



FOOD
BANKS BC



Public Health
Association of BC

**Division of Community
Engagement and Food Systems**

Community Food Systems Development in BC:

Activating the Food Access Sector

Acknowledgements

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Most importantly, we are grateful to all the leaders of food access organizations who welcomed and hosted us during our site visits as well as participated in our surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Your generous contributions and willingness to share your valuable time for this project have been instrumental in shaping this report.





The Public Health Association of British Columbia and Food Banks BC are provincial organizations and we acknowledge that our work goes beyond the places we live and impacts the lives of nations across British Columbia and Turtle Island.



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Foreword

We are deeply grateful to the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction for their commitment to exploring effective solutions to food security challenges in BC. The intelligence gathered in this report will support program redesign, strengthen systemic responsiveness and ensure that the voices on the front line are heard. Most of effective problem solving is achieved in partnership and in true understanding of the solutions the community has already imagined.

The Public Health Association of BC and Food Banks BC are pleased to present this comprehensive report on food access initiatives and community food development across British Columbia. At a time when community food security and sustainable local food systems have never been more crucial, this report provides vital insights into both the opportunities and challenges facing our communities.

This project identified that British Columbia's unique geography, diverse populations, varying climates and different community conditions foster distinct advantages and specific hurdles in developing equitable and dignified food systems.

From urban centers like Vancouver and Victoria to the most remote parts of Golden and Boston Bar, we recognize that each region requires a tailored approach to build resilient local food networks.

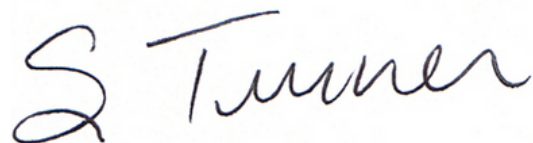
We recognize the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction for their investment in understanding how food security issues can be addressed most effectively in BC.

As we navigate evolving challenges including climate change, rising food costs and supply chain pressures, the need for robust community food systems has never been more apparent. We hope that this report offers clear pathways forward for organizations, policymakers and community leaders.

We honour all the food access organizations that are working tirelessly to ensure that food is available to all people. Much of this work is done beyond regular duties, and countless volunteers and dedicated staff members contribute their time and energy to support these essential services.



Finally, we hope that this report can be a beacon of hope, demonstrating that together, we can build a stronger, more equitable and sustainable local food systems for all British Columbians.



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Executive Summary

The "Community Food Systems Development in BC: Activating the Food Access Sector" report explores the diverse ways in which food access organizations in British Columbia (BC) are addressing immediate hunger and building capacity across the food access landscape to foster local food systems transformation.

This project, supported by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, aims to identify pathways for leveraging the food access sector to contribute to community food systems development, promoting healthier, more resilient communities across the province.

The report highlights the evolving landscape of food access programs in BC, where organizations have shifted from a traditional food bank model to more dignified and innovative models that foster community engagement such as market-style programs, community kitchens, and social enterprises.

Many organizations not only provide food programs but also offer wrap-around services, including mental health support, employment services, and childcare demonstrating a commitment to addressing the social determinants of food security and building more resilient communities.

In exploring the diverse and innovative spectrum of food access programming in BC, this report also offers valuable insights into the operating conditions and needs of food access organizations. Our conversations with leaders in this space revealed an appetite for collaboration and the need to involve food access organizations, key food system actors, and policymakers in the development of a roadmap for achieving more equitable and sustainable local food systems.

Ultimately, the report offers a compelling case for how the food access sector can be a lever for advancing and amplifying community food systems development across the province.



Highlights

- There is a growing demand for food access programs due to rising poverty rates, increased costs of living, and the ongoing climate crisis. This rise is expected to continue given the increased number of food insecure households, increased number visits to food banks, and rising cost of food in BC.
- Food access organizations play a critical role in responding to community needs during and after emergencies or natural disasters. Strengthening the capacity of food access organizations to address immediate and growing needs while enabling them to drive local food systems transformation is essential for achieving long-term food security.
- Accelerating food system transformation requires relationship building, knowledge mobilization, and collective efforts to address social, commercial, and environmental determinants of health. Given the embeddedness of food access organizations across the social and physical landscape in BC, they are well-positioned to activate these entry points to local food systems transformation.
- There is a wide spectrum of food access programming and services that are oriented toward providing dignified food access, promoting Indigenous food sovereignty, and/or transforming local food systems to be more equitable, sustainable, and resilient. Understanding the spectrum of food access programming in BC is crucial to better leveraging the food access sector to promote food security, health, and wellness across the province.



