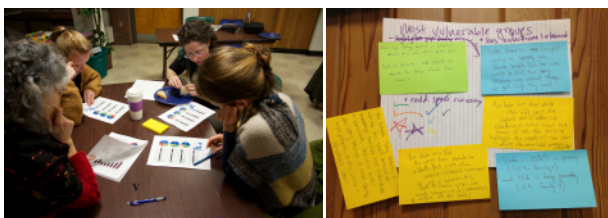# Creating This Mural

In the Winter of 2013 the Food Security Coalition collected data about poverty, housing and food security. This included local surveys and publicly available information from the state.

A first group of coalition members gathered together for a "story-finding" workshop in which we learned about the different kinds of stories that data can tell and found stories within our own data. We discussed a number of stories and chose one that the group wanted to tell publicly.

We then met a second time for a visual design workshop where we turned the story into a mural design. We built with pipe cleaners and LEGO bricks, drew pictures and did word exercises to explore different ways to represent the story's ideas. We then combined our favorite of the ideas into a draft design for the mural.

We decided to paint the design on a banner that can be moved between organizations and displayed at outdoor events. The banner was painted in only two afternoons (less than 24 hours!) by coalition members, partners from Tufts and local High School students. It is now on rotating display throughout the city.

About Data Murals

The Data Murals process helps a group find a story in their data, collaboratively design a visual to tell that story, and then invite a larger community to paint the story.

We create data murals because we believe that data can play an important role in bringing people together to create and advocate for change. Far too often data is stuck in boring reports or complicated online charts. Inviting people to play with data with hands-on activities offers a chance for organizations to activate their data as an asset.

To find out more, or make your own data mural, visit out website:

www.datamurals.org

The Team

This mural was designed and painted by members of the Somerville Food Security Coalition in Somerville, MA, USA in late 2013 and early 2014. The process was facilitated by Emily Bhargava (Connection Lab, LLC) and Rahul Bhargava (MIT Center for Civic Media) and supported with funds from the Knight Foundation.

a data mural about
Somerville Food Security

created by
Somerville Food Security Coalition
MIT Center for Civic Media
Connection Lab, LLC

The data say that for many people food is not affordable and accessible because of the number of people living in poverty (or undocumented). We want to tell this story because there are resources in Somerville to help.

The hands alternate showing factoids about food security and resources in our community that can help.

We selected quotes to concretize the ways that food is neither affordable nor accessible for many community members.

The circle of hands represents a human connection offering and accepting support of different types.

We choose the icons around the central circle to present places and groups within the Coalition and Somerville.

We included a few specific contacts for audiences in need - a phone number and website that have more information and lists of resources to help.

The house, broccoli and pencil represent that the data showed housing, education and food all being connected in the struggle to achieve food security.

The rings on the outside are a more abstract representation, showing the percentage of Somerville living in poverty over time. The wider the ring, the more people living in poverty that year.