my work with CFAC and an update to the matrix using

updated 2023 data. In 2023, CFAC utilized the Growth through Equity Tool to rank brick and mortar locations for DSD expansion to access different populations facing food insecurity. DSD as a program aims to address community food security through enabling people to purchase more food with their same EBT benefits and include more healthy food like fruits and vegetables. The program supports local farmers and keeps money in local economies, benefitting communities with DSD locations present.

2) Portfolio Component 2: Missoula Food Bank & Community Center Internship Reflection

The second component of my portfolio describes and reflects on the Kids Table Internship I completed for the Missoula Food Bank & Community Center (MFB&CC) during the summer of 2022. This experience was made possible through an AmeriCorps service position via Campus Compact at the University of Montana. Specifically, I prepared meals for the Kids Table program; operated a meal site daily to give out free lunches to kids; designed interactive and informative handouts about the contents of meals; distributed weekend (“EmPower”) packs; supported pantry and store services; participated in MFB&CC meetings/trainings/events; and completed AmeriCorps monthly reports. I operated a meal site at the Missoula Public Library (MPL) for the first two months of summer, then took over the Food Bank’s Mobile Food Bus for weekday distributions at four locations for the rest of the time.

Overall, my internship experience offered me insight into a local, community-based nonprofit, deepened my knowledge about food insecurity, and gave more nuanced insight into

the lives of food-insecure individuals. The Missoula Food Bank is a unique organization that prioritizes helping people, giving them food, and destigmatizing the experience of utilizing the services of a food bank. MFB&CC does this through a well-designed space similar to a grocery store, by treating customers with dignity and an extra level of care, and by giving additional food to people without asking probing or potentially embarrassing questions. The Kids Table program emphasizes giving out as many lunches and EmPower packs as the kids wanted and not asking who the food was for or any intrusive questions. This approach was stressed in our trainings working with vulnerable populations and with kids, as people accessing the Food Bank are often in difficult situations and may feel self-conscious about using such services. Customers of the Missoula Food Bank may or may not be on assistance programs, like SNAP, but may still need help.

The Missoula Food Bank is a nonprofit organization directly working on community food security in Missoula and the surrounding area. MFB&CC is an organization that gives direct aid while also providing resources to individuals to find work, learn cooking skills, and provide for themselves. This part of my portfolio includes a reflective essay describing my experience working with vulnerable populations directly through a nonprofit organization. Included in this section are AmeriCorps monthly reports of the work I completed and the informative nutrition handouts I created. My work there over the summer gave me a deeper perspective on people facing food insecurity and hunger while also directly working towards improving community food security.

3) Portfolio Component 3: The Policy Arena: Grow Montana Internship

The third component of my portfolio pertains to political action I have taken part in during the 2023 Montana Legislative Session, including carrying out an internship with Grow Montana-- a statewide food policy coalition, visiting the state capitol, testifying for a bill, and getting a Letter to the Editor (LTE) published. Grow Montana has advocated for changes in state policies to strengthen Montana's food and agriculture economics since 2005. The coalition includes members from the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition (CFAC), Mission West Community Development Partners, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Alternative Energy Resource Organization, Open and Local Coalition, Montana Farmers Union, and Land to Hand. The internship with Grow Montana involved me tracking bills related to food and agriculture during the legislative session. My responsibilities included updating a Grow Montana Policy Matrix Google sheet and putting out a weekly survey to policy specialists at partner organizations. I used a Policy Matrix Google sheet to keep track of the bill name/number, the lead organization, the coalition's position, bill sponsor, lead lobbyist, timeline, and updates. Each week, I sent out an update via email to policy staff at the different nonprofits in the Grow MT coalition, along with a policy survey. The weekly policy survey was a Google form to gather action updates and additional bill information from policy leads and to send out action alerts to the coalition the following week.

My LTE was written in support of the Montana Farm to Food Bank Program, proposed in HB 276. I wrote the letter to draw attention to the benefits HB 276 will have for Montana farmers, food banks, and the significant number of Montanan residents currently facing food insecurity and hunger. My letter was published in mid-February in the *Daily Montanan*,

Montana Free Press, Missoula Current, Helena Independent Record, and on the Montana Food Matters Food Story Hub. I continued my advocacy work by visiting Helena, Montana's capital, for two days of advocacy: the Joye Braun Day of Action and the Environmental Studies Legislative Leadership Trip. Each of these days involved education, listening to poignant environmental speakers, and observing legislators in the House and Senate chambers. Finally, in continuing my support for HB 276, I testified virtually on March 30th in support of the Farm to Food Bank bill. Regretfully, HB 276 passed the Montana House but died in the Senate Finance and Claims Committee on May 8th, 2023.

4) Professional and Career Goals

This portfolio will help me meet my professional goals by interweaving my experiences and reflections working on community food security with nonprofit organizations. The experiences outlined in this portfolio showcase the different competencies I have developed and ways I can contribute to organizations working in food systems, food justice, and community food security. I hope to work directly for organizations working to increase community food security and helping people access safe, nutritionally beneficial, culturally appropriate, and healthy food. My research for CFAC demonstrates the analytical and research skills I have learned to help nonprofit organizations with complex problems such as expanding the DSD program equitably. Interning with the Missoula Food Bank provided direct experience working to reduce hunger and food insecurity with a nonprofit organization. The political advocacy work for Grow MT and the LTE involved learning about state government policy that could increase access to local food. The conclusion of the portfolio further reflects on my skill development during the graduate program.

5) Works Cited

Brones, Anna. (2018, May 7). Karen Washington: It's Not a Food Desert, It's Food Apartheid.

Guernica Mag. <https://www.guernicamag.com/karen-washington-its-not-a-food-desert-its-food-apartheid/>

Double SNAP Locations. (2023). *Double SNAP Dollars*.

<https://www.doubledollarsmt.com/locations/>

Feeding America. (n.d.). *Food Insecurity*. Retrieved April 20, 2023, from

<https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/food-insecurity>

Gottlieb, Robert and Anupama Joshi. (2010). *Food Justice*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Hamm, M. W., & Bellows, A. C. (2002). U.S.-Based Community Food Security: Influences, Practice, Debate, *Journal for the Study of Food and Society*, 6:1, 31-44, DOI:

10.2752/152897902786732725

Hamm, M. W., & Bellows, A. C. (2003). Community food security and nutrition educators. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 35(1), 37-43.

Montana Food Bank Network. (2023, April 14). *Hunger in Montana*. Retrieved April 21, 2023, from <https://mfbn.org/hunger-in-montana/>

Papanek, Alicia, Catherine G. Campbell, and Karla Shelnett. (2023). Disparities in Community Food Environments: FCS3381/FY1520, 5/2023. *EDIS*, 2023(3).

Schlangen, Kaija. (2023, April 6). Food Apartheid. *University of Minnesota Duluth*.

https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/220359/4.6.2021_Food%20Apartheid.pdf?sequence=1

United States Food and Nutrition Act 2008. Section 2. (2011). Declaration of

Policy. <https://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/Food> And Nutrition Act Of 2008.pdf.

II. Component 1: Expanding Double SNAP Dollars Equitably: A Technical Report for the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition

1) Introduction

The Community Food & Agriculture Coalition (CFAC) is a nonprofit based in Missoula, Montana, that works to grow a healthy, local food community and make food accessible for all. CFAC works to engage community members from all backgrounds, integrate equity and inclusiveness in all programs, and take innovative and creative approaches in its work towards positive change and increased sustainability in Montana’s local food system (CFAC, 2023). CFAC coordinates Double SNAP Dollars (DSD), a nutrition incentive program created in 2015 that allows eligible Montanans enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to increase their buying power of fresh fruits and vegetables. SNAP provides benefits to supplement the food budgets of needy families so that they can purchase healthy food. The stated goal of the SNAP program is to “permit low-income households to obtain a more nutritious diet through normal channels of trade by increasing food purchasing power” (US Food and Nutrition Act, 2008). DSD builds upon the SNAP program by enabling Montana residents to double their benefit dollars from SNAP to purchase up to \$30 of fresh and local fruits and vegetables per day (Double SNAP Dollars, 2023). I began working with Ian Finch, CFAC’s Food Access Program Manager, in fall 2021 on a research project for ENSC 501: Scientific Approaches to Environmental Problems. Ian assisted me with defining a research goal to guide DSD expansion, provided resources and data, and invited me to attend CFAC’s Double SNAP Dollars Network (DSDN) Equity and Growth Subcommittee meetings.

The DSDN wanted a tool to identify which counties to prioritize for DSD expansion based on several factors: current SNAP participation, percentage of population over sixty-five, percentage of residents who identify as Native American or Alaskan Native, and food insecurity rate. Accordingly, I utilized these factors in a formula in Microsoft Excel to establish which counties have the highest levels of each factor, and, therefore, should be priority for DSD expansion to help underserved communities. This tool is named the County Ranking Tool and shown fully in Figure 10 of the Appendix.

The DSDN also wanted a tool to rank proposed retail locations that might be willing to use Double SNAP, due to limited funding for DSD expansion. Several criteria were developed to analyze proposed retail locations for DSD expansion: county food insecurity rate, county SNAP usage, if a location was in a USDA opportunity zone, if located in a rural zone, if the location was tribally owned or operated, if located in central or eastern Montana, and if a location currently accepts SNAP. This ranking tool was created using Microsoft Excel formulas which multiplied each criterion by factors to give each a different weight, which is reflected in the overall score for a given retail location. Locations with higher priority had higher scores based on the characteristics of the retail location and the weighting factors. This tool is named the DSD Decision Tool and shown fully in Figure 11 of the Appendix.

This technical report details the methods to create both the Country Ranking Tool and DSD Decision Tool to assist CFAC in evaluating counties and potential DSD locations. Results of both tools were analyzed to provide recommendations to CFAC on locations and counties to prioritize expansion of the DSD program in 2022 and 2023. As part of this portfolio project, an epilogue is included with updated data sources and reflection in 2023.

2) Background

2.1 SNAP Program and Eligibility

The U.S. Department of Agriculture administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to households in need. One in eight Montanans struggle to afford all the food they need (CFAC, 2023). Households under a certain gross and net income (shown in Table 1 below) can participate in SNAP and receive an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) System debit card (Montana DPHHS, 2023). The EBT card, called the Montana Access Card, is used to purchase food products from registered retailers and participating Farmers Markets using SNAP benefits. Expanded categorical eligibility refers to households where members are authorized to receive non-cash assistance from programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

SNAP eligibility in Montana involves:

“People who live together and buy food and prepare meals together are grouped as a “household” for SNAP. Husbands and wives, and children under age 22 living with their natural, adoptive or stepparents must be considered as one household. Household members that wish to be included must be U.S. citizens or legal aliens. Household members that wish to be included must furnish or apply for a social security number. Income and resource guidelines listed in this overview must be met. Able-bodied household members who are age 16 through 59 must register for work, and may be required to participate in a SNAP Employment and Training Program unless a specified exemption is met” (Montana DPHHS, 2023).

Table 1. Household Monthly Income Limits for SNAP, Expanded Categorical Eligibility, and Net Monthly Income, via Montana DHHPS.

People in Household	Gross Monthly Income Standard	Gross Monthly Income Standard (Expanded Categorical Eligibility)	Net Monthly Income Standard
1	\$1,473	\$2,266	\$1,133
2	\$1,984	\$3,052	\$1,526
3	\$2,495	\$3,840	\$1,920
4	\$3,007	\$4,626	\$2,313
5	\$3,518	\$5,412	\$2,706
6	\$4,029	\$6,200	\$3,100
7	\$4,541	\$6,989	\$3,493
8	\$5,052	\$7,772	\$3,886
Each Additional Member	+ \$512	+ \$788	+ \$394

Household members who wish to be included must complete all of these requirements to participate in SNAP. Households can qualify for expedited services to make food benefits available within seven days of the application to households that meet criteria including:

less than \$150 in monthly gross income and \$100 or less in liquid resources; or
migrant/seasonal farm worker households with \$100 or less in liquid resources; or
Households with a combined monthly gross income and liquid resources less than the household's monthly rent (or mortgage) and utilities (Montana DPHHS, 2023).

These expedited services also allow SNAP recipients to access the DSD program, as SNAP participants are automatically eligible for DSD benefits at participating locations.

2.2 SNAP Store Types

Retailers that allow customers to use SNAP benefits include superstores, supermarkets, convenience stores, and specialty outlets like farmers markets. There are 753 SNAP retailers in Montana (CBPP, 2021), 27 of which are DSD retail locations. In 2019, SNAP participants nationwide redeemed over 80% of benefits at larger stores like superstores and supermarkets (CBPP, 2021). Farmers markets constituted 0.9% of all stores and less than 0.1% of SNAP redemptions in that year, while convenience stores constituted 5.5% of redemptions but 45.2% of all stores (CBPP, 2021). These statistics are important to consider for expansion of the DSD program as most people redeem at larger stores, while convenience stores are the most common of all store types. Rural and convenience store owners face difficulties offering SNAP benefits after the 2017 SNAP Retailer Rule went into effect, which required stores to meet one of two eligibility guidelines: staple food stock (Criterion A) or staple food sales (Criterion B). Staple foods are basic food items that make up a portion of an individual's diet, are usually prepared at home, and consumed as a major component of a meal (Food and Nutrition Service, 2018). Rural corner stores need help promoting healthier food options, appropriately handling perishable items, finding suppliers that can adhere to their food delivery requirements, and maintaining their SNAP retailer license (Haynes-Maslow et al., 2018). Convenience stores face difficulties in becoming and keeping SNAP retailer status but have the added benefit of being the largest percentage of stores that can be SNAP retailers and potentially DSD locations. Local produce was not covered in the Haynes-Maslow et al. study, but it likely adds additional difficulties to

convenience store owners due to refrigeration and storage needed. DSD locations are primarily farmers markets as they need to offer local produce to be part of the DSD program.

2.3 DSD Program and Expansion

DSD can provide up to \$30 per day of additional benefits to SNAP participants towards buying fruits, vegetables, herbs, mushrooms, garden seeds, and starter plants (Double SNAP Dollars, 2023). DSD is aimed at helping people disproportionately affected by food insecurity (i.e., families and children) and is only available for EBT customers. Montana residents participating in SNAP can use their EBT card to access the additional DSD funds at any of the 27 DSD authorized sites across Montana. The DSD program has served over 9,000 Montanans since 2015 and kept money recirculating within communities of local farmers, ranchers, and farmers markets (Double SNAP Dollars, 2023). This program allows farmers to get a fair price for their crops and help food insecure people access healthier food at no additional cost. DSD is a grant-funded program supporting the maximum amount of locations the funding allows (Double SNAP Dollars, 2023). CFAC's goal is to expand the DSD program equitably to enable more Montana residents to utilize this local-food, nutrition-oriented assistance program. The Double SNAP Dollars Network Steering Committee's (DSDN) growth strategy, called Growth through Equity, targets underserved regions and populations in Montana, including the central and eastern parts of the state, rural and tribal communities, and direct market farmers (Finch, personal communication, March 15, 2023). CFAC received a Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) Covid Response and Relief (GusCRR) grant in 2021. CFAC is using this grant to provide nutrition incentives to SNAP clients in up to 20 new locations (Finch, personal communication, March 15, 2023). As part of a class project for Scientific Approaches to Environmental Problems, I worked with CFAC to design an analytical tool to support the

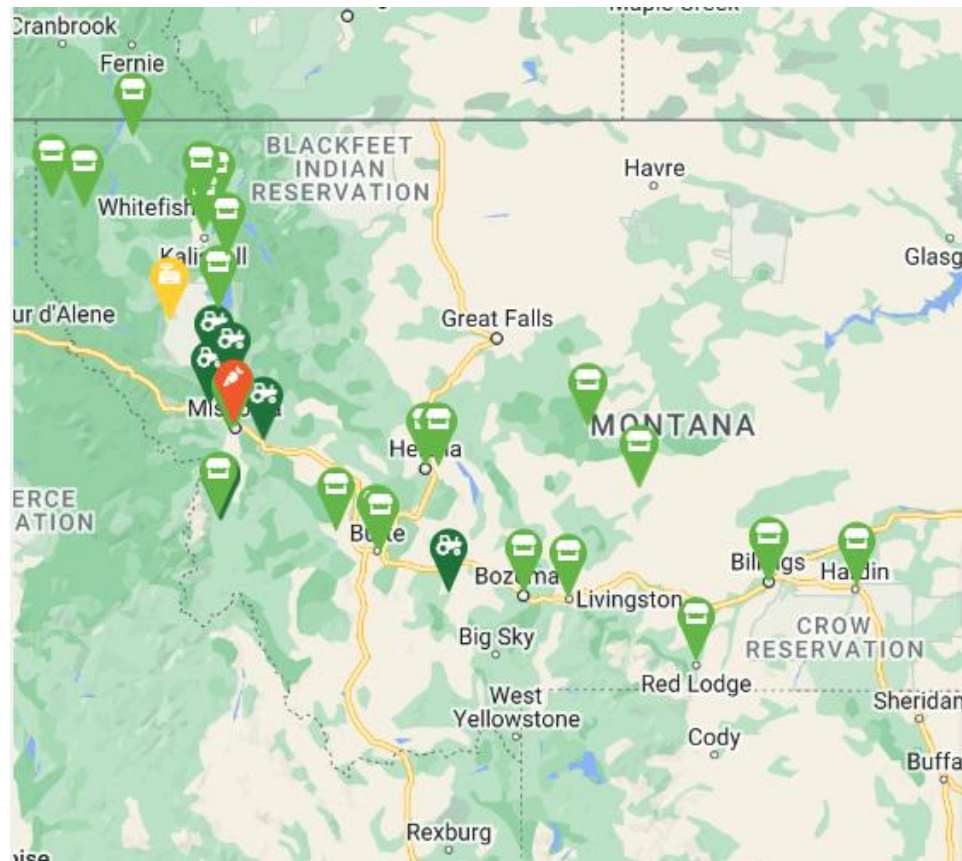
DSDN's growth strategy. I created two tools in Microsoft Excel to inform outreach, technical assistance, and onboarding priorities for increasing the number of DSD redemption locations in counties across the state. The results of the Growth through Equity Tool were analyzed and presented to CFAC in December 2021. Based on the analysis, the DSDN identified 33 proposed locations that had previously expressed interest in joining the DSD program or where DSDN members identified eligible locations that loosely fit the growth criteria for expansion.

