



GROCERY CONNECT

A CASE STUDY AND GUIDE FOR BUILDING
A REPLICABLE, COMMUNITY-CENTERED
FOOD ACCESS PLATFORM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Grocery Connect was developed in response to a persistent and practical food access problem: many communities have clear demand for fresh, affordable groceries, **but traditional grocery and delivery models are not structurally designed to serve them well.**

In low-access neighborhoods, residents often face overlapping barriers, including limited transportation, lower purchasing power, limited digital access, distrust of online payment systems, and the time burden of traveling outside the neighborhood for basic groceries. Grocery retailers

face their own constraints, including smaller basket sizes, higher last-mile costs, lower delivery density, and uncertainty about whether a brick-and-mortar store can be financially sustained.

Grocery Connect reframes this challenge as an infrastructure design problem. Rather than treating food access only as a charitable intervention, the model tests whether a tech-enabled, community-based grocery delivery hub can align resident needs, grocery partner capabilities, nonprofit infrastructure, and philanthropic investment. The goal is not simply to deliver food. The goal is to create an operating model that makes grocery access more dignified, more convenient, and more viable in places where the market has not solved access on its own.

The South Dallas pilot centered on service centers: trusted community-based locations where residents could place online grocery orders, receive help from concierge staff, use SNAP/EBT where applicable, and pick up groceries locally. The intended model included five core pillars: food access, service centers, benefits access, technology and digital literacy, and payment or financial inclusion. The pilot also showed that these pillars were not equally mature across all sites. Food access, service centers, and concierge-supported ordering were central to implementation. Technology support and financial inclusion were important parts of the original design, but their implementation varied by site, staffing, partner readiness, and resident need.

The strongest lesson from the pilot is that Grocery Connect is not just a grocery pickup program. It is an operating ecosystem. The model depends on the interaction between trusted community relationships, reliable grocery fulfillment, site selection, concierge support, resident activation, sustained funding, partner coordination, and continuous adaptation. When these pieces are aligned, Grocery Connect can reduce access barriers and create a more realistic pathway for grocery delivery in underserved communities. When they are not aligned, the model risks becoming a service residents try once but do not integrate into their routines.

Stakeholder interviews reinforced five replication lessons. First, trust comes before technology. Residents must trust the people, the platform, the payment process, and the pickup experience. Second, site selection is not a late-stage logistics decision; it is one of the earliest strategic decisions because the model works best where residents already go, where there is enough density or traffic, and where complementary services create repeated reasons to visit. Third, the concierge role is core infrastructure, not a nice-to-have. Fourth, the model requires honest funding assumptions: philanthropy and public or private investment subsidize the coordination, activation, staffing, and systems work that make the grocery

transaction possible. Fifth, future implementers should treat technology and financial inclusion as explicit workstreams with dedicated partners and measures, not as benefits that automatically follow from launching an app-enabled grocery service.



This report is intended for operators, funders, grocery partners, community anchors, and public-sector partners. Operators can use it to understand what must be in place to launch and manage a site. Funders can use it to understand what their investment is paying for and what conditions make the model viable. Grocery partners can use it to assess fit, operational requirements, and business value. Community partners can use it to understand the role of trust, staffing, resident engagement, and local context. Public-sector partners can use it to identify where delivery hubs may complement broader food access, benefits, transportation, and health equity strategies.

This document functions as both a case study and a practical implementation guide. It explains what Grocery Connect tested, what the pilot surfaced, and what future communities should consider before adapting the model. Detailed tools, templates, checklists, SOPs, scorecards, outreach language, and sample timelines should live in appendices or companion materials so that the main report remains readable while still giving operators the practical resources they need.

1. THE GROCERY CONNECT STORY

The Challenge

Across the United States, **37 million people live in food deserts—communities with limited access to affordable, nutritious food.** Beyond contributing to food insecurity, food deserts negatively impact physical and psychological well-being and, because of the disproportionate amount of time and money they involve, hinder families' economic mobility.

For single mothers in food deserts, something as fundamental and seemingly straightforward as grocery shopping is particularly challenging. Grocery prices in low-access food areas, on average, run 9% higher than elsewhere as business owners profit from limited competition. Grocery stores also tend to be further away, requiring access to reliable transportation. Car ownership is often unaffordable, and public transportation can be unreliable, time-consuming, or, worse still, nonexistent. Delivery services like GrubHub and DoorDash abound, but come with a cost and often limited choices. Needing to arrange childcare makes transportation arrangements even more complicated and expensive. And for those able to drive to a grocery store, income spent on car ownership and maintenance diverts funds from other uses, such as long-term savings and homeownership.

