



# ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2020-2022

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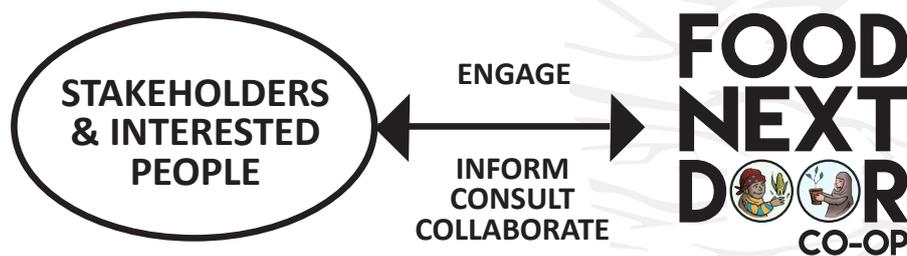
*At Food Next Door, we value our farmers' work, therefore, we will not get tired to keep sharing our stories.*

# SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## WHY DO WE HAVE AN ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY?

The Food Next Door Co-op engagement strategy is a two-way engagement strategy, for:

1. Food Next Door Co-op to engage well with all levels of stakeholders, and
2. people interested in Food Next Door to know how they can be involved and contribute.



Together with you, we have all contributed and made efforts in helping Food Next Door to get where it is today. Because of this, we thought it was very important to create an engagement strategy that will be two ways of engagement. Throughout our interaction with different people from diverse communities, it was very clear that many people, in Mildura, Australia, and internationally, are eager to know the stories of Food Next Door. However, people appeared unsure of what Food Next Door could offer them or what they could offer Food Next Door. Food Next Door understands that positive two-way engagement between Food Next Door and its stakeholders is crucial for our work to be successful. We want our mission “Nurturing Land, Nourishing People” to be clear to you. We want to create a culture where all people at every level feel engaged and involved.

This document outlines the commitment Food Next Door Coop has to you, the members, staff and other stakeholders. It is a document that helps all members and potential members to navigate Food Next Door services with ease. Who are we? What do we do? Hopefully this document will give you an insight into who Food Next Door is. Throughout this document, there will be discussions on the process of our communication, our approach to communication and engagement, and our engagement activities.



If you are still unclear as to why there was a need for an engagement strategy, well, we are sure you are not alone. So here we go, “ever since I joined Food Next Door, I feel engaged and involved; I love my work and everything the organisation stands for” (Food Next Door staff). This is how we wanted every participant on any level to feel as well. This led to an exciting journey to meet different people and organisations. We spent a lot of time listening to different people. This includes members, farmers, volunteers, consumers, landholders, and our stakeholders of Food Next Door.

This strategy draws heavily on information received directly from our stakeholders. We conducted eight formal interviews with farmers, landholders, volunteers and consumers. Participants were asked what influenced them to support Food Next Door’s work, why they chose to be part of the Food Next Door family, what they gained from being involved with Food Next Door, what they think our strengths and weaknesses are, and how we can best communicate with each other. You will see some quotes from our interview participants throughout this document. Their responses helped to inform our engagement activity plan in Section 3 and also how volunteers can get involved in Section 4. Because we are creating a new model, what we hear directly from you is what guides us.

**“I’m interested in following this as an example of something very very new in Australia and a new way of doing it because land has become so expensive for individuals that want to farm... so this as a model will be interesting to see how it works because I don’t only want rich people to be able to farm.”**

*Volunteer*



## WHO IS THIS STRATEGY FOR?

We have a diverse group of stakeholders – this strategy is for all of you. It was created for you and for Food Next Door to give each other a clear picture on how we can engage positively and effectively. It will be available to access for all Food Next Door staff, members, potential members, supporters and stakeholders.

This strategy is a living document and will be updated regularly. Things change quickly and we want this document to remain relevant.

Before we give you a tour of the actual engagement strategy, let us first introduce you to Food Next Door and its team and tell you how they contribute to our everyday work in engagement.

## OUR PURPOSE

Food Next Door Co-op’s primary purpose is to relieve the suffering and distress suffered by new migrants, particularly those without access to land and living in rural and regional areas, by supporting these groups to re-engage in farming and grow food, including their traditional foods.

We do this by:

- sourcing and negotiating access to land for the groups to use for farming,
- providing ongoing assistance and support to the groups to farm the land, and
- creating new distribution channels for the groups to sell their produce.

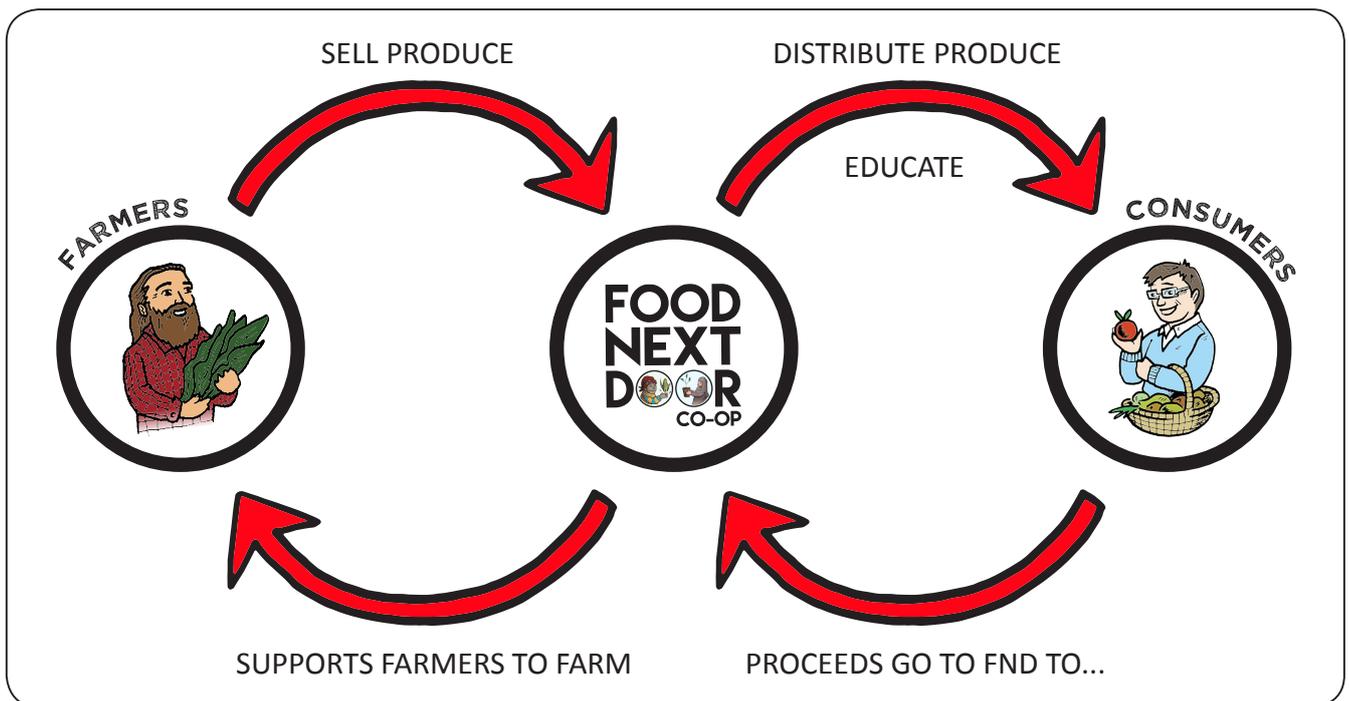
Our secondary objectives are to:

- strengthen overall community cohesion in the long term,
- build our soils and encourage regenerative farming practices,
- increase the number of small-scale farms to provide high quality produce to local markets, and strengthen local food economies through diversification of produce.