3) Methods

3.1 Growth through Equity Tool

The DSDN's goal is to expand the DSD program prioritizing central and eastern Montana, rural locations, indigenous ownership, and USDA opportunity zones within Montana. Currently, DSD sites are predominantly clustered around urban areas and western Montana as shown in Figure 1 (Double SNAP Dollars, 2023). The DSDN was specifically interested in an "equity filter" to prioritize the next DSD expansion locations from the list of 33 locations. For this technical report, I gathered county-wide data across Montana to synthesize in formulas to determine the highest priority counties for DSD expansion, creating the County Ranking Tool. Secondly, I analyzed the 33 retail locations CFAC was considering for expansion to evaluate each location based on the DSDN's priorities, creating the DSD Location Ranking Tool.

Figure 1. Current Double SNAP Dollars Locations in Montana.



3.2 County Ranking Tool Data Collection

For the County Ranking Tool, the four factors included were: food insecurity rate, SNAP participation rate, percentage of population 65 and older, and percentage of residents who identify as American Indian [hereby referred to as Native American] or Alaskan Native. Each of these were chosen as they highlight different needs of counties and populations of interest to utilize DSD benefits. The primary sources of County level data were the US Census Bureau, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), and the DPHHS. These were compiled into one Microsoft Excel document to layout the different statistics and population data by County in Montana (Figure 2).

Figure 2. County Ranking Tool with population data (World Population Review, 2023); food insecure individuals and food insecurity rate (Feeding America, 2021); population 65 plus (America Counts Staff, 2021); SNAP participants (Montana DPHHS, 2023), and resident population identifying as Native American (America Counts Staff, 2021).

B	C	D	E	G	H	I	J	K	O	P
County	Population Estimate (2021)	Population Estimate (2023)	Food Insecurity Rate (2019)	Food Insecure Individuals (2019)	Population 65+ (2020)	Percentage 65+ (2020)	SNAP Participants (2023)	Percentage SNAP Participants (2023)	Pop Native American (2020)	Percentage Pop Native American (2020)
Montana	1060665	1112671	9.5%	132,180	198374	18.7%	84675	7.6%	100578	9.5%
Beaverhead	9412	9407	10.9%	1,100	2067	22.0%	518	5.5%	405	4.3%
Big Horn	13365	13202	15.7%	2,300	1707	12.8%	2867	21.7%	9280	69.4%
Blaine	6774	7209	18.3%	1,050	1037	15.3%	916	12.7%	3932	58.0%
Broadwater	6072	7122	8.9%	650	1438	23.7%	346	4.9%	257	4.2%
Carbon	10691	10593	9.2%	1,100	2749	25.7%	470	4.4%	321	3.0%
Carter	1230	1493	9.8%	140	313	25.4%	25	1.7%	29	2.4%
Cascade	81688	85341	10.4%	10,230	15166	18.6%	8602	10.1%	7326	9.0%
Chouteau	5740	5919	11.2%	670	1165	20.3%	252	4.3%	1521	26.5%
Custer	11592	11918	10.4%	1,420	2313	20.0%	920	7.7%	462	4.0%
Daniels	1729	1634	6.0%	180	461	26.7%	60	3.7%	107	6.2%
Dawson	8680	8931	9.6%	920	1709	19.7%	539	6.0%	401	4.6%
Deer Lodge	9129	9457	14.3%	1460	2182	23.9%	880	9.3%	458	5.0%
Fallon	2912	3097	8.1%	230	492	16.9%	111	3.6%	69	2.4%
Fergus	11117	11404	10.5%	1,520	2726	24.5%	717	6.3%	369	3.3%
Flathead	102017	108386	9.2%	14,180	19883	19.5%	6489	6.0%	3911	3.8%
Gallatin	111682	127795	7.3%	11,650	14061	12.6%	2236	1.7%	3330	3.0%
Garfield	1257	1164	6.6%	120	289	23.0%	32	2.7%	34	2.7%
Glacier	13828	13892	18.4%	2,440	1666	12.0%	3197	23.0%	10018	72.4%
Golden Valley	822	805	11.5%	110	225	27.4%	54	6.7%	36	4.4%
Granite	3371	3378	10.2%	470	1020	30.3%	129	3.8%	123	3.6%
Hill	16342	16372	13.0%	2,160	2477	15.2%	2778	17.0%	4450	27.2%
Jefferson	12094	12289	7.1%	1,300	2587	21.4%	586	4.8%	494	4.1%
Judith Basin	1946	2008	9.8%	240	526	27.0%	71	3.5%	42	2.2%

Percentages of the population of each county participating in SNAP was determined using the equation:

$$\text{SNAP \%} = (\text{SNAP Participants} / \text{Total Population}) \times 100$$




A similar equation was used for determining the percentage 65 plus and percentage of population Native American. Once each of these percentages was calculated, a matrix was created to assign values of one to five that correspond to a given decimal value, as the percentages in Microsoft Excel are actually decimal values (i.e., 5.67% is 0.0567). The values are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Matrix values for County Ranking Tool.

Excel value	Corresponding matrix value
$0 < \text{"Cell Name"} < 0.05$ AND $\text{"Cell Name"} = 0.05$	1
$0.05 < \text{"Cell Name"} < 0.10$ AND $\text{"Cell Name"} = 0.10$	2
$0.10 < \text{"Cell Name"} < 0.15$ AND $\text{"Cell Name"} = 0.15$	3
$0.15 < \text{"Cell Name"} < 0.20$ AND $\text{"Cell Name"} = 0.20$	4
$0.20 < \text{"Cell Name"}$	5

The County Ranking Tool used a combination of the Microsoft Excel functions “SUM”, “IF”, and “IF(AND)” to turn decimal values into whole numbers as shown in Table 2. SUM adds all numbers in a given range of cells and can combine several Microsoft Excel functions together. IF checks whether a condition is met and returns one value if TRUE and one value if FALSE. IF functions were used to create boundaries around the different decimal values shown in column 1 of Table 2 and return values in column 2 if TRUE, and 0 if FALSE for a given cell (“Cell Name”, i.e. D2). Combining the IF function together with AND creates IF(AND, which checks whether all arguments are TRUE and returns TRUE if all arguments are TRUE. This is used to combine $0.05 < \text{"Cell Name"}$ and $\text{"Cell Name"} < 0.10$ together, as Microsoft Excel has syntax rules that do not allow: $0.05 < \text{"Cell Name"} < 0.10$. One final IF function returns a value if the decimal is exactly 0.05, 0.10, 0.15, or 0.20 as Microsoft Excel only has “less than” or

This equation was repeated for each of the four factors: Food insecurity rate, percentage 65 plus, SNAP percentage, and percentage Native American or Alaskan Native, creating matrix values for each county (columns Q, R, S, T of figure z). The matrix values were summed to give an overall score with a minimum value of 4 and maximum value of 20 (column U in Figure 3).

Q2	:				=SUM((IF(AND(E2>0,E2<0.0499),1,0))+IF(E2=0.05,1,0)+(IF(AND(E2>0.05,E2<0.0999),2,0))+IF(E2=0.1,2,0)+(IF(AND(E2>0.1,E2<0.14999),3,0))+IF(E2=0.15,3,0)+(IF(AND(E2>0.15,E2<0.19999),4,0))+IF(E2=0.2,4,0)+(IF(AND(E2>0.2,E2<1),5,0))))))									
	A	B	E	I	K	P	Q	R	S	T	U	W	X	
			Food Insecurity Rate (2019)	Percentage 65+ (2020)	Percentage SNAP Participants (2023)	Percentage Pop Native American (2020)	Food Insecurity Matrix	65 + Matrix	SNAP Participants Matrix	Pop Native American Matrix	Matrix Result			
1		County												
2		0 Montana	9.5%	18.7%	7.6%	9.5%	2	4	2	2	10			
3		001 Beaverhead	10.9%	22.0%	5.5%	4.3%	3	5	2	1	11			
4		003 Big Horn	15.7%	12.8%	21.7%	69.4%	4	3	5	5	17			
5		005 Blaine	18.3%	15.3%	12.7%	58.0%	4	4	3	5	16			
6		007 Broadwater	8.9%	23.7%	4.9%	4.2%	2	5	1	1	9			
7		009 Carbon	9.2%	25.7%	4.4%	3.0%	2	5	1	1	9			
8		011 Carter	9.8%	25.4%	1.7%	2.4%	2	5	1	1	9			

The DSD Decision Tool was designed to evaluate proposed DSD retail locations based on the county and attributes of the retail location. This second Microsoft Excel matrix used a list of proposed DSD retail locations from CFAC each with various information: location name, if

the location already accepts SNAP, county, city, if the location is in an opportunity zone, if the location is rural, if the location is Tribal owned or operated, and if the location is in Central or Eastern Montana. This data is shown in Figure 4 in columns C to Q.

Figure 4. DSD potential retail locations, via CFAC.

C	D	E	F	N	O	P	Q
Existing Firms							
GENERAL INFORMATION				EQUITY FACTORS			
Location Name	SNAP?	City	County	Opportunity Zone	Rural	Tribal	Central/Eastern
CFAC Spoke							
Camas Market	Yes	Hot Springs	Flathead	yes	yes	yes	no
Clark Fork River Market	Yes	Missoula	Missoula	no	no	no	no
Fresh & Local Food Box Program	Yes	Arlee, Hot Springs	Flathead	yes	yes	yes	no
Specialty Program (part of CFAC)	Yes						
Glacier Tilth Farm CSA	Yes	Dixon	Sanders	yes	yes	yes	no
Hamilton Farmers Market Co-op	Yes	Hamilton	Ravalli	no	no	no	no
Helena Farmers Market	Yes	Helena	Lewis and Clark	yes	no	no	yes
Missoula Farmers Market	Yes	Missoula	Missoula	no	no	no	no
Missoula FBCC	Yes	Missoula	Missoula	no	no	no	no
Missoula Valley Winter Market	Yes	Missoula	Missoula	no	no	no	no
Moon River CSA	Yes	Clinton	Missoula	no	yes	no	no
O'Hara Farmers Market	Yes	Hamilton	Ravalli	no	no	no	no
Polson Farmers Market	Yes	Polson	Lake	no	no	yes	no
The Produce Market (Billings)	Yes	Billings	Yellowstone	no	no	no	yes
Red Lodge Farmers' Market	Yes	Red Lodge	Carbon	yes	yes	no	yes
Ronan Farmers Market	Yes	Ronan	Lake	no	yes	yes	no
WMGC CSA	Yes	Missoula	Missoula	yes	no	no	no

The factors in the DSD Decision Tool are the retail location county food insecurity rate, retail location county SNAP usage, opportunity zone, rural/urban, tribally owned/operated, in Central or Eastern Montana, and if the location accepts SNAP. These factors are used in the DSD Decision Tool and multiplied by a weighting factor to give different factors various scores. This matrix weighs each factor based on how important each is to the DSDN, which are shown in the highlighted cells E5 to J5 of Figure 5 (shown below). Each potential location will result in a score based on the attributes the location has, and a higher score represents a higher priority. Each of these criteria had an associated weight shown in Table 4. By multiplying each max score by the weight and adding the numbers, the total score of 26 was derived.

Figure 5. DSD Decision Tool with weighting factors highlighted in yellow.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	DSD Decision Tool										
2	Factor/Criterion	Market Name	County	Food insecurity rates	SNAP usage	Opportunity Zone	Rural	Tribally Owned/Operated	Central/Eastern MT	Location accepts SNAP?	Total Score
5	Weight			1	1	2	3	4	4	3	26
17		Hot Springs FM	Sanders	5	5	2	3	4	0	0	19
18		Mission Falls Farmers Market	Lake	4	5	0	3	4	0	3	19
19		Red Paint Creek Trading Post	Phillips	3	5	0	3	4	4	0	19
20		People's Market at Bison Creek Ranch	Glacier	4	3	0	3	4	4	0	18
21		Harlo Farmers Market	Wheatland	3	5	2	3	0	4	0	17
22		Shelby Market and Music	Toole	3	4	2	3	0	4	0	16
23		Boulder Farmers Market	Jefferson	3	5	0	3	0	4	0	15
24		Shields Valley FM	Park	3	5	0	3	0	4	0	15
25		Anaconda Community Market	Deer Lodge	4	5	2	0	0	4	0	15
26		Anaconda Thrift Center	Deer Lodge	4	5	2	0	0	4	0	15
27		Glendive Farmers Market	Dawson	3	4	0	3	0	4	0	14
28		Twin Bridges Farmers Market	Madison	2	5	0	3	0	4	0	14
29		Livingston Farmers Market	Park	3	5	0	0	0	4	0	12
30		Cut Bank Farmers Market	Glacier	4	3	0	0	0	4	0	11

Food insecurity rate and SNAP usage (columns D and E on Figure 5) used a weight of 1 due to using the same scoring used in the County Ranking Tool of 1 to 5 based on decimal. For example, a food insecurity rate of 7% (0.07) and SNAP usage rate of 11% (0.11) would result in 2 points and 3 points, respectively (See Table 3). These factors have a max value of 5 for a County with over 20% food insecurity rate or SNAP participation. This max was to limit outliers and ensure these categories did not overpower the other factors in the matrix. Food insecurity rate and SNAP participation were weighted the same due to these factors telling different sides of the need of social programs like CFAC's DSD. A location within a county with low SNAP participation would still benefit from expanding DSD if there is a high food insecurity rate. Additionally, locations within counties with high food insecurity rates and high SNAP participation would be doubly prioritized for expanding the DSD program to provide as much benefit as possible.

The weighting factors for opportunity zone, rural/urban, tribal owned/operated, central/eastern Montana, and Location Accepts SNAP are shown in Table 3. USDA Opportunity zones are distressed areas within the United States with tax advantages to spur economic growth, investment, and job creation (IRS, 2020).

Table 3. Weighting factors and definitions for DSD Decision Tool.

Category	Weighting	Factor Definition
Food Insecurity Rates	1	1 = $0.0 < \text{"Cell Name"} < 0.05$, "Cell Name" = 0.05
SNAP Usage		2 = $0.05 < \text{"Cell Name"} < 0.1$, "Cell Name" = 0.1 3 = $0.1 < \text{"Cell Name"} < 0.15$, "Cell Name" = 0.15 4 = $0.15 < \text{"Cell Name"} < 0.2$, "Cell Name" = 0.2; 5 = "Cell Name" > 0.2
Opportunity Zone	2	Yes = 1, No = 0
Rural/Urban	3	Yes = 1, No = 0
Tribal owned/operated	4	Yes = 1, No = 0
Central/Eastern Montana	4	Yes = 1, No = 0
Location Accepts SNAP	3	Yes = 1, No = 0

A “yes” was determined if a potential location was found within an opportunity zone in Montana, with a weighing factor of 2. Opportunity zones are prioritized in this equity filter with a weight of 2 to emphasize investing in these locations and supporting the residents. Rural was

determined by the USDA Rural definition: “all areas outside Census places with 2,500 or more people” (USDA, n.d.). A “yes” means a potential DSD location is outside Census places with 2,500 or more people. A location being in a rural area was given a weighting factor of 3 due to prioritizing rural locations for expanding DSD. Tribally owned and/or operated was included because the DSDN wants to support tribal owned businesses with their Growth through Equity Plan. The Excel sheet provided by CFAC determined the ownership of the location (tribal owned/operated = 1, not = 0) and this factor was given a weight of 4. Similar to urban/rural areas, central or eastern Montana was based on location within the state to focus DSD expansion away from Western Montana and Missoula. Locations on the eastern side of the Continental Divide in Central and Eastern Montana were given a score of 1 and locations in Western Montana a score of 0. For the final factor, a location accepting SNAP benefits was given a 1 and a location currently not accepting SNAP given a 0. This factor was given a weight of 3 as convincing a market to start carrying all the products required to be a SNAP retailer would be difficult, therefore the DSDN would prioritize locations that already offer all the products required to accept SNAP. The total score of a location has a maximum value of 26. Each location can be compared to this value and ranked to determine top priority using this matrix.

