



How Data Automation is Feeding People when it Matters Most



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Client Profile

Client Name: Fair Food Network

Industry: Nonprofit

Core Challenge: Manually processing 85,000 handwritten emergency produce vouchers during a SNAP benefits crisis, with tight deadlines and limited staff capacity

Solution: Grooper SaaS (software as a service) solution for paper scanning, handwriting recognition, validation, and standardized CSV export for reimbursement

Key Outcome: Accelerated six months of manual data entry into several weeks of scanning and data extraction

- Enabled timely reimbursement of \$1.1 million to small independent grocers and farmers markets across Michigan
- Reinforced the Fair Food Network's reputation as efficient, fast, and trustworthy steward of state funds
- Greatly improved the chances that emergency food programs continue as needed

Challenge

In late fall 2025, a disruption in federal SNAP benefits sent a shockwave through Michigan families who rely on food assistance. Rachel Hoh, Director of Double Up Food Bucks Michigan at Fair Food Network, described what they were hearing from the community.

"We need to get this money out in the next week. People are scared and hungry. We need to respond now."

So Fair Food Network rapidly designed and printed paper Bonus Bucks vouchers that SNAP shoppers could use to buy fruits and vegetables even if their benefit cards were empty.

They mailed out 85,000 vouchers to about 100 partner sites across Michigan, all to be spent within a two-month grant window during November and December 2025.

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- Rachel Hoh, Director of Double Up Food Bucks Michigan



Grooper®



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GROOPER OUTCOMES

**10x FASTER
PROCESSING**

**40x MORE
PRODUCTIVE
Staff Members**

**\$1,100,000
BONUS BUCKS
Redeemed to Partners
Four Months Faster**

A manual process that could not scale

Once shoppers used the vouchers, grocers and farmers markets mailed the completed forms back to Fair Food Network, specifically the Double Up Food Bucks Michigan. Each voucher was handwritten, with fields for serial number, sale date, amount redeemed, and store information. Hoh's staff began entering those details one voucher at a time into spreadsheets.

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The numbers quickly became overwhelming.

- About 20,000 November vouchers required entry and validation
- Fifteen staff members were hand keying data and had completed only about 4,200 records after several weeks
- December volume was projected between 30,000 and 60,000 vouchers, arriving in January and needing completion by the end of that month

At that pace, the staff would still be counting vouchers well into the summer time, which was not realistic for staff or sustainable for the organization.

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Real human stakes in every voucher

Behind every paper voucher was a family under immense pressure. For shoppers, vouchers were often the difference between having fresh fruits and vegetables or going without.

“The calls that we were getting were really tragic in a lot of ways,” said Hoh. “Just to hear from folks that went to stores, and there were no more vouchers left. We really felt the intensity and chaos and the fear of this moment.”

For retailers, especially small, Michigan owned grocers, the financial stakes were just as high.

“These are small, independent grocers across the state, so it is even more important that we were able to get the money out quickly,” said Hoh. “A lot of these stores were pretty dependent on their sales from the bonus bucks to keep the doors open in these hard times.”

Delayed reimbursement on tens of thousands of vouchers would have left these stores carrying significant unpaid balances.

“It would have been a major issue to be that much indebted to these sites, and they would not have wanted to work with us anymore, so it was reputational in that way too,” said Hoh.

Fair Food Network needed a way to process voucher data fast, accurately, and at scale, without burning out staff or compromising on their commitment to partners and the public.

Solution

Finding Grooper in a moment of urgency

The path to Grooper started with something as simple as a search for a scanner. Rachel was looking for a fast scanner in Detroit, called a local dealer, and the dealer connected her with Grooper. Rachel and her team needed a tool that was quick and easy to use.

A hosted Grooper environment built for voucher processing

Grooper deployed a temporary SaaS environment tailored to this emergency voucher project. Grooper was configured to ingest scanned images of paper vouchers from Fair Food Network's high-speed scanner, interpret the handwritten information, and present staff with an efficient review workflow.

Grooper extracted five critical data points from each voucher

1. **Date of sale**
 2. **Serial number**
 3. **Amount redeemed**
 4. **Store name**
 5. **Store address**
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Handwriting recognition for real world messiness

In practice, the vouchers were far from clean lab samples. Grocers and market managers filled them out under real-world conditions in busy stores and bustling markets.