# Food Next Door Co-op

## WHAT WE DO

We support a local food system: from supporting growers to grow food, connecting that food to consumers, and educating consumers about how their food choices can support their local growers. So it goes around and around in a circle and builds community through these connections.



## SUPPORT FARMERS TO FARM

The Co-op provides access to land for landless farmers. We support farmers through hands-on training and mentoring in regenerative farming practices and horticulture, and providing access to small-scale farming machinery and tools. On our community farms we also provide water, seeds, compost and biological inputs, and insurance.



“...we already have a harvest because I was a part of Food Next Door. The harvest I’ve got I can feed my family and friends. This is really like, miracle, because if it wasn’t [for] Food Next Door I won’t (sic) get this harvest I had.”

*Farmer*

## CONNECT FARMERS WITH LOCAL MARKETS: OUT OF THE BOX

Food Next Door connects farmers with customers by distributing produce through the weekly box scheme, Out of the Box. We do the marketing for the farmers, and we keep the customers informed through a weekly e-newsletter and daily social media updates. This means farmers can focus on caring for their soils and producing the highest quality produce they can.



“You’ve got all these good people around you that are really happy to accept your produce and give you feedback...”

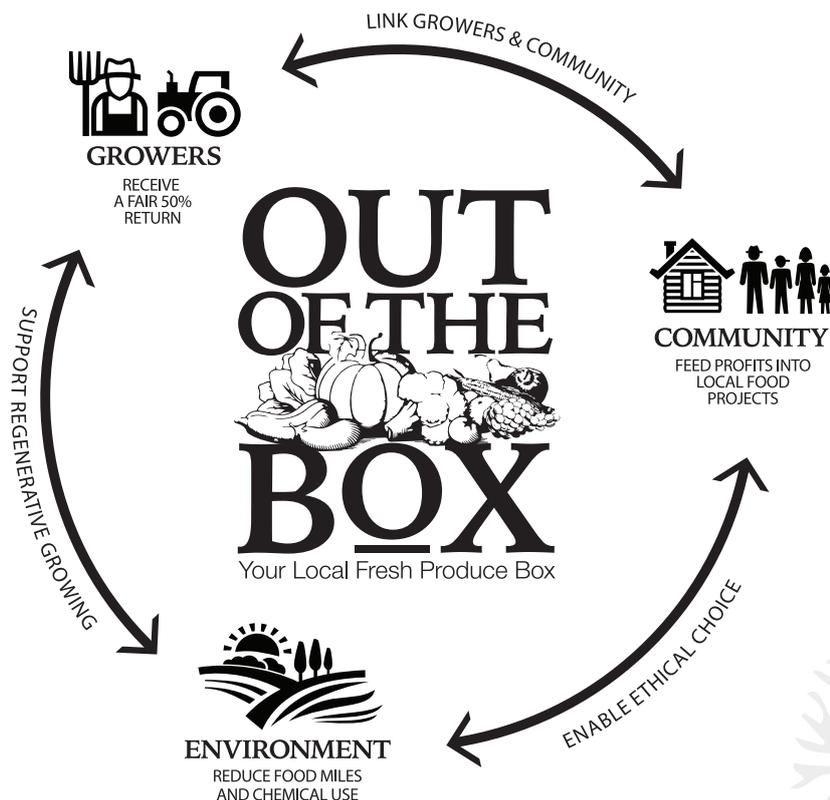
*Farmer*

We have been operating Out of the Box since September 2017. It is a weekly subscription model that operates on three connected principles: strengthening our local economy, building community, and caring for our environment. Out of the Box is run as a social enterprise, with profits fed back into local food projects.

“The thing that I like being a subscriber is I like how fresh the food is, I like that it’s high quality, and it comes from local growers so it’s not freighted a long way, but I also like that people are paid fairly for what they grow...”



*Consumer*



## BUILD COMMUNITY

Food Next Door connects farmers to each other too. Our local food system is small and farmers are learning skills from each other, building a community of small-scale regenerative farmers.

“Like I meet you [another grower] in the street, ah I know you, we’re both Food Next Door, we’re a part of Food Next Door. ... you can ask advice, you know I’m doing this, how can I do it? But you can’t ask someone I haven’t meet how to do. (sic)”



*Farmer*

Our community share the benefits by eating the food from these farms. They value the health benefits of the produce we provide, for themselves and for the environment.



“I’m also very interested in supporting examples of how food can be grown locally. I’m worried about the food system in Australia, I’m worried about what that means for the environment, I’m worried about the food we’re consuming in the cities, the way a lot of it is grown on large-scale farms with pesticide use and what that means for people’s health, let alone the health of the environment.”

*Volunteer*

“... I think that’s what keeps me going, ... know[ing] that for my family I want to be able to continue to supply them with the food that Food Next Door can offer. So I want that for my family but I want that for other families as well, so we need to keep going to ensure that, it’ll take a long time but eventually hopefully we’ll be feeding more and more families and more and more families will be getting the health benefits of what we can offer.”



*Volunteer*

Our pilot project, the Sunraysia Burundian Garden, yielded more than a crop of maize: it created a sense of belonging for the Burundian community, and new connections within the broader community. We discovered that collaborative food growing builds community in multiple and unexpected ways.



“I was isolated, I lived here, I had acquaintances, I didn’t have friends, I didn’t feel connected, and ...now I understand that ... what I was lacking all the time I was here I never felt like I was connected. Now I feel connected. And I want other people to feel connected too. And while doing something that’s really meaningful.”

*Landholder*

We dream that the Food Next Door model could form part of the fabric of growing food for Australia, where farmers are part of a network of people, they’re supported, and they’re understood.

# FOOD NEXT DOOR

## NURTURING LAND, NOURISHING PEOPLE

### WHY DID FOOD NEXT DOOR CO-OP FORM?

Food Next Door formed in Sunraysia to find solutions to one main problem: the lack of a strong local food system. The problem requires a whole-of-system collaborative approach and forming a co-operative was the best vehicle for this. Co-operatives are for mutual benefit – members contribute to benefit the co-op, and members benefit from the co-op.

### WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE?

Food Next Door matches under-utilised farmland with landless farmers to support smallscale regenerative farming, growing diverse crops & engaging people from diverse backgrounds to supply food to local households.

### WHAT ARE OUR PRIMARY ACTIVITIES?

1. We support landless farmers to farm. We do this by facilitating access to suitable farmland through landshare agreements, and by providing technical, educational and other support to the farmers.
2. We support a local food economy. We do this by creating and strengthening distribution channels for the sale of locally grown and produced food within our region.

### WHO CAN BE A MEMBER?

Any person who is able to use or contribute to the services of the co-op can be a member. There are four types of membership: consumer, producer, landholder, volunteer.

### WHAT DO MEMBERS HAVE TO CONTRIBUTE?

Membership fees for 2019 are \$30 for an individual, a couple, or a family. There is no joining fee.