The high cost and complications associated with accessing grocery stores in food deserts also apply to food banks: for single-parent families, transportation is often an insurmountable barrier to healthy, affordable food. For example, A 2025 report commissioned by Amazon and conducted by Feeding America found that residents sampled spend between \$105-\$180 monthly visiting food banks. For households earning less than \$25,000 annually, this represents 9% of total annual household income.

Why delivery is not enough

The growth of e-commerce and delivery creates new possibilities, but standard delivery models do not automatically solve food access. Delivery fees, tips, subscriptions, minimum basket sizes, payment requirements, address verification, unattended delivery concerns, substitutions, and refund processes can all become barriers. For SNAP/EBT users, the ordering experience can be especially complicated when payment timing, eligibility, substitutions, or out-of-stock items are not easy to understand.

How Grocery Connect changes the economics

Grocery Connect tests whether a centralized delivery hub can reduce the operational hurdles of the final delivery stage while increasing resident access. Instead of sending individual deliveries to many homes, the grocery partner delivers multiple orders to a trusted service center. The service center becomes the community-facing access point, while concierge staff helps residents navigate ordering, payment, pickup, issue resolution, and, where available, benefits support.

- **CENTRALIZE DELIVERY:** Consolidate orders at a community hub to reduce delivery complexity and improve route efficiency.
- **USE TRUSTED SITES:** Locate pickup where residents already have relationships, services, and reasons to visit.
- **ADD CONCIERGE SUPPORT:** Help residents overcome account creation, payment, substitution, pickup, and technology barriers.
- **PRESERVE GROCERY CHOICE:** Provide access to a full grocery assortment rather than a limited pantry model.
- **BRIDGE THE MARKET GAP:** Use philanthropic, public, or partner investment to support the infrastructure the market has not yet internalized.

Grocery Connect's approach changes the economics in several ways. Centralized delivery can reduce last-mile complexity, such as operational challenges of getting groceries from the retailer to the customer, including delivery cost, route efficiency, cold storage, pickup timing, order accuracy, missed pickups, and issue resolution. A trusted service center can reduce failed delivery risk by using centralized pickup sites, refrigerated delivery, concierge support, and on-site issue resolution. However, the model still depends on reliable delivery windows, sufficient order volume, strong partner communication, and clear processes for missed pickups, substitutions, refunds, and customer follow-up.

For grocery partners, the model's appeal extends beyond corporate social responsibility. Grocery Connect offers a way to **serve low-income, under-resourced communities, reduce transportation costs by coordinating deliveries, develop long-term relationships with customers, and yield valuable insights** on how grocers can better serve communities that traditional models have struggled to reach.

Although Grocery Connect is a market-based innovation, public and private philanthropic partners play a critical role, especially in the earlier stages with foundational investments in systems, staffing, site setup, outreach and training, and other components that are key to getting sites off and running. Their ongoing support for coordination, evaluation, and adaptation—in other words, covering essential costs that the market has not yet internalized—is equally invaluable. In partnering with Grocery Connect, funders are helping to bridge a gap in the market between community demand and grocery system capacity.

How Grocery Connect fits into a broader field of innovation

Grocery Connect is one model within a larger field of experimentation using delivery infrastructure, digital tools, benefits access, and trusted community partners to address persistent gaps in food access. Other examples include food-assistance navigation tools, public-private grocery delivery pilots, nonprofit delivery partnerships, home-delivered summer meals, and grocery stipend or membership pilots. The common thread is not that one model replaces another. The point is that communities are testing new ways to connect infrastructure, benefits, technology, and trust.

Share Our Strength itself has invested in these kinds of solutions, including a summer meals home-delivery pilot with Amazon that delivers shelf-stable breakfasts and lunches directly to children in rural communities, and a partnership with Instacart and Mercy Housing that provided families in affordable housing communities with grocery stipends, Instacart+ memberships, and nutrition education while studying impacts on food security and dietary health. Together, these efforts show that Grocery Connect is one model within a larger field of innovation using delivery infrastructure, digital tools, benefits access, and trusted community partners to address persistent gaps in food access.