These fields were often handwritten, sometimes stamped, and frequently messy. Many of the vouchers had addresses stamped on the vouchers upside down or at odd angles.

Despite misaligned stamps, tilts, and handwriting that was difficult even for humans to read, Grooper was able to capture the essential data and send the exceptions to staff members for approval.





Powerful technology that's easy to use

Grooper did not just make the process faster. It also made it more manageable and collaborative for a small, diverse team.

"It was such an easy tool to use. My team has a really wide variety of comfort with technology and tools, and it was really a tool that everyone on my team was able to use and interact with," said Hoh.

"It also made it possible that the work could be evenly distributed across the team."



Daily structured data for fast reimbursement

Once verified, Grooper exported data from each batch of vouchers into a clean CSV file. Grooper then delivered that file to Fair Food Network's existing SharePoint, ready for reconciliation, reporting, and reimbursement payments.

This automation replaced manual spreadsheet work with standardized, reusable data and provided leadership with clearer visibility into volume and progress.



A responsive partner, even from vacation

When it came to tech support, the Grooper team was very responsive. Rachel emphasized that this felt like a true partnership throughout the project.

"Your team was amazing. You were all so collaborative, even when my rep went on a trip to Hawaii, he still responded quickly. I had a really wonderful experience working with you all," said Hoh.

Outcome

Grooper transformed what could have been a months-long bottleneck into a focused, time bound project with clear end points. This empowered Fair Food Network to meet its deadlines and quickly deliver on its promises to families, retailers, and state funders.



Before Grooper

- About 4,200 vouchers processed in three weeks by fifteen people
- Staff were entering data manually into Excel, a few hundred vouchers per full day of work



With Grooper

- Roughly three quarters of the 85,000 vouchers were processed in just a few weeks in January
- The remaining vouchers had already been partially processed manually before Grooper came online



Faster reimbursement for independent grocers

Grooper enabled Fair Food Network to reconcile and reimburse approximately \$1.1 million dollars in Bonus Bucks redemptions owed to grocery and farmers market partners. Instead of carrying large unpaid balances for months, stores were paid back quickly, strengthening trust and willingness to collaborate on future programs.



Preserving program reputation and funding

The Fair Food Network and Double Up Food Bucks program already held a strong, positive reputation in the state. But Hoh and her team were able to leverage Grooper to further that reputation by being a responsible steward of public funds.

In other words, this solution did not just solve a back-office problem. It contributed directly to the effectiveness and reliability of a program that serves thousands of people each year.



An accessible tool for a variety of organizations

One of Rachel's reflections was that many nonprofits and similar programs simply do not realize that technologies like Grooper exist or how easy they can be to adopt.

"We would recommend it. It was so easy to use that I think it would really surprise some sites and some programs similar to ours that this kind of technology exists and could make their lives easier, but they just do not know about it," said Hoh.



Big Outcomes

10x Faster Processing

Before Grooper, fifteen staff processed about 4,200 vouchers in roughly three weeks, which equals about 200 vouchers per day at full effort.

With Grooper, roughly three quarters of all 85,000 vouchers were processed within a few weeks in January by a five-person team. This means the team moved from hundreds per day to tens of thousands within the same time window.



Staff Members 40x More Productive

Grooper empowered Fair Food Network to move from fifteen people processing only a few hundred vouchers per day to a five-person rotation processing several thousand per day.

This makes each staff member more than forty times more productive and increases overall organizational throughput by more than fifteen times.



Thousands of Michigan families didn't go hungry

Most importantly, thousands of people were able to get fresh fruits and vegetables when they needed it the most. The Bonus Bucks vouchers were a lifeline at a time when many people in need had no remaining funds on their EBT cards.



Small businesses get reimbursements four months faster

Grooper accelerated reimbursement cycles for Michigan owned and independent retailers. These small businesses depended heavily on Bonus Bucks redemptions to maintain cash flow and keep their doors open during a statewide SNAP emergency.



Success that ensures more help in times of need

Fair Food Network reimbursed Michigan owned grocers quickly and demonstrated to state funders that Double Up Food Bucks is efficient, fast, and a good steward of state dollars. This increases confidence that programs like this will continue supporting Michigan families in future crises.





For more information, go to
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