Members have to meet 'active membership' requirements, which are one or more of the following:

- Purchase a minimum of \$100.00 worth of products from the co-op within a calendar year;
- Supply the co-op with \$100.00 (wholesale price) of food, food related products, or other products sought by the co-operative, in a calendar year;
- Provide volunteer labour to the co-op for activities such as working in the co-operative's store, for a minimum of 20 hours in a calendar year; or
- Provide access to land for a minimum of three years for food-growing activities through way of a Memorandum of Understanding.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING A MEMBER?

Members become part of the Food Next Door community, supporting the primary aim of the co-op to assist newly arrived migrants and refugees to re-engage in farming and growing food.

**Consumer** members benefit by access to high quality locally grown produce supplied to the co-op.

**Producer** members gain the support of the co-op via knowledge exchange, shared tools and equipment, access to local markets.

**Landholder** members benefit from improved soil health and biodiversity on their land from regenerative farming practices.

**Volunteer** members benefit from increased knowledge and skills, access to professional development and training opportunities, mentoring, and working as part of a team.

### WHO ARE WE?

Our Board has seven Directors with skills in farming, beekeeping, film-making, social work, governance, risk management and community development. We have three paid staff, six volunteer staff, and three contractors who work with us on translation through design, biodynamic and regenerative farming, and research, documenting and analysis. Our Advisory Board has six members with skills in co-op management, governance and law, organic farming, organisational culture, business planning and human geography.

### HOW DOES OUR BOARD WORK?

Directors are elected at each AGM for a three year term, with a maximum of three terms. Positions are rotated so that each year two to three positions are available for re-election. The majority of directors must be members of the co-op.

### WHAT DO OUR STAFF DO?

Our paid staff manage and oversee day-to-day operations of the co-op and the weekly Out of the Box local produce subscription. Our volunteer staff assist in managing Out of the Box on a weekly basis.

### HOW DO WE REPORT TO MEMBERS AND KEEP THEM INFORMED?

We hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November that all members are invited and encouraged to attend. At the AGM an annual report from the Board and financial statements are presented.

A members gathering is held mid-year to report to members and provide an opportunity for members to have input into co-op activities.

A weekly Out of the Box newsletter is emailed to all registered members and subscribers.



# WHO WE ARE

## FARMERS

Farmers and producers are the visible part of the Co-op, the plants and food. What they produce enables our local food system to thrive. They provide skills and labour to grow produce that is sold to consumers. They need landholders to access land and the Co-op and consumers to buy their produce.

## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are often not visible. They are the worms and nutrients in the soil that make the Co-op thrive. They provide manual labour, administrative support, expert advice, grant writing and other specialist skills.

## LANDHOLDERS

Landholders are the soil – the foundation needed for farmers to grow food. They provide access to land through landshare agreements with the Co-op for a minimum of three years. Landholders benefit from farmers rejuvenating their land through regenerative farming practices.

## CONSUMERS

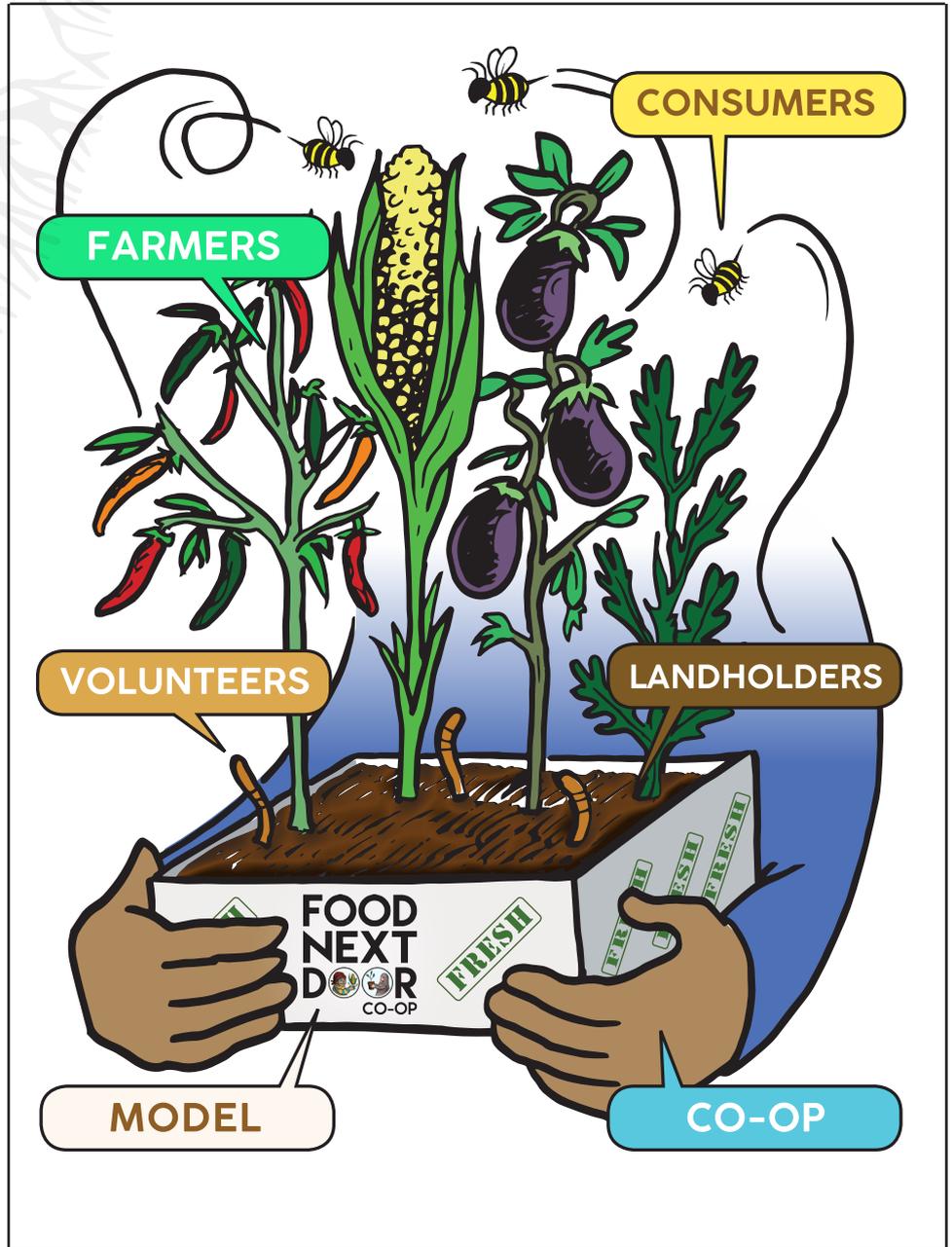
Consumers come and go like bees as they buy produce from the Co-op and the farmers. They need the food (farmers) to survive, and the farmers need the consumers to thrive. They provide income for the Co-op to enable the Co-op to thrive.

## MODEL

The Food Next Door model is the box that is replicable and transportable to other regions and other communities. The model provides the guidelines for how the members work together.

## CO-OP

The Co-op is the framework, the arms, holding everything together so that its members can thrive. It provides procedures, processes, insurance and other support. It needs its members to work together for the Co-op to thrive.



