

# 2025 Berkshire County Food Access Assessment

A Community Food Assessment for Berkshire County, Massachusetts



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# Executive Summary

This food assessment, an update to the 2019 Berkshire County Community Food Assessment, evaluates the assets, strengths and challenges around food access in Berkshire County. The information about food system assets was mostly collected in 2024; the goal-setting conversations in the regional food access groups mostly occurred in 2024 and 2025.

Berkshire County has low population density, with income levels much lower and the proportion of senior citizens much higher than the state average. Transportation can be problematic. Food is provided by a large cohort of widely dispersed small farms, community gardens and emergency food access sites supplementing larger food providers and retailers concentrated in the more-urban areas. This food access model is agile in responding rapidly to changing local needs, but economies of scale can be difficult to achieve. It is therefore critical that the food access system as a whole achieve efficiencies through communication and collaboration.

Strengths of the food access system include community connections, an abundance of farm-produced local products, highly engaged nonprofit organizations and volunteer cohorts, focus on youth involvement in the food system, enhanced composting efforts, and endeavors such as mobile access sites, distribution of information about emergency food access sites in the county, translation of materials, van transportation, and free-choice systems at food pantries that improve access and dignity for food-insecure residents. Challenges include funding, staffing, affordability and stability of land and available food spaces, limited numbers of volunteers and paid staff relative to increasing needs, insufficient collection of food system data, and limited coordination of efforts.

As part of fostering communication and collaboration, local food access groups meet at least quarterly to discuss regional food access issues and plan strategies to adapt to changes at the national and local levels. Categories of food access goals identified by these groups include:

- increasing access to and consumption of healthy foods, including through supporting enrollment in food assistance programs and addressing transportation challenges
- supporting cross-county communication to highlight resources and best practices and reduce duplication of efforts
- maintaining the funding, volunteer base and spaces needed to support increasing food system needs
- advancing collection and sharing of data to support grant-writing, strategic planning and collaboration

Strategies for addressing the specific regional goals have been identified by regional food access groups and are being initiated. The income challenges, transportation challenges, and demographic challenges that underlie food insecurity in Berkshire County and affect many sectors of the food access system are harder to address, as are political cuts to SNAP and other programs that impact food-insecure residents of Berkshire County and their support systems.

Future assessment of the food access system should aim for increased involvement of stakeholders, particularly in food access sector groups. In addition, the county would benefit from an investigation into the perspectives of the Berkshire County residents who access food.

# Introduction

## What is a Community Food Assessment?

A community food assessment is a collaborative process that allows examination of assets and needs in a community food system. Information about the food system comes from publicly available data in combination with community input from stakeholders through surveys, focus groups and community meetings. The process and findings are intended to:

- increase awareness of food system assets and issues around food access in the community,
- guide thoughtful consideration of strategies to address identified issues, and ultimately
- serve as a resource for organizations, businesses and municipal governments to plan collaborative initiatives that will address community needs.

## History of the Berkshire County Community Food Assessment

The first Berkshire County Community Food Assessment was initiated in 2017 as a Be Well Berkshires/Mass in Motion initiative, coordinated by Morgan Ovitsky and Amanda Chilson of Be Well Berkshires and the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition.

The project's goals were to facilitate collaboration and conversation among Berkshire County stakeholders engaged in food access, and to create a plan identifying regional assets and defining actionable strategies and solutions to improve and advance food accessibility (1). Objectives for the original Berkshire County Community Food Assessment were (and remain, with the current assessment) to:



- Identify barriers and challenges to access healthy, affordable food on a regional as well as countywide level
- Assess community resources that improve food access
- Identify priority populations experiencing food insecurity
- Facilitate collaboration among food access efforts to create a higher impact
- Identify and prioritize food access goals and action steps regionally and countywide.

This project involved collecting data from available resources and convening representatives from regional and county-wide organizations, businesses, educational institutions, municipal governments, health care organizations, and other stakeholders in the food system to discuss issues and priorities around food access in Berkshire County. The resulting report was published as the [2019 Berkshire County Community Food Assessment](#) (1).

Several years after the publication of the 2019 assessment, the Northern Berkshire Food Access Collaborative identified the need for an updated community food assessment to reflect the changed food access landscape and assets, and to identify new priorities and goals for the next 5-year timeframe. This update was initiated in 2023 and coordinated by Anne Goodwin of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA), with assistance from Morgan Ovitsky (now at Berkshire Bounty) and undergraduate students from MCLA and Williams College, along with many community stakeholders who participated in the asset map survey, food system focus groups, and interviews.



## Methodology

The foundation for this community food assessment was the 2019 Berkshire County Community Food Assessment, prepared for Be Well Berkshires and Mass in Motion (1).

Information for the community profile and some information for the food access landscape was obtained from publicly available data and reports, including from the U.S. Census Bureau, Feeding America, the Berkshire Health Systems Community Health Needs Assessment, reports from the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, reports from the Williams College ENVI 402 Environmental Planning class, news articles from the Berkshire Eagle, and websites from organizations and businesses.

Asset mapping was conducted using online and in-person surveys of food access system representatives in the contact lists of the regional food access groups, the Food Pantry Collaborative, and Berkshire Grown, and through targeted outreach to assets identified by focus groups. The asset map survey (Appendix 1: Asset Map Survey) asked respondents to identify their organization, business or initiative; its service area, its role(s) and contribution(s) in the food system; and asset strengths, with focus on the 2023-2024 time period. Respondents were also asked to identify challenges faced by their organization; these answers are presented in aggregate rather than linked to specific respondents. The survey methodology was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

Discussions of previous and current goals and action plans were discussed at the June 2024 Berkshire County Food Access Convening, with food system representatives having discussions in both regional breakout groups and food system sector breakout groups, and over multiple meetings of the Northern Berkshire Food Access Collaborative, the Central County Food Access Convening, and the Southern Berkshire Food Web representing North County, Central County and South County food systems, respectively. Best practice case examples were identified by the regional food access groups and created through website review and interviews with representatives from the profiled organizations and initiatives.

## Community Profile: Berkshire County, Massachusetts

### Location

Berkshire County is the westernmost county in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is the second-largest county by area at 926 square miles but the fourth-smallest county by population, with 129,028 residents recorded in the 2020 census data. It has a hilly topography and the second-lowest population density of the counties at 139 residents per square mile, compared to 895 residents per square mile in the Commonwealth as a whole (2). The population is spread among 32 communities, with only two (Pittsfield and North Adams) exceeding 10,000 residents (3).

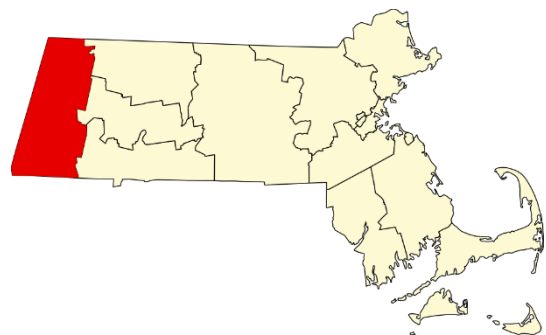


Figure 1 Map of Massachusetts Counties with Berkshire County highlighted. Image source wikipedia.org

Since Berkshire County covers such a large geographic area, with different regional demographics and needs, local organizations and initiatives often divide the county into north, central and south regions. The largest communities in these regions are North Adams (12,492 residents, North County), Pittsfield (43,121 residents, Central County) and Great Barrington (7,245 residents, South County) (3). The municipalities are grouped regionally by Berkshire Health Systems and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (4) as follows:

- North County: Williamstown, Clarksburg, North Adams, Adams, Cheshire, Florida, Savoy, Windsor
- Central County: New Ashford, Hancock, Lanesborough, Pittsfield, Dalton, Hinsdale, Peru, Richmond, Lenox, Washington, West Stockbridge, Stockbridge, Lee, Tyringham, Becket
- South County: Alford, Egremont, Mt. Washington, Great Barrington, Sheffield, Monterey, New Marlborough, Otis, Sandisfield

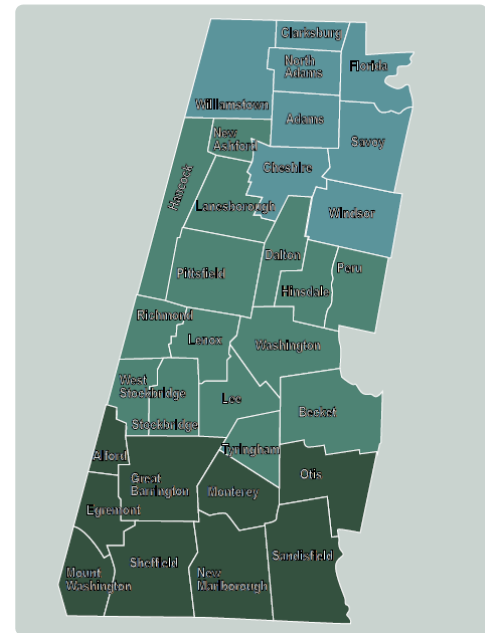


Figure 2 Map of Berkshire County municipalities. Source: 2025 BHS Community Health Needs Assessment (2); original graphic: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

Other organizations and initiatives sometimes organize these regions slightly differently.

It takes up to an hour and a half to drive between the towns of Sandisfield in the south of the county and Clarksburg near the northern border, and most residents require some form of transportation to access the grocery stores, food access sites, healthcare facilities and workplaces concentrated in a subset of cities and towns. Food retail is provided at low density across Berkshire County, with concentration along the north-south Route 7- Route 8 corridor.

Fixed-route and paratransit bus service is provided by Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) and serves 30 of the 32 communities in the county, mostly along the major roads running north-south along the county’s center, with service more limited during evenings and with no service on Sundays (5). More than 75% of Berkshire County residents commute by car (6). This transportation landscape poses challenges for community members without a private vehicle or who do not drive. The Regional Transportation Plan, a report that includes data and strategic planning around county transportation needs, is updated every four years by the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization and hosted on the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission website (7).



Figure 3 Source: Map of Berkshire County Food Retailers in 2021. Source: Massachusetts Food Systems Data Map (25)

## Demographics

Median household income in Berkshire County for the 2020-2024 period was \$76,013, with 11% of residents in poverty (8), compared to median income of \$103,960 and 9% of residents in poverty for the Commonwealth as a whole (9). According to the 2025 Berkshire Health Systems Community Health Needs Assessment, 25% of Berkshire County residents are in households with incomes less than twice the federal poverty level (4), a cutoff below which risk for food insecurity is greatly increased. Income and cost of living are unevenly distributed across the county.

According to 2024 population estimates, Berkshire County’s population was 26% age 65 or older, substantially higher than the 18.7% of Massachusetts as a whole, and only 15% 18 or younger (8). The elderly population is higher proportionally than the state and national averages at all age groups above 60, and it is expected to increase further (10).

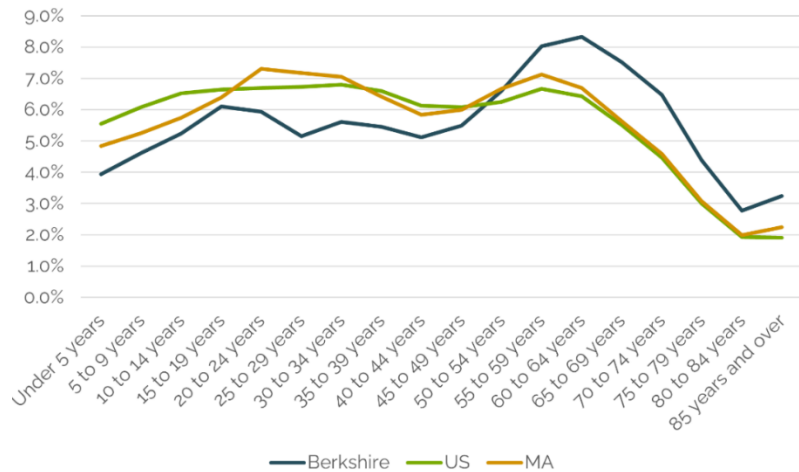


Figure 4 Source: Berkshire County Population Comparison, 2020 Census. Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (10)

Using single race/ethnicity designations Berkshire County was 85% White (non-Hispanic/Latino), 6% Hispanic or Latino, 4 % Black, 2% Asian, and <1% American Indian, Alaska Native or Pacific Islander, according to the 2024 population estimates from the 2020 Census data, and 2% of residents declared that they belonged to at least two of these groups (8). Also according to the 2020 census, 8% of Berkshire County residents over the age of 5 speak another language at home, and foreign-born residents make up an estimated 6% of the population (8). Organizations such as the Berkshire Immigrant Center and Volunteers in Medicine help connect immigrant residents to appropriate resources, and several smaller organizations provide important support for immigrant residents as well.

## Health and Health Care

Berkshire Health Systems is the largest health care provider in Berkshire County, with affiliates that include Berkshire Medical Center (BMC), BMC Hillcrest Campus, Fairview Hospital, North Adams Regional Hospital, Berkshire Health Urgent Care facilities, Berkshire Visiting Nurse Association and Berkshire Health Systems Medical Group. Additional health care access is offered through, among others, Community Health Programs (CHP) Berkshires, Volunteers in Medicine, and various medical providers.

Berkshire Health Systems carries out a Community Health Needs Assessment every three years, with the most recent reports being published in 2022 (11) and 2025 (12). Berkshire County residents face a lower life expectancy than that of the Commonwealth overall, and barriers to care such as transportation and low provider availability are problematic. Prevalence rates for obesity and diabetes in Berkshire County were 32% and 11%, respectively, in 2023. Health behaviors and outcomes of particular concern include poor mental health, maternal health, birth inequities, and substance use (12).

## Food Insecurity

According to Feeding America’s 2023 data, 12.3% of Berkshire County residents were food-insecure, compared to 11.5% of Massachusetts residents overall, with around 2/3 of the food-insecure Berkshire County residents having incomes below the 200% poverty line (13). Food insecurity has been increasing in recent years, both in Berkshire County and in Massachusetts as a whole, with Berkshire County’s food insecurity rates consistently higher than those of the Commonwealth overall.

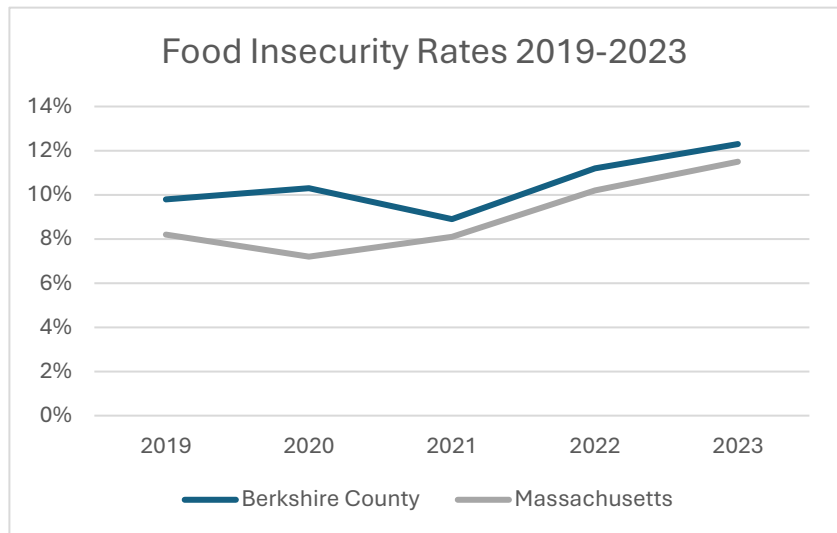


Figure 5. Food Insecurity Rates 2019-2023 for Berkshire County and Massachusetts, data points from Feeding America (13)

According to the Greater Boston Food Bank’s statewide food access survey and report, 39% of households in Berkshire County reported food insecurity in 2024, comparable to more than 1 in 3 households reporting food insecurity across Massachusetts (14). In addition to having high rates of food insecurity in urban settings, most notably North Adams and Pittsfield, Berkshire County has rural areas where limited income overlaps with distance to a grocery store at more than 10 miles away (15). Food insecurity affects a variety of health measures; compared to food-secure households, Massachusetts residents living in food-insecure households reported higher rates of mental health conditions, diabetes, disabilities, dental/gum disease, and asthma (14).