3.4 DSD Decision Tool Calculations

Using CFAC’s list of proposed locations for DSD expansion, I created a formula to input each proposed location and calculate a relative value using the weighted factors above. Inputting each market from the ‘Proposed Sites’ sheet, I used the VLOOKUP function to draw upon data I had already calculated in the County Ranking Tool section of the spreadsheet (Figure 3). VLOOKUP looks for a value in the leftmost column of a table then returns a value in the same row from a column you specify, by default the table must be sorted in ascending order. This

function can look up a value in the leftmost column in a predetermined table to return a value in the same row from a column I specify. For example, in Figure 6 the full equation for cell D17 is shown.

Figure 6. DSD Decision Tool with cell D17 highlighted, containing the equation =VLOOKUP(C17,'County Ranking Tool'!\$B\$3:\$P\$58,11,FALSE).

D17 :

DSD Decision Tool										
Factor/Criterion	Market Name	County	Food insecurity rates	SNAP usage	Opportunity Zone	Rural	Tribally Owned/Operated	Central/Eastern MT	Location accepts SNAP?	Total Score
Weight			1	1	2	3	4	4	3	20
	Hot Springs FM	Sanders	5	5	2	3	4	0	0	19
	Mission Falls Farmers Market	Lake	4	5	0	3	4	0	3	19
	Red Paint Creek Trading Post	Phillips	3	5	0	3	4	4	0	19
	People's Market at Bison Creek Ranch	Glacier	4	3	0	3	4	4	0	18
	Harlo Farmers Market	Wheatland	3	5	2	3	0	4	0	17
	Shelby Market and Music	Toole	3	4	2	3	0	4	0	16
	Boulder Farmers Market	Jefferson	3	5	0	3	0	4	0	15
	Shields Valley FM	Park	3	5	0	3	0	4	0	15
	Anaconda Community Market	Deer Lodge	4	5	2	0	0	4	0	15

This equation in cell D17 uses cell C17, Sanders, to look through the ‘County Ranking Tool’ sheet (Figure 3) across the row containing “Sanders” in the area B3:P58, returning the 11th column. The 11th column is the Food Insecurity Rate Matrix Value. The FALSE value is to specify the VLOOKUP to use only exact values for “Sanders”. The TRUE value would return approximate values for “Sanders” and is not recommended by Excel 2013, therefore I use FALSE. This VLOOKUP function uses the location’s county name in order to recall the Food Insecurity Matrix Value or SNAP Percentage Matrix Value calculated previously on the ‘County Ranking Tool’ sheet.

For the factors Opportunity Zone, Rural, Tribal Owned, Central/Eastern MT, and Accepts SNAP, another IF function is used to recall information from the ‘Proposed Sites’ sheet (Figure 4).

Figure 7. DSD Decision Tool with cell F17 containing the equation =IF('Proposed Sites'!N13 = "yes", F\$5,0).

F17

:

✕

✓

fx

=IF("Proposed Sites 'IN13 = "yes", F\$5,0)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	DSD Decision Tool										
2	Factor/Criterion	Market Name	County	Food insecurity rates	SNAP usage	Opportunity Zone	Rural	Tribally Owned/Operated	Central/Eastern MT	Location accepts SNAP?	Total Score
5	Weight			1	1	2	3	4	4	3	26
17		Hot Springs FM	Sanders	5	5	2	3	4	0	0	19
18		Mission Falls Farmers Market	Lake	4	5	0	3	4	0	3	19
19		Red Paint Creek Trading Post	Phillips	3	5	0	3	4	4	0	19
20		People's Market at Bison Creek Ranch	Glacier	4	3	0	3	4	4	0	18
21		Harlo Farmers Market	Wheatland	3	5	2	3	0	4	0	17
22		Shelby Market and Music	Toole	3	4	2	3	0	4	0	16
23		Boulder Farmers Market	Jefferson	3	5	0	3	0	4	0	15
24		Shields Valley FM	Park	3	5	0	3	0	4	0	15
25		Anaconda Community Market	Deer Lodge	4	5	2	0	0	4	0	15

The equation in figure 7 brings the matching value for Opportunity Zone from the ‘Proposed Sites’ sheet and returns the value in cell F\$5 if the cell N13 is “yes”. F\$5 returns the weighting factor for Opportunity zone of 2 in the case of “yes” and 0 in all other instances. The \$ freezes this F row but allows for the column value to be changed when I copy the formula over to the next column, rural (G\$5). This is the same process for rural, tribal owned/operated, and central/eastern MT. The category location accepts SNAP? is different as the data is out of order from the other 4 values in the Proposed Sites sheet, over in the D column in ‘Proposed Sites’. Finally, a SUM function in column K calculates the Total Score of a location out of 26.

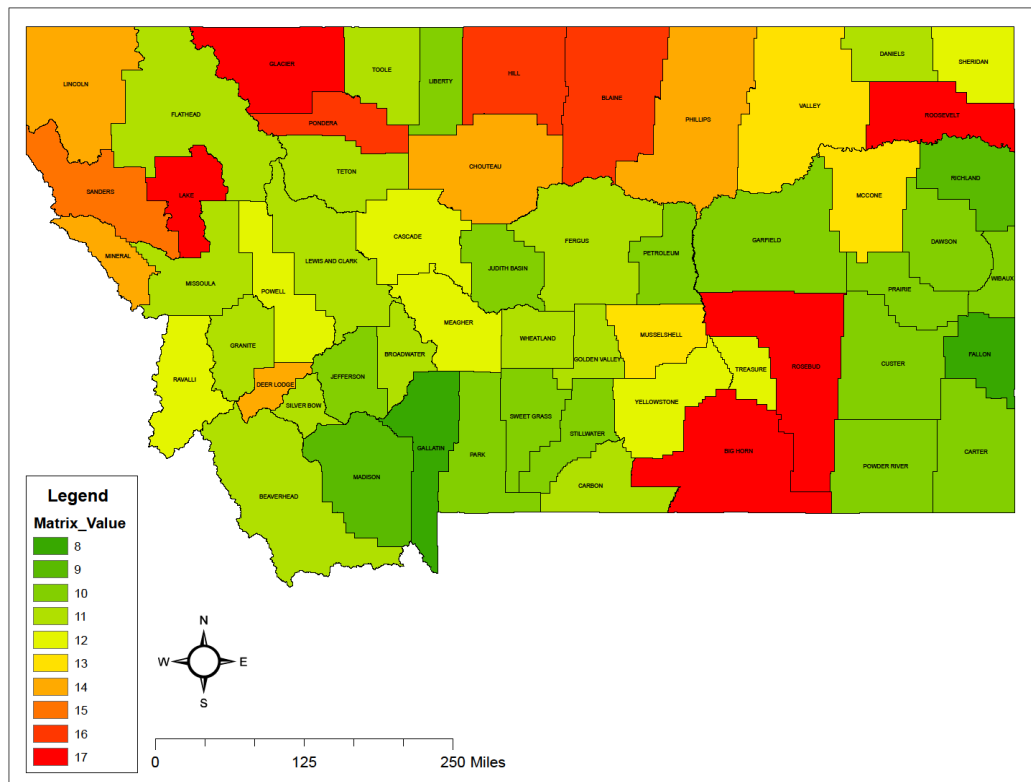
4) Results

4.1 County Matrix Results

Each of Montana’s 56 counties was analyzed using the County Ranking Tool. The Matrix Result column (Figure 3, Column U) sums Matrix outputs from the Food Insecurity Rate, population 65 plus, SNAP percentage, and population Native American or Alaskan Native. The

full results are in figure 10 of the appendix. Counties with the highest combination of the four key factors were Big Horn County, Glacier, Lake, Roosevelt, and Rosebud (all with a score of 17). The lowest ranked counties are Gallatin and Fallon counties with a score of 8. The average score was 11.95. These results were turned into a map of Montana to display the results geographically (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Map of Montana with County Ranking Tool results displayed visually.



4.2 DSD Decision Tool Results

Using the DSD Decision Tool, I analyzed 18 farmers markets, 4 direct market farms, and 7 retail markets. Several additional markets in the ‘Proposed Locations’ sheet containing #N/A are missing location data and therefore are excluded from this section. Locations with a score higher than 15 were color coded in red and locations with a score between 10 and 15 were coded in orange. These colors were used once again to highlight priority. A higher score represents a

location having a higher need for expansion following the DSDN's priorities. Lower scores represent locations that do not satisfy as many criteria and are a lower priority. The full results are in figure 11 of the appendix, and the top 5 locations and scores are as follows:

1. Hot Springs Farmers Market in Sanders County (19),
2. Mission Falls Farmers Market in Lake County (19),
3. Red Paint Creek Trading Post in Phillips County (19),
4. People's Market at Bison Creek Ranch in Glacier County (18),
5. Harlo Farmers Market in Wheatland County (17).

The DSD Decision Tool identified these five as the highest priority based on the combination of factors possessed by each location. Further discussion on the locations is covered in the Conclusion.

Existing DSD retailers were also populated from the 'Proposed Sites' sheet (see figure 12 of the appendix, subheading 'Existing Firms') and analyzed using the matrix. The current list of DSD firms only includes 3 locations in counties in the top 5 Counties of the matrix: Poison Farmers Market and Ronan Farmers Market in Lake County and River Valley Farmers Market in Big Horn County.

5) Discussion

There is a significant overlap between high scoring counties from the County Ranking Tool (red and red-orange regions shown in Figure 8) and Tribal Reservations in Montana (shown in Figure 9). Some of the highest-ranking counties are Blaine (16), Big Horn (17), Glacier (17),

Lake (17), Rosebud (17), and Roosevelt (17), all of which contain portions of Tribal Reservations. These matrix values are the highest of all counties even with limiting the influence of percentage of population identifying as Native American or Alaskan Native at >20%. As described in the methods section, any value over 20% corresponds to a matrix value of 5 to limit outliers. These top six counties all have more than 30% identifying as Native American or Alaskan Native with 4 out of 6 containing over 60%. If further research gives more weight to this category, these counties will be prioritized even more due to this demographic.

Figure 9. Montana Tribal Reservations map with county borders.



Values above 15 were determined to be counties of priority, as they score high on food insecurity rate, percentage age 65 plus, percentage Native American or Alaskan Native, and percentage participating in SNAP. Based on the County Ranking Tool, these counties should take highest priority in researching new locations to propose DSD expansion. When comparing locations within the DSD Decision Tool and the County Ranking Tool, some gaps appear. Big Horn,

Roosevelt, and Rosebud Counties all appear within the top 5 on the County Ranking Tool, however there are no potential sites within these counties. The other two counties within the top 5, Glacier, and Lake, have only 3 proposed locations total. This points to a gap between counties in need of DSD expansion and the current list of proposed locations from the DSDN.

One limitation using county level data is to understand that the boundaries of counties are arbitrary. While county level data is important in determining general areas of need, practical locations for DSD expansion might not fall exactly within county lines but still provide significant benefits to residents. For example, River Valley Farmers Market is a current DSD location in the town of Hardin, just outside of the Crow Reservation. This location has a score of 17 and is in Big Horn County, which also has a score of 17. The Crow Reservation is primarily in Big Horn County, with some land area in Rosebud and Yellowstone counties. Billings Healthy by Design Gardeners' Market is a similar distance from the reservation; yet, it has a score of 14. This location is also in Yellowstone County, which has a score of 12. Both locations provide Crow Reservation residents with access to DSD benefits, however the matrix scores are lower for Billings Healthy by Design Gardeners' Market and Yellowstone County. This showcases limitations in the matrices in accounting for locations and proximity of DSD retailers to county borders.

The best location for a recipient to access DSD might be across county lines; that analysis, however, goes beyond this technical report. To find this information, researchers could interview SNAP and DSD recipients in different counties to comprehend where they are spending their benefit dollars. Further research might look into city, town, and reservation SNAP recipients compared to current/proposed DSD locations to better understand within a county where most SNAP recipients reside. Additional research to map Native American Reservations

compared to current/proposed DSD locations could identify where DSD locations provide the most benefit to those communities. Including buffer zones on counties might help account for cross-county border travel to DSD locations. Each of these research questions would aim to dive deeper than county level data and expand upon the research conducted in this report.

6) Conclusion

The County Ranking Tool and DSD Decision Tool combine into the Growth through Equity Tool, a decision making tool to assist CFAC in expanding the DSD program. The County Ranking Tool used a formula based on four key factors in Microsoft Excel to convert percentages of food insecurity rate, population 65 plus, SNAP participants, and Native American populations into scores. The counties of greatest priority were determined to be Big Horn County, Glacier, Lake, Roosevelt, and Rosebud counties. Potential DSD expansion locations were evaluated using predetermined criteria with different weights combined into the DSD Decision Tool. This tool determined the top priority locations for DSD expansion to be: Hot Springs Farmers Market in Sanders County, Mission Falls Farmers Market in Lake County, Red Paint Creel Trading Post in Phillips County, People's Market at Bison Creek Ranch in Glacier County, and Harlo Farmers Market in Wheatland County. The tools developed in this technical report offer a county-level glimpse into the needs of Montanans and recommendations based on data to prioritize where to expand the DSD program. CFAC's current Proposed Location list does not fully cover priority counties identified by the County Ranking Tool. Only 3 proposed locations were within the top 5 priority counties, 2 in Lake County and 1 in Glacier County. Further DSD expansion should highly consider SNAP retailers within these 5 priority counties

and others ranked high on the County Ranking Tool. Once additional locations are decided, the DSD Decision Tool can be utilized to rank locations for expansion based on the DSDN's priorities. If deemed necessary, weighting factors can be altered by the Subcommittee to evaluate new locations by different priorities or criteria. These matrices are tools for decision making, but do not reflect the logistics around expanding the DSD program, consumer preferences, accessibility of different retail locations, or other factors not included in this analysis.

7) Addendum

Upon completion of this research project, I submitted the two tools and final report to CFAC in December 2021 and presented my findings at University of Montana's conference for graduate student research, GradCon in March 2022. This involved a public presentation and Q&A session in front of students and faculty. I added several more locations into the DSD Decision Tool in 2022 for CFAC, but no additional assistance was asked of me. In preparing this element to my portfolio, I revisited the project with Ian in March 2023 to understand how the DSDN used the research project and receive feedback on the matrices. To revise and update this element, I had several goals: update all possible data sources, review how CFAC used the tools, and create a more universal and user-friendly version of entire tool and technical report.

It is important for this type of tool to use the most recent data to provide the ongoing insight year-to-year. The first goal proved relatively easy to accomplish, as only the Montana population by county and SNAP data by county had updated 2023 data. Montana population estimates by county were found on the World Population Review and SNAP data by county was found on the Montana DPHHS Public Assistance Database. Future versions of this tool could

potentially be coded to include population databases and therefore automatically update. Ian provided me with new locations CFAC had already inputted into the tool when using it for 2022/2023 expansion.

CFAC has utilized these tools for expanding the DSD program since I completed the project in December 2021. In 2021/2022, the DSDN identified the top 10 retail locations from the DSD Decision Tool to offer 1:1 technical assistance (TA) for SNAP retailer authorization (if not already approved by the Food and Nutrition Service), SNAP and Double SNAP program management, outreach and marketing, and data collection, reporting, and evaluation (Finch, personal communication, March 15, 2023). These retail locations were brought to a group TA session, but ultimately some of them lacked human and financial resources to run a SNAP program. Eight additional locations were identified and added to the DSD Decision Tool in a third round of TA.

In 2022/2023, CFAC chose to expand DSD into the brick-and-mortar sector due to a lack of farmers markets and direct marketing retail locations in their “target geographies” (Finch, personal communication, March 15, 2023). Albertsons was identified as the #1 store providing produce to communities along Montana’s Hi-Line in north central and northeastern Montana. Albertsons has done successful nutrition incentive work in Washington state through the SNAP Produce Match program (Washington State Department of Health, 2023); therefore, the DSD Network and CFAC’s Board of Directors approved Albertson’s as a potential DSD retailer (Finch, personal communication, March 15, 2023). The DSD identified priority stores in targeted communities throughout Montana and added them to the DSD Decision Matrix to rank them. Out of the ten proposed stores, it was determined the East Missoula, Harlem, and Wolf Point Montana locations provide DSD benefits to high-need areas. CFAC started offering the DSD

program at these Albertsons locations on April 26th to increase fresh fruit and vegetable purchasing at these stores.

In revisiting this technical report, the final goal became clear: there needed to be a more universal and user-friendly version of the entire Growth through Equity Tool. Inputting new data into the matrices was difficult due to the complexity of the functions and some of the VLOOKUP functions were not operating properly when new data was input. CFAC moved around these shortcomings by pulling static county rankings from the County Ranking Tool (which uses the same data) and copying it over by hand. I wanted to create a newly updated version that clearly walks users through how each section is laid out, what the different equations reflect, how different parts of the tool are used, and how to change things like the weighting factors and data inputs. The methods section of this paper serves as the technical explanation of each formula to complement the direct instructions laid out in comments on the Microsoft Excel document sent to CFAC. The updated 2023 version of the document now has sample sheets that provide instructions on how to use the tool, what the formulas mean, how the weighting factors work, and how different functions work (see Figure 13 of the appendix). I drew upon my experience as a graduate student to lay out different exercises to fully understand the tool. It includes many comments that describe what each cell represents, where the data for formulas comes from, and how to input one's own data into the spreadsheet. CFAC is currently planning on using the Growth through Equity Tool when multiple proposed firms are competing for the same funding and to identify farm direct locations in 2024, when the organization plans to resubmit for GusNIP funding.