Report Iconography

Community food systems transformation is a complex topic, and we wanted to make it more digestible through the use of visuals throughout this report. The icons you see at the bottom right corner of the report shows the different processes of community food systems transformation, from growing to composting.

We invite you to engage with the icons as you read through the report as flipbook icons that symbolize transformation and sustainable cycles. Below you can see the specific meanings of each icon.



Growing



Harvesting



Transporting



Processing



Packaging



Distribution



Food Access



Recovery



Eating



Composting



Glossary

Community food assets are the resources, infrastructure, and practices that support and sustain local food systems.¹ These include natural or ecological assets like farms, gardens, and orchards; built environment assets such as community kitchens, farmers' markets, food banks, and food retail spaces; and social assets, which involve networks and informal practices like community bartering, cultural food traditions, and freeganism.²

Community food hubs are networks of partners collaborating to enhance food security and improve access to fresh, nutritious and culturally preferred food. They also offer food literacy and wellness programs, wrap-around services such as mental health support, employment services and childcare, as well as volunteer opportunities that foster community engagement. By addressing individual and community needs, food hubs build dignity, strengthen cultural connections, and enhance the well-being of community members.^{3,4}

Community food security is a situation 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".⁵

Community food systems development captures the connection between community food security and food systems transformation and refers to the diverse ways in which the food access sector is supporting on-the-ground efforts to address immediate hunger, build capacity across the food access landscape, and foster local food systems transformation in their communities.

Community resilience is the ability of a community to prepare for, withstand, adapt to, and recover from emergencies or hazards efficiently and effectively. This encompasses the preservation and restoration of a community's essential structures and functions during natural disasters such as wildfires and floods, health emergencies like pandemics (e.g., COVID-19), as well as human-made crises like food supply chain disruptions, housing crises and displacements, and economic inflation.



Dignified food access can be defined in a number of different ways. At its core, it is a rights-based approach to food programming that upholds individuals' inherent worth and dignity through four key elements: welcoming spaces that are physically and emotionally accessible; quality food choices that are nutritious and culturally relevant; respectful ways of service delivery that are non-judgmental, inclusive, and foster choice and autonomy; and advocacy efforts that promote systemic change to address food insecurity.⁶ This approach emphasizes participant agency, self-determination, and choice while promoting long-term solutions that extend beyond immediate food provision.

Food access is the uncompromised physical access to adequate, acceptable food.⁷ It is impacted by geography, climate and climate-related events, transportation, infrastructure, and physical mobility. Uncompromised access to food is a basic human right and should be attainable irrespective of socio-economic status, geographical location, cultural preferences, and other factors.

Food access programs are community-based initiatives that ensure individuals and families have reliable access to adequate, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food through mechanisms such as food hampers, good food boxes, meal programs, community kitchens, and community gardens. By providing these services, food access programs uphold the basic human right to food and mitigate social, economic, and environmental barriers to accessing food.

Food access organizations are community service organizations that offer food through programs such as good food boxes, food hampers, meal programs, community kitchens, or other programs designed to feed people. Some food access organizations focus only on food provision, while some offer other types of programming in addition to food.

Food insecurity exists when factors outside an individual's control negatively impact their access to enough foods to promote wellbeing. Economic, social, environmental, and geographical factors influence this access. Food insecurity is most acutely felt by those who experience the negative impacts of structural inequities, such as discrimination and on-going colonial practices.⁷



Food security means that everyone has equitable access to food that is affordable, culturally preferable, nutritious and safe; everyone has the agency to participate in, and influence food systems; and that food systems are resilient, ecologically sustainable, socially just, and honour Indigenous food sovereignty.⁷

Food Sovereignty refers to the right and ability of local communities to control and shape their own food systems, including food production, markets, ecological resources, and cultural food practices. It emphasizes local decision-making, equity, and environmental sustainability while challenging dominant food systems and advocating for alternatives that prioritize community needs, cultural traditions, and ecological well-being.⁸

Food systems refer to complex interconnected networks that encompass all activities, actors, and processes related to food production, processing, distribution, preparation, and consumption. It includes interactions between multiple sectors (e.g., agriculture, environment, health), various stakeholders (e.g., farmers, consumers, policymakers, industry), and different governance levels (local to global). These interactions generate both positive and negative outcomes, impacting key issues like food security, health, environmental sustainability, and economic inequality.