## Resources for Food-Insecure Households

### Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP is a federally funded nutrition assistance program that aims to provide benefits to supplement the food budget of low-income individuals and families so they can purchase healthy foods. The program is administered by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. SNAP benefits are determined based on a household’s income and a subset of living expenses, and the allotted monthly funds are loaded onto an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card for use at cash registers to subsidize recipients’ nutritional budgets. EBT cards are accepted at grocery stores and farmers markets in place of credit or debit cards. These benefits can be used to purchase items such as fruits and vegetables; meat, poultry, fish, dairy products; breads, cereals, snack foods, non-alcoholic beverages, and seeds and plants for production of fresh food for the household. (16).



Beyond the benefits SNAP provides to families in need, economic benefits are generated by the influx of federal money into the local community. According to the USDA Economic Research Service 2019 report, \$1 of SNAP benefits generates an estimated \$1.50 in economic activity (17). Despite the benefits provided to households in the community by federal SNAP funds, far fewer

people are enrolled than are eligible. For the four Massachusetts House of Representatives legislative districts in 2021, the 2021 “SNAP gap” was 40% (4259 residents) for 1<sup>st</sup> Berkshire, 43% (4417 residents) for 2<sup>nd</sup> Berkshire, and 40% (6464 residents) for 3<sup>rd</sup> Berkshire, and 59% (4157 residents) for 4<sup>th</sup> Berkshire) (18).

The application process for SNAP is estimated to take no longer than 20 minutes, but documentation is required to verify information provided by applicants. These include identification for the “Head of the Household” (e.g., driver's license, birth certificate, passport), proof of Massachusetts residence (e.g., bill, lease agreement, bank statement, mail), social security numbers for all household members applying, and proof of income for the previous four weeks (e.g., pay stubs, pension or child support documents). In addition, non-citizens must provide proof of legal non-citizen status. As many as 43% of SNAP recipients cited computer access as a primary concern, and phone assistance through a hotline is available but can be difficult to obtain. After the application is complete, SNAP approval times can vary (16).

### Healthy Incentives Program (HIP)

HIP is an extension of SNAP aimed at supplying low-income families with the funding needed to purchase locally sourced fresh food. This Massachusetts program reimburses families when fresh, locally-sourced food is purchased using a SNAP EBT card (19). HIP dollars earned through local food purchases are added back into the SNAP balance. HIP’s monthly reimbursement is based on household size, with a limit of \$40 for 1-2 people, \$60 for 3-5 people, or \$80 for 6 or more people; every month this limit is reset.



The HIP benefit can be used at farmers' markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and community-supported agriculture (CSA) farm share programs (16).

SNAP participants are automatically entitled to – and enrolled in - HIP benefits. Despite this, widespread use of this program has not been observed. According to 2024 HIP usage data from the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, the percent of Berkshire County SNAP recipients utilizing HIP averaged just 5% for the six months when outdoor farmers markets are open (May-Oct) and only 1.5% in the remainder of the year (20), even though the benefit can also be used at certain indoor sites year-round. These utilization rates are substantially lower than those for most of the other counties in the Commonwealth.

### Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program Coupons

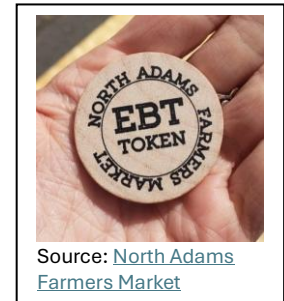
The Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program allows certain low-income residents to apply for coupons that can be used at farmers markets. Families enrolled in WIC can apply for \$30 coupon books that can be used at approved farmers markets and farm stands, as a supplement to grocery store benefits. Seniors who are age 60 or older and meet income eligibility requirements can apply through Elder Services of Berkshire County to receive \$25 coupon books through this program (21).



## Market Match

The Market Match program enhances economic development for farmers while increasing household access to healthy foods. The Market Match Fund coordinated by Berkshire Agricultural Ventures is described in the Best Practice Case Studies section below.

As with HIP, no further application process is necessary for households participating in the Market Match program once a resident is enrolled in SNAP, WIC or the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. These benefits can be used to purchase wooden tokens at double the value of the funds applied (up to \$30) – that is, a family can spend \$30 per visit in EBT funds for a total of \$60 in wooden tokens, which can then be spent at any farm stand selling SNAP-eligible foods. The \$30 is reimbursed through HIP, ultimately resulting in a tripling of the funds (16).



## Community Food Resources

In Berkshire County, as elsewhere in the state and country, federal and state assistance programs may not allow low-income households to fully meet their nutritional needs. Food-insecure households often supplement their food resources using food pantries and other food access sites, a need that increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic and, after an initial decline, has been increasing again in recent years, particularly for those using these resources more frequently (14).

Berkshire County has developed an extensive emergency food network, which includes food pantries, hot meal sites, brown bag programs, mobile food pantries, and shelters, among others. These sites often serve as a regular, essential means of meeting a household's food needs. In North County, the largest food pantry is the Al Nelson Friendship Center Food Pantry in North Adams, and the Berkshire Food Project provides hot meals. Pittsfield in Central County is served by numerous food pantries, with the Pittsfield Community Food Pantry (formerly South Community Food Pantry) serving the most households in the region and the county. In South County, the largest food pantry is the People's Pantry.

Food access sites are supported by a vast network of businesses, organizations and volunteers that donate, purchase, transport and distribute food, and the number and variety of food access sites and services have multiplied to respond to increasing local food insecurity in Berkshire County. Berkshire Bounty, an organization that purchases, aggregates and distributes foods to emergency access sites, recorded an increase in the amount food collected and delivered from 8,000 pounds in 2017 to over 420,000 pounds by 2023, and the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts has similarly distributed greatly increased food volumes to food access sites across the county (22).

# Community Food Access System: Landscape and Assets

Berkshire County has a diverse and widespread food system. A food system asset survey was used to collect information about organizations, initiatives and businesses associated with the county’s food system. The purpose of the asset map is to identify strengths and roles of assets in our food system, to highlight commonalities and potential collaborations between assets, and to promote communication to improve efficiency and reduce duplication of efforts. While the survey collected data from only a subset of assets in the food system, the 70 responses represented all sectors of the food system highlighted in the 2019 Berkshire County Community Food Assessment and spanned all three regions of the county. Many of the assets reported serving in multiple sectors of the food access system. The full asset map is provided in **Appendix 2: Asset Map for the Berkshire County Food System**.



Figure 6 Eight interdependent sectors in the food access system. Graphic courtesy of Maxwell Fyfe.

## Food Production

Around a third of the assets in the survey reported that they participated in the Food Production sector of the food system. Berkshire County has a large cohort of small farms, which have a strong local presence through farm stands, farmers markets, and community supported agriculture (CSA) shares, and the food production ranges from fruits and vegetables to meat, eggs and dairy. Farmers report selling value-added products such as cheeses and soaps in addition to fresh products. Food production assets also include several community garden programs.

Strengths of the food production assets included connecting local adults and children to the land where food grows and fostering a sense of community. Farms also offer mutual support by selling other farmers’ goods at farm stands. Farms and garden programs reported donating produce to local food access sites, either directly or through organizations that manage distribution. Challenges reported in the food production sector included low financial margins for farms, limited access to funding for community gardens, land and infrastructure expenses, material expenses, difficulty in finding reliable employees, and climate change. For farmers, small-sized farms can also contribute to a lack of economy of scale that would help to attract larger purchasers, open supply chain opportunities, expand funding sources, and produce food at a lower cost.

## Food Processing

Only five of the survey responses came from assets that reported “Processing” as at least one of their food system sectors, and the challenges identified by these assets did not directly relate to

the food processing sector as a whole. The processing role was interpreted by assets in different ways, including processing of farm products into value-added goods such as cheese and soap, as well as food processing through culinary education. Processing farm products can improve their marketability, storage life and profitability, and can address a challenge in selling local produce to local schools that lack staff or facilities for food preparation. Additional processing assets exist in the county, and identification of these assets is included in the “food hub” goals in the Additional processing assets exist in the county, and identification of these assets is included in the “food hub” goals in the Current Priorities and Goals section below.

## Food Distribution

Almost two thirds of the survey responders noted “Food Distribution” as one of their food system sectors and, as with food processing, this was interpreted in a variety of ways. Food is distributed to community members through food pantries and other food access sites, direct delivery, farmers markets and other retail locations, mobile food banks, mobile farmers markets, health care locations, and municipal offices. Large-scale transportation of food is facilitated by the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, Marty’s Local, Berkshire Community Action Council, Goodwill Industries of the Berkshires and Southern Vermont, and Berkshire Bounty, among others. Food access sites also report use of volunteers to transport donated and purchased foods.



Strengths in the food distribution sector included expansion of food transport and storage systems to meet needs. For example, the Goodwill Truck was purchased through a Community Development Block Grant and delivers 9000 lb of food per run from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts to 10 food access sites in Berkshire County, and a cold storage facility was purchased by Berkshire Bounty through a Food Security Infrastructure Grant and hosted at Berkshire Medical Center’s North Adams campus, allowing refrigerated and frozen food to be stored before distribution to local sites.

Challenges in the food distribution sector include the need for food exceeding distribution capability, funding, storage space, and staff and volunteer capacity – with funding being the most-frequently cited challenge. The widely distributed system of local pantries and the distance to the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts distribution site, located outside of Berkshire County in Chicopee, MA, pose particular challenges for the emergency food system. A 2024 Williams College Environmental Planning Project (22) outlined some possible strategies for improving efficiency in food distribution, and additional strategies are being discussed in regional food access groups.

## Food Retail & Marketing

Grocery stores and other commercial retail sites were under-represented in this asset map, but play a strong role in the Berkshire County food system by serving as a source of fresh, healthy foods for purchase, and by donating surplus food to local food access sites. Non-grocery store assets that reported a Food Retail & Marketing role included farmers markets and farms with farm stands, some of which accept HIP. Some of the county’s farm stores sell products from other local businesses as well as their own foods. Challenges noted in the food retail sector included funding, infrastructure and staffing.

## Emergency Food Access

The vast system of emergency food access sites in Berkshire County is represented in the asset map and in the list of sites in **Appendix 3: Food Pantries and Meal Sites in Berkshire County** that is managed by a volunteer, updated monthly and posted to email lists and municipal websites, and is also available in Spanish. Nearly half of the asset map survey responses noted a role in emergency food access. Food pantries, shelters, community gardens, farms, healthcare facilities, shelters, schools, and municipal offices all report serving in emergency food access.

Food pantry models in Berkshire County include pre-boxed, free choice and market-style systems, and range in size from very small initiatives in the smaller municipalities to larger sites in Pittsfield, Great Barrington and North Adams, and many sites report serving residents from outside their immediate community. Perishable items such as produce, meat and eggs are provided through purchases and donations from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, Berkshire Bounty, Berkshire Grown, grocery stores, farms, and community gardens. Many of the food access sites offer delivery or bring food to neighborhoods using mobile facilities, including the Berkshire Dream Center and the Mobile Food Bank from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. Subsidized or free community-supported agriculture (CSA) shares and other models allow low-income families access to local farm products, and several community garden programs promote hands-on production of culturally relevant foods for consumption by food-insecure residents. Hot meals are provided at sites that include Bright Morningstar Kitchen in Pittsfield, Berkshire Food Project in North Adams, and Berkshire South Regional Community Center in Great Barrington, as well as Meals on Wheels through Elder Services.

The emergency food access system has responded quickly to local needs by adding or modifying services to meet increasing demand. Additional strengths of the emergency food assets include flexibility, efforts to reduce barriers to food access, respect for residents who come to the sites, strong community connections, and dedicated volunteers. Challenges include need exceeding food supply, increasing need due to SNAP cuts, providing an adequate variety of healthy foods, funding, storage, staffing, transportation, size and stability of pantry spaces, and a limited volunteer base, with funding being by far the most-frequently cited challenge.



Figure 7 Food system challenges identified by the first cohort of asset map survey respondents.

## Food Recovery & Composting

Many of the emergency food access sites in Berkshire County reported receiving donated surplus food from local grocery stores, diverting food from the waste stream to food-insecure residents. Two composting companies, Second Chance Composting and Tommy's Compost Service, operate county-wide and have a presence at farmers markets, municipal waste facilities, and various public locations. Other assets that reported composting included farms, community gardens, and a food pantry.

Strengths of composting assets include increasing community access to composting, diverting food scraps from the waste stream, and improving soil health. Challenges include funding for infrastructure and equipment needs and making connections with community sites to which compost can be donated.

## Education

Education about the food system takes place across a variety of settings in Berkshire County. These include hands-on farming and nature experiences and education through community garden programs, farm programming, farmers markets, and youth employment programs; nutritional education through the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, community groups, and healthcare facilities; connection with food access resources through community health workers, healthcare facilities, and food access sites; and culinary education, workforce development, and other curriculum-based education through local educational institutions. More than a quarter of the asset survey respondents reported having an education role in the food system.

Strengths of education sector in the Berkshire County food system include strong engagement of youth; practical, hands-on learning; and the variety of outreach efforts through trusted institutions. Challenges in this sector include funding and a need for expanded collaboration with municipalities and other organizations,

## Policy & Funding

The policy and funding sector is under-represented in the asset map survey responses, with only a handful of assets reporting having a role in this sector. The larger organizations that reported contributing to this sector include the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, Berkshire Health Systems, and Berkshire Grown; smaller sites also reported policy & funding roles. Strengths of this sector include strong understanding of the local food system and local drivers of food insecurity, and missions that support promoting the food system and health of Berkshire County residents. Challenges include limited funding and staff capacity, as well as increasing need.

## Making Connections Between Food System Sectors

The strong interconnectedness of the Berkshire County Food System is in part illustrated by having more than a quarter of asset survey respondents report that they contribute to making connections between food system sectors. This role is reported by healthcare providers, food resource programs, community support and activism organizations, community gardening programs and farms, and emergency food access sites, among others. Strengths include existing partnerships and integrated roles within the community settings. Challenges include lack of funding; the need for services exceeding the ability to meet demand; difficulties in developing effective, well-funded collaborations between organizations and municipalities; lack of overall coordination combined with siloing of efforts; integration of food system initiatives with the local economy; limited staffing at organizations and municipal offices that work with the food system; limited hours at food access sites to which food-insecure residents are sent; and lack of staff and volunteers that speak the first language of local residents.

