

Part 4 - How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

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Big Blue Mobile Pantry



Title	Big Blue Mobile Pantry
Organisation	Moray Food Plus
Category	Promising Local Practice
Poverty Impact	Prevention, Reduction, Awareness.
Introduction to the Project	
<p>A range of community organisations have been involved in the project's development and continually supports its ongoing success. These include community groups from Garmouth, Portknockie, Portgordon, Grange, and Rafford.</p> <p>Transition Town Forres grow produce to donate to the Big Blue Mobile Pantry project.</p> <p>Moray Food Plus delivers and expands the project by holding activity sessions at community halls and through other services, e.g., the provision of winter coats.</p> <p>The local RIO council officers are involved in reviewing the data collected for the foodbank and bringing it to the council.</p>	



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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?
Mairi McCallum - Project Manager of Moray Food Plus.
How did the idea for the project come about?
The project has its roots in 2018 when the Moray Food Plus organisation investigated the price differences in local areas. The specific project idea was developed in 2020 throughout the COVID-19 lockdown. Mairi felt that those in rural areas required a service to provide food and essentials, particularly in areas without local shops. Some communities are situated more than a 30-minute drive from the nearest shops, a distance which is not possible for many people to make. The idea of 'Big Blue' is to cater to those unable to make the journey to supermarkets while providing essential meals that are not only affordable but also nutritious.
Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?
In 2018, the Moray Food Plus team received funding from Food Power to develop a food poverty action plan and carried out a 'shopping basket' comparison, visiting local shops in different areas around Moray to work out the 'average' price of a shopping basket. They found that in Elgin, the price was £7, compared to more rural areas, where it costs up to £17. This highlighted the need for a more affordable and accessible shop catering to communities far from larger towns like Elgin. For developing the project, the team didn't particularly draw on any reports or papers; they did, however, gather data and opinions from the local communities to see what they could do to benefit locals fully.

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Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?			
Mairi and the team at Moray Food Plus.			
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?			
Not necessarily those with lived experience of poverty, but the local communities to which the project caters were involved in the project's initial development. Those involved in developing the project began working with the local communities by visiting different rural areas that fit the ideal target of the project. In doing so, they gained an understanding of the wants and needs of each specific location and saw what particular areas would benefit the most from their project. We also consulted people accessing our other services who fell into our target group to find out if they would access such a service and what they would like to see from it.			
Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?			
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> XXX
Please provide details of the funding that was used to support the development of the initial idea of the project.			
Which organisation provided funding?	Food Power, William Grant, National Lottery Fund, Robertson Trust.		
How much was required?	Not specified.		
What was the specific source of funding? (e.g., particular grant or policy)	Not specified.		

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Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?			
No		Yes	xxx
Please provide details of the resources that were required when developing the initial idea of the project.			
Staff/Volunteer Time	Not specified.		
Facilities / Workspace	Rent an industrial unit to store stock and park vehicle.		
Equipment	A van was purchased and refurbished to be used as a mode of transport to potential villages.		
Local Knowledge	Local community groups provided information on the wants and needs of the villages.		
Food and Drink			
What, if any, barriers had to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?			
As development began during lockdown, transporting the van from London to the North of Scotland was the main issue. Multiple drivers being on furlough and the prominence of travel restrictions, particularly between borders, made this task difficult and caused a slight delay in the project's setup and start date.			
What, if anything, helped enable development of the initial idea of the project?			
Talking with local community groups in the areas Big Blue Mobile Pantry was targeting allowed the team members to gain insight into the villages' wants and needs. It confirmed which villages would benefit most from the service.			
When Big Blue Mobile Pantry came about, other charitable organisations across Scotland were introducing pantry services as an alternative to foodbanks. This allowed those organising the set-up of the Big Blue Mobile Pantry to gain an insight into the benefits of providing this service and prompt the notion of encouraging this type of service in northern parts of the country without the stigma of a food bank.			



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How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?

In 2018, the price differences between those buying groceries in rural areas vs nearby towns came to the attention of the Moray Food Plus organisation. However, it was mainly at the beginning of lockdown in 2020 when the idea became possible through funding provided. The project launched in April 2022.

Who made the decision to introduce the project?

Mairi - Project Manager at Moray Food Plus.

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Early Development – Pilot Project or Feasibility Study

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study?	
No	xxx
Yes, a pilot project	
Yes, a feasibility study	

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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Is there a referral process?	
No	xxx
Yes	
Is referral the only way that potential clients are made aware of the project?	
Yes	
No	xxx
Other than referral, how do potential clients come to know about the project?	
<p>Most potential service users find out through word of mouth as it is a very popular service within the community. The Big Blue Mobile Pantry caters to small villages where people meet and communicate with neighbours. There are also Facebook and Twitter pages for the project, which are accessible to everyone. For those who do not have access to or use social media (a lot of service users are elderly), local communities have taken it upon themselves to upload any information onto notice boards taken from Facebook and Twitter.</p>	
What is the most common way through which users typically access the service?	
Social media.	
Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to service users?	
No	
Yes	xxx
Social media.	