The spread of technological solutions has also attracted interest from grocery retailers, who see it as an opportunity to reach underserved markets while limiting the costs and risks associated with brick-and-mortar storefronts in these communities, another cause of food deserts. At the same time, they recognize that scaling will require partnerships.

2. THE MODEL: DESIGN & COMPONENTS

The South Dallas pilot tested a hub-based grocery delivery model anchored by Bonton Farms and community service centers, with Kroger serving as the grocery fulfillment partner. Residents ordered through Kroger’s digital platform, orders were picked and packed through Kroger’s fulfillment system, refrigerated trucks delivered orders to service centers, and concierge staff supported the resident experience in navigating ordering, payment, pickup, and issue resolution.

The following are the key pillars that enable the Grocery Connect model to be operational with clear partners, staffing, workflows, and measures. The five pillars do not carry the same level of urgency for every customer or every site. Future implementers should prioritize each pillar based on the barriers customers actually face, rather than assuming that every component must be built out in the same way at every location.

PILLAR	PURPOSE	PRIORITY
Food access	Give residents access to a full grocery assortment delivered to service centers, including fresh produce, meat, dairy, pantry goods, and household essentials, rather than limited pantry offerings.	Highest priority / foundational. This is the primary value to the customer: reliable access to fresh, affordable, high-quality groceries with more choice than emergency food or limited retail options.
Service centers	Use trusted community hubs as pickup points and support sites that consolidate last-mile delivery and reduce per-order cost.	High priority where transportation, trust, or technology barriers are present. Service centers make the model easier to use when they are located in places customers already know, trust, and visit, while also supporting a more efficient last-mile delivery model.
Benefits access	Support SNAP/EBT use and, where possible, WIC/Medicare enrollment, education, and redemption, along with broader benefits navigation.	High priority for SNAP-eligible households and other benefits-eligible customers. Customers need to be able to use their existing food benefits easily, and some may need support understanding eligibility, enrollment, or how to use benefits through an online grocery platform.
Technology and digital literacy	Provide concierge-supported online ordering so residents with limited digital access can learn to order online and become more confident using digital tools.	High priority for customers who are new to online grocery ordering or less comfortable with digital tools. Concierge support, laptops, large screens, and informal coaching can reduce frustration and build confidence over time.
Payment and financial inclusion	Help unbanked or underbanked residents move from cash-based systems into usable digital payment options.	Targeted priority for customers facing payment barriers. This becomes essential when customers have EBT but lack a debit card, credit card, bank account, or trusted digital payment method needed to complete an online order.

While Grocery Connect leverages market forces and technological innovations, fundamentally, it is not a grocery program, but instead a platform for redesigning food access systems built on partnerships, community trust, and a shared desire for lasting change.

3. THE MODEL AT A GLANCE

GROCERY CONNECT MODEL AT A GLANCE



Grocery Connect increases equitable access to groceries in underserved communities through fee-free online ordering, community access points, and wraparound support.



OUR PURPOSE

Grocery Connect addresses food insecurity and the digital divide by making it easier for community members to shop for healthy, affordable groceries.

- ✓ **Food Access:** Bring fresh, affordable groceries to neighborhoods with limited options.
- ✓ **Benefits Access:** Help residents access and maximize SNAP, EBT, and other benefits.
- ✓ **Digital Inclusion:** Provide technology support and build digital literacy.
- ✓ **Community Power:** Partner locally to create sustainable solutions that meet community needs.

HOW IT WORKS



WHO WE SERVE



Underserved Communities
Residents in areas with limited access to full-service groceries.



Benefit-Eligible Households
Families and individuals using SNAP, EBT, and other benefits.



Digitally Disconnected Individuals
Those with limited access to technology or digital skills.



Seniors & People with Limited Mobility
Residents who face barriers to traditional grocery shopping.



KEY COMPONENTS

- **Community Access Points:** Safe, convenient locations for order pickup and support.
- **Concierge Support:** Personalized help with ordering, tech, and benefits.
- **Fee-Free Service:** No delivery fees for community members.
- **Partner Network:** Collaboration with grocers, community organizations, and funders.
- **Education & Engagement:** Cooking classes, nutrition education, and digital literacy.



PARTNERS

- **Grocers (e.g., Kroger):** Provide inventory, fulfillment, and delivery.
- **Community Organizations:** Host access points and support outreach.
- **Funders & Donors:** Invest in sustainability and growth.
- **Healthcare & Social Service Partners:** Help integrate wraparound services.
- **Residents:** Co-create solutions and drive the model forward.