# Progress on Food System Goals from the 2019 Community Food Assessment

The county-wide priorities and regional goals and action steps defined in the 2019 Berkshire County Community Food Assessment (1) were discussed in the regional food access meetings and at the 2024 Berkshire County Food Access Convening, a county-wide summit, to identify the areas in which progress has been made and relate these to ideas for future work.

## Progress on County-Wide Priorities and Implementation

The Berkshire County priorities defined in the 2019 Berkshire County Community Food Assessment were transportation and food access, given that transportation challenges contribute to food insecurity; coordination, promoting greater collaboration for better outcomes; food security resources, reducing barriers to accessing food resources; and farms, with a goal of getting more local farm products into local communities (1). The shared action steps recommended for implementing the regional goals and recommendations were to:

- Convene a Food Access Collaborative stakeholder group with quarterly meetings to review progress, refine goals and action steps, and act as an overall steering committee
- Convene smaller working groups to define timelines and implement action steps
- Develop and utilize a strategy for communication that will involve and inform residents and municipal leaders, with quarterly progress updates.
- Convene an annual county-wide food access summit to celebrate successes and explore opportunities for collaborations in improving food accessibility.

The priorities for Berkshire County have continued to apply. All three county regions have established food access stakeholder groups with regular meetings and attendance typically exceeding 10-15 representatives from various sectors of the food access system.

A county-wide food access summit was convened in 2024 with more than 60 food access stakeholders in attendance. Information about food access use was provided, innovative approaches around diversity and equity were presented, and various breakout groups discussed challenges, opportunities and priorities in the county food system.

Progress highlighted in the breakout groups is highlighted in the regional progress sections below. Additional successes highlighted at the Food Access Convening included increased education about how to cook and serve produce; additional ServSafe certification opportunities; improvements in the transportation system; the Berkshire Community Action Council van, which transports residents to food pantries and grocery stores; and the expansion of Meals on Wheels food deliveries.

The regional food access groups used ideas from the 2024 Food Access Convening, the 2019 food assessment goals, and wide-ranging discussions to outline areas of progress and define new food system goals.

Efforts toward wider stakeholder participation, effective communication, and cross-region collaboration are ongoing.

## Progress on 2019 Goals for North County

To advance communication and collaboration, needs identified in the discussions leading up to the 2019 Community Food Assessment, the Northern Berkshire Food Access Collaborative was established in December 2017. This group has historically been coordinated by the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition and has quarterly meetings to discuss updates and areas of concern. Attendees include representatives from a variety of food system organizations and occasionally also community members not associated with local businesses or organizations.

In the 2019 community food assessment four goals were outlined for the northern region of Berkshire County. The Food Access Collaborative described areas of progress for each of these goals.

*2019 Goal 1 for North County: A Food Hub provides farmers and community food security organizations with increased food preparation and distribution infrastructure and services.*

Many food hub discussions have occurred in Food Access Collaborative meetings over the years, and the vision has shifted from a central location food hub to a network model as resource opportunities have changed. Two food hub assets that were added to the North County food system infrastructure since 2019 were the cold storage facility at Berkshire Medical Center's north campus and the food truck purchased by Goodwill Industries of the Berkshires and Southern Vermont.

Using a Food Security Infrastructure Grant, Berkshire Bounty purchased a custom built 128-square-foot refrigerated, walk-in storage facility and a separate 60-square-foot walk-in freezer. Both are housed at Berkshire Medical Center's campus in North Adams; Berkshire Health Systems maintains the site, pays for the electricity, and provides security monitoring. The centralized storage facility addressed a large unmet need for the emergency food system by increasing inventory of perishable foods, reducing waste, and allowing for overflow storage for local farms. Having the extra space available in the cooler and freezer has enabled Berkshire Bounty and Berkshire Grown to utilize state grants to purchase food items in bulk. These items are stored within the coolers and can be taken out by emergency food organizations within the county by utilizing order forms.

In 2020, Goodwill Industries of the Berkshires and Southern Vermont began using its trucks to help deliver food to access sites. Once in-person shopping resumed at Goodwill stores, the trucks were no longer available for food delivery, but the transportation need remained. A Community Development Block Grant grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development allowed purchase of a custom-built refrigerated truck that can carry 9,000 pounds of food from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts in Chicopee MA to ten sites in Berkshire County. The grant pays the driver a full-time salary and covers expenses such as gas and mileage.

Additional food hub assets are already in existence, and the Food Access Collaborative has identified the need for a feasibility study with focus on asset mapping, space, storage, vision (including opportunities for aggregation, processing, education and employment) and funding.

*2019 Goal 2 for North County: Local foods are consumed by North Adams Public School students through a Farm to School program.*

Undergraduate students from the Environmental Policies class at Williams College have proposed possible plans for implementing local produce into curriculum and food offerings for the North Adams Public Schools and a possible collaboration with a local farm (16), and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts created resources and funding for farm to school programming (23) that are available to the school systems. Farm-to-school implementation has started in the North Adams Public Schools.

*2019 Goal 3 for North County: Excess food is regularly reused, benefiting community food security.*

This goal has largely been met as envisioned in 2019. Big Y, Stop & Shop, Walmart and Wild Oats provide unsold, perishable foods to local meal distribution programs. The Williams WRAPS program distributes excess meal service food as frozen meals at food access sites. Berkshire County composting services are collecting non-edible foods, and organizations and local restaurants are using composting services for their food waste.

*2019 Goal 4 for North County: All eligible residents have access to food assistance resources that increase food security and improve health.*

The Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market expanded access to healthy foods into high-need neighborhoods, including North Adams in 2023 and 2024 and Adams in 2024 and 2025, with a tiered pricing system and weekly availability during the market season. Food pantry service hours have increased, the Goodwill food truck has expanded delivery of food bank items to food access sites, and the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts has added mobile food pantry distributions twice per month in North Adams and Adams. Limited enrollment in SNAP and low use of HIP relative to the eligible population remain challenges in North County.

## **Progress on 2019 Goals for Central County**

The Central Food Access Convening was established in 2024 to promote communication and collaboration meeting a goal of the 2019 Community Food Assessment and following up on a specific need for this group identified at the June 2024 Berkshire County Food Access Convening. This group is coordinated by the Director of Community Impact at Berkshire United Way and has monthly to bimonthly meetings to discuss updates and areas of concern. A variety of food system organizations are represented at these meetings.

In the 2019 Community Food Assessment, four goals were outlined for the central region of Berkshire County. The Central Food Access Convening identified areas of progress for each of these goals.

*2019 Goal 1 for Central County: Residents in Morningside have access to a retail outlet for healthy and affordable food options.*

Although the Morningside neighborhood still lacks a full-service grocery store, access to healthy and affordable foods has increased through a variety of other initiatives that started operation after 2019. The Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market has a weekly stop on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street June-October. This market offers produce and other foods from local farms at full-cost, reduced-cost and no-cost levels, and it accepts SNAP/HIP, WIC and Senior Coupons. The Berkshire Dream Center

offers Bread of Life Market, a market-style food pantry, three times per week and hot, restaurant-style meals through its Bright Morningstar Kitchen, both at its Tyler Street location. It also has a mobile food pantry with two Morningside stops. On Fenn St. Roots & Dreams and Mustard Seeds, Inc. hosts Madre Jardin, a community garden, and Mercado de Vida, a free market for groceries and clothing open six days per week. Casa Esperanza, a non-profit organization that addresses food insecurity and social isolation in Berkshire County's Latino community, is also based in the Morningside neighborhood.

*2019 Goal 2 for Central County: All eligible residents have access to food assistance resources that increase food security and improve health.*

The Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market, Berkshire Dream Center, Mercado de Vida and Casa Esperanza described above serve Central County community members beyond the Pittsfield's Morningside neighborhood. The Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market sets up weekly at Wahconah Park in addition to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, and the Berkshire Dream Center's Mobile Food Pantry has three Pittsfield stops in addition to those in the Morningside neighborhood. The Mobile Food Pantry from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts distributes produce and shelf-stable items monthly at Community Health Programs (CHP) in Dalton.

Food access sites have received greater publicity since 2019, in part thanks to the comprehensive, printable list of food access sites, including hours and services, that is regularly updated and emailed to a county-wide list of recipients by a local volunteer; the Pittsfield sites are also posted on the City of Pittsfield's website. This list is available in Spanish as well as English, thanks to translation support from the Berkshire Immigrant Center. In addition, in Summer 2025 that volunteer assembled and distributed a "Kids Eat Free" list of 15 Berkshire County sites that provided free breakfast and lunch for children 18 and under when school was not in session, including addresses and times. Eight of these sites were in Pittsfield.

To promote health and connection to services, Berkshire United Way convenes a group of 30 community resource navigators, representing over 20 agencies. The group has been meeting monthly for the last two years, with the goal of providing wraparound support for community members. These navigators include community health workers at Volunteers in Medicine, Berkshire Health Systems, Community Health Programs, and the local schools. Clients from various agencies are referred to the navigators, and this system has the capacity to also work with food access sites to expand access to appropriate support services.

*2019 Goal 3 for Central County: There is year-round distribution of fresh fruits and vegetables through emergency food sites in Pittsfield.*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) program allowed Berkshire Grown and Berkshire Bounty to purchase local foods from 31 farms in Berkshire County and surrounding regions. This food was distributed to 28 food access sites across the county, including around 10 sites in Central County. The Mobile Food Pantry from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts distributes produce as well as shelf-stable items monthly at Community Health Programs in Dalton on a year-round basis, and the Berkshire Dream Center's mobile pantry continues to distribute fresh produce at five Pittsfield sites.

During summer and fall the Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market and the Roots, Dreams & Mustard Seeds Madre Jardin community garden serve Pittsfield neighborhoods, as does the Roots Rising Pittsfield Farmers Market, a teen-run farmers market. The Pittsfield Farmers Market has a strong

outreach program in support of food resources and is a Market Match site. This initiative is described in detail in the **Roots Rising: Pittsfield Farmers Market case study** below.

## Progress on 2019 Goals for South County

The Southern Berkshire Food Web was established in March 2020 to promote communication and collaboration. This group is coordinated by the Food Access Coordinator at the Southern Berkshire Rural Health Network and has biweekly to monthly meetings to discuss updates and areas of concern. Attendance has remained steady with representation from at least 10 organizations across the regional food system.

In the 2019 Berkshire County Community Food Assessment three goals were outlined for the southern region of the County. The Southern Berkshire Food Web has identified areas of progress for each of these goals.

*2019 Goal 1 for South County: Food-insecure school-aged youth in South Berkshire County have increased access to free and reduced food outside of school hours.*

A food box program for selected students in the after-school program, initiated in 2016, was expanded district-wide in March 2020 and continues to the present day, delivering boxes of food to food-insecure households identified by counselors at the school districts of Southern Berkshire County. This effort is described in detail in the **Southern Berkshire Schools: Food Box Program case study** below.

In addition, in summer 2025 a local volunteer compiled and emailed a printable “Kids Eat Free” list of 15 Berkshire County sites that provide free breakfast and lunch for children 18 and under when school is not in session, including addresses and times. South County pickups were available in Lee and Sheffield.

*2019 Goal 2 for South County: All eligible residents have access to food assistance resources that increase food security and improve health.*

Food access in Southern Berkshire County has increased through food pantry expansion, publicity of resources, and education. The Otis Food Pantry opened in August 2020 and the Monterey Pantry opened in October 2020, addressing previously underappreciated needs for food access in these geographic areas. The Monterey Pantry also illustrates a need for open hours on Saturdays; as of 2024 more than half of households on Saturdays were coming from the towns surrounding Monterey. The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts began the Mobile Food Bank as a pilot program in 2016, and this continues to the present day, serving South County with a stop in Great Barrington once per month. The Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market, which supports local farmers and offers a tiered pricing system that includes no-cost items for the most food-insecure patrons, was started in 2023. It runs from June to October, currently making six stops across the three regions of the county, with weekly South County locations in Becket and Monterey.

Education about resources such as WIC and Community Health Programs is provided through the educational component of the Market Match program in Berkshire County, and the Berkshire South Regional Community Center offers cooking & nutrition classes for youth and adults. A comprehensive, printable list of food access sites, including hours and services, is regularly updated and emailed to a county-wide list of recipients by a local volunteer. This list is also available in Spanish, thanks to translation support from the Berkshire Immigrant Center.

2019 Goal 3 for South County: The immigrant population of South Berkshire County has access to healthy food options year-round.

Language can be a challenge for the immigrant population of South Berkshire County. The county-wide list of food access sites has been translated into Spanish, and additional language needs have been identified through discussions of the Southern Berkshire Food Web and a biannual survey of food sites by Berkshire Bounty.

Multicultural BRIDGE is a food distribution program that fed 154 families as of 2024, about 75% of these being immigrant families. In addition Multicultural BRIDGE delivers food to residences, including culturally relevant, healthy vegetables; provides culturally relevant recipes in English & Spanish; and distributes information about support resources, community events, and Multicultural BRIDGE events. The expansion of food pantry sites and hours has benefitted immigrant populations in Southern Berkshire County, and constituents who don't drive are benefitting from food delivery from food access sites, a service with increased availability since 2020.



Figure 8 Sectors of the food system, as defined in the 2019 Community Food Assessment (1)

# Current Priorities and Goals

## Priorities for Berkshire County

County-wide priorities and goals were discussed at the 2024 Berkshire County Food Access Convening, a county-wide summit attended by more than 60 stakeholders. Priorities suggested by regional and food system sector-specific breakout groups at the Food Access Convening could be grouped into the following categories:

**Collect and distribute more data and information**, for example by strategically collecting food system data and communicating it to groups that could use it, updating maps of food access sites and food deserts, listening to perspectives of community members who access food resources, and building understanding of drivers of food insecurity, including the “cliff effect.”

**Increase access to food resources for food-insecure residents**, for example by meeting people where they already are when providing food and information about resources, increasing use of mobile services, increasing transportation of food and people, offering more-flexible food access hours, expanding options for school-based pantries and resources, meeting needs of specific populations and individuals, including ethnic and cultural needs and needs in the hill towns, and reducing paperwork and other barriers to food access.

**Support the food system labor force**, for example by paying more people for their food work and by supporting, growing and retaining volunteers.

**Increase communication and collaboration between food system entities**, for example by convening food system groups, facilitating more-equitable communication, increasing funding and collaboration opportunities for grants and resource sharing, providing opportunities to convene among assets and navigate available resources, and activating a convening system to organize efforts.

**Identify food system challenges that would benefit from high-level coordination**, for example by reducing barriers to participation in the food system by decreasing paperwork loads and other barriers, and improving resilience in the food system through large-scale, coordinated planning of crops across the food production system and designated crops for sale to food access sites.

The regional food access groups used these suggestions, the 2019 action plan, and other discussions to formulate goals and action plans achievable in a five-year timeframe.



## 2025 Regional Goals: North County

The Northern Berkshire Food Access Collaborative identified four 5-year goals and outlined preliminary action steps to achieve these goals.

### North County Goal 1: Design a North County Food Hub that will allow farmers and food access organizations to store, process and deliver foods.