Food system transformation refers to the deliberate process of restructuring food systems to address their current unsustainable practices and negative impacts, including environmental degradation, food insecurity, health inequities, and social injustices. This transformation aims to achieve multiple Sustainable Development Goals, particularly targeting zero hunger, improved health and wellbeing, environmental sustainability, and reduced inequalities through systematic changes in how food is produced, distributed, and consumed.^{9,10,11,12,13}

Indigenous Food Sovereignty refers to a reconnection to land-based food and political systems from a disconnected state often driven by colonization. It moves beyond access to food, and is grounded in the idea that people should be able to self-determine their food systems and cultural traditions. It is guided by four key principles: sacred/divine sovereignty, participation, self-determination, and legislation and policy.¹⁴

Resilience is the capacity of a community to adapt to changes such as shifting demographics and housing affordability, and to “bounce back” from events such as economic downturns and the effects of a changing climate (e.g. more frequent and intense storms, temperate increases, or sea level rise).¹⁵



Resilient food systems are capable of providing a diverse, stable, sufficient, and accessible food supply in the face of adverse social, environmental, and economic conditions. This includes having the ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts, both in the short and long term, in ways that are inclusive and equitable.¹⁶ A resilient food system ensures equitable access to food that is affordable, culturally preferable, nutritious, and safe; is ecologically sustainable, socially just, and honours Indigenous food sovereignty.⁷



Introduction



Food charity emerged in Canada in the 1970s in response to the economic downturn and rising unemployment rates. These early food access programs were predominantly community-based, operating out of churches, community centers, and social service agencies.

The need for food assistance continued into the 1980s, leading to the establishment of Canada's first food bank in Edmonton, Alberta in 1981. In British Columbia (BC), the first food bank opened in 1982.¹⁷ Shortly after, the food bank movement gained momentum and more food banks were established across the country.

From the start, food charity was designed as a temporary emergency food service for those in need. Surplus food was collected and redistributed to organizations, which was then provided to communities through their food access programs. This approach to addressing hunger is not unique to Canada or North America and has been adopted globally. However, the absence of public programs and policy interventions and subsequent rise in food charity has raised concerns and drawn criticism.¹⁸ Formidable leaders and thinkers working in food security, food sovereignty, and food systems change have argued that food charity serves as band-aid solution to deeper systemic issues within the food system.^{19,20,21}





They argue that food access organizations and programs receive significant funding to mitigate hunger, but often fall short when it comes to addressing the root causes of food insecurity. For them, food access programs do very little, for example, to address unemployment rates, insufficient income, inflation rates, rising food prices, generational poverty, and other social and structural determinants of health and food security.

These criticisms are essential to overcoming the limitations and shortcomings of food access services. However, the food access landscape in BC is undergoing some notable and transformative changes. The traditional food bank model where people line up to receive bags or boxes of donated food no longer accurately represents the spectrum of food access programs that are cropping up all over the province. More food banks are evolving to offer market-style programs or pantries that mimic grocery stores, creating more dignified access to food by enabling participants to choose the items they want rather than receiving pre-made hampers.

These programs are often complemented by hot meal initiatives designed to foster community connection. Community kitchen programs have emerged as spaces for sharing food knowledge and cultural traditions. Several organizations partner with schools and school districts to deliver meals to students, often integrating food literacy and nutrition education into their programming. Social enterprises are also increasingly embraced by food access organizations, allowing for increased revenue generation and financial sustainability of programming.

Significant strides are being made to advance Indigenous food sovereignty and promote food self-sufficiency and self-determination. Additionally, some organizations are running multiple initiatives simultaneously, while others are engaging in cross-collaborations to develop community food hubs.





Coupled with the diversity in how programs source their food, such as purchasing directly from local farmers or rescuing surplus groceries, the diversity and innovation in the food access sector contribute to various outcomes that align with the BC government's goals of reducing poverty and enhancing food security and public health while supporting local food systems.^{22,23}

Understanding the wide spectrum of food access organizations in BC can provide valuable insights for leveraging the food access sector to promote healthier, more resilient communities across the province. This project aims to identify pathways for the food access sector to contribute to food systems transformation. By exploring the diversity of food access programming in the province and collaborating with the leaders of these organizations, this report offers insights into the operating conditions, resources, and needs of food access organizations to advance and amplify community food systems development in communities across BC.