IMPACT

- Increased access to fresh, healthy groceries.
- Greater use of food benefits and community resources.
- Improved digital skills and confidence.
- Stronger community connections and trust.
- Healthier families and more resilient neighborhoods.



SUCCESS MEASURES

- Number of residents registered and actively ordering.
- Order volume and repeat usage.
- Benefit enrollment and utilization increases.
- Participant satisfaction and retention.
- Health and well-being outcomes.
- Community partner engagement and growth.



Our Vision: A future where everyone has equitable access to the food and resources they need to thrive.

Learn more at groceryconnect.org

4. CENTERING THE PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE

Resident experience is the center of the Grocery Connect model. In the ideal journey, a resident learns about Grocery Connect through a trusted community source, places an online grocery order independently or with concierge support, pays using SNAP/EBT, debit, credit, or another approved method, and picks up groceries at a nearby service center. At pickup, the order is verified, issues are resolved where possible, and staff collect feedback to improve the service.

Grocery Connect asks residents to change a deeply habitual behavior. **Grocery shopping is not simply a transaction; it involves preferences, routines, trust, household timing, payment habits, transportation, childcare, food quality expectations, and social norms.**

Future implementers should expect adoption to take time and should design the experience as a behavior-change process, not a one-time launch.

- **TRUST BARRIERS:** Residents may be skeptical of online payment, grocery quality, substitutions, refunds, or whether participation could affect benefits.
- **TECHNOLOGY BARRIERS:** Some residents may need help with account creation, app navigation, device differences, password recovery, digital coupons, and order review.
- **PAYMENT BARRIERS:** Residents who rely on cash or EBT may still need a debit/credit card or workaround depending on the grocery platform.
- **TIME AND SCHEDULE BARRIERS:** Pickup windows must match resident routines; seniors, working parents, and shift workers may need different options.
- **VALUE BARRIERS:** Residents need to see a reason to shift from existing shopping patterns, especially if they compare pickup to home delivery or established grocery trips.



5. PARTNERS & ROLES

At its core Grocery Connect is a partnership, drawing on the unique capacities of everyone involved. Defining roles clearly and early on is critical to success. Key roles are outlined below:

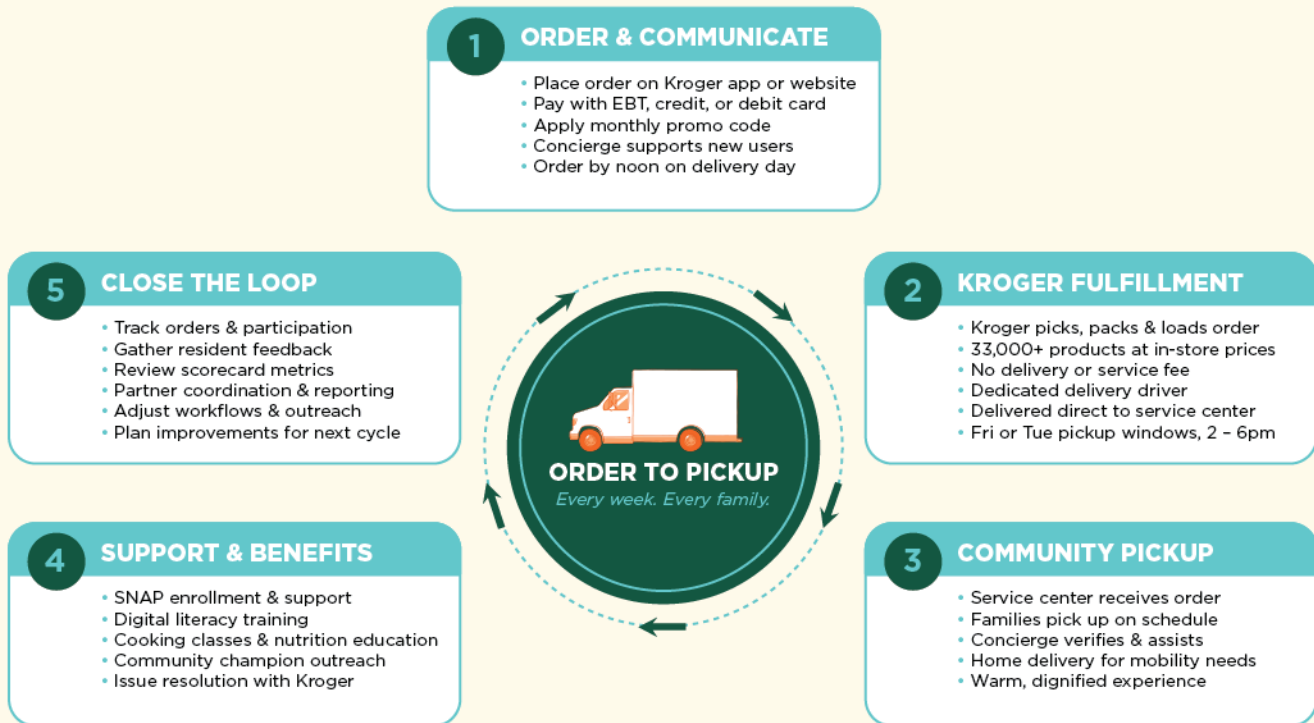
FUNCTION	PARTNER TYPE	CORE ROLE
Grocery fulfillment	Regional or national grocer	Online ordering, inventory, fulfillment, delivery, substitutions, issue resolution
Community trust and space	Local nonprofit / community anchor	Site hosting, resident engagement, local relationships
Backbone coordination	Lead nonprofit or operating entity	Governance, funding, partner coordination, performance management
Technology support	Digital access partner	Devices, connectivity, training, ordering support
Benefits access	Benefits navigation partner / trained staff	SNAP/EBT education, application support, usage support
Financial inclusion	Bank / fintech / community finance partner	Payment access, banking education, cash-to-digital support