Elements of a food hub system for aggregating, preparing and distributing food are already present in North Berkshire County, but there is no shared list of assets and no mechanism for mobilizing elements of a food hub when centralized coordination is needed, as with a food access emergency. A centralized food hub model focused on a single building has been repeatedly explored but found to be infeasible. A means of leveraging the distributed assets to function as a food hub is needed.

#### Recommendations for Preliminary Action Steps, North County Goal 1

- Enlist a student group from Williams College, Berkshire Community College or MCLA to create a feasibility study, e.g. by contacting the Center for Learning in Action and the Environmental Planning course at Williams, the nutrition instructor at MCLA, the Essential Needs Coordinator and Community/Outreach Counselor at BCC, and the local MASSPIRG chapters. If no student group can be found, recruit a volunteer through local food access volunteer lists.
- Assign someone knowledgeable about local food hub needs and resources to advise this student group/volunteer, for example from the Al Nelson Friendship Center Food Pantry.
- Task students or volunteer(s) with generating a feasibility study that would include:
  - Information about prior food hub discussions in Northern Berkshire County;
  - Information about existing food hubs that might serve as models (e.g. Roots & Dreams, Greenfield) and previous efforts toward creating a food hub in northern Berkshire County;
  - An asset map describing resources available to meet food hub needs, such as:
    - Means of meeting storage needs for emergency food sites, farmers, and any other relevant organizations
    - Means of establishing pathways for food delivery to storage and destinations, for example by expanding use of Marty's Local
    - Means of addressing food processing capacity for emergency food sites and farmers
    - Means of meeting infrastructure needs, including an education space and commercial kitchen facilities (for example accessing existing facilities at churches, Berkshire Community College, McCann Technical School and Red Shirt Farm);
  - Strategies for supporting aggregation of farmed goods;
  - Opportunities for culinary training and employment, for example through McCann Technical School, Berkshire Community College, MassHire, and Greylock Works);
  - Possible sources of funding, including through state resources such as Project Bread and our political representatives.
- Establish a Sub-Committee or Task Force of the Food Access Collaborative to create an action plan and initiate funding for a food hub model based on the feasibility study.

## North County Goal 2: Implement a farm-to-school program in the North Adams Public School System.

Farm to school programming was previously explored and is still seen as an area for future action, particularly given additional supports from the Commonwealth.

### Recommendations for Preliminary Action Steps, North County Goal 2

- Invite the Food Services Director of the North Adams Public School System to a Food Access Collaborative meeting to discuss goals and needs for support.
- Consider existing plans such as the proposals from the Williams College Environmental Planning students in 2023 and 2018 and the resources from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for farm to school programming (24), and adapt to the current goals of the North Adams Public Schools.
- Identify funding sources and other means of addressing needs, in collaboration with the North Adams Public Schools' grant writer.

## North County Goal 3: Increase access to food assistance resources that increase food security and improve health.

The gap between the number of households eligible for SNAP and the number receiving SNAP benefits remains stubbornly high, as noted in the SNAP section above. Specific actions will be taken to address possible reasons for low enrollment.

### Recommendations for Preliminary Action Steps, North County Goal 3

- Increase the ability to complete SNAP applications, for example by involving NBCC in training navigators and case managers to help with application, and by directing applicants to the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts SNAP hotline.
- Identify and distribute materials that might help reduce stigma or misconceptions about food assistance.
  - Identify tabling opportunities, for example at the Mobile Food Bank, farmers markets, food pantries, Berkshire Food Project, and North Adams Downtown Celebration.
  - Deliver flyers to Remedy Hall and food access sites, and advertise food assistance resources using social media, public access TV, Berkshire Grown publication.

## North County Goal 4: Promote healthier choices that utilize available foods.

It can be difficult for residents to know what to do with fresh produce that is available at food access sites, or to cook healthy meals with limited resources.

### Recommendations for Preliminary Action Steps, North County Goal 4

- Utilize cooking resources and nutrition coordinators provided by the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.
- Engage the McCann culinary program as well as local nurses or health educators who can discuss healthy eating practices, for example in managing chronic health conditions.
  - Provide cookbooks & recipes, for example by obtaining funding to reprint the *Flexible Pantry* cookbook from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, including the Spanish translation when available, and printing recipes from or directing clients to the WIC recipe database.

## 2025 Regional Goals: Central County

The Central Food Access Convening identified five 5-year goals and outlined preliminary action steps to achieve these goals.

### Central County Goal 1: Improve access to healthy food across central county.

Food access sites have increased in number, access hours, and geographic reach, but certain neighborhoods and populations are still struggling to access foods. Focus on food delivery and specific neighborhoods in Pittsfield plus towns beyond Pittsfield might help to address these needs.

#### Recommendations for Preliminary Action Steps, Central County Goal 1

- Expand food delivery for those who have difficulty accessing existing food access sites.
  - Identify people who need delivered food but are not accessing this service. This could involve collaboration between trusted organizations such as the Family Resource Center, Council on Aging, Multicultural BRIDGE, and Berkshire Immigrant Center.
  - Expand shared transportation resources across organizations, for example by utilizing the Elder Services van and Berkshire Community Action Council van, and coordinating volunteer drivers.
  - Recruit additional volunteers, by expanding use and promotion of the Berkshire United Way volunteer portal.
  - Expand delivery volunteers in rural areas, for example by including geographic targeting in the Berkshire United Way volunteer portal. To increase the number of delivery volunteers in rural areas, a geographic location filter could be included in the volunteer portal.
  - Expand mutual aid as a means of delivery, for example by coordinating pickups or deliveries to multiple residences in a given geographic area, or by looking at mutual aid models currently used with success by Finca Luna Búho and Multicultural BRIDGE, or expanding use of existing community communication channels such as Signal chats.
  - Utilize existing Berkshire Bounty data around delivery to identify possible areas for delivery expansion.
  - Promote collaboration between organizations that offer delivery to more-efficiently design delivery routes.
  - Fund purchase of a van to deliver foods, for example through Berkshire Bounty, and create a model for sharing this van to improve food delivery.
- Increase access to affordable, healthy foods in the Wahconah Street, West Side and Tyler Street neighborhoods of Pittsfield, for example by expanding the mobile distribution system.
- Increase access to affordable, healthy foods in other towns in Central Berkshire County, for example by first asking the emergency food access sites, neighborhood groups, Dalton Community Recreation Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Adams Housing Authority, Finca Luna Búho, Heart and Soil Collective, and senior centers about known needs.

## Central County Goal 2: Increase enrollment in food assistance programs.

Many of our community members who are eligible for SNAP, WIC, and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (Senior Coupons) are not accessing these resources. Efforts to increase enrollment might include education about assistance programs, support in completing applications and finding resource information, and maintaining common resources such as 413Cares.

### Recommendations for Preliminary Action Steps, Central County Goal 2

- Promote enrollment by increasing perceived ability to use available food while taking into account barriers in households, for example by providing cooking classes involving use of healthy foods with minimal kitchen resources.
- Increase local SNAP education.
  - Identify materials that might help reduce stigma or misconceptions about food assistance, perhaps in coordination with North County efforts.
  - Identify tabling opportunities and locations for flyer distribution, for example at the Mobile Food Bank, farmers markets, food pantries, and Community Health Programs (CHP).
- Increase the ability to complete SNAP applications by making sure food access sites know to direct applicants to the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts SNAP hotline.
  - Utilize community navigators to provide support for SNAP benefits and possibly provide training at an upcoming meeting of the navigators.
- Advertise food assistance resources using social media, public access TV, and Berkshire Grown publications.
- Increase use of the existing 413Cares website and the 211 resource by keeping information up to date and training food site representatives and community navigators in their use.

## Central County Goal 3: Generate a shared data system to promote collaboration.

Centralized mechanisms for collecting and distributing data about food access in Central County would be beneficial to the food access community as a whole. Efforts to achieve this goal might be undertaken in collaboration with South County, which has the same goal.

### Recommendations for Preliminary Action Steps, Central County Goal 3

- Contact Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Berkshire Benchmarks to see where reports relevant to the Berkshire County food system might be hosted.
- Communicate needs and trends at food access sites by identified through the biannual survey administered by Berkshire Bounty.
- Adopt a common data reporting system for food pantries, such as that developed for the South County food pantries.
- Generate report(s) of regional data such as food insecurity, income, and demographics that are not provided by other agencies and that might support collaborations for funding.
- Create a GIS map of all food access sites in Berkshire County, for example by working with the Environmental Studies department at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, and establish a model for storing, updating, and allowing access to this map.

- Create food desert map(s) for Berkshire County, for example by working with a local college, that might improve on the USDA food desert maps and highlight areas with a lack of access to culturally relevant foods.

#### Central County Goal 4: Design a Central County food hub that will allow farmers and food access organizations to store, process and deliver foods.

Elements of a food hub system for aggregating and distributing food are already present in Central Berkshire County. To most efficiently leverage existing resources, identify gaps, and allow rapid coordination in a situation requiring emergency mobilization of the food system, a Central Berkshire food hub model is needed. Since a similar food hub feasibility study will also be undertaken by the North County Food Access Collaborative, collaboration should be initiated to avoid duplication of effort, for example concerning research into existing models for food hubs, identification of resources that would serve both the north and central regions of the county, and potential sources of funding.

#### Recommendations for Preliminary Action Steps, Central County Goal 4

- Enlist a student group from Williams College, Berkshire Community College or Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts to create a feasibility study; if no student group can be found, recruit a volunteer through local food access volunteer lists.
- Assign someone knowledgeable about local food hub needs and resources to advise this student group/volunteer.
- Task students or volunteer(s) with generating a feasibility study that would include:
  - Information about existing food hubs that might serve as models (e.g. Roots & Dreams, Greenfield);
  - An asset map describing resources available to meet food hub needs, such as:
    - Means of meeting storage needs for emergency food sites, farmers, and any other relevant organizations,
    - Means of establishing pathways for food delivery to storage and destinations, for example by expanding use of Marty's Local,
    - Means of addressing food processing capacity for emergency food sites and farmers, for example at commercial kitchens such as those at St. Stephen's Church, Berkshire Community College, and Red Shirt Farm,
    - Locations for hosting educational activities,
    - Strategies for supporting aggregation of farmed goods,
    - Opportunities for culinary training and employment, for example through Berkshire Community College and MassHire;
  - Possible sources of funding, including through state resources such as Project Bread and our political representatives.
- Establish a Sub-Committee/Task Force of the Central Food Access Convening to create an action plan and initiate funding mechanisms for a food hub model based on the feasibility study.

## Central County Goal 5: Work with the City of Pittsfield to develop a Central County emergency preparedness plan

Food access is a critical element of emergency preparedness planning. As municipal governments create emergency preparedness plans, it will be important to have input from and plans that involve food system assets. The first priority will be to establish communication with the City of Pittsfield about emergency preparedness planning.

### Recommendations for Preliminary Action Steps, Central County Goal 5

- Create a working group that will:
  - Coordinate a meeting with the City of Pittsfield’s Community Development office and local food system representatives to discuss food access needs in the context of an emergency plan and identify action steps.
  - Survey food system stakeholders about needs relevant to an emergency preparedness plan.
  - Develop elements of an emergency preparedness plan for the City of Pittsfield that address the identified needs from the food system.

## 2025 Regional Goals: South County

The Southern Berkshire Food Web identified four 5-year goals and outlined preliminary action steps to achieve these goals.

### South County Goal 1: Improve access to delivered food.

Food delivery expanded greatly as a COVID-19 pandemic response, and can provide food access to people who for various reasons find it difficult to visit food access sites in person.

#### Recommendations for Preliminary Action Steps, South County Goal 1

- Identify people who need delivered food but are not accessing this service. This could involve collaboration between trusted organizations such as the Family Resource Center, Council on Aging, Multicultural BRIDGE, and Berkshire Immigrant Center.
- Expand shared transportation resources across organizations, for example by utilizing the Elder Services van and coordinating volunteer drivers.
- Ensure sustainability of the school food box program, for example with targeted fund-raising by Berkshire Bounty and/or other organizations, and by maintaining volunteer numbers and enthusiasm through efforts outlined in Goal 4 below.

### South County Goal 2: Use the food access network as a hub for providing access to other support services.

Community members who come to food access sites often have needs for other supports as well, and the food sites might serve as valuable sites to promote use of these additional supports.

### Recommendations for Preliminary Action Steps, South County Goal 2

- Create a printable, up-to-date South County resource guide. This task is already underway through a partnership between a Tri-Town Community Social Worker and an employee of Tri-Town Health.
- Increase use of the existing 413Cares website by keeping its information up to date and training food site representatives in its use.
  - Identify in-person location(s) where someone in need of supports could talk to someone to learn about resources and time-effectively gain access to appropriate services.
- Position community navigators at meal sites, farmers markets, and other locations to connect people to resources, talk with community members, and potentially address other basic needs.
  - Appropriate navigators would first be identified by contacting Community Health Programs, WIC, Food Bank of Western Massachusetts (for SNAP application processing) and/or other organizations, then navigators would be scheduled at appropriate intervals at relevant food access sites.

### South County Goal 3: Create a shared data system to promote collaboration.

Data needs were identified around describing our community, mapping our local food system, and identifying food system needs. The importance of having data accessible to members of the food system and the greater community was also highlighted.

### Recommendations for Preliminary Action Steps, South County Goal 3

- Contact Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Berkshire Benchmarks to see where reports relevant to the Berkshire County food system might be hosted.
- Identify needs of food access sites, for example by publicizing relevant results from the biannual survey administered by Berkshire Bounty and/or the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.
- Generate report(s) of regional data such as food insecurity, income, and demographics that are not provided by other agencies and that might be used to support collaborations for funding.
- Create a GIS map of all food access sites in Berkshire County work, for example by working with the Environmental Studies department at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, and establish a model for storing, updating, and allowing access to this map.
- Create food desert map(s) for Berkshire County, for example by working with a local college, that might improve on the USDA food desert maps and that might highlight areas with a lack of access to culturally relevant foods.

## South County Goal 4: Expand the regional staff and volunteer base

Food access sites have expressed concerns about recruiting and maintaining the volunteers that are critical to providing services to the community.

### Recommendations for Preliminary Action Steps, South County Goal 4

- Increase volunteerism by targeting both adults and youth.
  - Maintain a central resource that allows potential volunteers to see currently available volunteer opportunities, for example by adding opportunities to Berkshire United Way’s volunteer database, and by promoting this resource on websites and social media.
  - Increase youth involvement by promoting service learning opportunities in the food system to local youth programs such as Roots Rising, Gideon’s Garden, Greenagers, National Honor Societies at the school districts, and the Community Learning Enrichment Opportunities (CLEO) at Berkshire Hills Regional School District.
- Support and train volunteers by offering and promoting workshops and social events.
- Expand paid positions, for example by taking advantage of paid internship programs for college students.

# Best Practice Case Studies

The Northern Berkshire Food Access Collaborative, Central Berkshire Food Convening, and South Berkshire Food Web identified a variety of initiatives in Berkshire County that are models of innovative and collaborative approaches to address food system needs. Three such initiatives are the Market Match Fund managed by Berkshire Agricultural Ventures, the Pittsfield Farmers Market managed by Roots Rising, and the volunteer-run Food Box Program that serves students in the Southern Berkshire Regional School District.