8) Appendix

Figure 10. County Ranking Tool full results, with scores between 15 and 16 highlighted orange and scores above 16 in red.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
		County	POPESTIMATE	FI Rate	Number Food Insecure Individuals	AGE65PL US_TOT	65 Plus %	SNAP Participants Sept 2021	SNAP %	Pop Native America n (NA)	% Pop Native America n (NA)	Matrix FI Rate	Matrix 65 Plus	Matrix SNAP %	Matrix NA %	SUM Matrix
2		0 Montana	106065	13.8%	132,180	198374	18.7%	91,062	8.6%	100578	9.5%	3	4	2	2	11
3		001 Beaverhead	9412	12.4%	1,100	2067	22.0%	555	5.9%	405	4.3%	3	5	2	1	11
4		003 Big Horn	13365	18.0%	2,300	1707	12.8%	3,394	25.4%	9280	69.4%	4	3	5	5	17
5		005 Blaine	6774	16.1%	1,050	1037	15.3%	980	14.5%	3932	58.0%	4	4	3	5	16
6		007 Broadwater	6072	14.0%	650	1438	23.7%	333	5.5%	257	4.2%	3	5	2	1	11
7		009 Carbon	10691	11.3%	1,100	2749	25.7%	563	5.3%	321	3.0%	3	5	2	1	11
8		011 Carter	1230	10.9%	140	313	25.4%	29	2.4%	29	2.4%	3	5	1	1	10
9		013 Cascade	81688	12.5%	10,230	15166	18.6%	8,817	10.8%	7326	9.0%	3	4	3	2	12
10		15 Chouteau	5740	12.8%	670	1165	20.3%	266	4.6%	1521	26.5%	3	5	1	5	14
11		017 Custer	11592	12.7%	1,420	2313	20.0%	903	7.8%	462	4.0%	3	4	2	1	10
12		019 Daniels	1729	12.3%	180	461	26.7%	85	4.9%	107	6.2%	3	5	1	2	11
13		021 Dawson	8680	10.7%	920	1709	19.7%	578	6.7%	401	4.6%	3	4	2	1	10
14		23 Deer Lodge	9129	16.4%	1460	2182	23.9%	925	10.1%	458	5.0%	4	5	3	2	14
15		025 Fallon	2912	8.7%	230	492	16.9%	125	4.3%	69	2.4%	2	4	1	1	8
16		027 Fergus	11117	13.6%	1,520	2726	24.5%	630	5.7%	369	3.3%	3	5	2	1	11
17		029 Flathead	102017	16.4%	14,180	19883	19.5%	7,329	7.2%	3911	3.8%	4	4	2	1	11
18		031 Gallatin	111682	13.5%	11,650	14061	12.6%	2,820	2.5%	3330	3.0%	3	3	1	1	8
19		033 Garfield	1257	10.9%	120	289	23.0%	34	2.7%	34	2.7%	3	5	1	1	10
20		035 Glacier	13828	18.2%	2,440	1666	12.0%	3,247	23.5%	10018	72.4%	4	3	5	5	17
21		037 Golden Valley	822	12.2%	110	225	27.4%	59	7.2%	36	4.4%	3	5	2	1	11
22		039 Granite	3371	16.4%	470	1020	30.3%	141	4.2%	123	3.6%	4	5	1	1	11
23		041 Hill	16342	13.2%	2,160	2477	15.2%	3,002	18.4%	4450	27.2%	3	4	4	5	16
24		043 Jefferson	12094	11.7%	1,300	2587	21.4%	544	4.5%	494	4.1%	3	5	1	1	10
25		045 Judith Basin	1946	11.6%	240	526	27.0%	77	4.0%	42	2.2%	3	5	1	1	10
26		047 Lake	30220	17.3%	4,880	6669	22.1%	4,422	14.6%	9279	30.7%	4	5	3	5	17
27		049 Lewis and Clark	68622	11.0%	6,630	12855	18.7%	5,284	7.7%	3684	5.4%	3	4	2	2	11
28		051 Liberty	2416	14.2%	300	500	20.7%	106	4.4%	41	1.7%	3	5	1	1	10
29		53 Lincoln	19797	20.3%	3790	5665	28.6%	2723	13.8%	809	4.1%	5	5	3	1	14
30		55 McCone	1669	12.9%	940	438	26.2%	269	16.1%	48	2.9%	3	5	4	1	13
31		057 Madison	8530	10.0%	170	2451	28.7%	25	0.3%	210	2.5%	2	5	1	1	9
32		59 Meagher	1857	15.6%	250	573	30.9%	102	5.5%	44	2.4%	4	5	2	1	12
33		61 Mineral	4307	17.1%	670	1248	29.0%	615	14.3%	226	5.2%	4	5	3	2	14
34		063 Missoula	118640	14.3%	15,130	18467	15.6%	8,902	7.5%	6619	5.6%	3	4	2	2	11
35		65 Musselshell	4632	14.6%	640	1229	26.5%	570	12.3%	252	5.4%	3	5	3	2	13
36		067 Park	16648	14.2%	2,260	3783	22.7%	827	5.0%	572	3.4%	3	5	1	1	10
37		069 Petroleum	512	12.6%	60	126	24.6%	12	2.3%	12	2.3%	3	5	1	1	10
38		71 Phillips	4060	13.4%	530	907	22.3%	462	11.4%	515	12.7%	3	5	3	3	14
39		073 Pondera	5960	16.0%	950	1210	20.3%	652	10.9%	1070	18.0%	4	5	3	4	16
40		075 Powder River	1720	10.6%	180	458	26.6%	59	3.4%	85	4.9%	3	5	1	1	10
41		077 Powell	6953	15.0%	1,060	1420	20.4%	503	7.2%	574	8.3%	3	5	2	2	12
42		079 Prairie	1070	12.1%	120	346	32.3%	47	4.4%	51	4.8%	3	5	1	1	10
43		81 Ravalli	43166	15.4%	6170	11124	25.8%	4193	9.7%	1447	3.4%	4	5	2	1	12
44		083 Richland	10855	12.3%	1,120	1626	15.0%	505	4.7%	563	5.2%	3	3	1	2	9
45		085 Roosevelt	11069	17.4%	1,780	1276	11.5%	3,060	27.6%	6901	62.3%	4	3	5	5	17
46		087 Rosebud	9040	15.9%	1,460	1418	15.7%	1,743	19.3%	3253	36.0%	4	4	4	5	17
47		089 Sanders	11847	22.4%	2,450	3697	31.2%	1,568	13.2%	916	7.7%	5	5	3	2	15
48		091 Sheridan	3386	12.0%	430	773	22.8%	176	5.2%	189	5.6%	3	5	2	2	12
49		093 Silver Bow	34739	13.7%	4,500	6623	19.1%	4,533	13.0%	1491	4.3%	3	4	3	1	11
50		095 Stillwater	9483	11.3%	970	2165	22.8%	457	4.8%	277	2.9%	3	5	1	1	10
51		097 Sweet Grass	3703	12.1%	440	981	26.5%	126	3.4%	117	3.2%	3	5	1	1	10
52		099 Teton	6117	12.0%	730	1397	22.8%	408	6.7%	302	4.9%	3	5	2	1	11
53		101 Toole	4835	12.1%	620	894	18.5%	330	6.8%	479	9.9%	3	4	2	2	11
54		103 Treasure	673	10.6%	100	192	28.5%	40	5.9%	35	5.2%	3	5	2	2	12
55		105 Valley	7406	12.4%	850	1733	23.4%	697	9.4%	954	12.9%	3	5	2	3	13
56		107 Wheatland	2184	14.2%	290	531	24.3%	194	8.9%	89	4.1%	3	5	2	1	11
57		109 Wibaux	1030	13.7%	130	244	23.7%	21	2.0%	18	1.7%	3	5	1	1	10
58		111 Yellowstone	160029	11.4%	15,940	27096	16.9%	16,075	10.0%	12081	7.5%	3	4	3	2	12

Figure 11. Full results of Growth Decision Matrix of proposed DSD expansion sites and existing sites. The average score was 11.62.

DSD Decision Tool										
Factor/Criterion	Market Name	County	Food insecurity rates	SNAP usage	Opportunity Zone	Rural	Tribally Owned/Operated	Central/Eastern MT	Location accepts SNAP?	Total Score
Weight			1	1	2	3	4	4	3	26
	Hot Springs FM	Sanders	5	5	2	3	4	0	0	19
	Mission Falls Farmers Market	Lake	4	5	0	3	4	0	3	19
	Red Paint Creek Trading Post	Phillips	3	5	0	3	4	4	0	19
	People's Market at Bison Creek Ranch	Glacier	4	3	0	3	4	4	0	18
	Harlo Farmers Market	Wheatland	3	5	2	3	0	4	0	17
	Shelby Market and Music	Toole	3	4	2	3	0	4	0	16
	Boulder Farmers Market	Jefferson	3	5	0	3	0	4	0	15
	Shields Valley FM	Park	3	5	0	3	0	4	0	15
	Anaconda Community Market	Deer Lodge	4	5	2	0	0	4	0	15
	Anaconda Thrift Center	Deer Lodge	4	5	2	0	0	4	0	15
	Glendive Farmers Market	Dawson	3	4	0	3	0	4	0	14
	Twin Bridges Farmers Market	Madison	2	5	0	3	0	4	0	14
	Livingston Farmers Market	Park	3	5	0	0	0	4	0	12
	Cut Bank Farmers Market	Glacier	4	3	0	0	0	4	0	11
	Seeley Lake Sunday Market	Missoula	3	4	0	0	0	0	3	10
	Trout Creek Farmers Market	Sanders	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	10
	Darby Farmers Market	Ravalli	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	9
	Cultivating Connections	Ravalli	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	9
Direct Market Farms	Wicked Good Farm	Flathead	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	8
Direct Market Farms	Wicked Good Farm	Flathead	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	8
	The Farmers Stand	Flathead	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	8
	Max's Market	Flathead	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	8
	Door Step Farm Foods	Park	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	8
	Orchard Homes Farmers Market	Missoula	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	7
Retail	Yellowstone Valley Farmers Market	Yellowstone	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	7
	Great Falls Farmers Market	Cascade	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	7
	Clark Fork Organics	Missoula	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	7
	OddFellow Inn & Farm	Lewis and Clark	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	7
	O Street / Missoula Fresh Market (or similar)	Missoula	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	7
	Bozeman Community Coop	Gallatin	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	6
	Lame Deer Trading Post IGA		0	#N/A	#N/A	0	0	0	0	#N/A
	Hardin IGA		0	#N/A	#N/A	0	0	0	0	#N/A
	Town and Country		0	#N/A	#N/A	0	0	0	0	#N/A
	Yellowstone Valley Food Hub		0	#N/A	#N/A	0	0	0	0	#N/A
Existing Firms	Glacier Tith Farm CSA	Sanders	5	5	2	3	4	0	3	22
	Camas Market	Flathead	4	4	2	3	4	0	3	20
	Fresh & Local Food Box Program	Flathead	4	4	2	3	4	0	3	20
	Red Lodge Farmers' Market	Carbon	3	5	2	3	0	4	3	20
	Ronan Farmers Market	Lake	4	5	0	3	4	0	3	19
	Libby, Farmers Market at	Lincoln	5	5	2	3	0	0	3	18
	Troy Farmers Market	Lincoln	5	5	0	3	0	4	0	17
	River Valley Farmers Market	Big Horn	4	3	0	3	0	4	3	17
	Helena Farmers Market	Lewis and Clark	3	4	2	0	0	4	3	16
	Poison Farmers Market	Lake	4	5	0	0	4	0	3	16
	Eureka Farmers Market	Lincoln	5	5	0	3	0	0	3	16
	The Produce Market (Billings - Sharli)	Yellowstone	3	4	0	0	0	4	3	14
	Billings Healthy by Design Gardeners' Market	Yellowstone	3	4	0	0	0	4	3	14
	Moon River CSA	Missoula	3	4	0	3	0	0	3	13
	Bozeman Winter Market	Gallatin	3	3	0	0	0	4	3	13
	Hamilton Farmers Market Coop	Ravalli	4	5	0	0	0	0	3	12
	O'Hara Farmers Market	Ravalli	4	5	0	0	0	0	3	12
	WMGC CSA	Missoula	3	4	2	0	0	0	3	12
	Butte Farmer's Market	Silver Bow	3	4	2	0	0	0	3	12
	Bigfork Village Market	Flathead	4	4	0	0	0	0	3	11
	Columbia Falls Community Market	Flathead	4	4	0	0	0	0	3	11
	Kalispell Farmers Market	Flathead	4	4	0	0	0	0	3	11
	Whitefish Farmers Market	Flathead	4	4	0	0	0	0	3	11
	Clark Fork River Market	Missoula	3	4	0	0	0	0	3	10
	Missoula Farmers Market	Missoula	3	4	0	0	0	0	3	10
	Missoula FBCC	Missoula	3	4	0	0	0	0	3	10
	Missoula Valley Winter Market	Missoula	3	4	0	0	0	0	3	10

Figure 12. Proposed Double SNAP Dollar sites list from CFAC.

A	B	C	D	E	F	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T						
	2021 DSD Proposed and Existing Firms					Yellow highlight = SNAP and DSD TA in progress												
	Proposed/Possible Firms																	
3	SC Member/ Local	Staff providing technical	GENERAL INFORMATION		EQUITY FACTORS				2021 GusCRR PROPOSED BUDGET									
4			Farmers Markets	SNAP?	City	County	Opportunity Zone	Rural	Tribal	Central/Eastern	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3					
5	JOURNALS/GENERAL INFORMATION/ntana.edu - nutrition	Jeanette Awoay @montana.edu - nutrition	James (Aly connect James)	James	Cut Bank Farmers Market		Cut Bank	Glacier	no	no	no	yes		300	500			
6				James	Shelby Market and Music		Shelby	Toole	yes	yes	no	yes		300	500			
7				James	Livingston Farmers Market		Livingston	Park	no	no	no	yes		600	1000			
8				James	Boulder Farmers Market		Boulder	Jefferson	no	yes	no	yes		300	500			
9				James	Glendive Farmers Market		Glendive	Dawson	no	yes	no	yes		300	500			
10				Aly	Orchard Homes Farmers Market		Missoula	Missoula	no	no	no	no		300	500			
11				James or Tammy	Twin Bridges Farmers Market Maybe		Twin Bridges	Madison	no	yes	no	yes		300	500			
12				Ian	Hot Springs FM		Hot Springs	Sanders	yes	yes	yes	no		1000	2000			
13					Roundup				no	yes	no	yes		200	300			
14				James or Tammy	Shields Valley FM		Shields Valley	Park	no	yes	no	yes		300	500			
15				James	Harlo Farmers Market		Harlowton	Wheatland	yes	yes	no	yes		300	500			
16				Gretchen or James	People's Market at Bison Creek Ranch		East Glacier Park	Glacier	no	yes	yes	yes		200	400			
17				Aly	Seeley Lake Sunday Market	Yes	Seeley Lake	Missoula	no	what is the defini	no	no						
18				Ian	Anaconda Community Market		Anaconda	Deer Lodge	yes	no	no	yes		500	500			
19				Ian	Fort Peck FM?		Lauren investigating		yes	yes	yes	yes						
20				James	Mission Falls Farmers Market	Yes	St. Ignatius	Lake	no	yes	yes	no						
21					Yellowstone Valley Farmers Market		Yellowstone											
22					Darby Farmers Market		Darby	Ravalli										
23																		
24				educator based		Great Falls Farmers Market	Great Falls	Cascade										
	Trout Creek Farmers Market		Trout Creek						Sanders					2021 GusCRR PROPOSED BUDGET				
	Direct Market Farms		City						County					Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		
										Opportunity Zone	Rural	Tribal	Central/Eastern					
	Aly	Clark Fork Organics							Missoula	Missoula	no	no	no	no	200	500	1000	
	DONE	Wicked Good Farm							Whitefish	Flathead	no	no	no	no	500	1000	1000	
	James or Aly	OddFellow Inn & Farm							Helena	Lewis and Clark								
	Aly	Cultivating Connections							Hamilton	Ravalli								
	Ian or James	Miller Colony																
		Retail							City	County					2021 GusCRR PROPOSED BUDGET			
											Opportunity Zone	Rural	Tribal	Central/Eastern	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	
	Ian	Red Paint Creek Trading Post							Dodson	Phillips	no	yes	yes	yes		2000	3000	5000
	Ian	Anaconda Thrift Center							Anaconda	Deer Lodge	yes	no	no	yes			500	600
	Gretchen or is this DO	The Farmers Stand									no	no	no	no			5000	5000
	I. A. J	O Street / Missoula Fresh Market (or similar)									no	no	no	no	15000	42000	50000	
	Gretchen or James	Max's Market							Bigfork	Flathead	no	no	no	no			500	1000
	James or Ian	Bozeman Community Coop							Bozeman	Gallatin	no	no	no	yes - South Central - does this count here?				
	James or Ian	Door Step Farm Foods							Livingston	Park	no	what is the defini	no	yes - South Central - does this count here?				
		Lame Deer Trading Post IGA																
		Hardin IGA																
		Town and Country																
	*recommended by Robin Kelson, AF	Yellowstone Valley Food Hub		Bozeman, Belgrade, Livingston, Dill		6	12	5	14									
Where are the gaps on the map?																		
Potential Site?																		
			City/Location	County	EQUITY FACTORS													
					Opportunity Zone	Rural	Tribal	Central/Eastern										
		https://docs.google.com/document/d/1p0H2i8pekRlw4ygAHFZB5/	Have															
			Chinook															
			Dupuyer															
			Dupuyer															
			Fort Benton															
			Rocky Boy's Reservation															
			Crow Reservation															
Existing Firms																		
	W9 on file?	Staff providing technical	GENERAL INFORMATION		EQUITY FACTORS				2021 GusCRR PROPOSED BUDGET									
			Location Name	SNAP?	City	County	Opportunity Zone	Rural	Tribal	Central/Eastern	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3					
			CFAC Spoke															
			Camas Market	Yes	Hot Springs	Flathead	yes	yes	yes	no								
			Clark Fork River Market	Yes	Missoula	Missoula	no	no	no	no								
			Fresh & Local Food Box Program	Yes	Arlee, Hot Springs	Flathead	yes	yes	yes	no	200 boxes - \$15 of produce over 14 weeks = \$42,000							
			Specialty Program (part of CF)	Yes							42000	20000	0					
			Glacier Tilt Farm CSA	Yes	Dixon	Sanders	yes	yes	yes	no								
			Hamilton Farmers Market Co-op	Yes	Hamilton	Ravalli	no	no	no	no								
		Ian	Helena Farmers Market	Yes	Helena	Lewis and Clark	yes	no	no	yes	4000	6000	8000					
			Missoula Farmers Market	Yes	Missoula	Missoula	no	no	no	no								
			Missoula FBCC	Yes	Missoula	Missoula	no	no	no	no								
			Missoula Valley Winter Market	Yes	Missoula	Missoula	no	no	no	no								
		Aly	Moon River CSA	Yes	Clinton	Missoula	no	yes	no	no	1000	3000	5000					
			O'Hara Farmers Market	Yes	Hamilton	Ravalli	no	no	no	no								
			Polson Farmers Market	Yes	Polson	Lake	no	no	yes	no								
	Yes		The Produce Market (Billings)	Yes	Billings	Yellowstone	no	no	no	yes	500	600	700					
			Red Lodge Farmers Market	Yes	Red Lodge	Carbon	yes	yes	no	yes								
			Ronan Farmers Market	Yes	Ronan	Lake	no	yes	yes	no								
			WMGC CSA	Yes	Missoula	Missoula	yes	no	no	no								
			Farm Hands Spoke															

Figure 13. Sample Sheet of County Ranking Tool with explanation comments and practice exercises.