Defining Community Food Systems Development

We use the term 'community food systems development' to capture the connection between community food security and food systems transformation. Conceptually, community food security is "when all citizens obtain a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self-reliance and equal access for everyone".⁵ Our emphasis on community food security is intentional. Where household food security is generally concerned with the ability to acquire food at the household level, community food security is a concept that deals with the underlying social, economic, and environmental factors that affect the quantity and quality of available food, including its affordability.^{5,24}





As a vision, community food security has been mobilized over the last two decades to guide ground-up food system transformation interventions.^{25,26,27}

The following 3-stage continuum, from household food insecurity to community food security, provides a useful framework for understanding the different short and long-term outcomes associated with select interventions (see Figure 1). The first stage involves *short-term relief* through emergency and charitable food programs that primarily address immediate hunger (e.g., food banks and soup kitchens).

The second stage focuses on capacity-building through programs that empower participants through education and training, and help raise awareness of food issues

(e.g., community kitchens, community gardens, etc.).

The third stage is systems redesign and aims to improve the economic, ecological, and social sustainability of the food system through policy councils, food policies, social enterprises and social advocacy to address poverty.

Informed by this body of work, we use the term ‘community food systems development’ to understand and articulate the ways in which the food access sector is supporting on-the-ground efforts to address immediate hunger, build capacity across the food access landscape, and foster local food systems transformation in their communities.

Figure 1: Conceptualizing community food security as a continuum



Adapted from [Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2024](#)





British Columbia

The State of Food Insecurity

According to the BC Centre for Disease Control, “food security means that everyone has equitable access to food that is affordable, culturally preferable, nutritious, and safe; everyone has the agency to participate in, and influence food systems; and that food systems are resilient, ecologically sustainable, socially just, and honour Indigenous food sovereignty.”⁷ Conversely, “food insecurity exists when factors outside an individual’s control negatively impact their access to enough foods that promote wellbeing.”⁷ These include social, economic, and environmental factors that impact food access, including discrimination and on-going colonial practices.

Food insecurity is a widespread issue across BC, and food access organizations are facing growing demands in the communities they serve following the COVID-19 pandemic, rising poverty rates, increased costs of living, and the ongoing climate crisis. In 2022, 15% of BC residents (732,000 people) struggled to put food on the table.

An estimated 21.8% of BC residents reported living in food insecure households in 2023, which translates to a 5% increase from 2022 (16.8%).²⁹ The 2024 Hunger Count reported 225,605 visits to food banks in BC, which is an 81% increase from 2019 and a 15% increase from the previous year alone.¹⁷ Food Banks BC’s latest Impact Report reported serving a “record-breaking” 100,000+ unique individuals in a single month.³⁰ All of these reports suggest that the number of BC residents in need of food access programs continues to rise at unprecedented rates.





Current Social, Economic, and Environmental Conditions

Understanding population trends, including low-income and unemployment rates, rising food prices, and the persistence of houselessness provides insight to the extent of the adversity being felt across the province to which food access organizations are often responding. It also reveals the diversity of community members food access organizations serve.

According to 2021 census data, BC has a diverse population, with over 5 million people, 6% of whom are Indigenous, 34% are visible minorities, and 29% have immigrant status.³¹ Every region in the province except the Northeast has experienced population increases between 2016–2021. Approximately 223,675 people are unemployed, with the Mainland/Southwest region having the highest unemployment per capita at 143,150 (8.5%), followed by Vancouver Island/Coast at 32,690 (7.6%) and Interior/Thompson–Okanagan at 25,135 (8.3%).

The 2023 Report on Homeless Counts in BC identified 11,352 people as experiencing houselessness, with Greater Vancouver, Fraser Valley, and Greater Victoria having the highest counts.³² The most common reported reason for housing loss was inadequate income. Approximately 67% of the unhoused population are considered long-term residents of their communities, and there continues to be overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples (40%) and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community (11%) in this demographic.