## Berkshire Agricultural Ventures: Market Match Fund

### Market Match and Berkshire Agricultural Ventures (BAV)

Market Match is a SNAP-matching initiative implemented at farmers markets across the United States that allows food-insecure shoppers to purchase locally produced foods at more-affordable prices. Through Market Match, the purchasing power of SNAP EBT funds can be doubled at local farmers markets. This has the dual benefits of increasing access to local, healthy foods and supporting local food production.

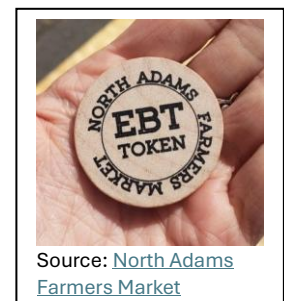
Since spring 2022, Market Match in Berkshire County has been coordinated by Berkshire Agricultural Ventures (BAV), a nonprofit with a mission to promote local farms, local food businesses, and the local food economy. In support of this mission, BAV has unified the branding and facilitated marketing of incentive programs targeted to SNAP recipients.



### The Market Match Fund

The BAV Market Match Fund, started in 2022, centralizes the fundraising and fund distribution for Market Match at farmers markets in Berkshire County. Shoppers can redeem SNAP dollars using their EBT cards to purchase Market Match tokens (a \$1 SNAP EBT purchases \$2 in tokens, up to a total of \$60 in tokens per visit) to spend at farmers' market tables for SNAP-eligible food items. At the end of the market day, farmers return tokens to the market for payout. The BAV Market Match program supports local farms and food producers by increasing revenue, farmers markets by providing fund distributions and increasing market traffic, and SNAP-receiving households by increasing purchasing power for healthy foods.

The Market Match program is currently offered at the weekly, seasonal farmers markets in Stockbridge, West Stockbridge, Sheffield, North Adams, Williamstown, Pittsfield, Lee, and Great Barrington, as well as at the Berkshire Grown Winter Farmers Markets in Great Barrington and North Adams. Outside of Berkshire County the Market Match program has also supported farmers markets in Millerton, NY, New Lebanon, NY, Copake, NY and New Milford, CT. Details about how to use the program are provided in English and in Spanish on the BAV website.



The Market Match Fund receives financial contributions from corporate foundations, family foundations, and individual donors, with most of money used to support grants to farmers markets. All but a few of the SNAP-accepting farmers markets in Berkshire County apply for these non-competitive grants. Grant funds are distributed based on SNAP use data, with additional funds appropriated if needed. While some of the farmers markets have external

sources of funding for Market Match (for example from family or corporate foundations, or local businesses), the majority if not the entirety of the matching funds at Berkshire County Farmers Markets are provided by the BAV Market Match Fund.

Data collection by BAV has focused on determining how much each farmer's market is using SNAP (redemption patterns and trends across individual markets and county), identifying non-BAV sources of Market Match funds and determining where triple-matching may be possible with the combination of BAV and external funding sources. From 2022 to 2024, \$485,000 was distributed through the Market Match Fund, supporting 14,476 transactions across the seasonal markets and \$663,957 redeemed at vendors.

### **Future goals for Market Match**

BAV plays a large role in supporting Berkshire County agriculture and the food economy. In addition to providing technical assistance and funding support (microloans and grants) to farmers, it would be helpful to provide more programming such as workshops for farmers and farmers market managers, which would complement the Market Match activities.

BAV collects data that could be useful to other organizations in Berkshire County that are involved in food system policy and coordination. Future data-sharing collaborations might benefit the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, and community partners such as Berkshire Grown and Berkshire Bounty.



## Roots Rising: Pittsfield Farmers Market

Roots Rising is a Berkshire County program that employs youth crews to work in our local food system. In a competitive application process, youth gain employment on Farm Crew, a cohort of 12 teens per crew for a spring, summer or fall season, assisting and working alongside local farmers. A diverse grant funding stream pays the youth \$15/hr in the spring and fall, and in the summer the teens earn a \$2000 stipend for a 5-week educational period. A teen can do multiple Farm Crew seasons, but given its popularity the summer season can only be done once.



The Farm Crew program is targeted to farms in need of support and that do regenerative agriculture, which requires more labor. The farmers must be mentors and work side by side with the youth, and the labor is provided at no cost to the farm. All twelve teens on a Farm Crew go together to a single farm on a given day. The current anchor worksite hosts are Holiday Brook farm and Red Shirt Farm; Farm Crews have also worked with Abode Farm and Hancock Shaker Village. Field trip days are used to visit other farms. This expands the experience set of the Farm Crew and allows farmers to evaluate which projects might work well with a Farm Crew and whether there might be compatibility for an ongoing partnership.

Pittsfield Farmers Market is a year-round market that, in addition to farm stands, offers live music, biweekly chef demos, food scrap drop-off through Tommy's Compost, and children's activities. Berkshire North WIC distributes farmers market coupons onsite, and a "Giving Table" allows thousands of pounds of donations from shoppers and vendors to be distributed by volunteers from the Unitarian Universalist Church to pantries, shelters and meal sites. Community organizations can apply to host tables rent-free, and the BIPOC Vendor Fund gives grants selected applicants to pay for market fees and supplies, business development, or other expenses. The Pittsfield Farmers Market also hosts the Summer Eats program, sponsored by the Pittsfield Public Schools' Nutrition Services Program, which provides free breakfast and lunch to youth when school is not in session during the summer. The market was established in 2013, and in 2019 Roots Rising expanded its youth crew program to include Market Crew. The Market Crew is a "graduate level" cohort of five Farm Crew alumni who are paid to run the Pittsfield Farmers Market, making this the only teen-run farmers market in Berkshire County.



Figure 9 Pittsfield Farmers Market. Photo: Anne Goodwin

The Market Crew youth communicate with farmers, sell merchandise, handle transactions, and explain SNAP, HIP and Market Match programs to shoppers. Since these youth have all worked on Farm Crew with Roots Rising, their abilities and strengths are known and can be used to build a strong team. With the help of two adult Roots Rising staff, the teens help vendors load tables before the market, work at tables during market hours, and break down the stands after the market.

A strength of Roots Rising's work with the Pittsfield Farmers Market is its commitment to listening to and responding to the community's needs. Market shoppers are offered a written or online survey, and weekly conversations take place with market managers. Paid full-time, adult

staff at Roots Rising use this feedback to drive decisions and planning, for example by responding to shoppers' desire for a year-round market. An annual survey of farmers has yielded suggestions for how to improve market management and promotion.

In 2020, the in-person farmers market was shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic. Continuing its tradition of listening and responding, Roots Rising used its extensive social media following and email list to distribute an online survey to farmers and the community, asking about current problems and what might be done to address them. They heard that farmers needed sales opportunities, given the lost sales from events, farmers markets and restaurant purchases, and that the community needed safe access to fresh, local food.

Roots Rising pivoted to operating Pittsfield Farmers Market as a virtual farmers market. They approached Berkshire Agricultural Ventures for technical support and quickly developed an online sales platform. Barrington Stage Company, with theater productions on hiatus, donated warehouse space with garage bays. Farmers delivered to the loading bays, and Stop & Shop donated boxes every morning. Volunteers were recruited through the Roots Rising network and word of mouth.



Each week for the year of the virtual market, farmers sent a list of available products, which were uploaded to the sales platform. Around 200-250 orders were accepted weekly. Over 100 adult volunteers, including Youth Crew alumni age 18+, organized tables of food from different farms and packed the virtual market orders. A separate pool of volunteers did contact-free delivery all over the county. Since SNAP EBT cards couldn't be used at the virtual market, funds (around \$100,000 in total) were used to purchase food for donation. A lottery system was set up, allowing those in need to register, so that the donations could be distributed in an equitable fashion.

The virtual farmers market responded to community needs in a time of upheaval, and it had a tremendous community impact. In 2021 the Pittsfield Farmers Market resumed as an in-person event. Roots Rising was still unable to provide transportation for the work crews, which reduced the number of applicants and increased the difficulty of transporting youth crews to work sites. It was also a slower year for the farmers market, with fewer farmers and fewer shoppers.

Through the experience Roots Rising and others involved with the virtual market learned about community needs and possible directions for future work. Important messages included: 1) Roots Rising needs to further support food production in Berkshire County, preferably with its own farm; 2) Roots Rising needs a physical space and facilities, to pivot in response to changing conditions; and 3) adults have some of the same needs as youth around employment and collaborative work in food production. Future possible endeavors for Roots Rising include establishing its own farm and education center to complement the work done with outside farms, and starting an apprenticeship program with housing that could reduce barriers to access for farm work.

## Southern Berkshire Schools: Food Box Program

The Food Box Program that serves the Southern Berkshire School District and the Berkshire Hills Regional School District provides home delivery of food boxes to food-insecure households with children in the district schools.

The Food Box Program was initiated in 2016 for selected students in the after-school program of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District. It was expanded district-wide in March 2020 to address food access pressures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, and has since expanded further to include the Berkshire Hills Regional School District. Eligible families are identified by school counselors in both districts, and information is also provided on the public-facing website for the Southern Berkshire Regional School District.

Fresh and nonperishable foods for the food boxes are sourced from the Peoples Pantry food pantry, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, Berkshire Grown, and Berkshire Bounty. Donations from the Southern Berkshire Regional School District, Berkshire Hills School District and local churches allow the program to also have purchasing power to supplement the food donations, and the shopping at the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts for both school districts is managed by the Peoples Pantry.

The sourced shelf-stable and fresh foods are packaged into boxes by stable teams of volunteers who do not know the identity of the recipients, preserving dignity for the families. Volunteers also deliver the boxes to recipients' houses.

To coordinate these efforts for the Southern Berkshire Regional School District, a Food Access Coordinator position was established at the Southern Berkshire Rural Health Network. The school district does not directly endorse or sponsor the food box program; the Food Access Coordinator position is funded by private donors. The Food Access Coordinator engages with all of the Southern Berkshire School District's schools to identify families in need and is in charge of the collaborative efforts needed to source food, fill boxes, and complete delivery routes. create and deliver the food boxes.



The Berkshire Hills district joined the food box program more recently and hired a Food Box Program Coordinator in 2023. This coordinator similarly identifies food needs, enrolls families, and coordinates filling and delivery of boxes for that school district.



Challenges in maintaining the food box program include sourcing reliable amounts and types of food, stable access to funding, and inclusion of coordination responsibilities as part of a paid position's job description. With coordination managed at the district level, districts considering adding a similar program in the future would need to first determine if providing food outside of the school setting aligns with a school district's food access philosophy. Buy-in from school administrators and school adjustment counselors is essential. Capacity of food suppliers would also need to be evaluated, as would the sources of funding and volunteer capacity.

## Conclusions and Future Directions

The diverse, dispersed food system in Berkshire County has great strengths in terms of community connection, agility, and extensive production of local foods. It also has great challenges in terms of funding, labor force, communication, coordination and economies of scale.

The agility of our food system was particularly seen during the COVID pandemic, when needs for food resources increased dramatically while social distancing and other safety guidelines imposed challenges in addressing these needs. The number of food access sites has continued to multiply to meet local needs, and existing food access sites have continued to add capacity. Other sectors of the food system have also expanded, including in food production and composting. Having a large number of food system locations allows for experimentation with varied service and organization models, which can greatly benefit the food system as a whole, particularly when successes can be widely shared.

Three best practice case studies are included in this food assessment, but there are many more initiatives worth highlighting. Food accessed groups discussed the innovative efforts of Red Shirt Farm, which in addition to working with Roots Rising Youth Crews has expanded its revenue stream through a farm store that provides a retail outlet for many local food producers in addition to the farm's own products. The food equity efforts of the Berkshire Dream Center, particularly around its market-style Bread of Life Market food pantry, restaurant-style Bright Morningstar Kitchen, and mobile food pantry serving low-income neighborhoods in Pittsfield and North Adams, were also highlighted in food access discussions and can lead to creative thinking about access practices at other sites. Specific efforts of food access sites and other organizations that work with immigrants and other marginalized groups, particularly in South County and Central County, have been praised by their food access peers and might be considered by sites across the county. Highlighting such efforts sometimes occurs through articles in the Berkshire Eagle or other news outlets, but more often occurs through word of mouth or food system groups with limited audiences. Mechanisms for sharing successes and best practices in a more intentional way should be considered.

Areas for collaboration can be identified through regional food groups, and feedback from the county-wide food summit overwhelmingly highlighted a desire for regular county-wide meetings. Specific initiatives being undertaken by the regional food groups should help to address challenges identified in county-wide and local meetings and benefit the food system as a whole. Shared goals such as food hub mapping and data collection efforts will require cross-region collaboration, which should open communication channels that will benefit the food system more broadly. County-wide food convenings also play a critical role in bringing food system assets together in-person to facilitate conversation, communication and collaboration. The next county-wide food access convening is planned for 2026, and these will hopefully continue on an annual or biannual basis.

A five-year follow-up will likely be appropriate for the next iteration of the Berkshire County Community Food Assessment. Efforts should be made to collect data from additional stakeholders and sector-specific focus groups as part of the assessment process.

A concern identified at the 2024 Berkshire County Food Access Convening and noted by the author of this assessment is the absence of voices from the food-accessing community in our regional and county-wide food discussions. While this is not atypical in community food assessments, it would benefit our food system to listen to these critical perspectives. At the 2025 Anti-Hunger Policy Conference in Washington D.C., the author of this document connected with the authors of the 2024 Northern Arizona Food Equity Report: An Examination of Food Insecurity Trends and Community Needs Across Northeastern Arizona (25). This initiative of the Flagstaff Family Food Center, the area’s food bank, used surveys and community conversations (both interviews and focus groups) to collect information from clients of food access sites, with compensation for participation. This report was separate from and complementary to the City of Flagstaff’s Comprehensive Community Food Systems Assessment (26), which in style more closely matches our Berkshire County assessment. The documents provided by the Flagstaff Family Food Center team and their offer of mentorship could serve Berkshire County researchers who might undertake a similar initiative.

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# Appendices

Appendix 1: Asset Map Survey

Appendix 2: Berkshire County Food Access System Asset Map

- County-wide Assets
- Regional Assets: North Berkshire County
- Regional Assets: Central Berkshire County
- Regional Assets: South Berkshire County

Appendix 3: List of Food Access Sites in Berkshire County, September 2025

## Appendix 1: Asset Map Survey

We would like to learn about your organization, business or initiative as part of an asset mapping activity for Berkshire County's 2025 Community Food System Assessment!

Goals of the food system assessment include identifying community food access resources that are already in place, identifying best practices & challenges, and facilitating collaboration among the different sectors. The answers to the questions will be used to generate regional and county-wide asset map tables that will be distributed to food system groups in North, South and Central Berkshire County and included in the community food assessment. The 2019 Berkshire County Community Food Assessment is open-access (<https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Community-Food-Assessment-FINAL.pdf>) and the 2025 edition will be open-access as well.

Your input is invaluable for this process! Participation in this 8-question survey is voluntary, and the answer to the question about your challenges will be presented only in aggregate by food system sector or region, not associated with any specific organization or business. Please provide information for your organization or business THROUGH 2024; information about 2025 and beyond will be included on the next food system assessment. If you would like assistance completing this survey (for example by providing your answers over the phone), I or one of my student interns would be happy to reach out to you. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions!