[illegible]

9) Works Cited

America Counts Staff. (2021, August 25). Montana Population Topped the 1 Million Mark in 2020. *United States Census Bureau*. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/montana-population-change-between-census-decade.html>

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2021). SNAP Is an Important Public-Private Partnership. *Center for Budget and Policy Priorities*. <https://www.cbpp.org/snap-is-an-important-public-private-partnership#Montana>

Community Food & Agriculture Coalition. (2023). Double SNAP Dollars. *CFAC*. <https://www.missoulacfac.org/programs/food-access/double-snap-dollars/>

Double SNAP Locations. (2023). *Double SNAP Dollars*. <https://www.doubledollarsmt.com/locations/>

Feeding America. (2021). Food Insecurity in Montana. *Feeding America*. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2019/overall/montana>

Finch, Ian. (2021). DSD Growth through Equity. *Community Food & Agriculture Coalition*. <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19wbhE3CTwm0RyhCPdRCX6fRSPPWCcnqMzF1fBqart0o/edit#gid=0>

Finch, Ian. (2023, March 15). Personal Communication.

Food and Nutrition Service U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Retailer eligibility - clarification of Criterion A and criterion B requirements*. (2018, January 19). Retrieved April 27, 2023, from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer-eligibility-clarification-of-criterion>

Governor's Office of Indian Affairs. (2021). Tribal Nations. *Montana Official State Website*.

<https://tribalnations.mt.gov/tribalnations>

IRS. (2020, August 13). Opportunity Zones. *Internal Revenue Service*.

<https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/opportunity-zones>

Lindsey Haynes-Maslow, Isabel Osborne, Stephanie Jilcott Pitts, Marilyn Sitaker, Carmen

Byker-Shanks, Lucia Leone, Adriana Maldonado, Jared McGuirt, Lauri Andress, Lisa

Bailey-Davis, Barbara Baquero, Jane Kolodinsky, Brian Lo, Emily Morgan, Rebecca

Senguin, Alice Ammerman. (2018, December). Rural corner store owners' perceptions of stocking healthier foods in response to proposed SNAP retailer rule changes. *Food*

Policy, Vol 81, 2018, Pages 58-66, ISSN 0306-9192,

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2018.10.004>

Montana DPHHS. (2023). State of Montana SNAP Program Overview. *Montana.gov*.

<https://dphhs.mt.gov/InteractiveDashboards/publicassistancedashboard>

USDA. (n.d.). Montana – Rural Definitions. *United States Department of Agriculture*.

https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/DataFiles/53180/25581_MT.pdf?v=39329

United States Food and Nutrition Act 2008. Section 2. 2011. Declaration of

Policy. <https://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/Food> And Nutrition Act Of 2008.pdf.

Washington State Department of Health. (2023). *SNAP Produce Match*. [https://doh.wa.gov/you-](https://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/nutrition-and-physical-activity/healthy-eating/snap-match-programs/snap-produce-match?combine=Albertsons&county=All&field_snap_mo_value=All)

[and-your-family/nutrition-and-physical-activity/healthy-eating/snap-match-](https://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/nutrition-and-physical-activity/healthy-eating/snap-match-programs/snap-produce-match?combine=Albertsons&county=All&field_snap_mo_value=All)

[programs/snap-produce-](https://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/nutrition-and-physical-activity/healthy-eating/snap-match-programs/snap-produce-match?combine=Albertsons&county=All&field_snap_mo_value=All)

[match?combine=Albertsons&county=All&field_snap_mo_value=All](https://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/nutrition-and-physical-activity/healthy-eating/snap-match-programs/snap-produce-match?combine=Albertsons&county=All&field_snap_mo_value=All)

World Population Review. (2023). *Population of Counties in Montana*. Review.

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/states/mt>

III. Component 2: Missoula Food Bank & Community Center Internship Reflection

1) Introduction

In the summer of 2022, I completed an internship with the Missoula Food Bank and Community Center (MFB&CC) working with the Kids Table program. I was employed through an AmeriCorps program via Campus Compact at the University of Montana. My main responsibilities involved preparing meals for Kids Table; operating a meal site to give out meals; making informational sheets about the contents of meals (“1/4 sheets”, see figure 1 below and Figures 2-4 in the appendix); distribution of MFB&CC’s weekend backpack program (EmPower packs); participation in home delivery programs (ROOTS delivery); supporting pantry and store services; participating in MFB&CC meetings, trainings, and events; and participating in AmeriCorps meetings and preparing monthly reporting. Through this internship, I gained valuable insight into the experiences of food insecure families and worked tangibly to address community food security through a community-based nonprofit. I explain these activities below and include a reflection on what I learned during the process.

Figure 1. June Harvest of the Month factsheet on Leafy Greens.



MFB&CC started in 1982 and has been ‘nourishing community’ in Missoula and the surrounding area for over 40 years (Missoula Food Bank, 2022a). In 2021, MFB&CC provided 80,673 afterschool meals (55,225 of these were breakfasts and lunches over summer as part of the Kids Table program), 40,041 EmPower packs, in-store food services to 28,832 individuals (9,090 unique households), and 5,370 ROOTs boxes to elderly citizens (Missoula Food Bank, 2022b). Currently, the MFB&CC is located on 1720 Wyoming Street in a building that combines the services of a food pantry (“The Store”), community center, learning kitchen and classroom, the EmPower Place, and a Partnership Health Center Clinic. The Food Bank Store does not have eligibility criteria, with the goal that every person leaves with food every time they visit. The MFB&CC is a non-partisan, anti-racist, LGBTQ2S+ ally organization that works to create a safe and welcoming space for every person who utilizes their services. Customers are asked to fill out an intake form that is self-reported and no documentation is required to utilize the Food Bank Store at the Wyoming Street location. Next, trained volunteer Resource Assistants will share additional resources available to individuals and answer any questions customers have about the Store. Based on the number of people in their household, customers can then shop from a variety

of fresh produce, dairy, frozen meat, bakery items, and dry and canned goods at the Food Bank Store. In addition to the store services, MFB&CC is a community center with event hosting space and monthly activities. The Bill and Rosemary Gallagher Learning Kitchen offers free cooking classes to help families with healthy, low-cost meal preparation and food preservation, in addition to partnering with other service providers for additional workshops. MFB&CC also houses EmPower Place, a “hands-on family learning center” that combines community center, science museum, food hub, and library into one space for children and parents (Missoula Food Bank, 2022a). EmPower Place is a collaboration between spectrum, MFB&CC, and the Missoula Public Library to provide science exhibits, role models from the University of Montana, literacy and STEM programming, and books for children, young adults, and parents (Missoula Food Bank, 2022a). Finally, the MFB&CC hosts a satellite location from Partnership Health Center (PHC) to provide health services, dental hygiene appointments, and behavioral health services via telehealth (Missoula Food Bank, 2022).

2) Responsibilities

My chief responsibility at the MFB&CC was the weekly meal site I operated, starting with the Missoula Public Library (MPL) and followed by taking over the MFB&CC’s “Mobile Food Bus” for August. In the morning, I would prepare meals with volunteers and pack up banana boxes full of lunches for each meal site. Each day, I would pack up a van or the Mobile Food Bus full of lunches and groceries, travel to my meal site and deliver meals to kids and families. Activities at the meal site included passing out free lunches, recording meal counts, interacting with kids, giving out groceries, managing volunteers at meal sites, and keeping the

space clean and sanitary. Meals given to kids were required to be logged in a meal sheet each day and entered into an online portal. On Fridays we would give kids “EmPower packs”, which included breakfasts and dinners to help them stay fed over the weekend. This made Fridays the busiest days of the week, sometimes serving over 200 meals and EmPower packs.

While working at MFB&CC, I also had the responsibility of creating informational sheets about ingredients in the meals kids were receiving, such as milk, leafy greens, or blueberries (see Figures 1-4 in the appendix). These sheets would include facts about the ingredient on one side and engaging activities, recipes, puzzles, and games on the other side. This was a passion project for me as I had a creative outlet to educate the kids about food items in their lunches. Once a month on the third Thursday, MFB&CC would take part in the Senior Delivery Program, or “ROOTS” delivery, and the staff and volunteers would help deliver paper bags of groceries to customers who had difficulty accessing the Food Bank. I worked with three other AmeriCorps interns on these tasks, and we would meet weekly with our supervisors to discuss responsibilities and upcoming events. As part of AmeriCorps service, we were required to fill out monthly reports on the impact we were having and the responsibilities we had as part of our service. We wrote the AmeriCorps reports as a team of Kids Table interns, each of us writing one for June, July, and August. These reports are attached in the appendix as items 1, 2 and 3.

3) Reflection

From my time interning at the MFB&CC, I gained meaningful insight into a nonprofit work experience, and deeper perspective on household and individual food insecurity as well as community food security. Working at a nonprofit like the MFB&CC was helpful for me to

understand the work involved and the impact on the community. The MFB&CC has been invaluable to food insecure individuals in Missoula, especially during COVID-19 and through rising inflation as COVID-19-related aid programs ended. It deepened my understanding of people facing food insecurity and I learned more and more that welfare programs like SNAP are not doing enough for people, especially in the face of high inflation. Families who make more money than what is considered “in poverty” (and eligible for SNAP benefits) also face food insecurity. This can be due to external expenses such as medical debt, gambling or alcohol addiction, or rising costs of housing. While I had researched SNAP eligibility guidelines during Component 1, this experience helped me better understand that eligibility isn’t the whole story and families might have other problems that don’t show up in the guidelines but still affect them. Working with kids facing food insecurity is very impactful as children born into food insecurity face developmental challenges resulting from inadequate nutrition at a young age.

The Kids Table Summer program directly assisted food-insecure individuals in the Missoula community and particularly those living in and around the Missoula Public Library, Linda Vista Apartments, University Family Housing, Travois Village, and Futura Trailer Park. The work I did for the Food Bank’s ROOTS program and grocery store directly helped customers of the MFB&CC access healthy food impacted by the post-pandemic inflation in the summer of 2022. My specific meal site at the Missoula Public Library and along the Food Bus route allowed me to directly serve free lunches that summer. As part of the 2022 AmeriCorps Summer Kids Table VISTA team, we served 3,000 individuals food, nutrition, or health programming; supervised 3,200 hours of service by volunteers; and provided services to 2,600 disadvantaged youths. We also provided health-related information, increased food security, and assistance to disadvantaged youth, Native American Tribal Members, individuals aged 55+, and

U.S. Veterans and active-duty family members. These numbers are fully detailed in Table 1 of the appendix.

Working with the kids and managing volunteers was the most rewarding aspect of my summer at the food bank. Seeing the same kids come up every day and politely ask for lunches was hard to see, but also joyful and rewarding. Overall, I had very few kids use poor manners and most kids were patient while they waited for their lunches. The volunteers were very inspiring, as many were retirees and some even brought their grandchildren. These volunteers provided labor to create thousands of lunches and distributed them to kids and families in need. They chose to spend their free time helping pack lunches for those less fortunate and often made great conversation as they worked. The volunteers inspired me to continue packing sandwiches and repackaging tortilla chips; if they could do it at 80 years old, I could certainly keep doing it at 22.

Working at the Food Bank, I was frustrated by the amount of plastic waste involved with individually packing lunch items. We would repack many different snacks into small plastic bags, pack lunches into paper or plastic bags, and individually wrap sandwiches for every sack lunch. This could be as many as 800 lunches *per day*; and we worked five days a week for three months. I had difficulty observing this excessive use of plastic, as every day involved packing hundreds sandwiches into plastic bags, especially as I personally went all of 2022 using and reusing just 10 plastic bags. The tough thing was that there was no alternative for how we could safely pack all that food. Rewashing or reusing bags? Too much water usage. Compostable bags? Too expensive compared to plastic. Putting the food directly into the sack lunches? This would not be food safe, would waste too much time, and would not keep the food fresh. There was no obvious solution to the waste created every single day. I eventually came to terms with my

discomfort by accepting that plastic waste must be created in order to serve kids healthy and nutritious food and follow food-safe guidelines.

The repetitive nature of preparing food for the Kids Table lunch program and packing lunches became more difficult to deal with as summer continued. I made thousands of peanut butter & jelly sandwiches, packed innumerable bags of Wheat Thins, and rewashed crate upon crate of apples. It felt difficult sometimes to smile, make small talk, and not turn into a robot when you face the same tasks week after week and work with the same people. Using a Bluetooth speaker to play music really helped keep our spirits up, especially playing some of the “Big Bootie Mixes” by Two Friends. Being able to go to my meal site every day at lunch and give out hundreds of sack lunches to grateful children was the key to keeping going and staying optimistic. The kids were so excited to get their lunches, and I loved being able to see them every day, hanging out in the Missoula Public Library or on the Mobile Food Bus. I felt like an ice cream truck driver as the Mobile Food Bus had its own song that I would play as I drove around neighborhoods! Although instead of ice cream, I was bringing kids healthy lunches and good vibes.

4) Conclusion

The Kids Table VISTA internship furthered my career goals by working directly in the local food system on food insecurity via an entry level role at a community-based nonprofit organization. MFB&CC’s role in increasing community food security is exactly the type of work I am interested in post-graduate school. The Food Bank works to procure local food and help disadvantaged people access healthy, nutritious food especially in times of hardship like the summer of 2022 (i.e., post COVID-19, inflation, and the war in Ukraine). I wanted to work at the

community level to see a more direct impact as opposed to state, national, or international levels. After my experience, I find local level work to be very rewarding and impactful and something I am seriously considering after graduate school. Being able to serve under AmeriCorps is a great experience to have on my resume for applying to government positions. Working domestically in AmeriCorps rather than abroad in the Peace Corps was also an important aspect to the job. I want to focus my career on helping combat food insecurity here in the United States while also avoiding any sort of colonizer or white savior feeling by working abroad.

My one regret from the Kids Table Internship was the loss of equity and diversity work when the acting equity director resigned. The first two weeks of summer, our AmeriCorps intern group were given equity readings and discussed these readings each week during diversity and inclusion conversations each Friday. This task was taken on by another MFB&CC staffer when the equity director left (before summer), but only lasted the first couple of weeks into summer. I attempted to take on this equity work myself but was turned down as our group was cutting the diversity talks due to limited capacity. I want to recognize the difficult environment and additional responsibilities team members of the MFB&CC had taken on given that several people had recently left the organization and the Food Bank broke distribution records several times in summer 2022. There was little time for equity work with reduced personnel and increased responsibilities, but I think it is important when working with vulnerable groups and as a mostly white organization to continue this work even in difficult times. I wish I was given the opportunity to create equity content and lead weekly discussions even just with the Kids Table intern group. This led me to feel underutilized as a master's candidate and relegated to intern tasks when I had more capabilities than I had responsibilities.