In 2022, the BCCDC's Food Costing Report indicated that the average monthly cost of a nutritious diet for a family of four in BC was \$1,263. Canada's Food Price Report, forecasted a 2.8% rise in food prices in 2025, translating to a total predicted annual food expenditure of \$16,833.67 for a family of four residing in BC.³³ Hence, purchasing nutritious food in BC will become increasingly challenging for residents, especially for those experiencing unemployment, houselessness, and the 11% of the population who are considered low-income.³⁴





It is worth noting too, that most food-insecure households in Canada are made up of people who work, particularly low wage earners, racialized workers, and those working multiple and/or short-term or precarious jobs.³⁵

The climate crisis has also worsened social, economic, and environmental conditions in BC. According to the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy: Actions for 2022–2025, severe heatwaves, wildfires and unprecedented flooding are impacting BC communities, the economy, infrastructure and ecosystems.³⁶ During the summer of 2021, 619 deaths were reported over seven days and across the province as a result of extreme heat.³⁷ Also known as a “heat dome”, the extreme temperatures resulted in “one of the most damaging wildfire seasons on record and triggered a state of emergency lasting two months.”³⁶ A few months later, in the fall of 2021, the southwest regions of the province experienced severe floods, resulting in landslides along with road and bridge closures that cut off and isolated communities.³⁶ The 2021 floods were estimated to cost the province \$7.5 billion in damages, making it the most expensive disaster in Canadian history.³⁸

Climate change has not only exacerbated adverse conditions, but has also presented new challenges to food access organizations providing food, personnel, infrastructure and other support during times of crisis.

The food system is often described as both the problem and solution to issues like hunger, poverty, and the climate crisis.¹⁰ Hence, calls for food system transformation are often linked to provincial-wide initiatives (e.g. CleanBC, TogetherBC, and BuyBC),¹⁵ as well as global conventions and targets, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.^{9,12}

The general consensus across the province and globally is that transforming the food system is crucial to ending poverty and hunger, promoting good health and wellbeing, reducing inequality, and advancing climate action and efforts to create sustainable cities and communities (i.e. SDGs 1–3, 10–13, and 15).





Accelerating Food Systems Transformation

Navigating the Complexity of Food Systems

Food systems is a concept that is used to understand the underlying social, environmental, and institutional factors that affect the quantity and quality of available food in a region. It includes all the activities, outcomes, and drivers that impact food consumption, nutrition, production, markets, and the overall food environment.³⁹

However, transforming food systems is complex because it involves considering how a multitude of key elements and actors interact.⁴⁰ This includes understanding feedback loops (i.e. how different factors interact and affect each other), including trade-offs and synergies, which can influence the results we want to achieve overtime, both now and in the future.

Additionally, there are many barriers and challenges to transforming the food system. One fundamental barrier is the persistence of governance challenges due to complicated relationships

between different people and sectors, differences in scale, power imbalances, and conflicting values.

Some researchers have called for new roles, competencies, and skill sets to stimulate “real and equal collaboration, knowledge integration and transformative learning.”⁹

Underlying these complicated relationships are the different ways in which food systems are conceptualized which can amplify conflicting values and priorities and postpone the design and implementation of interventions.

Researchers suggest that to identify leverage points where interventions will be most effective, we need to move away from linear (e.g. farm-to-fork) and circular views (e.g. includes waste management and nutrient recovery) of the food system to complex models that include economic, social, environmental and technological dimensions of food systems.⁴¹





Another significant barrier to food systems transformation is the misalignment of funding structures. There is a need for investments to be distributed more evenly across sectors and disciplines, and for incentives that encourage holistic and integrative approaches.⁹ Adding to this challenge is the lack of coordinated efforts to monitor food systems transformation efforts.

Researchers are exploring how to do this work in a rigorous and transdisciplinary manner to track change, foster urgent action, and hold decision-makers at all scales accountable.¹⁰

Hence, evidence-based research on how to address the interconnected challenges of economic development, ecological integrity, and social justice, from local to global scales is still emerging.⁴²