Anne Goodwin  
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts  
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413-662-5344

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself. Required\*

1. What is the name of your organization, business or initiative? \*
2. In which town or city is your organization, business or initiative based?
3. If your service area does not match your answer for #2, which area is served by your organization, business or initiative?
4. To which part(s) of the food system does your organization, initiative or business belong? (Select all that apply.)
  - emergency food resources
  - education about food system elements
  - policy & funding
  - food production
  - food recovery & composting
  - food processing
  - food distribution
  - retail & marketing
  - making connections between components listed above
5. In which way(s) does your organization/business contribute to the food system?
6. What are key strengths of your organization, business or initiative in contributing to the food system?
7. What are key challenges for your organization, business or initiative in maintaining your role in the food system? [Note: answers to this question will be grouped and used in aggregate, and will not be linked to a specific organization/business.]
8. If there are follow-up questions, who is an appropriate contact person at your organization, business or initiative, and what is an email address or phone number for that contact person?

## Appendix 2: Asset Map for the Berkshire County Food System

This list does not include representation from all food system assets in Berkshire County. Some survey entries have been edited for clarity or spacing.

**Food system sector options:** emergency food resources, education about food system components, food production, food distribution, policy & funding, food recovery & composting, retail & marketing, making connections between food system sectors

### County-wide Food Access System Assets

Table 1 County-wide Food Access System Assets

Asset	Food System Sector(s)	Food System Service(s) Provided by Asset	Asset Strengths
Berkshire Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Tobacco Cessation	education	Education on tobacco use and food insecurity	Community education, bringing community together; exploring social determinants of health, working with LGBT community & pregnant women
Berkshire Bounty	emergency resources food distribution	Healthy food distribution to emergency food sites (donated and purchased); Food recovery, builds capacity & improves health	Purchasing power, volunteer engagement, county wide; nimble organization that is flexible, collaboration with various organization
Berkshire Community Action Council, Inc	food distribution making connections emergency food resources	Food depot that services 11 smaller food pantries. We have a refrigerated van & walk-in refrigerator/freezer free to food access sites and a full-time Food Infrastructure Coordinator who works with pantries to fill gaps they are seeing. We support The Sherriff's Dept aquatics farm, Berkshire Dream Center Morningstar Kitchen and Greenagers through funding.	administration capacity
Berkshire County Sheriffs Office	food distribution retail & marketing	Delivery of prepared medically tailored meals in collaboration with Berkshire Fallon Health and BHS.	

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Food System Sector(s)</b>	<b>Food System Service(s) Provided by Asset</b>	<b>Asset Strengths</b>
Berkshire Fallon Health Collaborative (under Berkshire Health Systems)	food distribution	Medically tailored meals and grocery delivery program for our members with complex health and behavioral conditions. The program is designed to improve health conditions (i.e. diabetes, hypertension, malnutrition), help reduce food insecurity, and reduce transportation barriers by providing food delivery.	We work in partnership with the Berkshire County Sheriff's Office to bring expertise in nutritional health for chronic conditions to the program. BCSO provides space for food storage and packing, and the transportation needed to deliver to our members. We have been working together since July 2021 with a dedicated team of community health workers and a registered dietician to meet the needs of our members.
Berkshire Grown	education policy & funding food distribution making connections	Support for farmers in the Berkshires through educational opportunities and technical assistance, by promoting and advocating for local food, and by purchasing local food for distribution to food access sites.	We maintain strong connections with many local farmers, we are involved in running the Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market, and we operate a cold storage facility in Great Barrington that serves as a hub for local food distribution.
Berkshire Health Systems	emergency food resources education food production food distribution making connections policy & funding	Direct contributions, some policy and funding, education, marketing, distribution, workforce development, etc.	Understand the importance of the food system in the micro- and macro-economics of the County. The impact is has on social determinants of health.
Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market	food distribution retail & marketing	Bridge the gap between local food producers and community members by making fresh, local food accessible for all.	We support local farm and food businesses by making food purchases from the Berkshires. We make local food more accessible by bringing it to low income and/or low access areas. Our tiered payment system makes local food purchasing an option for all income levels. We accept SNAP/HIP and FMNP coupons. We have strong support from partner organizations and the communities that the market serves.

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Food System Sector(s)</b>	<b>Food System Service(s) Provided by Asset</b>	<b>Asset Strengths</b>
Brien Center	making connections	Refer clients to the food points	
Finca Luna Búho and the Seeding Solidarity collaboration with Woven Roots Farm	food production education emergency food resources food distribution	Food sovereignty program. Largest free CSA share program in the county; over 830 participants receive solidarity CSA shares educational programming and weekly community gatherings for families of marginalized lived experiences	As a farm and organization run by people of marginalized lived experience specifically that of immigrant experience, we are part of our community in a way that removes it from charity work and into solidarity because we are interwoven with and actively in/part of the community.
Food Bank of Western Massachusetts	emergency food resources food distribution education policy & funding food recovery & composting making connections	Regional food distribution warehouse for a network of independent food pantries, meal sites, emergency shelters, and direct distribution programs across the 4 counties of western MA. We educate the public, policy makers, and users of the food assistance network about food insecurity, nutrition, and food policy, and work in collaboration with our partners in these sectors to feed our neighbors in need and lead the community to end hunger.	We reach a disbursed network of food assistance sites and partner organizations. We distribute LOTS of food to our member agencies, which is then distributed for free to people in need of food assistance. We have strong relationships with organizations working on food issues in our service area and beyond, and facilitate connections between those organizations - one example would be our Berkshire Food Pantry Collaborative meetings to discuss current trends and challenges in food assistance work in the community. We have knowledge of where there are gaps in food assistance, and work to develop new relationships and partnerships in those areas.
Goodwill Industries of the Berkshires & Southern Vermont	food distribution making connections	Transport of food from the Foodbank of Western MA to food pantries and meal sites in Berkshire County. At present we deliver to 3 food pantries in North County, 1 food pantry in Pittsfield, 1 meal site and 1 homeless shelter. Since April 2020 (4 years), we have delivered over 1,240,000 lbs of food to pantries and meal sites.	We have applied through CDBG Federal grant to purchase a food truck (delivery of September 2023), transportation is one of the key elements of getting food from foodbank and farms to food pantries & meal sites in the Berkshires
Hoosac Harvest	food distribution	Providing resources to subsidize CSA shares	There is no stigma in having a subsidized share, as it is not public knowledge, so the community is expanded.

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Food System Sector(s)</b>	<b>Food System Service(s) Provided by Asset</b>	<b>Asset Strengths</b>
Marty's Local	food distribution	Distribute foods wholesale to retailers, restaurants, schools, and institutions from 100 regional farms and food producers. We divert foods to the Food Bank of Western MA when possible.	We source a broad selection of local foods (produce, dairy, meat & eggs, flour & grains, cheeses, specialty products) and deliver to our customers six days a week (in most areas).
Safe Food of the Berkshires (Food Safety Consulting)	food recovery & composting	Food safety principles and practices to follow when receiving, storing, transporting and preparing food products.	Knowing MA and Federal regulations that are required to keep foods safe. Educating individuals or food handlers on safe food principles and practices required to keep foods safe in all areas of production from farm to table. .
Second Chance Composting	education food recovery & composting retail & marketing making connections	A composting company, hauls food scraps from local businesses and residences, processes it into compost that is used locally to grow more food and plants in home gardens and at farms.	Offering a service and full-scale composting facility in order to make sure food scraps don't end up in the landfill. In addition, turning them into compost helps complete the food web cycle.
Tommy's Compost Service	food recovery & composting	Composting food waste for healthy soils to grow food in; Composting food from food pantries and consumers	Allowing for underserved populations to have access to composting food waste; preventing wasted food through education; Increasing Berkshire County soil quality through composting; reducing emissions related to the transport of waste.
Volunteers in Medicine (VIM) Berkshires	making connections education	Screening patients for food insecurity. Our community health workers help patients navigate food resources	Information sharing, guiding the community on where they can access food banks
WIC (Women, Infant and Children)	making connections food distribution education	Education and free food to qualifying breastfeeding women and children under 5. Access to nutritional education and free farmers market foods via checks.	Free food and education, free formula, access to resources, access to full translation

## Regional Assets: North Berkshire County

Table 2 Regional Assets: North Berkshire County

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Food System Sector(s)</b>	<b>Food System Service(s) Provided by Asset</b>	<b>Asset Strengths</b>
Al Nelson Friendship Center Food Pantry (Northern Berkshire Interfaith Action Initiative)	emergency food resources  food distribution	Food pantry with deliveries to those without transportation or homebound. We receive food from local farm shares that we purchase, Big Y, Stop & Shop, local farmers and gardeners, Berkshire Bounty, and the Postal Food Drive, and pass these on to our patrons. We receive items (and/or funds) from Berkshire Bounty and provide donated pet food to families with cats and dogs. We receive diapers from the Berkshire Diaper Project at no cost and pass them on to any family in our area.	We are an all-volunteer organization with 46 current and committed volunteers. Ten of those volunteers comprise our Board of Directors. Having a board that intimately understands the workings of the organization is key to our success. This also allows our organization to focus all of our financial resources on food, personal care items, and costs associated with the rental of our space and outreach. The volunteers represent the three communities we serve as well as other neighboring communities.
Berkshire Food Project	emergency food resources  food distribution	Serving healthy, no cost meals and connecting people to other resources. We serve a hot nutritious meal five days a week and offer two meals for our guests to take home. Northern Berkshire Transport delivers meals to people who are unable to leave their homes, Louison House takes meals and grocery items to unhoused individuals in emergency shelters, and frozen meals are provide to Roots Teen Center and Have Hope Recovery Center.	We provide a nutritious meal to the community 5 days a week, 52 weeks a year, in a dignified and respectful manner. Our in-house dining combats social isolation by providing a welcoming safe space and connects our guests to resources within the community. Our takeout meals fill gaps for our guests and allow meal sharing with family or neighbors. We partner with organizations to provide frozen meals to address the rising food insecurity in the community. Anyone who needs meal can walk through our doors, no questions asked. Our food is tasty too!
Bigfoot Farm	food production		
Caretaker Farm	food production  emergency food resources  education  food distribution	Through our CSA, food provided every week to 300 families from June through October and 125 families from November through March. We also provide food weekly to the Berkshire Food Project.	Connecting people to the land that grows their produce. Building community. Providing sustainably growth food to our community.

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Food System Sector(s)</b>	<b>Food System Service(s) Provided by Asset</b>	<b>Asset Strengths</b>
Cheshire Food Pantry	food distribution emergency food resources	Provide healthy, fresh foods for those challenged with food insecurity.	Research, write grants, seek sponsors manage with no budget.
Cricket Creek Farm	food production food processing	Small, grass-based dairy farm producing raw milk, beef and pork. We wholesale some of our products throughout Berkshire County	There are very few dairy farms producing local milk for sale locally.
Full Well Farm	food production food distribution	Vegetable and herb production, direct to consumer sales, sales of products from other local farms.	Direct relationships with consumers and access to land for food production
Growing Healthy Garden Program	education food production food distribution food recovery & composting	Education (teaching and informing), composting	Nimble, solid connection, 16 years' experience
Louison House	emergency food resources	Our residents and clients have DNAP and spend in the system as does Louison House	Consumer
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA)	emergency food resources food distribution education	Serves as a pantry and alternative food resource for MCLA students	Easily accessible food, student preference and interest central to coordination, well supported
North Adams Mobile Food Bank	food distribution making connections	Distributing, resource connecting, offering nonfood necessities, connections to large local and nationwide organizations.	
North Adams Public Schools	education	Meals during as well as outside of school, childhood; and local produce	Providing 3 meals a day prek-12, leadership and support
Northern Berkshire Community Coalition (NBCC)	education emergency food resources making connections	Facilitates the Food Access Collaborative; sharing info, conversation and connection, distributes limited number of emergency food backpacks	Getting people, organizers and organizations together to support the local food system; Large connecting network, implement programs and address food insecurity

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Food System Sector(s)</b>	<b>Food System Service(s) Provided by Asset</b>	<b>Asset Strengths</b>
Northern Berkshire Veteran Services	emergency food resources food distribution	Support for veterans	It helps take the pinch out of our veterans' wallets.
Salvation Army Gateway New Life Center	emergency food resources food distribution	Emergency Pantry, weekly food pantry on Tuesdays and delivery pantry on Wednesdays to those 55 yrs and up, who have no means of transportation, or are shut on due to a variety of reasons. We purchase our food from local vendors as well as take on donations from community members and receive food from our Food Bank monthly.	We work with a variety of volunteers in the community who come together to help elevate hunger one person at a time. We are on call 24 hours a day and can be reached by phone or email
Wild Oats Market	retail & marketing	Sales and donations	Focused on local producers, community ties to identify needs.

## Regional Assets: Central Berkshire County

Table 3 Regional Assets: Central Berkshire County

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Food System Sector(s)</b>	<b>Food System Service(s) Provided by Asset</b>	<b>Asset Strengths</b>
Berkshire Community College	emergency food resources education food processing	Ensures that students, often a vulnerable section of society, have enough food so they can complete their degrees and improve their financial situations. We also have a culinary program as well as a work force program that works with people who work in the food prep industries.	We have close contact with students and a variety of avenues to reach out and try to provide nourishment. We also have an extensive kitchen with much of the best equipment.
Casa de Esperanza	emergency food resources food processing	Provide food for the immigrant families	Provide fruits and vegetables eggs and milk to the families in need
Christian Center	emergency food resources education food distribution making connections	Food pantry, meal site and resource center; The Christian Center is non-profit organization that offers a full food pantry and lunch 5 days/week	We currently see 1300-1400 families monthly for pantry and 400-500 individuals for lunch monthly, and serve over 13,000 pantry visitors each year and 6500 meals each year. We are open 5 days/week, have Spanish-speaking personnel on site 4 days/week and, at 132 years old, our organization is a well-known member of the community. We receive donations from Berkshire Bounty and multiple community gardens and gardeners.
Grumpy Gardener (Pittsfield Community Gardening Program)	education policy & funding food production emergency food resources making connections retail & marketing food distribution	Production, education, policy, community organizing, and frankly helping certain regional agricultural nonprofits engage with populations they've ignored (aka DEI-training).	Currently the strength is educational programming for K-5. A secondary strength is the relationship with two Pittsfield food pantries. Again, to be frank, I have brown skin and grow food so I'm something of an object of fascination to some( as you could imagine).