My experience at MFB&CC was amazing and I think it is a fantastic organization for anyone interested in social work, food systems, food insecurity, and community-based work. MFB&CC provides valuable direct aid to food insecure populations especially those who are most vulnerable such as children, elderly, and people with disabilities. I would not recommend students do short summer opportunities with Campus Compact or AmeriCorps unless they are financially supported, as I was during my internship experience. The living stipend paid by AmeriCorps is not enough to live in Missoula and I was not able to save any money during my summer internship experience. The education award at the completion of service did significantly help with tuition and education expenses as it is a sizeable amount of money. I think people should be paid a livable wage yet because working for AmeriCorps is considered “service”, it is not considered work nor is it considered volunteering. Some year-long AmeriCorps positions provide living stipends or offer communal living but this opportunity did not. Most people aren’t working for AmeriCorps for the money, but I think other students should be aware before signing up. I personally was okay working through AmeriCorps for career reasons and found the Segal Education Award at the end of service helpful to help pay for my last two semesters of grad school. Overall, I would completely recommend working for the MFB&CC in the Kids Table program for the amazing hands-on experience, the ability to work with great people, and to witness the impact on hundreds of kids’ lives over a summer. I want to thank my supervisors at the MFB&CC, Jamie and Ashley, along with all my coworkers during my time at the Food Bank: Alex, Shelby, Keeza, Marcus, Jamie Z., Beccam Gregg, and Maggie.

5) Appendix

Figure 2. July Harvest of the Month $\frac{1}{4}$ informational sheet on Dairy, front side.



Figure 3. July Harvest of the Month ¼ informational sheet on Dairy, back side.

MONTANA
Harvest of the Month
missoula food bank & community center

Can you complete the word search? Find the following words in the puzzle. Words are hidden → and ↓

G	G	L	I	D	A	I	R	Y	E	P	C
O	K	Y	O	G	U	R	T	N	R	R	A
A	K	J	B	C	H	E	E	S	E	O	L
T	M	L	O	C	C	X	B	V	D	T	C
G	I	S	N	S	H	E	E	P	C	E	I
X	L	L	E	Q	B	X	E	R	M	I	U
L	K	D	S	T	E	C	O	W	S	N	M
Y	R	K	S	W	J	M	O	T	O	E	E

Words:
BONES
CALCIUM
CHEESE
COWS
DAIRY
GOAT
MILK
PROTEIN
SHEEP
YOGURT

MONTANA
Harvest of the Month
missoula food bank & community center

All **dairy** products are derived from **milk**, mostly from cows. Montana also has goat and sheep **milk** producers.

Here are the 6 main dairy cattle breeds in the US. The Holstein cow produces the most milk of all breeds at 9 gallons of milk per day!

MONTANA
Harvest of the Month
missoula food bank & community center

The recommended amount of **dairy** for kids is 2.5-3 cups per day. Check out the chart below!

Color in your MyPlate with all your favorite foods!

MyPlate.gov

	Amount That Counts as 1 Cup in the Dairy Group
Milk	1 cup milk
	1 half-pint container milk
	1 cup evaporated milk
	1 cup calcium-fortified soy milk
	1 half-pint container calcium-fortified soy milk
Yogurt	1 cup yogurt (dairy or fortified soy)
Cheese	1 ½ ounces hard cheese (cheddar, mozzarella, Swiss, Parmesan)
	½ cup shredded cheese
	1 ounce processed cheese (American)
	½ cup ricotta cheese
	2 cups cottage cheese
	2 ounces Queso fresco
	2 slices Queso blanco

MONTANA
Harvest of the Month
missoula food bank & community center

All dairy products are derived from **milk**, mostly from cows. Montana also has goat and sheep **milk** producers. Montana has approximately 13,000 cows!

Color in the cow below!

It is important to eat or drink **dairy** to build strong **bones** and **teeth**. Make sure you get the recommended amount of 2.5-3 cups per day of **dairy** to grow big and strong!

Figure 4. Blueberry ¼ informational sheet.

FUN FACTS ABOUT BLUEBERRIES:
Today in your lunch we have some **BLUEBERRIES!**
Blueberries are the *only* food that has a natural **blue** color.
Wild **blueberries**, called **huckleberries**, grow in Montana each August. Here's huckleberries -->
Blueberries are a great source of **Vitamin C**, **K**, and **fiber**. **Vitamin C** is good for your **immune system**, **Vitamin K** is good for **body functions**, and **fiber** is good for your **stomach**.

Can you color in our fruit rainbow?

missoula food bank & community center

Table 1. AmeriCorps Kids Table Summer VISTA Team impact numbers.

Month	Unduplicated individuals received educational programing	Individuals served by food, nutrition, or health programing	Individuals reported increased food security	Individuals reported increased health knowledge
June	550	1105	1105	550
July	730	1250	1250	850
August	375	600	600	425
Totals	1655	2955	2955	1825
Month	Unduplicated new volunteers recruited or managed by AmeriCorps members	Hours of service by volunteers	Individual disadvantaged youths received services	Unduplicated Native American Tribal Members impacted
June	15	1680	750	30
July	15	1032	1250	40
August	8	512	600	15
Totals	38	3224	2600	85
Month	Individuals aged 55+	U.S. Military Veteran Family Members	U.S. Active Duty Military Family Members impacted	
June	550	10	5	
July	13	45	25	
August	7	22	11	
Totals	570	77	41	

Appendix Item 1: AmeriCorps June Monthly Response Summary

Collecting monthly impact data from AmeriCorps members helps MTCC to maintain program compliance with our grant funders, and we appreciate the time you put into completing these reports.

For reference, you can download a copy of important reporting definitions. Words in [blue](#) in the report have definitions available. If you have questions, you can always contact Eli Bowe (bowe@mtcompact.org).

Click to write the question text Click to write the question text Q1. Your Name (First & Last):
Alexander Mitchell

Q2. List the names of any other AmeriCorps members contributing to this report (If none, enter "N/A"):

Shelby Smith Andrew Besser

Q3. The activities described in this report occurred in which month?

- June 2022

Q4. How does your service site track the data in this report?

- Volunteer Database Other:
- Meal Counts

Q5. Select Your Service Site

- Missoula Food Bank & Community Center

Q6. ED1A How many [unduplicated](#) individuals received educational programming from the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

550

Q7. ED27C How many [unduplicated](#) individuals displayed improved academic engagement or social- emotional skills on account of educational programming provided by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

0

Q8. H4A How many [unduplicated](#) individuals were served by food, nutrition, or health programming provided by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

1105

Q9. H12 How many [unduplicated](#) individuals reported increased food security on account of programming provided by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

1105

Q10. H17 How many [unduplicated](#) individuals reported increased health knowledge on account of programming provided by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

550

Q38.

G3 - G3.1A How many **unduplicated new volunteers** have been **recruited** or **managed** by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

Do not include AmeriCorps members, either MTCC AmeriCorps members or AmeriCorps members serving with other programs.

15

Q39. How many of these volunteers were College Students?

5

Q40.

How many hours of service were provided by volunteers this month, including both **new** and **ongoing** volunteers **recruited** or **managed** by the AmeriCorps VISTA.

Do not include AmeriCorps members, either MTCC AmeriCorps members or AmeriCorps members serving with other programs.

1680

Q41. How many of these hours were volunteered by College Students?

30

Q12.

In total, how many **unduplicated, disadvantaged** youth received services in the past month due to AmeriCorps member activities?

750

Q18. This month AmeriCorps member service impacted (Select all that apply):

- Native American Tribal Members Individuals Aged 55+
- U.S. Military Veteran Family Members
- U.S. Active Duty Military Personnel Family Members

Q19. How many **unduplicated** Native American Tribal Members were impacted?

30

Q20. How many **unduplicated** Individuals Aged 55+ were impacted?

550

Q23. How many **unduplicated** U.S. Military Veteran Family Members were impacted?

10

Q24. How many **unduplicated** U.S. Active Duty Military Family Members were impacted?

5

Q25. Please share a **Great Story** from service this month:

Shelby Smith shared how her regular driving the Missoula Food Bank's Food Bus has allowed for

others to feed those around them in a meaningful way. Peggy Anderson regularly picks up the groceries and lunches supplied by AmeriCorps members and other managed volunteers. She then supplies for three households and a total of six youth. She regularly has helpers of different ages to help her with the groceries and lunches. So, in the process of providing proper nutrition to the Travois Village area, Shelby has also fostered a greater community.

Q26. Describe any challenges you are experiencing in your AmeriCorps service:

A challenge Andrew is experiencing as an AmeriCorps service member is feeling underutilized as a current graduate student. He has expressed interest in taking on some further challenges and higher level work that the current obligations he has had at the Food Bank. Specifically, Andrew has wanted to take on a weekly equity email that was sent out by the previous equity director. The email included a few pieces to read and watch on an equity/diversity topic and questions to think about for the discussion/meeting later in the week. Andrew feels this is well within his abilities to create this weekly email and hold a discussion on equity topics. This has not been as well received due the Food Bank currently being in a place of high demand for its services and losing several team members who have recently quit, like the equity director.

Q27. Please upload any new photos or videos from your service.

[\[Click here\]](#)

Q28. Have more than one file to upload? Check this box!

N/A

Q35. Please provide links to any new press coverage about your service.

N/A

Q37. Please share links to any social media posts your host site or community partners have made about your service.

N/A

Appendix Item 2: AmeriCorps July Monthly Response Summary

Collecting monthly impact data from AmeriCorps members helps MTCC to maintain program compliance with our grant funders, and we appreciate the time you put into completing these reports.

For reference, you can download a copy of important reporting definitions. Words in [blue](#) in the report have definitions available. If you have questions, you can always contact Eli Bowe (bowe@mtcompact.org).

Click to write the question text Click to write the question text Q1. Your Name (First & Last):
Shelby Smith

Q2. List the names of any other AmeriCorps members contributing to this report (If none, enter "N/A"):

Andrew Besser Alex Mitchell

Q3. The activities described in this report occurred in which month?

- July 2022

Q4. How does your service site track the data in this report?

- Volunteer Database Other:
- Meal Counts

Q5. Select Your Service Site

- Missoula Food Bank & Community Center

Q6. ED1A How many [unduplicated](#) individuals received educational programming from the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

730

Q7. ED27C How many [unduplicated](#) individuals displayed improved academic engagement or social- emotional skills on account of educational programming provided by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

0

Q8. H4A How many [unduplicated](#) individuals were served by food, nutrition, or health programming provided by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

1250

Q9. H12 How many [unduplicated](#) individuals reported increased food security on account of programming provided by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

1250

Q10. H17 How many [unduplicated](#) individuals reported increased health knowledge on account of programming provided by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

850

Q38.

G3 - G3.1A How many **unduplicated new volunteers** have been **recruited** or **managed** by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

Do not include AmeriCorps members, either MTCC AmeriCorps members or AmeriCorps members serving with other programs.

15

Q39. How many of these volunteers were College Students?

1

Q40.

How many hours of service were provided by volunteers this month, including both **new** and **ongoing** volunteers **recruited** or **managed** by the AmeriCorps VISTA.

Do not include AmeriCorps members, either MTCC AmeriCorps members or AmeriCorps members serving with other programs.

1032

Q41. How many of these hours were volunteered by College Students?

11

Q12.

In total, how many **unduplicated, disadvantaged** youth received services in the past month due to AmeriCorps member activities?

1250

Q18. This month AmeriCorps member service impacted (Select all that apply):

- Native American Tribal Members Individuals Aged 55+
- U.S. Military Veterans
- U.S. Active Duty Military Personnel
- U.S. Military Veteran Family Members
- U.S. Active Duty Military Personnel Family Members

Q19. How many **unduplicated** Native American Tribal Members were impacted?

40

Q20. How many **unduplicated** Individuals Aged 55+ were impacted?

13

Q21. How many **unduplicated** U.S. Military Veterans were impacted?

0

Q22. How many **unduplicated** U.S. Active Duty Military Personnel were impacted?

0

Q23. How many [unduplicated](#) U.S. Military Veteran Family Members were impacted?
45

Q24. How many [unduplicated](#) U.S. Active Duty Military Family Members were impacted?
25

Q25. Please share a [Great Story](#) from service this month:

At several meal sites children have been enjoying reading and interacting with the nutritional quarter sheets provided in their lunches. With the ability to color and learn more about the produce included in the lunches, kids have been able to learn about the nutritional content in their lunches while having fun learning about dairy, blueberries, and leafy greens.

Q26. Describe any challenges you are experiencing in your AmeriCorps service:

With the increasing numbers of free meals needed us three AmeriCorps service members have felt stressed to adequately provide these meals and concerned about the increased levels of food insecurity, especially towards the end of the month. Us service members have had to make an increasing number of meals with less help due to volunteers not showing up. The foodbank has also dealt with some supply chain issues which has made the production process of kids eat free meals even more difficult at times. Overall, the increased amount of meals means that family are needing this service and more families are facing more food insecurity. We have seen this need most at the end of the month when SNAP and other welfare benefits start running out.

Q27. Please upload any new photos or videos from your service.

[\[Click here\]](#)

Q28. Have more than one file to upload? Check this box!

- This box!

Still not enough space? Please email any additional photos or videos to Eli (bowe@mtcompact.org).

Q30. Bonus file upload space 1

[\[Click here\]](#)

Q31. Bonus file upload space 2

N/A

Q32. Bonus file upload space 3

N/A

Q33. Bonus file upload space 4

N/A

Q34. Bonus file upload space 5

N/A

Q35. Please provide links to any new press coverage about your service.

N/A

Q37. Please share links to any social media posts your host site or community partners have made about your service.

N/A

Collecting monthly impact data from AmeriCorps members helps MTCC to maintain program compliance with our grant funders, and we appreciate the time you put into completing these reports.

For reference, you can download a copy of important reporting definitions. Words in [blue](#) in the report have definitions available. If you have questions, you can always contact Eli Bowe (bowe@mtcompact.org).

Click to write the question text Click to write the question text

Appendix Item 3: AmeriCorps August Monthly Response Summary

Q1. Your Name (First & Last):

Andrew Tate Besser

Q2. List the names of any other AmeriCorps members contributing to this report (If none, enter "N/A"):

Alexander Mitchel Shelby Smith

Q3. The activities described in this report occurred in which month?

- August 2022

Q4. How does your service site track the data in this report?

- Volunteer Database Other:
- Meal Counts

Q5. Select Your Service Site

- Missoula Food Bank & Community Center

Q6. ED1A How many **unduplicated** individuals received educational programming from the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

375

Q7. ED27C How many **unduplicated** individuals displayed improved academic engagement or social- emotional skills on account of educational programming provided by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

0

Q8. H4A How many **unduplicated** individuals were served by food, nutrition, or health programming provided by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

600

Q9. H12 How many **unduplicated** individuals reported increased food security on account of programming provided by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

600

Q10. H17 How many **unduplicated** individuals reported increased health knowledge on account of programming provided by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

425

Q38.

G3 - G3.1A How many **unduplicated new volunteers** have been **recruited** or **managed** by the AmeriCorps member(s) this month?

Do not include AmeriCorps members, either MTCC AmeriCorps members or AmeriCorps members serving with other programs.

8

Q39. How many of these volunteers were College Students?

0

Q40.

How many hours of service were provided by volunteers this month, including both **new** and **ongoing** volunteers **recruited** or **managed** by the AmeriCorps VISTA.

Do not include AmeriCorps members, either MTCC AmeriCorps members or AmeriCorps members serving with other programs.

512

Q41. How many of these hours were volunteered by College Students?

0

Q12.

In total, how many **unduplicated**, **disadvantaged** youth received services in the past month due to AmeriCorps member activities?

600

Q18. This month AmeriCorps member service impacted (Select all that apply):

- Native American Tribal Members Individuals Aged 55+
- U.S. Military Veteran Family Members
- U.S. Active Duty Military Personnel Family Members

Q19. How many **unduplicated** Native American Tribal Members were impacted?

15

Q20. How many **unduplicated** Individuals Aged 55+ were impacted?

7

Q23. How many **unduplicated** U.S. Military Veteran Family Members were impacted?

22

Q24. How many **unduplicated** U.S. Active Duty Military Family Members were impacted?

11

Q25. Please share a **Great Story** from service this month:

This month my parents were visiting from out of state and I was able to have them apply to be volunteers for the Food Bank for the two weeks they are visiting me. As the Food Bank's Food Bus Driver, I was able to have both of my parents volunteer with me on the bus and give out free meals to kids in Missoula. This was a great experience as I recruited two new volunteers to help the Food Bank deliver meals and directly show my parents what my AmeriCorps service experience has been like.

Q26. Describe any challenges you are experiencing in your AmeriCorps service:

In the Food Bank's EmPower place, sometimes the need to constantly engage with kids and the games they want to play has been difficult and fatiguing. Several of us have experienced difficulty to keep our energy and enthusiasm levels as the same levels as some of the most excited kiddos. Kids often have so much energy and curiosity that it can be difficult to keep up with them, especially early in the morning or late into our work day.

Q27. Please upload any new photos or videos from your service.

[\[Click here\]](#)

Q28. Have more than one file to upload? Check this box!

- This box!

Still not enough space? Please email any additional photos or videos to Eli (bowe@mtcompact.org).

Q30. Bonus file upload space 1

[\[Click here\]](#)

Q31. Bonus file upload space 2

N/A

Q32. Bonus file upload space 3

N/A

Q33. Bonus file upload space 4

N/A

Q34. Bonus file upload space 5

N/A

Q35. Please provide links to any new press coverage about your service.

