



### BACKGROUND

The Veggie Garden Mapping Project was led by Gateway Health and supported by Bunnings Wangaratta, Northeast Health Wangaratta and the Rural City of Wangaratta (RCoW). This project was delivered as part of Deakin University's RESPOND research project addressing children's health and wellbeing in Wangaratta and surrounds. The project aimed to map the locations and status of veggie gardens in educational and community settings. The key goals were to understand veggie garden usage, challenges, and enablers, and to explore opportunities for community engagement, knowledge sharing, and supporting food security initiatives.

### METHOD

1. Stakeholder Engagement: Consultation with various local health, education, and community organisations.
2. Surveys: Conducted in educational and community-based settings to assess veggie garden locations, usage and challenges.



### RESULTS

**Educational Settings:** Representatives from 16 of the 24 schools responded, all 16 reported to have veggie gardens, about half of these are actively in use and the other half are used seasonally or for some of the year. Common challenges reported include time, maintenance, and costs, while successes stemmed from community involvement, donations, and student engagement.

**Community-based Settings:** Representatives from 10 community organisations completed the survey, with most reporting challenges related to maintenance and ownership. Wicking beds and community enthusiasm were reported to be sure enablers of success.



### DISCUSSION

**Challenges:** Like previous research, the main issues for garden success relate to lack of time, resources, and maintenance. Schools and community gardens often struggle without sustained funding and volunteer support.

**Successes:** Gardens that thrived had strong community partnerships, volunteer involvement, and curriculum integration.

**Benefits:** Veggie gardens have the potential to increase access to nutritious foods, improved health and wellbeing and contribute positively to our community's food security.

### OUTCOMES

- Partnership with Bunnings Wangaratta to offer veggie garden resourcing to surveyed settings
- Distribution of funding to early childhood services and schools to support veggie gardens.
- Future support to include cooking and gardening workshops, funding evaluation, resource support and increased opportunities for sharing produce.



### CONCLUSION

This project provides a foundation for understanding and supporting veggie gardens in the Rural City of Wangaratta. Ongoing evaluation will assess the effectiveness of support and engagement provided that aimed to help sustain the veggie gardens. This project also supports broader policies aiming to create healthier food systems and provides a basis for future engagement with local stakeholders and our community.