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Food System Sector(s)</b>	<b>Food System Service(s) Provided by Asset</b>	<b>Asset Strengths</b>
Heart & Soil Collective	<p>food production</p> <p>food recovery &amp; composting</p> <p>food processing</p> <p>food distribution</p> <p>making connections</p>	<p>Connects people to the land where their food grows through local food programming and hands-on nature experiences. We accomplish our mission through partnerships with small farms, direct-to-home local food distribution, creation and maintenance of community gardens and educational experiences for children and adults.</p>	<p>Purchasing produce directly from local farms and delivering directly to homes is our greatest key strengths- putting money into the hands of farmers and local food into local homes. Building community gardens and teaching workshops are both ways to produce more food locally, and help community members feel empowered to grow their own food.</p>
Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry	<p>emergency food resources</p>	<p>Distributing food to anyone who comes to the food pantry</p>	<p>It is a safe environment, we are personable, friendly, welcoming and knowledgeable about the community and always ready and willing to help in any way we can.</p>
Pittsfield Community Gardens Program	<p>education</p> <p>food production</p> <p>food processing</p> <p>food distribution</p> <p>policy &amp; funding</p>	<p>Opportunities to grow and tend gardens; we grow veggies, and some soft fruits for the people, families, and food pantries we're connected to. We aim to expand perennial plant offerings in the coming years to continue "Greening" our "Grey" neighborhoods; and we're embarking on an oral history of the "westside mural project" (two cohorts of our elementary students contributed 2 works of art).</p>	<p>We are funded through Pittsfield's operating budget. The Westside Neighborhood Initiative (Westside Neighborhood Resource Center and the Pittsfield Dept. of Community Development) advocated for and secured city resources to establish the program. We continue to employ that ethic— steward space for people to connect, develop a plan and ask for what's wanted. Our most attended programming is through our partnership with 18Degrees Kids Clubs at Conte and Morningside Elementary School.</p>
Roots and dreams and Mustard seeds	<p>emergency food resources</p> <p>education</p> <p>food production</p> <p>making connections</p>	<p>Food pantry with some farm purchasing agreements, running a community garden where children produce food that their parents can get at the pantry, exploring options to decommodify food entirely</p>	<p>Our organization is run strictly on a basis of peer leadership, collaboration, and mutual respect. Many people feel when they interact with us that they are being treated as an equal, not always the case with other types of food assistance programs. Our focus on community/ collaborative ownership will drive us into our goal of decommodifying food</p>

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Food System Sector(s)</b>	<b>Food System Service(s) Provided by Asset</b>	<b>Asset Strengths</b>
Roots Rising	education food production food distribution making connections retail & marketing	Our Youth Crews provide free labor to local farms and educate & empower the next generation of changemakers. Through our Pittsfield Farmers Market, we provide year-round direct sales for local farms & food producers and connect our neighbors to affordable & accessible local food and the people who grew, raised or made it. We purchased property and are now in the planning stages to launch our own farm.	We are agile and nimble, we listen and respond, we are deeply rooted in community. We are creative thinkers and love to pilot new initiatives.
Second Drop Farm	food production education retail & marketing making connections emergency food resources	Food is grown on our farm. We sell food from our farm and surrounding farms at our farm store, and we are a partner farm and active board member to Heart and Soil Collective which provides food from local farms to people in need.	Second Drop Farm offers PYO and directly connect the public to the land by providing a unique experience for people who would normally not have the opportunity to pick fruit and flowers. We also sell farm products from other farms to give them more reach.
South Community Food Pantry (now Pittsfield Community Food Pantry)	food distribution emergency food resources education policy & funding food recovery & composting	Food distribution; the pantry distributes/shares food and also composts. The church is expanding its compost work and is involved in food-related advocacy in cooperation with the pantry through Bread for the World.	Ability to keep up with rising demand and distribute food to over 1400 households monthly. We also provide a delivery option for those who cannot get to the pantry; helping our neighbors; We have a dedicated space for food distribution and a central location. Having volunteers willing to deliver food also makes a huge difference.
St Joseph Church Food Pantry	emergency food resources food distribution	Weekly distribution to those in need	Accessibility, dependability
Zion Lutheran Church/The Common Room	food distribution	Hosts winter farmers markets, serves as a staging site for the Pittsfield Summer Eats program along with Roots Rising and Pittsfield Public Schools.	Centrally located space in downtown Pittsfield, willingness to collaborate and partner.

## Regional Assets: South Berkshire County

Table 4 Regional Assets: South Berkshire County

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Food System Sector(s)</b>	<b>Food System Service(s) Provided by Asset</b>	<b>Asset Strengths</b>
Bard College at Simons Rock	food distribution emergency food resources	Campus food pantry, getting vegetables from on-campus farm during summer; farm stands, local pantry.	
Berkshire Hills School District	education	MSW field placement student at middle school – moving food box program forward; getting food into people’s homes.	Organization to make food box program successful
Berkshire South Regional Community Center	food distribution	Weekly free community supper	Weekly free community supper, alternating between in-person meals & curbside pickup; funding provides access to free meals
Clinical & Support Options	connecting components food distribution	Connect families to resources, some distribution. Community meal once a month, education & resource guide.	Helping community access resources (SNAP applications, family support workers, family meal offered once a month)
Community Health Programs (CHP)	emergency food resources food recovery & composting food distribution.	Distributions for Southern Berkshire WIC families via grant funded Vitamin Angels program. All CHP patients are eligible for 2x-monthly distribution of local eggs, milk & veggies. We host 2x-monthly FBWM Mobile distributions and run a monthly grant-funded Mini-Mobile with a fruit & dairy box available to anyone. We pick up food donated through the FBWM at Price Chopper in Great Barrington and Big Y in Lee.	Our strengths are the size of the organization and history of distributions which allow us to be a food hub, combined with the fact that this is a healthcare facility as well we are in a key position to assist people with health-related barriers.
Dandelion Hill Farm	food production retail & marketing	Sale of raw goats milk from the farm, plus cheese, eggs and veggies. Our focus is dairy but we supplement with other products and value-added products like goat milk soap.	Selling to friends, neighbors, community and the underserved community. We accept farmer Market coupons for WIC and Seniors. At the farmer markets we accept SNAP. Access to healthier food for WIC customers.

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Food System Sector(s)</b>	<b>Food System Service(s) Provided by Asset</b>	<b>Asset Strengths</b>
Dancing Greens Farm	food production	Grow vegetables and participate in a farmers market. We have workshops and events on our farm	Through our events we try to get people to be veggie lovers who wouldn't normally be.
Field of Love Farm	food production	Growing diversified vegetables for Sheffield Farmers Market, distribution through Berkshire Grown's Food Access Programs	Knowledgeable about organic, regenerative food production practices, willingness to do the very hard work of being a farmer
Gideon's Garden	food production education food distribution		Degree of flexibility, lots of volunteers, community connection w/ church.
Greenagers	food production food distribution		Physical resources land + infrastructure
Lee Food Pantry	food distribution emergency food resources	Distribution- serve surrounding town, community-based donations	No overhead, pantry located on town property, strong volunteer network
Monterey Food Pantry	emergency food resources	Supply food weekly to 33 households, 70 people	Open Sat. for those who work, delivery to homebound customers
Mumbet's Freedom Farm	food production education	Farm involved in production, education, programming	Partnerships with different organizations, small farm allows for flexibility, multicultural bridge
Otis Food Pantry	emergency food resources food distribution	Distributes food each week and serves families and seniors from Otis and surrounding communities. We share any overages in produce with the Farmington River Regional School. On occasion we deliver to shut ins when they can't get to the pantry. We coordinate with the Farmington River School if they find a family in need of assistance.	A core set of volunteers keeps our pantry running, & back-ups cover when needed. Consistent pantry volunteers have developed relationships with our patrons. A coordinator schedules volunteers, posts on social media, writes an article for the Otis Observer, and notifies patrons about special events or times. Treasurers keep accounts and have applied for 501(c)3 status for the pantry. Volunteers do outreach for donations and special events

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Food System Sector(s)</b>	<b>Food System Service(s) Provided by Asset</b>	<b>Asset Strengths</b>
People's Pantry	emergency food resources  food distribution	Food pantry, at which volunteers serve a weekly average of 650 individuals in 235 households. Shoppers come from over 50 towns to the People's Pantry. Great Barrington is the People's Pantry's home and where most shoppers reside. The People's Pantry supports 5% of all Great Barrington households weekly with supplemental food, in line with a poverty rate of 4% in Great Barrington.	The People's Pantry is the second largest food Pantry in Berkshire County and for over 25 years has provided supplemental food to people who live with food insecurity. It is our mission to provide healthy and local food to everyone who comes to our doors. Everyone can shop at the People's Pantry, no questions are asked about eligibility, income, immigration status or anything else. We believe that, if people come to our door, they are in need of food.
Railroad Street youth Project - Southern Berkshire Community Health Coalition	food distribution  making connections	We connect young people experiencing food insecurity with the local resources available to them.	Up to date resource sharing
Sheffield Food Assistance	emergency food resources  food distribution	Food pantry	We give food—without discrimination; 35 years of serving the people of the Southern Berkshire School District.
Solid Rock Farm	food production	Extra produce is brought to the Berkshire Dream Center in Pittsfield and we hope to do much more!!	Restoration of gardens and use of "farmington soil" - regenerative farming
Southern Berkshire Regional Food District	education  food distribution	Backpack program (food box program) - we receive food and distribute to families. SBRSD does NOT sponsor or endorse the program- it is all volunteer based, with organizing to get the food to the families and driving when they are unable to pick it up on their own	We have awesome and reliable people in our system who are committed
Southern Berkshire Rural Health Network	making connections	Convening organization	Community connections

## Appendix 3: Food Pantries and Meal Sites in Berkshire County

(Since program hours and days can change without notice, please call the location to be sure of times and requirements) – September 29, 2025

### Food Pantries in Berkshire County

Table 5 List of Food Pantries in Berkshire County

Location	Days & Times	Requirements
<b>Pittsfield Food Pantries</b>		
Berkshire Dream Center Market Style Food Pantry (held at the Morningside Baptist Church) 475 Tyler Street Pittsfield 413-522-3495	Wednesdays 5:00pm-6:00pm (after work hours – must call on Tuesdays to schedule an appointment) Thursdays 10:00am-12Noon Serving all people with their first name starting with A-L Fridays 9:00am-11:00am Serving all people with their first name starting with M-Z	No requirements If the weather is inclement or schools are closed due to bad weather, please call the Berkshire Dream Center at 413-522-3495 for updates.
Berkshire Dream Center Mobile Food Pantry 413-522-3495	Pittsfield Locations: 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month Central Annex at 10:00am Providence Court at 10:45am Berkshire Peak (Old Riverview Apartments) at 11:30am Dower Square at 12:15pm Wilson Park at 1:00pm	No requirements If the weather is inclement or schools are closed due to bad weather, please call the Berkshire Dream Center at 413-522-3495 for updates.
Berkshire Humane Society <b>Pet</b> Food Pantry 214 Barker Road Pittsfield 413-447-7878	Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:00am – 6:00pm Wednesdays, Fridays, & Saturdays 10:00am-4:00pm Sundays 1:00pm – 4:00pm	Fill out a request card at time of pick-up If available, please bring an I.D.
Berkshire Veterans’ Outreach Ctr. 5 Cheshire Road, Suite 128 Located in Allendale Underground Pittsfield 413-448-6052	Thursdays 11:00am – 1:00pm	Available for veterans and their families. Proof of Veteran status required.
Campus Cupboard at Berkshire Community College Rm. A-101-Susan B. Anthony Bldg. 1350 West Street Pittsfield 413-236-1622	Mondays thru Fridays 8:00am – 4:00pm Stop in or <a href="#">schedule an appointment</a>	Must be a current BCC student with a BCC student ID
Christian Assembly Church 850 Williams Street Pittsfield 413-442-1495	Fridays 10:00am – 2:00pm	No requirements Assistance provided.
Christian Center Client Choice 193 Robbins Avenue Pittsfield 413-443-2828	Mondays thru Thursdays 9:00am – 2:00pm Fridays 9:00am – 1:00pm	Assistance available once a week

<b>Location</b>	<b>Days &amp; Times</b>	<b>Requirements</b>
First Baptist Church 88 South Street Pittsfield 413-445-4539	Tuesdays 10:30am – 12:30pm	Sign in when utilizing services
First United Methodist Church 55 Fenn Street Pittsfield 413-499-0866	Tuesdays 4:00pm – 5:30pm Use Fenn Street entrance	No requirements
Mercado de Vida, Roots & Dreams and Mustard Seeds, Inc. O.U.R. Community Center 119 Fenn Street Pittsfield 413-345-2794	Mondays 12NN - 3:00pm Tuesdays 12NN - 3:00pm Wednesdays, 12NN – 3:00pm Thursdays 2:00pm – 6:00pm Fridays, 9:00am – 12NN Saturdays 3:00pm – 6:00pm	Bring your own bags if you can
Pittsfield Community Food Pantry (formerly South Community Food Pantry) 110 South Street Pittsfield 413-464-8042	Wednesdays & Thursdays 7:30am – 11:00am Wednesdays 4:30pm – 5:30pm	No requirements
St. Joseph’s Church (Held at the Parish Center) 414 North Street Pittsfield 413-445-5789	Wednesdays 8:30am – 10:00am	Sign in when utilizing services
St. Mark’s Church 400 West Street Pittsfield 413-447-7510	Last two Fridays of each month 9:00am – 10:30am	No requirements
The Salvation Army 298 West Street Pittsfield 413-442-0624	Mondays, Tuesdays, & Wednesdays 12:30pm – 3:00pm	No requirements
Soldier On Food Pantry 360 West Housatonic Street Pittsfield 413-236-5644	Saturdays 8:00am – 11:00am	Open to the public
<b>Becket, Dalton &amp; Hinsdale Food Pantries</b>		
Becket Federated Church Parish House 3391 Main Street Becket 413-841-1701	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Saturdays of each month 9:00am – 11:00am	For Becket, Washington, and the surrounding Hilltowns Emergencies: 413-770-1897 or 413-841-1701
Dalton United Methodist Church 755 Main Street Dalton 413-684-0521	Tuesdays 4:00pm – 6:00pm	Open to Berkshire County residents
The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts Mobile Food Bank Held at the Dalton CRA 400 Main Street Dalton 413-684-0260 Food Bank at 413-419-0079	4 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month 11:00am – 12Noon Rain or shine	No proof of eligibility required

<b>Location</b>	<b>Days &amp; Times</b>	<b>Requirements</b>
Hinsdale Food Pantry 371 Old Dalton Road Hinsdale 413-212-7067	Thursdays 10:00am – 11:00am	For families in Hinsdale, Peru, Middlefield, Washington, Worthington
St. Agnes Church 489 Main Street Dalton 413-684-0125	Thursdays 5:30pm – 6:15pm	For Dalton and Hilltown residents only
<b>Lanesboro Food Pantry</b>		
American Legion Located in the old school house in Berkshire Village 144 Old State Road Lanesboro 413-442-1025	Fridays 9:00am – 10:30am	Open to the public
<b>North County Food Pantries</b>		
Adams COA Mobile Food Bank Food Bank of Western Mass. 3 Hoosac Street Adams 413-743-8333 or Food Bank at 413-419-0079	2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month 12:30pm – 1:30pm Walk-up location	No proof of eligibility required One distribution per household Must be a Berkshire County resident
Adams COA Brown Bag 3 Hoosac Street Adams 413-743-8333	4 <sup>th</sup> Friday of every month 11:00am – 12Noon	For residents 60+. Must complete application to join program and income eligible.
Al Nelson Friendship Center 45 Eagle Street North Adams 413-664-0123	Wednesdays 10:00am – 2:00pm Friends physically unable to get to the food pantry, call on Wednesdays 10am-2pm to set-up delivery on Thursdays, 10:00am – 12Noon	Assistance to residents of Clarksburg, Florida, and North Adams every other week
Berkshire Dream Center Mobile Food Pantry 413-522-3495	North Adams Locations: 4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month Mohawk Forest at 11:00am Brayton Hill at 11:45am Greylock at 12:30pm	No requirements If the weather is inclement or schools are closed due to bad weather, please call the Berkshire Dream Center at 413-522-3495 for updates.
Cheshire Food Pantry At the Cheshire Community House 190 Church Street Cheshire 413-464-2024	1 <sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month 11:00am – 12:00Noon	Available to all Cheshire residents with proof of residency; Emergency food is also available
Community Bible Church 160 Bridges Road Williamstown 413-458-5556	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month 12Noon – 2:00pm	
First Congregational Church of Adams 42 Park Street Adams 413-346-8884	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month 5:00pm – 7:00pm Deliveries available – Please call Brian at 413-346-8884	No eligibility requirements
The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts Mobile Food Bank Brien Center Parking Lot	1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Fridays of each month – Drive thru or walk-up 10:30am – 11:30am	No proof of eligibility required One bag per distribution per household