# WHO WE ARE

**GUTABITA ISI, KUGABURIBA ABANTU**

## ABARIMYI

(Farmers)

Abarimyi, abatera ibiterwa, ibiterwa hamwe n'ibifungurwa ni ibihimba biboneka vy'Ishirahamwe. Ivyo bimbura birafasha itunganywa ry'ibifungurwa iwacu rikamera neza.

## ABAFUNGURA IVYIMBUWE

(Consumers)

Abikora ku vyimburwa baraza hama bakagenda igihe bagura ivyimbuwe n'Ishirahamwe hamwe n'Abarimyi.

## ABITANGA

(Volunteers)

Abitanga kenshi usanga batibonekeza. Barakenerwa cane nk'umwavu mu butaka kuko batuma Ishirahamwe rimererwa neza.

## BA NYENE AMATONGO

(Landholders)

Ba nyene amatongo ni ubutaka. Ni umushinge ukenewe ku barimyi kugira himburwe ibifungurwa.

## IKIGERERANYO

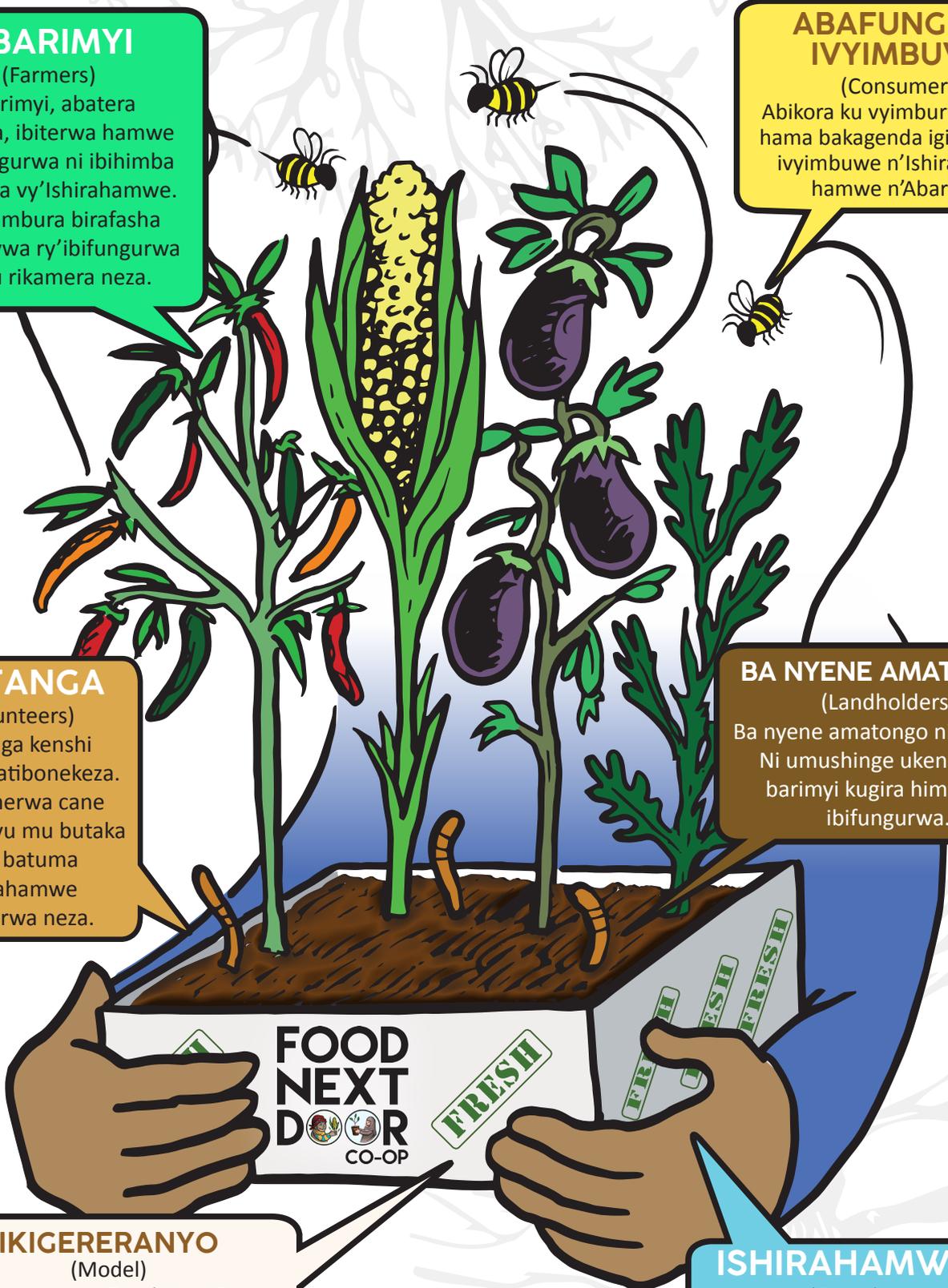
(Model)

Ikigereranyo ca Food Next Door (Ibifungurwa Kuri Buri Muryango) ni nk'akabogisi gashobora gusubirwamwo kandi koroshe gutwara aho ari ho hose mu turere tundi no mu mirwi y'abantu kanaka.

## ISHIRAHAMWE

(Co-op)

Ishirahamwe rigereranywa ni intimatima n'amaboko bigumije vyose hamwe maze abagize Ishirahamwe bakamerwa neza.



# WHO WE ARE

## KUTUNZA ARDHI, KULISHA WATU

### WAKULIMA

(Farmers)

Wakulima, mavuno, watumiaji na chakula ndicho kinachosababisha shirika kujulikana. Mavuno yao ndio yanayoleta kipaumbele.

### WATUMIAJI

(Consumers)

Watumiaji au Wateja huja na kwenda kama nyuki wanaponunua mazao kutoka kwa shilika na kwa wakulima.

### WANAJOJITOLEA

(Volunteers)

Wanaojitolea mara nyingi hawaonekani kwa uso. Wanafananishwa na mbolea kwenye udongo kwa kuendeleza Shilika.

### WAMILIKI WA

### ARDHI

(Landholders)

Wamiliki wa ardhi ndio msingi wakusababisha wakulima wapati mavuno.