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?	
No	xxx
Yes	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or project governance?	
No	xxx
Yes	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project? <i>If so, please describe below.</i>	
No	
Yes	xxx
Service users, including people with lived experience of poverty, are asked for feedback on a daily basis through feedback cards to inform the ongoing service.	

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?	
Mairi McCallum - Manager of Moray Food Plus.	
Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?	
Yes	
No	xxx
<p>The project manager for Moray Food Plus oversees the Big Blue Mobile Pantry and works with the local community and those involved in the service to develop strategies that ultimately contribute to helping the local community. Through geographically planning routes and driving over 300 miles every week to meet and cater for local communities, she also helps with developing future strategies in tackling food access opportunities in these areas. Mairi is heavily involved in every project that Moray Food Plus offers, working with the food bank and family support centres, ultimately tackling food insecurity in the local area.</p>	
What proportion of the manager's overall workload is given over to this project?	
Most of it	
About half of it	
Just a small proportion of it	
Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?	
No	xxx
Yes	

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Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?	
No	
Yes	xxx
<p>Big Blue Mobile Pantry is a service provided by a limited number of staff members; however, it is overseen by Moray Food Plus. Over the couple of years of its development, they have focused on working with other services under Moray Food Plus while also working with some of the partner agencies. For example, alongside the Big Blue Mobile Pantry bus, they have worked with local project services that also provide affordable items for those in the area, with one example being 'Coat Hangar', a local service that provides winter coats, working together to help reach rural areas.</p>	

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

In your opinion, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?	
Don't know	
No	xxx
Yes	
In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	
Is the project part of any other strategy?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	xxx
<p>While providing accessible food to rural communities, the project follows a 'Zero Waste' strategy. In doing so, Moray Food Plus aims to promote a healthy lifestyle while educating those of all ages on the ways in which they can use their food scraps or leftover food in the fridge to create a meal. In the past, they have set up cooking classes which teach those attending how to manage food and cook with all of their produce, but it also allows those to try a variety of new and healthy foods. Their main overall objective is around food access, so when it comes to establishing and branching out the project, that is the main focus.</p>	



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In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this strategy?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	
Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?	
No	xxx
Yes	

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Funding

Has external funding been secured to support the work?		
	No	
	Yes	xxx
Please provide details of the external funding that was secured to support this work?		
Which organisation provided funding?	National Lottery and Robertson Trust	
What was the specific funding stream/source/scheme?	Not specified	
How much funding was secured?	Not specified	
For how long has funding been secured?	For three years: 2024-2027	
Is future funding from the same external source a possibility?		
	Don't know	
	No	
	Yes	xxx
Is future funding from the same external source based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered from this work?		
	No	xxx
	Yes	
Future funding isn't particularly focused on pre-agreed outcomes. However, the reports and statistics from their work and feedback from the current funders suggest that they can easily reapply and gain funding.		
Has a specific sum been secured from the host organisation to support this work?		
	No	
	Yes	



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Please provide details of the funding that was used secured from the host organisation to support this work?	
How much funding was secured?	
For how long has funding been secured?	
Is future funding from the host organisation a possibility?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	
Is future funding from the host organisation based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?	
No	
Yes	
What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?	

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Staffing and Resources

Do existing staff from the host organisation contribute toward the work of this project as part of their broader work for the organisation?		
	No	
	Yes	
Not specified		
Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?		
	No	
	Yes	
Not specified		
Have additional paid staff been employed to contribute toward the work of this project?		
	No	
	Yes	
Not specified		
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project?		
	No	
	Yes	xxx
Local volunteers		



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Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?	
No	Yes xxx
Please provide details of the resources that are required to deliver the project?	
Facilities / Workspace	As the vehicle is over 7.5 tonne it requires an operating licence and there are restrictions around where it is kept overnight - a secure parking location is required. Big Blue has an industrial unit for storing food and to park up (including an electrical hook up to keep the vehicle fridge & freezer running overnight).
Equipment	Suitable vehicle with fridge/freezer and adequate storage; outreach activity equipment.
Local Knowledge	Life skills, cooking, and food nutrition expertise.
Food and Drink	Yes.
Are any of the resources needed to deliver the project provided in-kind, rather than budgeted from project funds?	
No	Yes xxx
Local volunteers, outreach workers, and locally employed within these areas.	
Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?	
No	Yes xxx
No new technology was bought or developed to deliver the project. However, they did buy a bus in the planning stage to provide the service.	



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Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?	
No	
Yes	xxx
The bus drivers were required to participate in CPC training and apply for a specific license to drive the bus. Due to staff turnover, there have been instances where staff needed to be trained. When staff members with a particular talent or expertise left, new staff had to either train in that particular area, or they were encouraged to learn new areas of expertise.	