The grocery partner is especially important because the model depends on operational capabilities that many food access partners cannot provide themselves. Grocery partners should be assessed based on whether they can provide online ordering, accept SNAP/EBT or other benefits where applicable, pick, pack, and deliver orders to a centralized service center, offer competitive pricing, provide a full grocery assortment, support low- or no-cost delivery, preserve cold-chain integrity, and assist with order resolution at pickup.



6. OPERATIONS

THE GROCERY CONNECT WEEKLY CYCLE



KEY PRINCIPLES



Community trust

Rooted in authentic relationships, consistency, and responsiveness



Dignified experience

Respectful, convenient, and empowering — not charity-based



SNAP/EBT accessible

Online EBT purchasing integrated; enrollment support on-site



Operational reliability

Consistent deliveries, communication, and payment systems



Continuous improvement

Adapt based on feedback, operations and community needs

7. COSTS & SUSTAINABILITY

Planning materials estimate one-time site setup costs of approximately \$110,000–\$260,000 per site, with ongoing operating costs of approximately \$7,000 per month per site. The referenced 18-month, three-site pilot estimate was approximately \$1.17 million. Share Our Strength invested a total of \$800,500.

COST CATEGORY	EXPENDITURES	WHY IT MATTERS
Site setup	Renovation, permits, cold storage, furniture, equipment, signage, safety setup.	Makes the site usable, safe, visible, and capable of handling food pickup.
Staffing	Concierges, program manager, backup staffing, supervision, training time.	Provides the human bridge between residents, technology, benefits, and grocery operations.
Community activation	Events, printed materials, text outreach, ambassador incentives, launch campaigns.	Builds awareness, trust, and repeated trial. Launch without activation is a very expensive whisper.
Technology and training	Devices, connectivity, how-to materials, digital literacy support, troubleshooting.	Reduces barriers to ordering and builds resident confidence.
Partner coordination	Governance, meetings, data review, issue escalation, reporting, adaptation.	Keeps a multi-partner model from becoming a pile of good intentions in a trench coat.
Evaluation and learning	Data collection, feedback loops, site summaries, dashboards, reporting.	Supports continuous improvement and helps funders and partners understand value.

What funders are actually paying for

Funders are paying for the infrastructure that makes a grocery transaction possible in a context where the market has not solved access on its own. That includes trust-building, staffing, technology support, site readiness, benefits support, partner coordination, data systems, and the learning required to adapt the model.

Sustainability realities

- **ORDER VOLUME MATTERS.** Grocery partners need enough recurring volume to justify delivery windows, staffing, and operational adaptations.
- **ADOPTION IS NOT AUTOMATIC.** A resident may register but not become an active user without reminders, support, incentives, and value beyond novelty.