### MFUMO

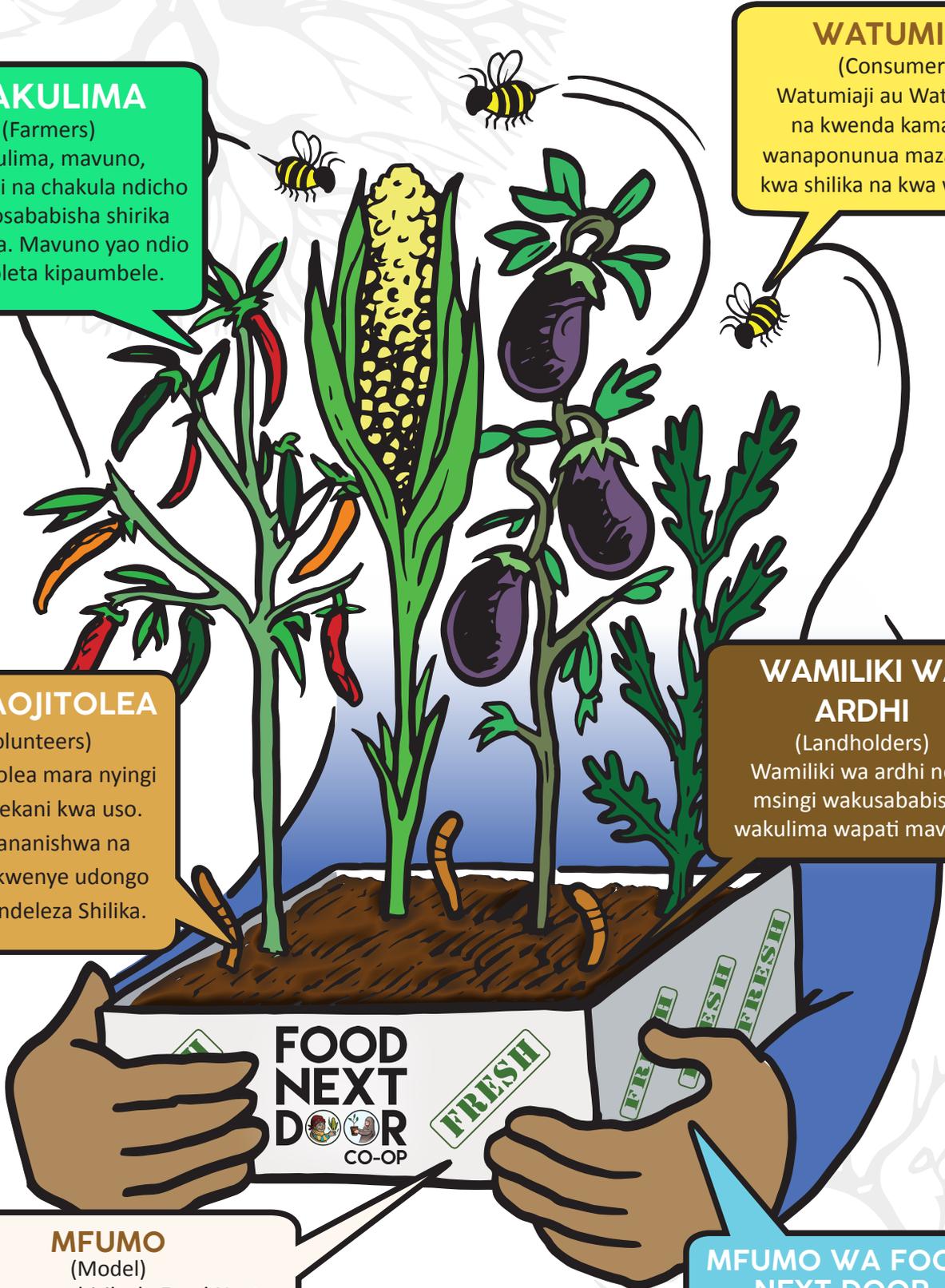
(Model)

Mfumo wa shirika la Food Next Door ni mfano wa sanduku ambalo linaweza kugawanywa na kusafirishwa kwa mikoja mbalimbali na jamii zingine.

### MFUMO WA FOOD NEXT DOOR

(Co-op)

Mfumo wa Food Next Door ni kama mikono imeshikilia kila kitu pamoja ili washiriki waweze kustawi.



## SECTION 2. STAKEHOLDERS AND OUR APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

### WHO ARE OUR STAKEHOLDERS?

Food Next Door has a diverse range of internal and external stakeholders, who have different levels of interest and influence, and require different forms and levels of communication and engagement. The diversity of stakeholders is one of our key strengths, but it also presents a challenge in making sure we communicate and engage effectively with everyone.



“I think with working with people from different backgrounds and different migrant groups there’s a lot of checking in that needs to happen, even once it’s been explained, explain, check in, explain, check in...”

*Volunteer*

Internal stakeholders are people and groups that form part of Food Next Door Co-op, the operations, the management, the strategic direction, and the decision-making.

Our internal stakeholders are Food Next Door staff, including the Executive Officer, Administration Officer, Out of the Box Manager, and Project Officers; Food Next Door Directors; and Food Next Door members. We have three additional internal stakeholders that are integral to Food Next Door’s work, the Grower mentor Peter Webb, Artist translator Kieran Mangan and Researcher-in-residence Olivia Dun.

External stakeholders are people and groups who influence and support and have relationships with Food Next Door. They may provide advice, funding, collaboration, or in-kind support.

Our external stakeholders include land holders, funding bodies, the Community Water Bank, Out of the Box subscribers, interested general public, the media, interested supporters and supporting organisations, collaborators, project steering groups, and the Food Next Door Advisory Board.

### OUR APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

Food Next Door believes that no one-size-fits-all when it comes to community engagement. Which is a great thing! We work by a set of values and with a unique approach that facilitates engagement at many levels.

*We want to create a community through food, friendships and connection.  
Our ideal community is where food is shared, and stories are told.*

“Now there is a connection, if I have problem (sic), even it’s not about Food Next Door (sic), about farming, I can still contact them, I need your help, I need you, come over, have a party, share food... there’s a friendship there Food Next Door created.”

*Farmer*



We believe that graphics and photos are so much more engaging than just a paragraph of text, and they are easier to understand by people at all levels of English. It was essential to have a large visual content for this document. Some information has been translated into Swahili and Kirundi to reflect the language of the majority of new migrant farmers currently engaged with Food Next Door.

## OUR VALUES

### NURTURING

Food Next Door works to care for the land through growing, distributing and sharing food.

### COMMUNITY

We work to build community through growing, distributing and sharing food.

### INCLUSION

We include people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs, gender and sexual identity, and age, who contribute as farmer- and producer-, consumer-, volunteer- and landholder-members.

We welcome contributions from all Co-op members.

### RESPECT

We respect and acknowledge the knowledge and skills of all members. We respect and acknowledge the Traditional Owners on whose land we work. We recognise their knowledge and skills in actively managing our land and waters for millennia.

### CO-OPERATION

We seek ways to work together.

## NO ENGLISH, NO PROBLEM

We encourage and respect language diversity and support our members to speak to us in a language they feel comfortable. We employ and engage multi-lingual community members to assist with translation for our stakeholders with low levels of English. We have translated our WHO WE ARE flyer into Swahili and Kirundi. Information will be translated into additional languages in the future to reflect the new migrant farming communities engaged with Food Next Door.

“ Food Next Door nikama urafiki, ukiwa mwana cama, unakutana na watu wengine, wanapata mawasiliyano yako nawe piya unapata mawasiliyano yawo. Na wana kusaidiya kubaki na kudumu ndani ya masiliyano. Watu hawo ni w wapya kwako nawe piya ni mpya kwawo.”