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?				
	No	xxx		
	Yes			
Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?				
	Yes	xxx		
	No			
Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project?				
Not specified.				
How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation?				
Daily.				
What methods, techniques or strategies are used by the host organisation to measure impact of the project?				
Service users feedback cards.				
What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?				
Number of users	Yes	xxx	No	
Profile of users	Yes	xxx	No	
Experience of users	Yes	xxx	No	
Outcomes for users	Yes		No	
Anything else	Yes		No	



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Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?	
No	
Yes	xxx
The data collected can help determine which areas need more attention and which are doing well and no longer require services.	
Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?	
No	xxx
Yes	
Has the insight from the external organisation's evaluation been used to adapt the way the project works?	
No	
Yes	
Not specified.	
Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of the project in the future?	
Don't know / no current plans	
No	
Yes	
Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?	
Don't know / no current plans	
No	xxx
Yes	

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Impact

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?	
Fully met	xxx
Making progress toward meeting Aims	
Not making progress	
<p>Overall, the project's aims have been achieved by guaranteeing rural communities a platform to have local produce at affordable costs and in an accessible way. However, the ways in which they have delivered upon these aims are different from what they initially thought, as routes had to be tweaked and planned to match a time and day that suits members better.</p>	
What difference has the project made?	
<p>The project has given rural communities a platform to receive groceries at a low cost without having to travel long distances to the shops to get the basics. For parents of children with additional support needs, the idea of the bus being a safe space near their house, where they can get groceries rather than a loud and busy supermarket is significant. Additionally, it allows them access to more healthy food and allows them to try new foods, a chance they may not have had before. The project has created a new sense of community. It allows for people to come along and converse with their neighbours while experiencing a service which helps them out financially and caters to all wants and needs, especially helping the environment.</p>	
Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?	
No	
Yes	xxx
<p>The demand for Big Blue Mobile Pantry has increased, and the project has received more support than anticipated. Also, some aspects that contributed to meeting the demand have changed.</p>	

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Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?	
Yes	xxx
No	
<p>The amount of food recovery has dropped, which affected meeting the needs of the current member base. In the meantime, the organisation generates enough income to purchase food, supported by funding from Tesco and the Co-op Community Fund. However, if food recovery continues to drop, they must look for another delivery model, like a social supermarket.</p> <p>They have created a waiting list for those who wish to receive their service and monitor members who may not use it often to take them off the membership list.</p>	
Has the project changed through time?	
No	
Yes	xxx
What changed	The demand for Big Blue Mobile Pantry has increased, and the project has received more support than anticipated. Also, some aspects that contributed to meeting the demand have changed.
Why has it changed	Not specified.
Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?	
No	
Yes	xxx
<p>The communities have really adopted Big Blue and have welcomed them into their communities. Big Blue has become a real focal point in the village.</p>	

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In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?	
No	
Yes	xxx
<p>Although the project was not set up to tackle poverty by making food accessible and affordable, the project contributes to preventing and mitigating poverty. Purchasing food from the Big Blue Mobile Pantry bus is £2.50 for a £15-20 shop. Therefore, the Big Blue Mobile Pantry offers a service where those suffering from food insecurity or a lack of income can access affordable food without the stigma of going to a food bank. Additionally, with lower salaries in rural areas compared to bigger towns and cities, travelling over 30 miles to buy food can be very expensive. Big Blue offers an opportunity for to reduce the cost of living, saving a significant amount of petrol money and time.</p>	

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?	
<p>Not advertising the Big Blue Mobile Pantry as a food bank attracts members who may feel slightly 'ashamed' of accessing a food bank. It also attracts financially secure customers who use the service more out of convenience than necessity, catering to their values of buying produce from a service that promotes environmental health. In terms of funding, the support is already there from the initial two funders, meaning the progress of the project is appearing very well and promising to funders.</p>	
What, if anything, is working less well?	
<p>Initially, the geography of the project was difficult to navigate. Creating a route that was time and cost-efficient was challenging, but now, as time has passed, all seems to be going well.</p>	
What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the Covid-19 pandemic Big Blue created new partnerships with many of the rural communities. • Big Blue engaged representatives from community groups very early on and this has helped them to feel that Big Blue is their project. • Big Blue purposely avoided areas with small shops as they did not want to displace local business and put more financial pressure on them - this helped create a focus for the project. • Big Blue also hold activities within the communities, hiring village halls to financially support them. 	
Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?	
	No
	Yes xxx
<p>To explore more 'Zero Waste' elements in the project and look into expanding cooking classes and teaching people how to cook with less waste, in addition to providing community activities while the bus is parked.</p>	

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How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?

The project has required a significant amount of funding. Although the project requires a significant amount of funding it has been possible to secure this funding. By offering a “more than food” service Big Blue is strengthening communities and this relationship is understood to be the key to the success of the project. If replicating it, other groups need to build their community bonds and work with them. It is important to treat each area as unique, what works for Big Blue may not be right for another area. Big Blue covers a large geographic area so the larger vehicle is necessary to ensure that it can carry enough stock and make for a comfortable shopping experience for people visiting. Big Blue is also restricted by the types of roads we travel - some projects use a double decker bus with a pantry at the bottom and a community area at the top. This may work in some areas but would not be right for Moray due to the country roads and low bridges.

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