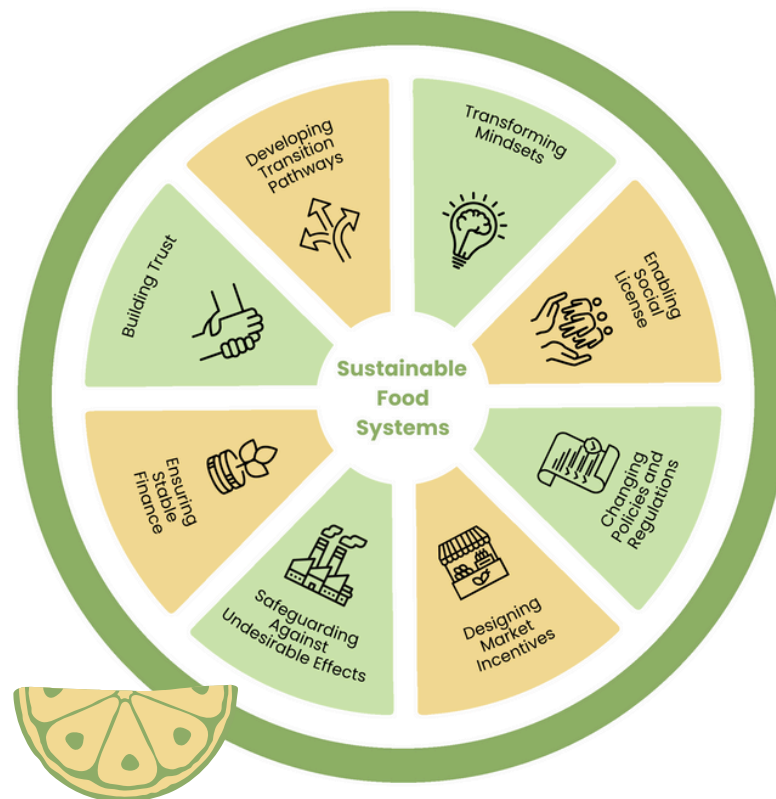




To help navigate these challenges, researchers have identified a variety of entry points to accelerating food system transformation to achieve healthy and sustainable diets, productive agrifood systems and improve waste management (see Figure 2).

These entry points highlight the significance of relationship building and knowledge mobilization, as well as engaging in collective efforts to address social, commercial, and environmental determinants of health.⁴³ Further, food access organizations appear to be well positioned to activate many, if not all, of these elements of food systems transformation.

Figure 2: Elements of food systems



Adapted from Herrero et al., 2020





Leveraging Food Access Organizations

Food access programs, largely delivered by community-based organizations and the non-profit sector, connect a growing number of BC residents to food through initiatives such as community meal programs, food pantries, food hampers, and community gardens.

This approach ensures that organizations are equipped to tackle some of the root causes of food insecurity, fostering more resilient communities through on-the-ground, community-driven interventions.

A roadmap is needed to identify pathways for achieving more equitable and sustainable local food systems. This roadmap needs to be developed in collaboration with food access organizations, key food system actors, and policymakers, to more effectively connect community members to diverse, nourishing, and locally produced and harvested food (e.g. participatory asset mapping).^{2, 44}

This project aims to start this process by outlining such community food systems development pathways and exploring the role of food access programming in

addressing both food insecurity and transforming local food systems in communities across the province.

As mentioned above, one important point of tension in this work is the debate over whether food access programs and services are a solution or barrier to long-term food security and food system transformation.^{18, 45}

This project aims to lean into this tension with hope and creativity, recognizing the potential for food access organizations to act as levers for food systems change, given how deeply embedded they are across the social and physical landscape of BC and beyond.^{47, 48, 49}





Project Scope



This work draws upon insights from PHABC's Food Access Across BC, which investigated the state of food access organizations following the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants from that survey reported several assets and barriers to meeting the needs of the communities.

Weaving Our Work

The project also highlighted the unique challenges and conditions faced by Northern BC communities. Building off this work, PHABC and Food Banks BC (FBBC) conducted a pilot project to explore regional food (in)security and identify leverage points for food systems transformation in Northern BC, a region with both the highest percentage of household food insecurity and highest food prices in BC.²⁸

The resulting Strengthening Food Systems and Dignified Food Access in Northern BC Report highlighted local context-specific challenges, strengths, and opportunities for improving food access.



Informed by both the process and findings of this pilot project, the Community Food Systems Development in BC project aims to identify local context-specific challenges and interventions for improving food access in the remaining regions of the province. It also explores the diverse ways the food access sector is and can serve as a lever for local food systems transformation.



Project Objectives

This project aims to identify pathways for activating food access organizations to achieve greater community food systems development across BC. To do this effectively requires a fourfold process:

1. Better understand the spectrum of food access programs in BC and identify the different types of services offered.
2. Identify the unique regional context-specific strengths and challenges that food access organizations are experiencing.
3. Identify place-based assets, opportunities, and leverage points for food systems transformation.
4. Work with participants to identify and prioritize interventions that are appropriate for their local context.



Project Design



This project is designed to explore the food access landscape across the four remaining health authority regions of BC: Fraser Health, Interior Health, Island Health, and Vancouver Coastal Health.