N/A

Q37. Please share links to any social media posts your host site or community partners have made about your service.

N/A

6) Works Cited

Montana DPHHS. (2023). State of Montana SNAP Program Overview. [Montana.gov](https://dphhs.mt.gov/InteractiveDashboards/publicassistedashboard).

<https://dphhs.mt.gov/InteractiveDashboards/publicassistedashboard>

Missoula Food Bank. (2022a). *Empower place*. Retrieved May 1, 2023, from

<https://missoulafoodbank.org/community-center/community-center/empower-place>

Missoula Food Bank. (2022b). *2021 Annual report*. Retrieved May 1, 2023, from

<https://missoulafoodbank.org/about-us/data/annual-report>

IV. Component 3: The Policy Arena: Grow Montana Internship

The third component of my portfolio pertains to political actions I undertook during the 2023 Montana Legislative Session, including an internship, visiting Montana's capitol, and testifying and writing a Letter to the Editor (LTE) in support of House Bill 276 (HB 276).

1) Grow Montana Internship

The first part of my political advocacy work was an internship with Grow Montana, a food policy coalition formed in 2005. Grow Montana advocates for changes in state policies to strengthen Montana's local food and agriculture economies. The coalition includes committee members from the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition (CFAC), Mission West Community Development Partners, National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), Alternative Energy Resource Organization (AERO), Open & Local Coalition, Montana Farmers Union, and Land to Hand. The coalition has fostered food systems research, created educational materials, and helped create significant policy changes to support Montana's food producers.

Grow MT's legislative victories include:

- Authorized the Montana Department of Livestock to inspect mobile meat slaughter units;
- Created Montana's Food and Agricultural Development Centers;
- Created more flexibility for public institutions to buy Montana-grown or processed food, and;

- Established cottage food in Montana and helped streamline regulations related to mobile and temporary food vendors (Grow Montana Food Policy Coalition, 2023).

I connected with Grow Montana after observing a meeting in which they worked on their three-year strategic growth plan. I was originally interested in working with them as a potential practicum project for my certificate in the Natural Resources Conflict Resolution (NRCR) program; however, an internship made more sense given Grow MT's need for assistance following bills during the 2023 legislative session. My responsibilities as a legislative tracking intern included: tracking bills related to food and agriculture, communicating updates to the policy leads, updating a Policy Matrix, and sending out a weekly survey to policy specialists at partner organizations. Specifically, I tracked 8 items during the 2023 Legislative session and kept information about them updated in the Policy Matrix, an online Google Sheet shown in Figure 2 of the appendix. The bills and resolutions tracked included the following: HB 276, SJ 9, LC0620, HB 350, HB 831, SJ 27, SB 202, and HB 340.

The Policy Matrix was used to keep track of bill numbers and titles, lead organization, the coalition's position, bill sponsor, lead lobbyist, timeline, and updates. This allowed coalition members to quickly see the status of each bill being tracked and the most recent action on each bill. The Montana Legislature's website, while dated in style, was the most helpful resource in tracking bills, listening in on hearings, and reading full texts, amendments, and fiscal notes. Each week, I would send out a legislative update on all tracked bills along with a weekly Google form to Grow MT policy leads. These included: Maura Henn, Grow Montana Coalition Coordinator and Community Foods System Specialist at the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT); Wren Greaney, Advocacy Manager of the Montana Food Bank Network; Rachel Prevost, Membership Services Director at the Montana Farmers Union; Caroline Canarios,

Legislative Organizer at the Northern Plains Resource Council; and Jasmine Krotkov, former House District 25 Representative. The Weekly Policy Survey was a Google Form to gather policy lead's action alerts to share with the coalition each week (Figure 3 of the appendix). This helped me stay in communication with the policy leads and gather their action alerts for Maura. Montana's 68th legislative session concluded on May 2nd, 2023 and the current status of each bill or resolution tracked is as follows:

HB 276: Establish a Farm to Food Bank Bill – Passed House of Representatives, currently dead after being tabled in Senate Finance and Claims Committee. Grow Montana position: Supported.

SJ 9: Joint resolution establishing soil health week and day – Became law (signed on 5/11), enrolling and final preparation process. Grow Montana position: Supported.

LC0620: Provide for local retail meat establishments – Still in drafting process. Grow Montana position: undetermined.

HB 350: Generally revise country of origin labeling (COOL) – Tabled in House Agriculture Committee, missed bill transmittal deadline. Grow Montana position: Supported.

HB 831: Fund school meals for all students – Bill withdrawn per House Rule H30-50(3)(b), missed bill transmittal deadline. Grow Montana position: Supported.

SJ 27: Study of Food Security and Agricultural Prosperity – In First House Committee, non-tabled. Grow Montana position: Supported.

SB 202: Generally revise the Montana Local Food Choice Act – Became law, signed by Governor 5/2. Grow Montana position: Opposed.

HB 340: Require child support cooperation for food stamp eligibility –

Tabled in House Judiciary committee, missed bill transmittal deadline. Grow

Montana position: Opposed.

I assisted Grow MT in this capacity throughout the 2023 January through April legislative session. Throughout the internship, I gained a better understanding of the various steps bills take as they move through the legislative process, how to keep track of their progress, and the different opportunities individuals and organizations have to participate and make their voices heard. While I would have preferred more responsibilities during the legislative session, the internship provided me with a good introduction to Montana's legislative process and allowed me to assist a nonprofit coalition in tracking important legislation. Learning about the legislative process in Montana was helpful as I participated in other forms of political action and visited Helena, Montana's state capitol.

2) Political Advocacy: Visiting Helena

In addition to work I did for Grow Montana, I visited the state capitol twice during the legislative session, once as part of the Joye Braun Day of Action and once as part of the EVST Legislative Leadership Trip. First, on January 20th, I joined 20 climate groups and 300 Montanans in Helena for the nationwide Joye Braun Day of Action to honor the Native rights and climate activist's birthday, and to demand climate action from legislators. Joye Braun is famous for her work opposing the Standing Rock pipeline and advocating for President Biden to declare a climate emergency. The focus on January 20th was on HB 170, a bill repealing Montana's state energy policy, which was read and voted on for the second time (Passed 67-32).

The bill, sponsored by Representative Gunderson (R., HD 1), repealed Montana's 30-year-old bipartisan energy policy, which balanced existing and emerging energy resources and technologies with environmental protections. Montana's energy policy established guidelines for electric lines, emphasized the Legislature's goals on keeping electricity affordable for residents, and the state's policy to "promote energy efficiency, conservation, production and consumption of a reliable and efficient mix of energy sources that represent the least social, environmental, and economic costs and the greatest long-term benefits to Montana citizens" (Eggert, MTFP, 2023). The Joye Braun Day of Action was a great experience and show of solidarity by environmentalists in Montana, even with HB 170 passing second reading in the House (67-32) to a chorus of boos from environmentalists in the wings. There were powerful speakers, and the capitol atrium was filled with support for an intersectional environmental movement, clean energy, and Montana's right to a clean and healthful environment. HB 170 eventually passed the House and Senate and was signed by Governor Gianforte on March 16th.

My second visit to Helena was on March 15th, as part of the Environmental Studies Legislative Leadership Trip. We visited with members from the Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC), who gave specific information on how to lobby bills, what legislator's schedules are like each day, how best to approach legislators, and background on the most important bills MEIC was lobbying for or against. Our group of students attended a rally in the Capitol Rotunda in support of Montana's constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment. This rally had several guest speakers calling out legislation threatening that right enshrined in Montana's Constitution and threatening to remove plaintiffs' standing in the *Held v. State* case regarding failure to address climate change and protect young people's rights. We continued our day by observing legislators in the House and Senate Floor Sessions debate bills

and vote. Finally, we met our Missoula Representatives on the House floor. Overall, this was a very informative trip to the Capitol and provided a unique opportunity to access our elected representatives. I appreciated the experience the Environmental Studies Program provided to the students in attendance and the opportunity to meet our elected representatives. Montana's small population ratio to representation allows for citizens to have a close connection to the political process and more direct access to elected representatives. This is exemplified in my ability to support HB 276 as an individual citizen.

Introduced by Representative Marty Malone (R- HD 59), HB 276 was a bill that established a grant program to support food bank programs purchasing food from local farmers and ranchers. The bill created a grant program for "farm to food bank activities" such as: administering the program by a nongovernmental organization, purchasing Montana-grown food products by food hubs across the state, and distributing products to Montana-based food pantries (HB 276, item 1 of the appendix). Grants awarded via this program were to be based on a competitive process open to applicants focused on the applicants "(a) ability to administer and implement farm to food bank activities; (b) ability to incorporate positive change in local food purchasing; (c) history of and ability to promote healthy food activities; and (d) ability to demonstrate statewide relationships with food hubs" (HB 276). HB 276 had a fiscal note of \$1,000,000 over 2 years and provided nearly \$760,000 in grants to food banks and food hubs in order to purchase Montana grown food. HB 276 was introduced on January 18; passed the Montana House on February 27; passed the Senate Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation Committee on March 31; and died in the Senate Finance and Claims committee on May 8 (Montana Legislature, 2023).

3) Testimony in Support of HB 276:

On March 30th, I testified remotely in the Senate Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation Committee in support of HB 276. The process involved signing up the day before via the Montana legislative website, attending the virtual hearing, and waiting for my turn to speak as a proponent of HB 276. My testimony was:

“Good afternoon Chair Lang and members of the committee. My name is Tate Besser, B-E-S-S-E-R, I am a graduate student at the University of Montana and I live in Missoula. I am speaking in support of House Bill 276. As a student intern at the Missoula Food Bank & Community Center during the summer of 2022, I saw the effects of the rising costs of food, gas, and household items as community members struggled to make ends meet. Each month, I saw an increasing number of customers at the food bank, seeking assistance for basic needs. The Missoula Food Bank broke records multiple times over summer as more and more people needed the services of the food bank. Last year, an average of 38,000 Montanans per month accessed food pantry services while the median price per pound of food increased 12.5%. The Montana Farm to Food Bank Bill will help address these issues by providing grants to food bank hubs to purchase, process, store, and distribute Montana-produced foods. This approach bolsters local markets for Montana farmers and ranchers, ensuring they are paid adequately for their quality products. The program will strengthen partnerships between producers and local organizations that can get fresh products to community members in need. This bill is simply a win-win for Montana. I hope state legislators understand how important this bill is to producers, food pantries, and resilient Montana communities. I urge them to pass House Bill 276. Thank you for your time today.”

Montana citizens have significant access to their elected representatives and an easy process for participating, if they have time and are keeping track of bills as they move through the process.

Testifying virtually is a holdover from COVID-19, something I appreciated to avoid driving to Helena to speak in-person. Online testimony increases inclusivity in the political process and over half the participants testified virtually during the March 30th committee meeting. The virtual testimony I participated in began at 1pm on a Thursday and I spoke at around 1:45 pm. If someone was unable to commit to this amount of time to testify virtually, there was an option to submit written testimony which would be read aloud during the committee meeting. If they have the time and technology, Montana citizens can easily register and speak on behalf of bills they support or oppose.

4) Letter to the Editor: House Bill 276 is a win-win

The final part of my political advocacy was a Letter to the Editor (LTE) in support of the Montana Farm to Food Bank Program proposed in HB 276. This piece of writing was originally for Neva Hassanein's Politics of Food course (Fall 2022) as an op-ed; however, Neva recommended I shorten the piece into an LTE and publish it during the 2023 legislative session. I wrote this to draw attention to the benefits of HB 276 for Montana farmers, food banks, and the significant number of Montanan residents currently facing food insecurity and hunger. The LTE was published on February 16th in the *Daily Montanan*, *Montana Free Press*, *Missoula Current*, *Helena Independent Record*, and on the Montana Food Matters Food Story Hub (also published on March 22 in the *Missoula Current*, see Figure 1) as HB 276 was passing the House and preparing for first reading in the Senate. The goal of my LTE was to write a carefully-honed opinion piece in support of HB 276 during early hearings in the House. It grabs the reader's attention, quickly gets my point across, and advocates for policy in the current legislative

session. HB 276 had nearly universal support at each hearing from food banks, nonprofit organizations, and citizens and had no testimony opposed during the March 30th hearing where I testified virtually. Despite all of this support, HB 276 was tabled in the Senate Finance and Claims Committee and effectively died.

Figure 1. LTE in support of HB 276, published in the Missoula Current on March 22.

VIEWPOINT: MONTANA FARM TO FOOD BANK BILL A WIN-WIN

Missoula Current | Published: March 22, 2023

Montana Food Bank Net



SHARE ON FACEBOOK



SHARE ON TWITTER



PRINT THIS PAGE

Tate Besser

As a student intern at the Missoula Food Bank & Community Center during the summer of 2022, I saw the effects of the rising costs of food, gas, and household items as community members.

Each month, I saw an increasing number of customers at the food bank, seeking assistance for basic needs. Last year, an average of 38,000 Montanans per month accessed food pantry services while the median price per pound of food increased 12.5%.

One creative proposal, the Montana Farm to Food Bank Bill (HB 276, sponsored by Rep. Marty Malone R- HD 59), will help address these issues by providing grants to food bank hubs to purchase, process, store, and distribute Montana-produced foods.

Also, this approach bolsters local markets for Montana farmers and ranchers, ensuring they are paid adequately for their quality products. The program will strengthen partnerships between producers and local organizations that can get the fresh products to community members in need.

This bill is simply a win-win for Montana. I hope state legislators understand how important this bill is to producers, food pantries, and resilient Montana communities. I urge them to pass House Bill 276.

5) Conclusion

Throughout the 2023 Legislative Session, I interned for the food policy coalition Grow Montana, visited Helena for political rallies and to observe legislators, testified virtually, and wrote an LTE in support of HB 276. The internship with Grow Montana was the beginning of these pieces coming together into the third component of my portfolio. The work I did for Grow Montana required me to monitor 8 bills and resolutions on the legislative website and communicate updates each week to the coalition's policy leads. One of the main bills to follow was HB 276, which I directly supported via publishing an LTE and virtual testimony on behalf of HB 276. Virtual testimony complimented in-person experiences visiting Helena for the Joye Braun Day of Action and EVST Legislative Leadership Trip. These political advocacy experiences have increased my knowledge about how Montana's legislative process works, how bills move through the Senate and House, and ways to get involved, testify, and directly support legislation. These experiences have helped me recognize the accessibility of citizen participation in Montana's legislative system through various options to testify, directly interacting with legislators, and written testimony or published LTE's.

While Montana citizens may have easy access to get involved in the legislative process, overall I felt that an individual's impact on the process was very minimal and inconsequential. Of the bills I've discussed in this component, Montana's legislation approved HB 170 and SB 202, both of which were opposed by environmentalists and Grow MT. Additionally, the legislation did not pass HB 276, HB 350, HB 831, and SJ 27, all of which were supported by Grow MT (and myself). This shows the limitations to citizen participation, especially for environmental and social welfare bills in red states like Montana. HB 276 was the most frustrating bill to not pass, as it was universally supported by farmers and ranchers and had bi-

partisan support from Legislators. Even a complete lack of opposing testimony during HB 276's hearing was not enough to propel the bill to Governor Gianforte's desk.

I feel prepared to assist organizations in legislative lobbying and testimony in support of their legislative priorities because of these experiences. Upon completion of this internship, I feel encouraged to stay in Montana and seek employment in an organization working for food advocacy efforts politically, like Grow MT, the Montana Food Bank network, or CFAC.

6) Appendix

Figure 2. Grow Montana 2023 Policy Matrix.

Bill/ Number	Lead Organization/Sponsor	Grow MT's Position	Overview	Strategy	Legislator Carrying the Bill	Draft/Info	Lobbyist	Timeline
Establish a farm to food bank grant program HB 276	MTFBN	Support, Priority 1	Establish a farm to food bank grant program		Marty Malone (R) HD 59	Draft available		Passed 3rd reading, moved to Senate. First reading in Senate 2/28,
make the first week of April Montana Soil Health Week, and designate Wednesday of that week as Montana Soil Health Day.	NPRC	Support	State Soil Health		Rep. Bruce Gillespie (R), SD9	Draft Available		Passed 2nd and 3rd readings, transferred to House 2/16. First reading on 3/14
Provide for local meat retail establishments LC0620	undetermined	No language yet	Generally revise meat processing laws		Kenneth Bogner (R) SD 19	Draft ready for delivery 2/7		Passed Senate 33-16, referred to House Ag committee 2/17
Generally Revise Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) HB 350	MFU	Support	COOL		Frank Smith HD 31	In First house committee- killed by		Missed transmittal deadline
Fund School meals for all students - LC3486		Support	Expand Free School Meals		Rep. Melissa Romano			Draft ready for delivery 1/31
Provide funding for soils and agricultural land protection (LC1749)								Draft on hold 1/19
Generally Revise the Montana Local Food Choice Act (LC0307 / SB 202)			Revises SB 199 (Montana Local Food Choice Act)		Greg Hertz (R) SD 6	In house, out of committee		Passed Senate 33-16, referred to House Ag committee 2/17. 3/23
Require child support cooperation for food stamp eligibility		Likely Oppose	SNAP Restrictions		Rep. Jane Gillette (R)	Draft available		Tabled in House Judiciary committee 2/7

Figure 3. Grow Montana Weekly Policy Update google form.