## THE COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATION FARM

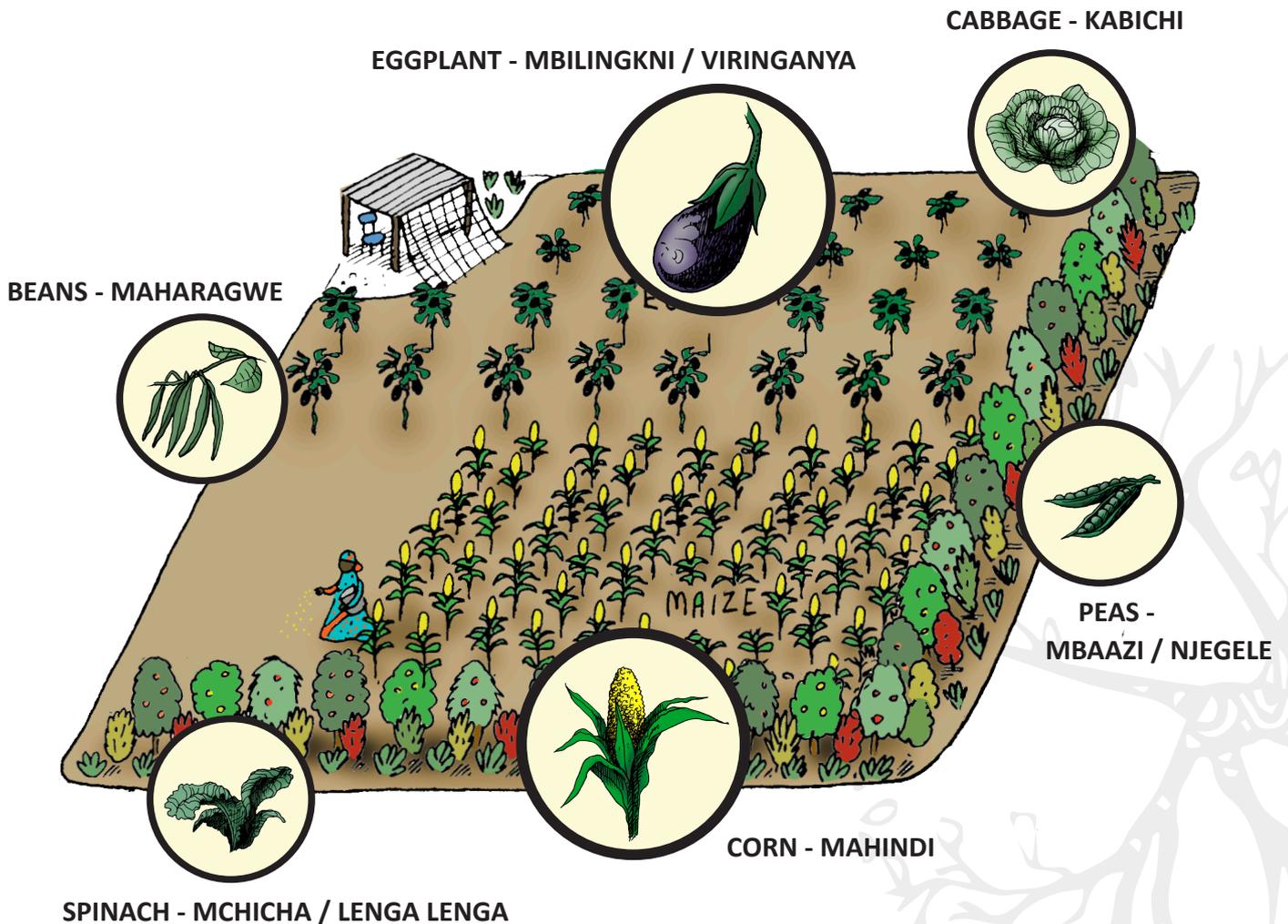
Our major project, establishing a community demonstration farm, means we can offer place-based engagement activities. It forms a major component of our engagement strategy.



“By having the demonstration farm it becomes a focal meeting point for new arrivals where we can sit down and talk in the field, on the land, and communicate what it is that we can offer and visually show them what is growing and they can be part of that possibility as we grow new land.”

*Volunteer*

The Community Demonstration Farm project is funded by Regional Development Victoria through Mallee Regional Partnerships. The community demonstration farm will establish new crops suitable for the region, rejuvenate idle farmland, and demonstrate the economic viability of small-scale regenerative farming in the Mallee. The Community Demonstration Farm is a physical and safe place where people will be able share skills and contribute to our local food economy. It is a core centre to bring people and communities together and share their passion, diversity, languages, dances, songs, and stories, and to create connections. Many of our engagement activities will take place here.



## SECTION 3. ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY PLAN

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### ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Our engagement activities vary from daily communications to annual events, from detailed sharing of internal information to public articles and appearances. They can be grouped into areas based on the levels of interest and influence of stakeholders. These are: INFORM (for stakeholders with low levels of interest or influence), INFORM AND CONSULT (for stakeholders with a high level of interest or influence, but not both), and INFORM, CONSULT AND COLLABORATE (for stakeholders with high levels of interest and influence).

Tables 1 to 4 present our engagement activity plans for the four stakeholder groups.

### REVIEW

This engagement strategy will be reviewed yearly. At each review there will be the addition of new words and their meaning in languages of our members.

Food Next Door understands that engagement involves a process of responding to information to shape and improve the quality our work. Food Next Door understands that information collected from our supporters can also indicate that the engagement approach needs to change.

For Food Next Door, we are at the beginning. We will regularly gather feedback from our stakeholders through the consultation and collaboration activities outlined in this strategy to make sure our work is improved.

**TABLE 1. ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY PLAN FOR STAKEHOLDER GROUP: Low interest, low influence**

Strategy: INFORM			
Includes media, interested general public, and interested supporters and organisations, e.g. Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Community Council (SMECC), Mildura Rural City Council, Lower Murray Water, AMES Australia, Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance, Open Food Network, Sustain: The Australian Food Network, Cultivate Farms, Cultivate Peoples of the Millewa Mallee Aboriginal Corporation.			
ACTIVITY	TIME	WHO	MEASURABLE
Welcoming new community members – open office policy.	Ongoing	AMES FND staff and members	New community members signed in at office/farm – sign-in system to be implemented by July 2020
Food and information stalls at events These activities provide an opportunity to engage members from diverse backgrounds to share traditional dishes and to cook together enabling knowledge exchange.	At least two per year, e.g. SMECC Multicultural Festival, Cullulleraine Music Festival	FND staff and members	Volunteer hours registered for each event attended New membership applications for each event attended
Social media <a href="#">@outoftheboxsunraysia</a> <a href="#">@foodnextdoorcoop</a> <a href="#">@sunraysiafoodmovement</a>	Daily posts (at least one per day)	FND staff	Number of enquiries/direct messages per month Number of post engagements per week
Print and radio news media	As-needs basis (e.g. major announcements and developments via media releases)	FND staff, Board and members	Number of media engagements (radio or print) per year
Advocacy: speaking at forums, conferences; recognition for achievements through awards	At least one forum/conference attended per year (as speaker/workshop facilitator) At least one application for an award per year	FND staff and Board	Number of award nominations per year Coverage of presentations at forum/conference via social media or news media
Web sites <a href="#">Food Next Door</a> <a href="#">Out of the Box</a> Community Water Bank (in development)	Out of the Box web site updated on a weekly basis Food Next Door web site updated every six months Community Water Bank web site updated every six months	FND staff and volunteers Park Douglas Printing	Number of enquiries/contacts from Food Next Door web site per quarter Number of membership applications via web sites per month New Out of the Box subscribers per month Number of enquiries via Community Water Bank web site per quarter
YouTube channel	Established in 2020	FND staff Kieran Mangan	All existing audio files and video productions available by December 2020 Number of educational videos produced and available in at least two languages per year
E-newsletters	Weekly Out of the Box newsletter Quarterly Food Next Door Co-op newsletter	FND staff, volunteers and Board	New OOTB newsletter subscribers per month New FND newsletter subscribers per quarter
Printed information	As-needs basis (e.g. existing materials translated for a new language group)	FND staff Kieran Mangan	WHO WE ARE flyer translated into Swahili and Kirundi and printed for distribution to members