- **THE MODEL MAY GENERATE MARKET INSIGHT** even before it generates direct profit. It can show grocery partners where demand exists and what conditions would make deeper investment possible.
- **SUBSIDY MAY REMAIN NECESSARY** for coordination, staffing, activation, and equity-focused supports, especially if the model serves residents with high barriers and low purchasing power.
- **FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS SHOULD BE MODEST AND TRANSPARENT** until a site has enough real order, retention, and cost data to support stronger claims.

8. BEST PRACTICES & LESSONS LEARNED

Trust before technology

Grocery Connect is tech-enabled but not tech-led. Technology alone does not solve access: Residents need to trust the platform, the payment process, the grocery partner, the pickup experience, and the people helping them.

Likewise, technology also addresses customer confidence, safety, payment concerns, substitutions, refunds, account creation, and troubleshooting.

Site selection is critical

Grocery Connect works best when service centers are located in places residents already know, trust, and can access. As such, site selection is a strategic decision as well as an operational one. Concierges are key.

Concierges are infrastructure

Concierges support ordering, benefits navigation, pickup, troubleshooting, reminders, and relationship-building. This central, customer-facing role often makes the difference between a resident trying Grocery Connect once and making it part of their routine. For example, concierges can help residents who have EBT but lack the debit/credit card or banking relationship needed to complete online orders. Hiring and training concierges is therefore critical to Grocery Connect's success and requires sufficient time, attention and investment.

Order volume matters

Grocery partners need enough recurring volume to justify delivery windows, staffing, and operational adaptations.

Residents are both customers AND partners

Community engagement is central to the operating model. Grocery Connect asks residents to change how they shop. That requires repeated touchpoints, trusted messengers, incentives, feedback loops, and opportunities for them to experiment with a new way of grocery shopping. Cooking classes, snack labs, clinics, financial literacy, or other services can make the hub more valuable and increase traffic.

The model should preserve resident dignity

Residents should have choice, transparency, plain-language communication, and assurance that participation and feedback will not affect benefits.



9. IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATIONS

The implementation process should be understood as a sequence of decisions, not a generic launch checklist. The pilot experience suggests that future implementers should make the biggest decisions early: whether the community is a fit, whether a grocery partner can meet operational requirements, whether a trusted site exists, whether the financial model is honest, and whether the resident experience has been tested with real users before scaling.

Pre-launch decision sequence

PHASE	ESTIMATED DURATION	KEY DECISIONS	OUTPUTS
Define	3-4 weeks	Who is the priority population? What access barriers are most important? What would success look like for residents and partners?	Resident personas, problem statement, equity principles, early partner requirements.
Research	3-6 weeks	Is there enough density, demand, site traffic, and grocery partner capability to justify a pilot?	Community analysis, site scan, grocery partner scan, payment/barrier analysis, preliminary cost assumptions.
Partner	6-10 weeks	Which partners can perform the required functions, and what must be formalized before launch?	MOUs or agreements, role clarity, decision rights, data-sharing expectations, escalation paths.
Plan	6-8 weeks	What must be ready before first orders? What will be tested during soft launch?	Launch plan, staffing plan, training materials, communications plan, scorecard, risk register.
Retrofit and setup	Variable; often 4-12 weeks depending on site	What physical and technology infrastructure is required?	Cold storage, laptops/devices, signage, furniture, parking plan, delivery setup, safety procedures.
Soft launch and adjust	4-8 weeks	What did real users experience? What must change before broader launch?	Pilot user feedback, revised workflows, updated training, partner issue log.
Operate and improve	Ongoing	What data and feedback will guide changes?	Regular reporting, resident feedback loops, partner check-ins, refinement plan.