<b>Location</b>	<b>Days &amp; Times</b>	<b>Requirements</b>
124 American Legion Drive North Adams Food Bank at 413-419-0079		
North Adams COA Brown Bag Distribution at Spitzer Center 116 Ashland Street North Adams 413-662-3125	4 <sup>th</sup> Friday of every month 12:30pm – 1:30pm	
The Salvation Army Gateway New Life Center Pantry 393 River Street North Adams 413-663-7987	Tuesdays 12Noon – 3:00pm Call on Tuesdays 10:00am – 12Noon to schedule a delivery. Deliveries on Wednesdays 11:00am – 2:00pm	For North County residents only For Emergency Pantry please call 413-663-7987
Williamstown COA Brown Bag Distribution at the Harper Center 118 Church Street Williamstown 413-458-8250	4 <sup>th</sup> Friday of every month 1:00pm	For residents 60+. Must complete application to join program
Williamstown Food Pantry at Sts. Patrick & Raphael Parish Center 53 Southworth Street Williamstown 413-458-5443	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays of each month, Holidays could be different 9:00am – 12Noon Drive or walk-thru	Assistance to residents of Lanesboro, New Ashford, Williamstown, and Pownal, VT
<b>South County Food Pantries</b>		
Berkshire Humane Society's Purradise Pet Food Pantry 301 Stockbridge Road Gt. Barrington 413-717-4244	Mondays – Saturdays 9:00am – 4:00pm Sundays 10:00am – 4:00pm	Fill out request card and ID requested
CHP Family Services 442 Stockbridge Road Gt. Barrington 413-528-0457	Mondays – Fridays 9:00am – 4:00pm Self-serve for food out front Other food available, just ask staff.	No eligibility required
The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts Mobile Food Bank Held at CHP 444 Stockbridge Road Gt. Barrington 413-247-9738, ext 121	1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month 11am – 12Noon Rain or shine	No proof of eligibility required
Lee Food Pantry 45 Railroad Street Lee 413-644-0022	Saturdays 10:00am – 12Noon	Serves people in Becket, Lee, Lenox Dale, Otis, Stockbridge, and Tyringham & West Stockbridge <a href="http://www.graceberkshires.org">www.graceberkshires.org</a>
Lenox Ecumenical Food Pantry Located at the United Methodist Church of Lenox 6 Holmes Road Lenox 413-445-5918	Saturdays 9:30am – 11:00am	Serves Lenox and Lenox Dale residents along with our members of Lenox and Lenox Dale churches

<b>Location</b>	<b>Days &amp; Times</b>	<b>Requirements</b>
Monterey Pantry Pickup Monterey Church U.C.C. 449 Main Road (In the basement) Monterey Call 413-429-4254, email to <a href="mailto:montereypantry@gmail.com">montereypantry@gmail.com</a> , or go to website at <a href="http://www.montereypantrypickup.org">www.montereypantrypickup.org</a> for information	Saturdays 10:00am – 11:00am	Serves residents of Monterey, Sandisfield, and New Marlborough
Otis Food Pantry 1 North Main Road Otis <a href="mailto:otisfoodpantry@gmail.com">otisfoodpantry@gmail.com</a> On Facebook at: Otis Food Pantry	Wednesdays 9:00am – 11:00am	No residency restrictions
Peoples Pantry 5 Taconic Avenue at St. James Place – Across from CVS Gt. Barrington 413-591-0301 <a href="http://www.thepeoplespantrygb.org">www.thepeoplespantrygb.org</a>	Mondays 4:00pm – 5:30pm Thursdays 10:00am – 12:30pm	South County residents only No proof of eligibility required
Sheffield Food Assistance Program Held at Old Parish Church 125 Main Street Sheffield 413-229-8173	Mondays 8:30am – 9:30am	Must be resident of Southern Berkshire Regional School District
Solidarity Kitchen & Pantry 965 Main St. Ste. 2 Gt. Barrington 413-274-8142 <a href="mailto:Engagement@multiculturalbridge.org">Engagement@multiculturalbridge.org</a>	July – October Fridays: 1:00pm – 4:00pm Saturdays: 1:00pm – 4:00pm Mondays: 10:00am – 12Noon Delivery available upon need, request, and volunteer availability.	Culturally specific local farm fresh food for victims of violence and discrimination BRIDGE clients – Call ahead for intake at 413-274-2024
Village Food Box Program in Sheffield Email Sarah Johnston at <a href="mailto:sjohnston@sbrsd.org">sjohnston@sbrsd.org</a> to reserve a box	Distribution on Thursdays unless school vacation (biweekly during summer months) 3:00pm in Sheffield or New Marlborough school campus or 12Noon at First Congregational Church	Serving all Southern Berkshire Regional School District families (not sponsored by SBRSD) Delivery option upon request
<b>Stephentown, NY Food Pantry</b>		
Stephentown Federated Church 1513 Garfield Road (County Road 26) Stephentown, NY 518-487-8606	Saturdays 9:00am – 11:00am Available weekly	Serves residents of Hancock and Stephentown Need proof of residency

## Berkshire County Meal Sites

### Pittsfield and Dalton Meal Sites

Table 6 Meal Sites in Pittsfield and Dalton

Meal Sites	Days & Times
<b>Breakfast Meal Sites</b>	
Christian Center 193 Robbins Avenue Pittsfield 413-443-2828	Continental Breakfast Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays 8:30am – 10:30am Wednesdays 9:00am – 10:30am
First United Methodist Church 55 Fenn Street Pittsfield 413-499-0866	Tuesdays - Harvest Table Breakfast 8:00am – 9:30am Use Fenn Street Entrance
Pittsfield Community Food Pantry (formerly South Community Food Pantry) – St. Joseph’s Kitchen 110 South Street Pittsfield 413-464-8042	Wednesdays & Thursdays 7:30am – 9:30am Grab & Go Breakfast
The Salvation Army 298 West Street Pittsfield 413-442-0624	Mondays thru Thursdays Brunch served 10:30am – 11:30am
<b>Lunch Meal Sites</b>	
Christian Center 193 Robbins Avenue Pittsfield 413-443-2828	Mondays thru Fridays 12Noon – 1:00pm
Dalton Senior Center 40 Field Street Ext. Dalton 413-684-2000 (Hosted by the Dalton Council on Aging)	Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays 12Noon – 1:00pm Congregate meals or grab & go available for seniors Recommended donation of \$3 Need 24 hour notice. Call 684-2000 Sunday Community Lunch 1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sundays of each month 1:00pm ALL AGES WELCOME!, Donations appreciated
Jewish Federation at Knesset Israel Synagogue 16 Colt Road Pittsfield 413-442-2200 Kosher senior meals \$3 suggested donation 60+ \$7 donation all others	Mondays and Thursdays. Beginning October 21st, meals will also be available on Tuesdays. 12Noon – Grab & Go - Pick-up at kitchen door In-person dining option also if there are 4 or more people – please leave telephone number Meals by reservation by calling 413-442-2200 MUST CALL NO LATER THAN 9AM SAME DAY
Pittsfield Senior Center 330 North Street Pittsfield 413-499-9346	Mondays thru Fridays 11:30am – 12:30pm, Modified congregate meals Call 1 day ahead by 12Noon for reservations Recommended \$3 donation for seniors 60 and over

<b>Meal Sites</b>	<b>Days &amp; Times</b>
Price Memorial AME Zion Church 27 East Street Pittsfield 413-449-4668	Saturdays 11:00am – 1:00pm Bagged lunches to go – Call Connie at 413-449-4668 for information on deliveries
<b>Dinner Meal Sites</b>	
Bright Morningstar Kitchen 475 Tyler Street - Downstairs Pittsfield 413-522-3495	Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays 4:30pm – 5:30pm Dinner 5:30pm – 6:00pm Take-Out Inclement weather or school closure due to bad weather: please call the Berkshire Dream Center at 413-522-3495 for updates.
First Baptist Church – “Feed My Sheep” 88 South Street Pittsfield 413-445-4539	Mondays 5:30pm – 6:00pm
First United Methodist Church 55 Fenn Street Pittsfield 413-499-0866	Tuesdays - Harvest Table Meal 4:00pm – 5:30pm Use Fenn Street Entrance
Pittsfield Community Food Pantry (formerly South Community Food Pantry) – St. Joseph’s Kitchen 110 South Street Pittsfield 413-464-8042	Wednesdays 4:30pm – 5:30pm A cooked take-home dinner is available
St. Stephen’s Church (Enter on Allen Street) 67 East Street Pittsfield 413-448-8276	Thursdays & Fridays 4:30pm - 5:30pm
The Salvation Army 298 West Street Pittsfield 413-442-0624	Sundays 4:30pm – 5:30pm

### North County Meal Sites

Table 7 Meal Sites in North Berkshire County

<b>Meal Sites</b>	<b>Days &amp; Times</b>
<b>Breakfast, Lunch, &amp; Dinner Meal Sites</b>	
Adams COA 3 Hoosac Street Adams 413-743-8333	Congregate meals Mondays thru Thursdays at 11:30am – 12Noon 60+ (\$3 suggested donation); under 60 price is \$8 Grab & Go Meals, Fridays 11:00am – 11:30am Please call 24 hours in advance to register for a meal at 413-743-8333
Berkshire Food Project First Congregational Church of N. Adams 134 Main Street (Entrance on Summer Street) North Adams 413-664-7378	Mondays thru Fridays 11:30am – 1:00pm
Cheshire COA Held at Cheshire Senior Center 119 School Street Cheshire 413-743-9719, ext. 107	Mondays thru Fridays Grab & Go – Pick up at 10:30am Mondays, Tuesdays, & Wednesdays Congregate meals available at 11:30am Must call Cheshire COA the day before by 11:00am to make a reservation

<b>Meal Sites</b>	<b>Days &amp; Times</b>
First Baptist Church Community Soup Kitchen Eagle Street Entrance 131 Main Street North Adams 413-663-3780	Saturdays 11:00am – 12Noon
North Adams COA Mary Spitzer Center 116 Ashland Street North Adams 413-662-3125	Congregate meals Mondays – Fridays 11:30am 60+ (\$3 suggested donation) – Please call 24 hours in advance to register at 413-664-9826
Williamstown COA Distribution at the Harper Center 118 Church Street Williamstown 413-458-8250	Grab & Go Hot meals Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 11:30am – 1:00pm Registration required Residents 60+ \$3 suggested donation

### South County Meal Sites

Table 8 South County Meal Sites

<b>Meal Sites</b>	<b>Days &amp; Times</b>
<b>Lunch Meal Site</b>	
Claire Teague Senior Center 917 Main Street Gt. Barrington, 413-528-1881	Mondays through Fridays Meals served at 11:30am Provided through Elder Services Reservation needed at least 24 hr in advance Residents 60+ \$3 suggested donation, under 60 price \$8, 1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday free to veterans
Guthrie Center 2 Van Deusenville Road Gt. Barrington 413-528-1955	Wednesdays Free Community Lunch 12Noon – 1:00pm
Heaton Court Community Room 5 Pine Street Stockbridge	Thursdays, 12 Noon Congregate meals through Elder Service’s Meals on Wheels Program \$3 suggested donation
Lenox COA, Community Center 65 Walker Street Lenox 413-637-5535 If new to program, you must fill out a form	Mondays thru Fridays 11:30am – 12:30pm Grab & go meals
Sheffield Senior Center 25 Cook Road Sheffield 413-229-7037	Mondays Soup & Sandwich Lunch 11:30am Free from the Sheffield Senior Center Wednesdays & Fridays Meals served at 12Noon Provided through Elder Services, for residents 60+ \$3 suggested donation, under 60 price \$8 1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday, free to veterans
Stockbridge Senior Center 50 Main Street Stockbridge	Tuesday, 11:30am Congregate meals through Elder Service’s Meals on Wheels Program \$3 suggested donation

Meal Sites	Days & Times
<b>Dinner Meal Sites</b>	
Berkshire South Regional Community Center 15 Crissey Road Gt. Barrington 413-528-2810  Everyone is welcome.	Mondays In-Person: 5:00pm – 6:00pm Take-Out: Curbside Pick Up begins at 4:00 pm Please consult <a href="http://www.berkshiresouth.org">www.berkshiresouth.org</a> for specific in-person and take-out meals. Meals are first come first served.
Breaking Bread Community Supper Held at the American Legion Corner of Cook Road and Rte. 7 Sheffield 413-229-8614	Thursdays 5:00pm – Grab & go dinners Please call 413-229-7037 for a reservation. Free to all

## Other Food Programs

**Brown Bag Program** - This program is a supplemental monthly food program offering 10-15 pounds of food to eligible individuals, 55 years or older, free or for a small donation. For income eligibility requirements and further information, call your Council on Aging.

**Elder Services' Elder Nutrition Program** - Noontime meals are offered for those 60 years of age and older at several senior centers throughout the County. Some sites offer transportation through the Council on Aging. A suggested donation of \$3.00 per meal is requested. Individuals under 60 years of age are welcome for a required fee of \$8.00 per meal. Call Elder Services of Berkshire County for information and locations at 1-800-981-5201.

**Elder Services' Meals on Wheels Program** - Nutritious, hot noontime meals are offered Monday through Friday to homebound Berkshire seniors, who are 60 years of age or older. A suggested donation of \$3.00 is requested to help cover the cost of food preparation and delivery. There are eligibility requirements. Please call Elder Services of Berkshire County at 413-499-0524 to make a referral for yourself, family member or friend.

### **North Adams Weekend Home Delivered Meals for Seniors All Saints Meal Ministry**

To sign-up, please call 413-664-9656  
Diane Bleau Held 1 Sunday per month (date varies)

### **Pittsfield Weekend Home Delivered Meals for Seniors Sponsored by St. Joseph's Church and St. Mark's Church**

To sign-up call Terry Manchester (860-605-3162)  
Held the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays of each month

### **Berkshire Mobile Farmers' Market (Runs through October 17<sup>th</sup>)**

Berkshire Mobile Farmers' Market offers Fairshare payment options. You choose the option that works best for your budget from retail to free. SNAP and HIP accepted.

- Tuesdays: 3-5 pm at Cheshire Community Center and 3:30-5:30 pm at Becket Town Hall
- Wednesdays: 11:30 am-1:30 pm at Wahconah Park and 3-5 pm at Second Street Second Chances
- Thursdays 11:00 am-1:00 pm at Adams Visitor Center
- Fridays 3:30-5:30 pm at Monterey Community Center