Grow MT Weekly Policy Update Form (2023)

Complete this form for upcoming policy communications you would like Grow MT to share with coalition members, including action alerts and legislative updates. The Grow MT coordinator will share this form on Thursday each week during the 2023 session. Please complete by COB on Friday. Updates from the responses will be sent out on Monday of the following week.

Email *

Short answer text

What issue does this update address? *

☐ Farm to Food Bank Bill

☐ State Soil Health Bill

☐ COOL Bill

☐ Meat Processing Bill

☐ Expand Free School Meals Bill

Please provide a two sentence update about the issue.

Your answer

Please provide a two sentence summary on upcoming actions or legislative steps.

Your answer

Opportunity for Action? Please provide the Action Alert information you would like *
Grow MT to share.

Your answer

Submit

Clear form

Appendix Item 1: House Bill 276

1

HOUSE BILL NO. 276

2

INTRODUCED BY M. MALONE, T. WELCH, S. KERNS, J. DOOLING,
M. HOPKINS

3

4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FARM TO FOOD
BANK GRANT PROGRAM;

5 REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO ESTABLISH AND
ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM;

6 ESTABLISHING GRANT REQUIREMENTS; ESTABLISHING A GRANT PROCESS;
PROVIDING

7 PREFERENCES FOR GRANT AWARDS; ESTABLISHING REPORTING
REQUIREMENTS; PROVIDING A

8 GENERAL FUND TRANSFER; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; PROVIDING
RULEMAKING AUTHORITY;

9 PROVIDING DEFINITIONS; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE AND A
TERMINATION DATE."

10

11 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

12

13 NEW SECTION. Section 1. Short title. [Sections 1 through 7] may be cited as
the "Farm to Food

14 Bank Grant Act".

15

16 NEW SECTION. Section 2. Purpose. (1) The purpose of [sections 1 through 7]
is to provide a farm

17 to food bank grant program administered by the department for farm to food bank
activities. Farm to food bank

18 programs strengthen local food economies by creating a new market for Montana farmers
and ranchers,

19 expanding access to fresh, local products for those who may not otherwise have access to
those products, and strengthening producer and consumer relationships in the state. Farm to food
bank implementation looks

20 different in each community but in Montana it includes the following elements:

21 (a) using available funds to support Montana farmers and ranchers;

22 (b) support for regional food hubs that can leverage producer relationships to
purchase, process,

23 store, and distribute products for and to food banks; and

24 (c) access to fresh, healthy, local products for low-income consumers.

25 (2) [Sections 1 through 7] create a program to:

26 (a) support regional food hubs in building producer networks and purchasing,
processing, storing,

27 and distributing local food to food pantries;

1 (b) create a new consumer market for Montana farmers and ranchers; and

2 (c) ensure equitable, statewide access to farm to food bank funds.

3

4 **NEW SECTION. Section 3. Definitions.** As used in [sections 1 through 7], the
following definitions

5 apply:

6 (1) "Farm to food bank activities" include:

7 (a) the administration of the farm to food bank program by a
nongovernmental organization;

8 (b) the purchase of Montana-grown fruit, vegetables, meat, legumes, whole
grains, eggs, and dairy

9 products by food hubs across the state; and

10 (c) the distribution of products purchased under this program to Montana-
11 based food pantries.

12 (2) "Food hub" means any food bank, food and agricultural development
13 center, or other

14 community organization that can illustrate ongoing relationships with Montana-grown
15 food producers in its

16 region and the ability to purchase, store, and distribute local products to food pantries in
17 its area.

18 (3) "Montana-grown" includes:

19 (a) items grown or raised in the state;

20 (b) processed food items containing at least 51% of total ingredients grown,
21 raised, or both, in the

22 state; or

23 (c) food items processed outside of the state in accordance with existing
24 regulations so long as the

25 food item or at least 51% of its ingredients were grown, raised, or both, in the state.

26

27 NEW SECTION. Section 4. Farm to food bank grant program requirements
28 -- rulemaking. (1) (a)

29 The department shall develop an open and competitive grant program.

30 (b) Grants must be awarded in accordance with [section 5] for farm to food
31 bank activities.

32 (2) The department may adopt rules necessary to implement a farm to food
33 bank grant program.

25 Rules may include but are not limited to:

26 (a) standards for farm to food bank activities;

27 (b) methods for determining an applicant's progress in implementing farm to
food bank activities;

28 (c) methods for determining compliance with the requirements of [section 5];
and

1 (d) other procedures necessary to administer and implement the grant program.

2

3 NEW SECTION. Section 5. Farm to food bank grant requirements. (1) Grants
awarded in

4 accordance with [sections 1 through 7] must be based on a competitive process open to
applicants based on

5 an applicant's:

6 (a) ability to administer and implement farm to food bank activities;

7 (b) ability to incorporate positive change in local food purchasing;

8 (c) history of and ability to promote healthy food activities; and

9 (d) ability to demonstrate statewide relationships with food hubs.

10 (2) Preference must be provided to applicants who demonstrate an ability to
reach underserved

11 communities, especially those in rural areas and on tribal reservations.

12 (3) (a) Food purchased using grant funds must be:

13 (i) Montana-grown in accordance with [section 3]; and

14 (ii) used for food purchases that are otherwise a part of an applicant's normal
food bank nutrition

15 program.

16 (b) Food purchased for farm to food bank activities may not be used to supplant
existing local food

17 purchases by food banks that would otherwise be purchased with existing food bank
nutrition funds from other

18 sources.

19 (c) A grant recipient may spend up to 5% of the grant amount awarded on
administration costs,

20 including convening and partnering with food and agricultural development centers, local
producers, food

21 pantries, and food hubs.

22

23 **NEW SECTION. Section 6. Farm to food bank special revenue account.** (1)
There is an account

24 in the state special revenue fund for the farm to food bank grant program.

25 (2) The purpose of the account is to provide funding for farm to food bank
grants awarded in

26 accordance with [sections 1 through 7].

27 (3) There must be deposited in the account:

28 (a) any funds available through and identified by the department for the farm
to food bank program;

1 (b) any legislative appropriations; and

2 (c) gifts, grants, or donations made for the purposes of [section 1 through 7].

4

5 NEW SECTION. Section 7. Farm to food bank reporting requirements. The
department shall

6 design and compile evaluation reports from grant recipients and prepare a report for the
natural resources and

7 transportation budget committee established in 5-12-501 in accordance with 5-11-210 that
describes:

8 (1) the total dollar increase in purchases of Montana-grown fruit, vegetables,
and other farm

9 products;

10 (2) products purchased and the total number of businesses from which the
products were

11 purchased; and

12 (3) recommendations for continuing the farm to food bank grant program.

13

14 NEW SECTION. SECTION 8. TRANSFER OF FUNDS. BY AUGUST 1,
2023, THE STATE TREASURER SHALL

15 TRANSFER \$1 MILLION FROM THE GENERAL FUND TO THE ACCOUNT
ESTABLISHED IN [SECTION 6].

16

17 NEW SECTION. Section 9. Appropriation. There is appropriated ~~\$1 million~~
\$500,000 from the ~~state~~

18 ~~general fund~~ ACCOUNT ESTABLISHED IN [SECTION 6] to the department of
agriculture ~~one-time-only~~ for EACH YEAR

19 OF the biennium beginning July 1, 2023, for the purposes provided for in [sections 1
through 7].

20

21 NEW SECTION. Section 10. Notification to tribal governments. The secretary
of state shall send a

22 copy of [this act] to each federally recognized tribal government in Montana.

23

24 NEW SECTION. Section 11. Codification instruction. [Sections 1 through 7] are
intended to be

25 codified as an integral part of Title 80, and the provisions of Title 80 apply to [sections 1
through 7].

26

27 NEW SECTION. Section 12. Effective date. [This act] is effective July 1, 2023.

28

1 NEW SECTION. Section 13. Termination. [Sections 1 through 7] terminate June
30, 2025.

2

- END -

7) Works Cited

Besser, Tate. *Missoulian*. (Feb 16, 2023). https://missoulian.com/opinion/letters/letter-to-the-editor-house-bill-276-is-win-win/article_c6f02dbc-0d4c-51e1-9166-cef7e837046c.html

Eggert, Amanda. *Montana Free Press*. (April 11, 2023).
<https://montanafreepress.org/2023/04/11/what-was-in-the-1993-state-energy-policy-and-why-did-lawmakers-repeal-it/>

Grow Montana Food Policy Coalition. *About us*. (2023). <https://growmt.org/about-us/>

Montana Legislature. *HB 276*. Montana Legislative Branch. (May 8, 2023).
[http://laws.leg.mt.gov/legprd/LAW0203W\\$BSRV.ActionQuery?P_SESS=20231&P_BL_TP_BILL_TYP_CD=HB&P_BILL_NO=276&P_BILL_DFT_NO=&P_CHPT_NO=&Z_ACTION=Find&P_ENTY_ID_SEQ2=&P_SBJT_SBJ_CD=&P_ENTY_ID_SEQ=](http://laws.leg.mt.gov/legprd/LAW0203W$BSRV.ActionQuery?P_SESS=20231&P_BL_TP_BILL_TYP_CD=HB&P_BILL_NO=276&P_BILL_DFT_NO=&P_CHPT_NO=&Z_ACTION=Find&P_ENTY_ID_SEQ2=&P_SBJT_SBJ_CD=&P_ENTY_ID_SEQ=)

V. Conclusion

To wrap up my portfolio project and Master's program, I reflect back along the two-year journey it has been. My first visit to Missoula was in April 2021 as I finished my undergraduate degree in environmental management at California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo. I had applied to several master's programs in environmental studies and had set my eyes on going straight into a masters while I still had the momentum of being in college. Meeting with Robin Saha, who eventually became my first advisor at UM, was the first step in deciding to come to UM; he talked about the benefits and connections the EVST program had around Missoula. He mentioned the connections to environmental nonprofits started by EVST alum, different classes I could take in my two years at UM, but what stuck out was that the program "creates changemakers". That phrase has stuck with me throughout the time I have spent in Missoula and the various projects I have completed. It was emphasized during the Foundations course in fall 2021: my purpose statement described how when I leave the EVST program, I will be a maker changemaker. That has been my mantra since I decided I wanted to study environmental science in undergrad, and I finally feel ready to be that difference maker upon completion of my Master's portfolio. The scope of what I where I want to make change has changed several times as I worked with different scales in different projects. The experiences that have culminated in this portfolio project have been primarily at the state and community level, something I plan to continue after graduation. Seeing the impact an organization has on a community directly is something that drives me to keep helping people.

During my master's program, I also earned the graduate certificate in Natural Resources Conflict Resolution (NRCR). I learned about how to be a difference maker in collaborative work, facilitation, and conflict resolution which I believe complements my Master's in Environmental Studies. In addition, the certificate included a practicum project as the capstone and practical experience in conflict resolution, stakeholder analysis, facilitation and mediation, and current issues related to collaboration and conflict resolution. I completed my practicum project for the Missoula Food Policy Advisory Board (MFPAB) to analyze and bring together stakeholders in local meat processing in Missoula. The collaborative meeting involved discussing barriers, problems, and collaborative solutions to the lack of meat processing in Missoula. The meeting took place alongside the writing of this master's portfolio and was difficult to incorporate into a broader theme around community food security and local food.

Completing the Expanding Double SNAP Dollars Equitably Technical Report for CFAC was one the first of many semester-long projects I did in the EVST program and helped acclimate me from the quarter system. The project was completed in ENSC 501: Scientific Approaches to Environmental Problems in Fall 2021 and is representative of the mindset in which I started grad school: analytical, determined, and hardworking. I didn't mind the hours I spent perfecting Excel formulas to create the matrices, however I do remember many times confidently pressing the Enter key, thinking "this is gonna be the one"... only to face another error. I enjoyed the challenge of creating a research tool from scratch to aid CFAC in expanding the DSD program. I saw the fruition of this project seeing how CFAC has used the tool in 2022 for 10 new locations and in 2023 to determine the optimal Albertson's locations for the DSD program. The two tools was showcased at a GusNIP grantee convening CFAC representatives attended in Philadelphia, showcasing the value it has brought to CFAC in the last two years. My

project contributed to community food security through the information CFAC has gained to expand their DSD program throughout Montana. The DSD program empowers individuals to purchase healthy fruits and vegetables, supports local agriculture, and is a systems-wide approach to reducing food insecurity. Providing the knowledge support to this program has enabled expansion of the DSD program to new locations, especially with the inclusion of DSD at Albertson's locations in rural Montana in 2023.

The technical report in Component 1 required some significant edits to update the tools, methods used to create the tools, and make the entire project more user friendly. Given that the project was for the Scientific Approaches to Environmental Problems class, I really dove into the technical aspects and Microsoft Excel functions of the project in the original paper draft and presentation at Gradcon 2022. After receiving feedback from my advisor, I changed a lot of the jargon present in the original methods section and simplified the overall explanation for the County Ranking Tool and DSD Decision Tool. This was a significant challenge in the final weeks of this portfolio project but resulted in a much clearer technical report and user-friendly version of the tools for CFAC. The journey that this technical report has taken has helped me understand how to convey technical information to a general audience and how to organize information to make it clear to follow. I will bring the lessons I learned in writing the report and revamping it with me to future projects and assignments.

My internship with the Missoula Food Bank & Community Center (MFB&CC) was in summer between my first and second years of the EVST program and provided me with experience working for a nonprofit organization directly improving community food security. Each day, I worked on packing and distributing breakfasts and lunches to hundreds of kids around Missoula. The Missoula Food Bank does a fantastic job providing free food to people and

the overall goal is to reduce dependency on the food bank's services. However, that summer I saw more and more people use the food bank as they dealt with rising inflation costs and COVID-19 benefits expiring. The internship gave me direct experience helping food insecure individuals working alongside fantastic people at MFB&CC. I felt challenged by the day-to-day physical work and monotony packing lunches and making sandwiches. The coworkers, volunteers, and kids we were serving were the highlight of the summer experience and helped relieve the monotony. I succeeded during my time at the MFB&CC, bringing good vibes, good tunes, and a strong work ethic with me each day. I regret not pursuing the diversity weekly writings on my own more and finding some way to keep the work going, possibly during time outside of work. I understood the stress and workload being taken on by every member of our MFB&CC team that summer, nonetheless the importance of diversity and inclusion work goes beyond the day-to-day responsibilities especially as a predominantly white organization. I plan on bringing my attitude and work ethic with me from this internship to future jobs.

During the 2023 legislative session, I interned for food and agriculture policy coalition Grow Montana, tracking bills and communicating updates between action leads. The internship was a learning opportunity to understand the process bills in Montana undergo and where citizens can make their voices heard. This internship experience was part of my political advocacy actions during the 2023 legislative session, which included visiting the capitol, testifying in support of HB 276, and writing a Letter to the Editor (LTE). My visits to the capitol included rallies, speakers, in-person observation of hearings, education on lobbying, and meeting my elected representatives. Attending the rallies and seeing the support Montanan's have for protecting the environment of our amazing state was fantastic to see. I plan on staying involved with environmental action and using my voice to advocate for policies that benefit the

environment and protect our right to a clean and healthful environment. During the Grow MT internship, I began my support of HB 276, the Farm to Food Bank bill, and eventually testified virtually and wrote an LTE in support. The combination of working for Grow MT and these individual actions helped cement my skills in citizen participation, tracking legislation, and lobbying. I will bring these forward with me to potential jobs involving political action and in my own participation in the legislative process here in Montana.

While I participated significantly in the political process during the 2023 Legislative session, the overall effects of this participation seemed minimal on the Legislator's overall decisions. Several bills myself and environmentalists opposed passed (HB 170, SB 202) and several bills we supported did not pass even with bipartisan support (HB 276, HB 350, HB 831, and SJ 27). This raises concerns about the effectiveness of working within a political system opposed to change in a conservative majority state which often does not support environmental policies. Policies to increase community food security and support food insecure populations did not pass even as many Montanan's struggle with food insecurity and hunger. I believe there is still merit in working within this political system to try to fix not only the current conditions but also the root causes of food insecurity like poverty and social inequities. While working within the system, it is important to also support the work of organizations to provide direct aid to people currently facing hunger through food pantries and programs like DSD. These organizations may not be fixing the underlying causes to poverty and food insecurity, they are providing essential services, enabling people to provide for their families, chose healthy food options.

My skillset has grown significantly throughout the Master's program and I feel prepared to be a changemaker in the workforce, unlike how I felt post-undergrad two years ago. Two

years ago, I did not feel “ready” to work like how I have felt the last year in the EVST program. Making the decision to pursue graduate education right out of my Bachelors felt like an easy path to take, to continue going to school and learning. My time at the University of Montana has been anything but easy. The courses in the EVST program have been challenging, the projects I have completed have pushed me to higher professional standards, and I have completed projects being used directly by nonprofits. I worked hard to create my own research project with the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition (CFAC) to better inform their decision making with the Expanding Double SNAP Dollars Equitably Technical Report. I spent my summer working at the MFB&CC helping make a difference for many kids facing hunger here in Missoula. I supported Grow Montana and personally advocated HB 276, a bill I know will significantly increase the amount of local food available in food bank hubs across Montana. In compiling this portfolio, I have reflected upon all these experiences making change in nonprofit organizations and hope to continue in this work after graduation. I want to be someone who creates change and the EVST program has helped prepare me for that opportunity.