Recommended enhancements

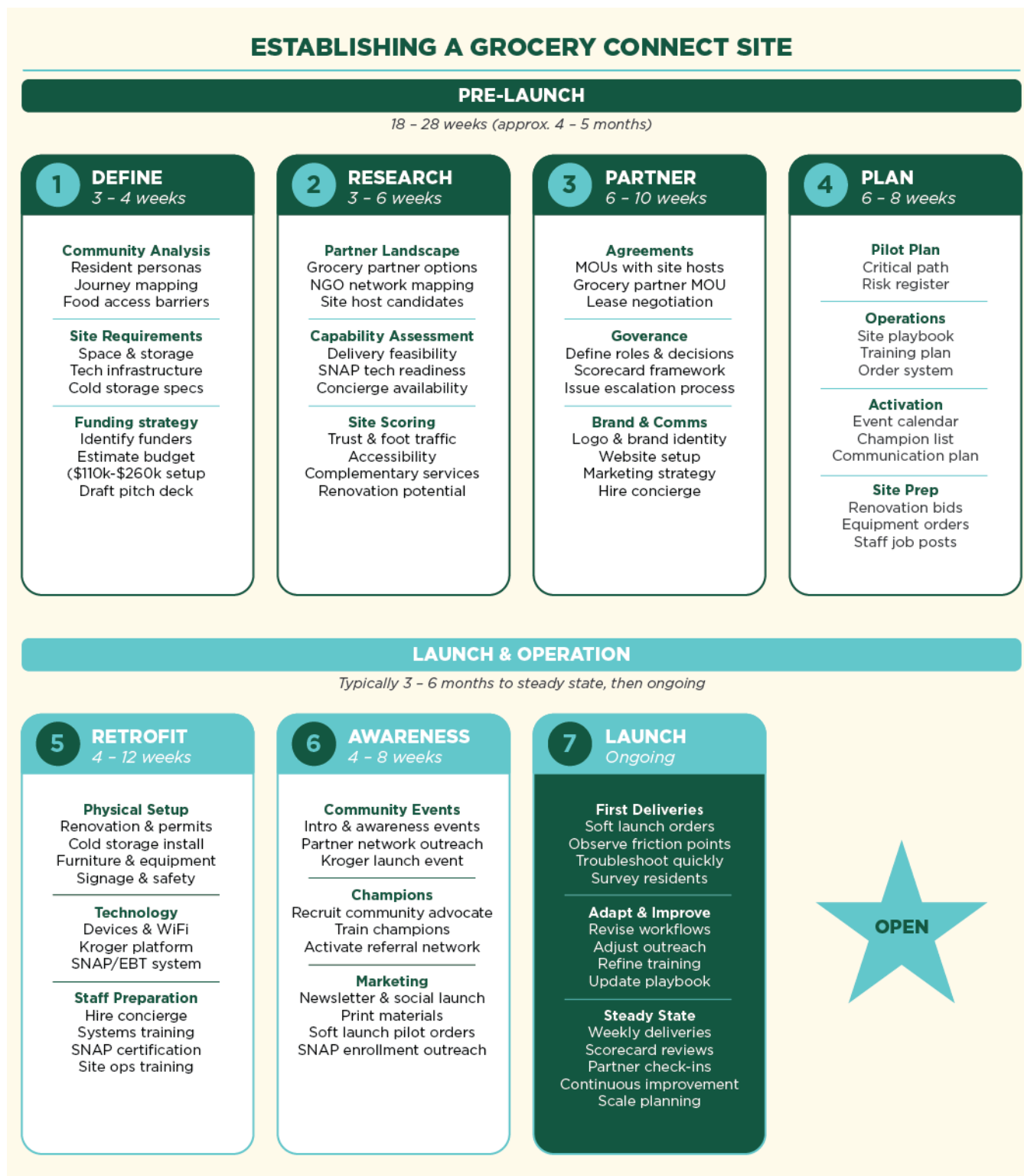
- Community ambassador or champions program with local residents or trusted leaders.
- How-to videos, visual guides, and live ordering demonstrations for technology support.
- Programming that creates repeat traffic, such as cooking classes, nutrition education, financial literacy, clinics, or family activities.
- Incentives that encourage trial without creating an unsustainable expectation of ongoing gift cards.
- Digital payment support, prepaid debit options, banking partnerships, or financial coaching for residents who cannot easily use the grocery platform payment requirements.

Future enhancements / open design questions

- Whether doorstep delivery should be offered for homebound residents or as a competitive alternative to traditional delivery services.
- Whether multiple grocery providers should be accessible through a single community-facing portal.
- Whether service centers should be integrated into broader health, benefits, workforce, or financial mobility hubs.
- How to fund the model over time if order volume does not reach the level needed for grocery partner cost recovery.

10. ADAPTING THE MODEL

The figure below provides a generalized overview of the process for establishing a Grocery Connect site.



Is a model like Grocery Connect right for your community?

For a model like Grocery Connect to take root and improve food access, communities must first assess whether the model is a strong fit for their local context and capacity. Readiness at this stage is less about being fully prepared to launch and more about determining whether the community has the foundational conditions needed to successfully explore and pursue the model. Several early considerations can help guide that decision.