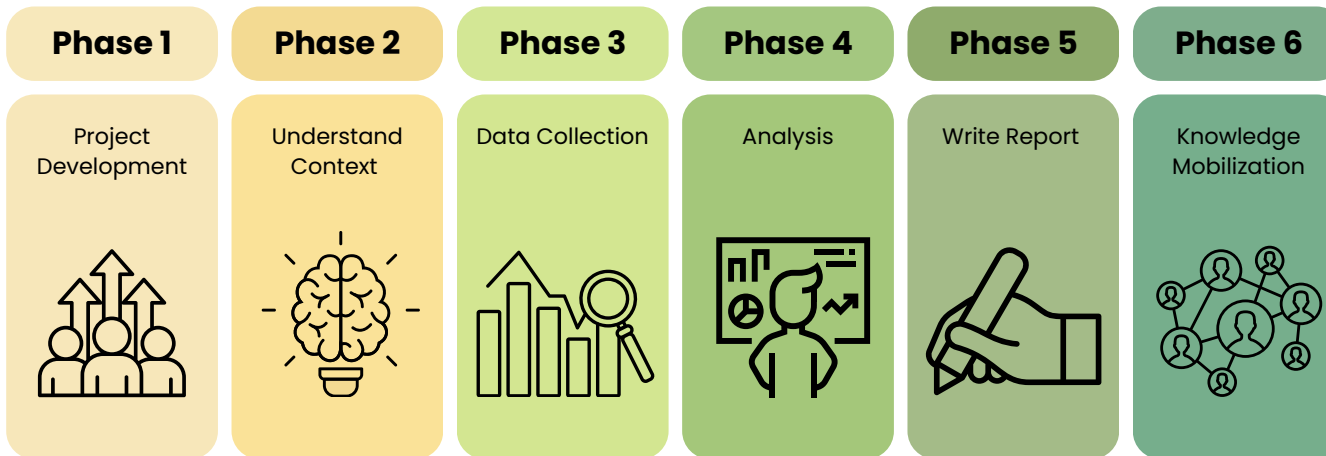
This project is designed to be collaborative and participatory and builds on previous work delivered by PHABC and FBBC. As previously mentioned, a pilot study was carried out in Northern BC (specifically within the Northern Health Authority region) and the results were reported separately in the Strengthening Food Systems and Dignified Food Access in Northern BC Report.

The project relies on both primary and secondary data in its investigation of food access organizations and their role in supporting community food security and transforming the food system to be more just, equitable, sustainable, and resilient.

See Figure 3 below for details on each phase of the project.



Figure 3: Project design



Survey

An online survey was used to collect data from a diversity of food access organizations across the province, excluding the Northern region.

The survey was designed to: a) collect descriptive data on food access organizations in each of the remaining regions; and b) gather information that characterizes local and regional food systems across BC. This included data to support the development of a food access model typology to enhance understanding of the diverse and

innovative spectrum of service models emerging across the province. The survey also informed the development of our interview and focus group questions, ensuring conversations were grounded in topics relevant and meaningful to participants.

Survey recruitment was conducted primarily through email communications. This involved directly contacting organizations and promoting the survey within larger networks across the province such as the BC Food Security Gateway, Farm to School BC, United Way of BC, Food Banks BC and Seeds of Change Surrey.



To be eligible to participate, organizations were required to serve communities located in one of the four remaining health authority regions and administer at least one food access program (e.g., meal programs, affordable markets, food hampers, community growing, etc.). While most respondents identified food access as a central focus of their organization's programming, others incorporated food access into their broader initiatives.

Participants completed the survey online via the Hosted in Canada platform or by phone/Zoom. Data was exported into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data obtained from multiple-choice questions was analyzed regionally using R, a programming language for statistical computing and data visualization. Qualitative data from open-ended questions was thematically analyzed, with emergent themes identified and compiled by region to explore shared context and the unique conditions under which food access organizations operate. For further details on the survey, please see **Appendix 1**.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interview questions were informed by the survey results and were designed to: a) collect more details on the barriers and opportunities for engaging in food systems transformation; and b) solicit feedback on the development of a food access model typology.

Following the survey submission, leaders of organizations were invited to participate in an interview. To ensure representation, the 26 interview participants were from food access organizations located across the four regions. While some organizations incorporated multiple models into their programming, efforts were taken to prevent over-representation of any single model (e.g., food banks or food hampers). Consideration was given to ensure organizations from a variety of communities were included.