<p>Farm open days These may include hands-on workshops, talks, cooking demonstrations, and farm tours.</p>	<p>At least two per year</p>	<p>Park Douglas Printing FND staff and members Grower mentor</p>	<p>by July 2020 First open day held by December 2020. Number of people attended.</p>
<p>Harvest festival At the Community Demonstration Farm. The festival will include shared harvesting and preparation of meals, sharing stories and cultural traditions, and celebrating the harvest through music and singing.</p>	<p>Annual event</p>	<p>FND staff, farmer members, volunteers Grower mentor FND Board</p>	<p>First Harvest Festival held in 2021. Number of people attended.</p>
<p>Out of the Box weekly pick-up Each Thursday afternoon customers pick up boxes at Out of the Box, located at Clove Organics, a collaborating partner of Food Next Door. This weekly activity has created strong community connectedness.</p>	<p>Ongoing each week, Thursdays 2-6 pm.</p>	<p>FND staff and volunteers Clove Organics</p>	<p>One 'customer of the week' photo and article uploaded to social media per quarter One story and photo of volunteers/the swap table/produce uploaded to social media per quarter</p>
<p>Food Next Door farm information signs</p>	<p>Erected at each farm on the roadside</p>	<p>FND staff Landholder</p>	<p>Erected at River Farm and Community Demonstration Farm by July 2020</p>

**TABLE 2. ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY PLAN FOR STAKEHOLDER GROUP: High interest, low influence**

Strategy: CONSULT				
Includes Out of the Box subscribers, Advisory Board, Project Steering Groups, collaborating organisations, e.g. Strategic Community Assistance to Refugee Families (SCARF), Clove Organics, Sparke Helmore Lawyers, Goodwill Collective, Insight Academy of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Monash University, University of Wollongong, University of Melbourne, Many Rivers, Park Douglas Printing, Ruralco, Cultivator, Sunraysia Community Health Services.				
ACTIVITY	TIME	WHO	MEASURABLE	
On-farm training and workshops	At least three per year	FND staff and members Grower mentor	Number of participants per workshop At least one workshop open to the public	
Project workshops and meetings An integral part to our collaborative approach of working is to engage project partners and collaborators through workshops and meetings	At initiation of new projects As-needed basis	FND staff Project teams (may include Project Steering Groups and collaborators)	At least one workshop per new project per year (initiation workshop) Number of workshops/collaborative meetings per existing project per year	
Advisory group meetings We have an Advisory Board who are actively engaged through our annual strategic planning day and individually on an as-needs basis. Some of our externally funded projects are advised by Project Steering Groups.	Advisory Board meet at least twice per year Advisory Board members available individually on an as-needs basis Project Steering Groups meet at least twice per year	FND EO and Project Officers FND Advisory Board Project Steering Groups	Number of Advisory Board members attending meetings per year Number of commitments actioned for Advisory Board per meeting Number of Advisory Board member consultations per quarter Number of Project Steering Group members attending each meeting Number of commitments actioned for Project Steering Group per meeting	
Farm visits and grower meetings	At least quarterly, transitioning to at least fortnightly by July 2020	FND farmer members Grower mentor FND staff	A new position to provide structured support to farmers recruited by June 2020. By June 2020 we will develop a farmer entrant toolkit for independent farmer members to structure the delivery of our support, including frequency of farm visits. Minutes of grower meetings	
Phone and email project-specific communications	Ongoing on an as-needs basis	FND staff Project stakeholders and collaborators		
Online surveys Survey results inform our operations and key results are promoted via social media to assure people that their voices are being heard and considered in the way that Food Next Door does business.	At least one consumer survey per year At least one farmer survey per year, translated into Swahili	FND staff and Board	Number of responses from consumer survey. Number of survey results promoted via social media and e-newsletter Number of responses from farmer survey At least one action taken from farmer survey results, made transparent through communication to farmers.	
Annual marketing event	At least one marketing activity per year	FND staff Collaborator	In April 2020 a group of trainers and students from Insight Academy will visit Mildura to participate in a marketing activity. New OOTB subscribers resulting from the marketing activity.	

**TABLE 3. ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY PLAN FOR STAKEHOLDER GROUP: Low interest, high influence**

Strategy: CONSULT				
Includes land holders, Community Water Bank, funding bodies				
ACTIVITY	TIME	WHO	MEASURABLE	
Landshare agreements Food Next Door facilitate access to land with private land holders through developing a landshare agreement. The agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of Food Next Door and the land holder. The process of developing the agreement is a really important engagement activity. This process establishes a strong relationship and shared understanding between the land holder and Food Next Door and is important in managing expectations.	Landshare agreements are developed for a minimum three-year period and reviewed annually	FND staff Landholder Farmer members Grower mentor	Landshare agreements for the River Farm and Community Demonstration Farm finalised and signed by July 2020.	
Water distribution agreement Food Next Door is establishing a Community Water Bank, which is a stand-alone organisation with a diverse Board, that will accept and hold donations of water for irrigation.	In development in 2020	FND EO and Project Officer FND Board Ruralco Community Water Bank Board Project Steering Group	Agreement between Food Next Door and Mildura Community Water Bank finalised and signed by August 2020 Participatory workshop attended by FND Directors and Community Water Bank Board members held by June 2020	
Funding agreements All funding bodies require agreements with Food Next Door that outline how project success will be measured and how the funding will be delivered over the life of the project. The process of applying for and receiving funding usually involves consultation with the funding body.	On a project-by-project basis	FND staff Funding bodies	Milestones delivered on time and on budget for existing projects. New funding opportunities contacted in 2020 to make a connection and discuss Food Next Door's work and project idea in the context of both Food Next Door's mission and the funding body's desired outcomes.	
Reviews Reviews of agreements are an opportunity to engage with the other party and discuss progress, any problems or issues that have arisen in the preceding period, any new risks identified, and agree on any changes to the agreement. This strategy ensures continuing engagement and maintenance of relationships with land holders and the Community Water Bank.	Annual	FND staff Landholders (landshare agreements) Community Water Bank (water distribution agreement)	Annual review of agreements conducted in 2021	
Progress reports	In accordance with funding agreements	FND staff and Project Officers	Progress reports delivered on time for existing projects.	