Communities should first determine whether they are experiencing grocery access barriers that a hub-based delivery model could realistically address. If so, a related key factor is whether the target community has enough population density, accessibility, or walkability to support a service-center-based approach.

Communities should also consider whether there is an existing site that residents already trust and regularly use, since Grocery Connect works best when embedded within familiar community spaces and relationships.

Potential partners are another important consideration. Communities should evaluate whether a grocery retailer or food provider could realistically meet the operational requirements of the model and whether local organizations offering benefits access, digital support, or financial inclusion services are interested and capable of participating in a coordinated effort. Early alignment among partners is critical to understanding whether the model can function as an integrated system rather than a standalone food access intervention.



Communities should also consider whether sufficient funding may be available to support planning, launch activities, and early operations. While long-term sustainability planning comes later, identifying potential funding pathways early can help determine whether moving forward is feasible.

In addition, communities should assess whether they are likely to recruit and retain concierge or frontline staff who can build trust with residents and support navigation across services. Clear processes for communication, data-sharing, and issue resolution among partners are also important indicators that collaboration can be effectively managed.

Finally, before expanding or scaling the model, communities should be prepared to test the resident experience with real users to ensure the approach is responsive, accessible, and grounded in community needs. Thoughtful consideration of these factors can help communities determine whether Grocery Connect is an appropriate and achievable strategy for advancing food access locally.

11. MEASUREMENT AND LEARNING

The model should be measured across adoption, operations, resident experience, partner performance, and equity. A simple scorecard is more useful than an elaborate dashboard nobody updates. Start with the metrics that can actually be collected, then improve data systems as the model matures.

DOMAIN	SAMPLE METRICS	USE
Pre-launch activation	Community events, champion sign-ups, training attendance, website/helpline traffic.	Assess whether awareness and trusted referrals are building before launch.
Adoption and retention	Registrations, active users, repeat users, order volume, order frequency.	Distinguish curiosity from routine use.
Operations	Average orders per delivery window, pickup failures, late trucks, left orders, issue logs.	Identify bottlenecks and delivery-window viability.
Financial / basket	Average order value, orders below minimum threshold, refunds, SNAP/EBT usage where available.	Understand affordability, platform fit, and grocery partner economics.
Resident experience	Satisfaction, common barriers, technology confidence, payment issues, trust concerns.	Improve the model based on lived experience.
Equity and access	Participation by priority population, language access, disability/homebound needs, payment access barriers.	Ensure the model is reaching the residents it was designed to serve.



CONCLUSION

Grocery Connect began with a straightforward question: **can a community-anchored delivery hub make grocery access more dignified, more reliable, and more economically viable in neighborhoods where the market has not delivered?**

The South Dallas pilot did not fully answer that question — no single pilot could — but it demonstrated enough to make the question worth pursuing seriously.

What the pilot showed is that the model works when its parts work together. Trusted sites, strong concierge support, a reliable grocery partner, sustained community activation, and honest funding assumptions are not optional features. They are the operating system. Remove any one of them, and the experience residents have is diminished. Build all of them deliberately, and Grocery Connect can become something residents actually rely on.

The broader significance of this work is not just what Grocery Connect has tested in South Dallas. It is what the model represents for a field still searching for durable solutions to food access in underserved communities. Hub-based delivery, concierge support, SNAP integration, and community partnership are not new ideas individually. Grocery Connect is a serious attempt to combine them into an operating model that is replicable, adaptable, and honest about its costs.

The communities that will benefit most from this work are not yet running a Grocery Connect site. They are reading this report, assessing their local conditions, and deciding whether the model fits. For them, the most useful thing this pilot can offer is clarity: about what works, what requires investment, and what demands genuine community trust before anything else.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Most importantly, we thank the residents and families of South Dallas who placed their trust in Grocery Connect, shared their experiences, and helped shape the model through their feedback and participation. Their voices continually reminded us that food access is about far more than groceries—it is about dignity, opportunity, convenience, health, and community.

To everyone who contributed to this work—whether through interviews, implementation, partnership, funding, operations, or community leadership—thank you. Your experiences, lessons learned, and commitment to advancing equitable food access have created a resource that we hope will help communities across the country build stronger, more sustainable, and more community-centered grocery access systems.