



Support for Northern BC Food Systems Transformation

Backgrounder



With support from the Government of British Columbia, we are pleased to announce support for community food security and food systems transformation in Northern BC.

Overview

Public Health Association of BC (PHABC) and Food Banks BC (FBBC) see change within the food system as complex and ever-evolving. Household food insecurity is at a record high in BC, with the highest rates being experienced in the North¹. Despite an increased demand for emergency hunger relief, food access organizations have limited capacity to address systems-focused, sustainable solutions to food insecurity.

We define *food access organizations* as hunger relief operations/organizations such as non-profits, charity organizations, Indigenous organizations or Nations, and social enterprises providing food provisions through food hampers, good food boxes, meal programs, community kitchens, community gardens, community food hubs, or other programs designed to feed people.

From 2024-2026, we will be advancing Community Food Security and Food Systems Transformation through three streams of support. Food access organizations and partners from Northern BC are eligible to participate. Map of eligible region [here](#).

- **Stream 1:** Through a *Rapid Stimulus Grant for Food Systems Transformation*, we will support food access organizations in Northern BC to better meet immediate needs while serving as leverage points for regional food system transformation.
- **Stream 2:** Through our *Ideas Lab* program, we will facilitate and enable multi-sectoral stakeholders across the food system to collaborate, align, and innovate together for local food systems solutions.
- **Stream 3:** Through one to three targeted partnerships across Northern BC, we will be supporting select organizations to pilot large-scale innovations and food systems interventions that can be scaled across the region and province.

Timeline



Understanding Community Food Security

Community food security occurs when “all community residents obtain a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self-reliance and equal access for everyone”.ⁱⁱ Community food security investigates the underlying social, ecological, and institutional factors that affect the quantity and quality of available food, including its affordability.ⁱⁱⁱ

Food Systems

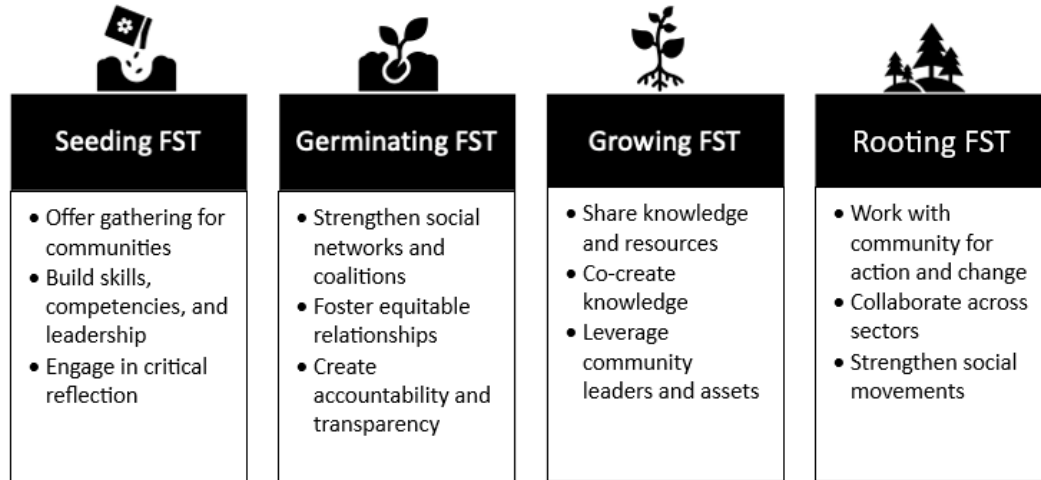
Food systems comprise all the activities, outcomes, and drivers that impact food consumption and nutrition, food production and food markets, and the institutional food environment.^{iv} Using a systems lens in community food security focuses our attention on wholes and relationships rather than the individual and separated components.^v With this approach, we can see the interconnectedness and interactions among the parts of the system enabling us to see the complexity of the underlying social and ecological contexts.

Food Systems Transformation

Food systems transformation refers to efforts being made to transform mainstream food systems to be more just, equitable, sustainable, and resilient. There are multiple entry points to accelerating this transformation. Informed by the latest research on food systems transformation^{vi} and emerging evidence on food access organizations as change agents,^{vii} FBBC and PHABC have identified the following stages of food systems transformation.

The FBBC and PHABC teams are undertaking several projects to support community food security and enable food systems transformation at various stages.

Stages of Food Systems Transformation (FST)



Program Details

1. **Rapid Stimulus Grant for Food Systems Change** – One-time flexible grants for non-profits and First Nations to advance capacity-building and transformation in the food system. With funding of \$5,000 to \$25,000 available per project, we aim to fund 40 projects. Grant applications will be accepted from March 1 – April 19, 2024. More information [here](#).
2. **Ideas Lab Program** – 18-month Social Innovation and Systems Design program for multi-sectoral, project-based collaborations of stakeholders within the food system. Program participants will be eligible to receive seed funding for their innovation projects. More information to come in spring 2024.
3. **Large-Scale Innovation Pilot Projects** – 18-month large-scale pilot projects, testing innovative food security and food systems interventions that can be scaled across the region and province. One to three organizations will be selected based on our prior work in the North, informed by community-identified needs, capacity, and partnerships. More information to come in summer 2024.



ⁱ BC Centre for Disease Control. (2023). Priority Health Equity Indicators for British Columbia: Household Food Insecurity Update Report. Vancouver, B.C.: BC Centre for Disease Control, Population Public Health.

ⁱⁱ Hamm, M. and Bellows, A. (2003). Community Food Security and Nutrition Educators. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, Volume 35, Issue 1, Pages 37-43.

ⁱⁱⁱ McCullum, C., Desjardins, E., Kraak, V. I., Ladipo, P., & Costello, H. (2005). Evidence-based strategies to build community food security. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 105(2), 278-283.

^{iv} Fanzo, J., Arabi, M., Burlingame, B., Haddad, L., Kimenju, S., Miller, G., Nie, F., Recine, E., Serra-Majem, L. and Sinha, D. (2017). Nutrition and food systems. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security.

^v Van der Bijl-Brouwer, M., & Malcom, B. (2020). Systemic Design Principles in Social Innovation: A Study of Expert Practices and Design Rationales. *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, 6(3), 386-407. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sheji.2020.06.001>

^{vi} Herrero, M., Thornton, P.K., Mason-D'Croz, D., Palmer, J., Benton, T.G., Bodirsky, B.L., Bogard, J.R., Hall, A., Lee, B., Nyborg, K. and Pradhan, P. (2020). Innovation can accelerate the transition towards a sustainable food system. *Nature Food*, 1(5), pp.266-272.

^{vii} Swords, A. (2022). Action research on organizational change with the Food Bank of the Southern Tier: a regional food bank's efforts to move beyond charity. In *Rethinking Food System Transformation* (pp. 199-215). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.