**TABLE 4. ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY PLAN FOR STAKEHOLDER GROUP: High interest, high influence**

Strategy: COLLABORATE				
Includes Food Next Door staff, members and Board, Grower mentor Peter Webb, Artist translator Kieran Mangan, Researcher-in-residence Olivia Dun				
ACTIVITY	TIME	WHO	MEASURABLE	
Annual members gathering Our annual members gathering (held in addition to the Annual General Meeting) is for members to get together and share and learn about each other in an informal and fun way. Members bring a plate of food to share. An activity is run to help people meet each other, with consideration of language barriers. Translators are engaged for the gathering both formally and informally, and stories are shared over food.	June each year	FND staff and members FND Board Potential members	Number of members attended. Coverage of gathering promoted via social media	
New members information pack Including a copy of our WHO WE ARE flyer in their first language (the flyer will continue to be translated into additional languages of our members as different new migrant groups become involved) and a copy of the Co-op rules (currently in English only).	Members receive upon joining.	FND staff	Every new member receives welcome email or letter and information pack. Multi-lingual information on how to volunteer and what you receive as a volunteer to be developed by December 2020 as part of the welcome pack.	
Annual governance training and strategic planning	Annual, within two months of AGM	FND EO FND Board FND Advisory Board	Number of people attending	
Team calendar	Updated weekly	FND staff		
Secure access and storage to shared file system	Ongoing on an as-needs basis	FND staff	New staff given access to relevant folders within one week of commencing. Staff leaving the organisation have access to folders removed on their last work day.	
Collaborative report preparation A collaborative report-writing approach is taken to increase skills and experience within the team, and to share ideas. Because team members have different ways of thinking and come from diverse backgrounds, gaining input from the whole team produces a dynamic and holistic report. This approach also raises a diverse range of potential risks that can be addressed early in preparing reports. Collaborative report writing also engages the organisation to be informed about all aspects of the work Food Next Door is undertaking.	As-needs and project-specific basis	FND staff FND Board and Advisory Board as required	Number of authors acknowledged for all major reports.	

<p>Weekly team meetings At the beginning of each meeting staff 'check in', to let the team know how they are feeling. Check in is an opportunity to express feelings and emotions without requiring a response. This ensures that staff are aware of the wellbeing of one another and take this into consideration in the work place. Meetings are completed with a five-minute meditation before beginning our work.</p>	<p>Weekly</p>	<p>FND staff</p>	<p>Minutes/updated action lists maintained on a weekly basis Shared calendar updated on a weekly basis</p>
<p>Whats App groups Whats App is the preferred communication method for new migrants and enables team members to leave voice messages, send photos, and maintain regular and frequent informal communication.</p>	<p>On an as-needs basis</p>	<p>FND staff Farmers, volunteers, members, as required</p>	<p>Person allocated responsibility for maintaining Whats App group, including adding and removing members. Whats App groups maintained by responsible person.</p>
<p>Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) A PGS is a regional or local organic certification system.</p>	<p>To be developed in 2020</p>	<p>FND staff, farmer and consumer members Grower mentor</p>	<p>PGS established by November 2020</p>

## SECTION 4. HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

### IF YOU ARE A FARMER

If you are a landless farmer, get in touch via email ([admin@foodnextdoor.org.au](mailto:admin@foodnextdoor.org.au)) or Facebook message, or come in to the office during opening hours. We will find out what you are looking for and let you know if we can help you access land other support.

If you are farming your own land and need support contact Food Next Door by email ([admin@foodnextdoor.org.au](mailto:admin@foodnextdoor.org.au)), Facebook message or through our web site. We can let you know how we can help.

If you have produce you want help getting to market, contact Out of the Box by email ([outoftheboxsunraysia@gmail.com](mailto:outoftheboxsunraysia@gmail.com)), Facebook message, or through the Out of the Box web site. We order produce from our growers on a weekly basis and can let you know if we are able to buy from you. Please note we only buy produce that has been grown to organic, biodynamic or regenerative practices. No nasty sprays or artificial fertilisers please.

### IF YOU ARE A LAND HOLDER

If you are interested in gifting access to, or donating, land to Food Next Door farmers, contact us at [admin@foodnextdoor.org.au](mailto:admin@foodnextdoor.org.au).

“My role in Food Next Door is as a landholder who is donating some of his land to ... people as part of Food Next Door to be able to go and do farming. ... I see it as a social contribution that I can do to help the community.”

*Landholder*



We've been approached by a diverse range of land owners interested in offering land to Food Next Door for food growing. Some land owners really want to see their land productive but don't have the time or resources to grow food themselves.



“For me it's about fulfilling my dream of utilising my farmland, I always wanted to have a working farm but I couldn't do it on my own...”

*Landholder*

For others our model is an exciting opportunity to make connections and to give something back to our community.

We work closely to develop landshare agreements with land holders so they are tailored to the land, the location, and the needs of the land holder. We can send you a template agreement if you're interested in learning more about these, just let us know.



“...because I’m interested in vegetables and growing and had this land and I wanted to do what the Burundian garden was doing I suddenly had this connection that I didn’t have before and I thought this is exactly what I want to do ever since I came to Mildura and here are some people that are wanting to do the same thing, like minded people, and from there I thought wow here is something I can do to help and get rewards myself because I’ve met new people made new connections, gained more knowledge and to see my farm being utilised for something that I believe in is just awesome, makes me feel good.”

*Landholder*

### IF YOU ARE A CONSUMER

You can subscribe to Out of the Box via the web site. Committing to a weekly or fortnightly box is a great way to support Food Next Door and your local food system, and the best way to eat healthy for you and your family.

“...we are providing food that hasn’t been sprayed with chemicals that could potentially be bad for your health. And ... it’s seasonal so it’s what our body actually requires so if you’re living in Mildura what is growing here at the moment is what your body actually needs for it to stay healthy.”



*Consumer*

### IF YOU WANT TO VOLUNTEER

Volunteering is a great way to get involved, give something back to the community, learn new skills, and make new friends!

One thing we can assure you is that as a member of Food Next Door, your personal and professional values will be challenged at times, but, if you open your heart, there is going to be a tremendous positive change in your life and you will surely have a better understanding of yourself and your own values. You will also learn that you possess so much to offer and more importantly you will be amazed how your gift can impact so many people – it’s the size of your heart that matters. Your work will influence social change for many people. Food Next Door wants to assure you that what makes a difference in someone’s life can just be a smile.

You can volunteer at Out of the Box on a weekly basis if you like routine. Get in touch via the Facebook page, web site or email ([outoftheboxsunraysia@gmail.com](mailto:outoftheboxsunraysia@gmail.com)).

Other volunteering opportunities include at events and on the farms. Email us at [admin@foodnextdoor.org.au](mailto:admin@foodnextdoor.org.au) to register your interest as a volunteer and we’ll keep you in the loop.

## THE COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATION FARM

At the Community Demonstration Farm, you will learn that sometimes it is a small act of kindness that can create a tremendous change in someone's life. It can have great effects on others. It can help someone to forget what they are going through. ***This is why our goal is to create a community through friendships and connections.*** We believe that the more we bond the more we will create a strong community, and a community with a strong spirit.



“Food Next Door is ... like friendship, you go there, you meet new person, you make friendship they get your contact, you get their contact, they let you keep connected, and it's a new person, you are new to them, it's something ongoing.”

*Farmer*

## CONTACT DETAILS AND OFFICE HOURS

Contact email:

[admin@foodnextdoor.org.au](mailto:admin@foodnextdoor.org.au)

[outoftheboxsunraysia@gmail.com](mailto:outoftheboxsunraysia@gmail.com)

Web site:

<https://www.foodnextdoor.org.au/>

<https://outoftheboxsunraysia.com.au/>

Office location: 33 Deakin Avenue, Mildura, Victoria (home of Arts Mildura)

At the time of writing this engagement strategy our office opening times are:

Wednesday to Friday: 9:00am – 5:00pm

We have staff who speak English, French, German, Kirundi and Swahili