Organizations that completed the survey were prioritized, as the interview questions were built upon survey responses for deeper exploration.



Site Visits

In addition to the interviews, 22 site visits were conducted across the four regions to explore the physical spaces, facilities, and operations of food access organizations in greater depth.

The primary purpose of the site visits was to gain a better understanding of the operational contexts of these programs and to strengthen relationships with the organizations. During the visits, the team toured the facilities, engaged with staff and volunteers, and occasionally observed food access programs in action.

For further details, please see Appendix 4.

Regional Focus Groups

After analyzing the interview and survey data, the project team conducted one focus group over Zoom in each of the four regions with leaders of food access organizations that had participated in the interviews and/or site visits. During the focus groups, the team presented the preliminary findings from the data analysis and participants were invited to identify gaps, validate findings, and discuss whether the data accurately reflected the challenges and needs of food access programs in their respective regions.

This collaborative approach also allowed leadership staff to provide feedback and exchange insights with other organizations in their region, further refining and informing the data and results.

For further details on regional focus groups and our approach to qualitative analysis, please see Appendix 5 and 6, respectively.





Limitations

Some limitations occurred with data collection. For instance, the survey's reach may have been restricted. Organizations not part of the direct contact list, affiliated networks or social media promotions may not have been aware of the survey and therefore missed the opportunity to participate.

The platform used to administer the survey, Hosted in Canada, had some technical issues, as it allowed participants to save their survey progress and return to it later, but many could not access it.

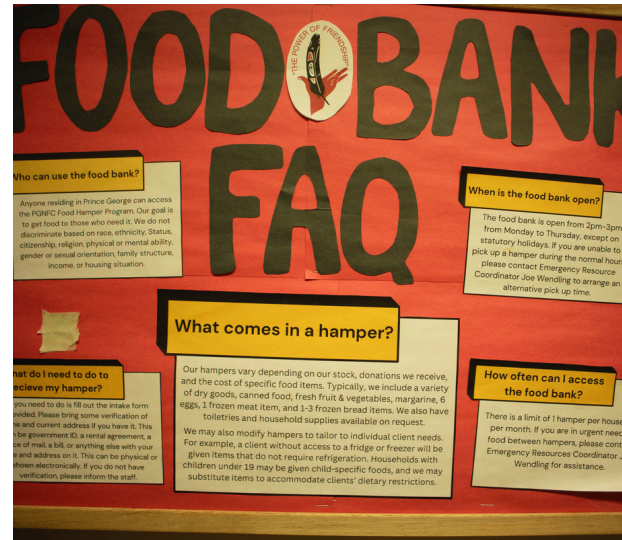
Consequently, many surveys were left incomplete and some had to be completed over Zoom since the unfinished surveys were only accessible via the platform's backend.



While efforts were made to ensure interviews were carried out with leadership from a diversity food access models, this goal was not achieved across all regions.

Many food access organizations faced capacity challenges, especially during the summer season, when programs were operating with reduced staff or limited hours.

Additionally, within the Fraser and Island Health regions, we were unable to secure an interview with an organization focused on Indigenous Food Sovereignty. This gap highlights the need for more targeted outreach and relationship-building to better engage organizations working in this critical area, ensuring their perspectives are included in future projects.



Results



The following section shares the results of primary data collected via survey, interviews, and focus group discussions.

Primary Data

We collected 168 surveys completed by leadership of food access organizations, conducted 26 interviews, carried out 22 site visits, and facilitated 4 regional focus groups (see Table 1).

The results were analyzed to convey the shared and unique regional context and organizational conditions that are impacting food access programs across the province. For the latter two subsections, we share data that characterize the spectrum of food access models and their role in shaping local food systems.



Table 1: Total study participation and across all four regions

	BC	Fraser	Interior	Island	Vancouver
Surveys	168	32	49	52	35
Interviews	26	5	7	7	7
Site Visits	25	3	6	6	7
Focus Groups	4	1	1	1	1

Data on Northern Health Region was collected during a pilot study and reported in a separate publication.





“We've seen a crazy increase since 2022/2023...In our experience, it was really the difference in 2021 to 2022. When inflation hit in March 2022, that was the spike. (Focus Group Participant)”

Characterizing the Food Access Landscape

Increased Demand for Food Access Programming

There has been a substantial increase in demand for food access programs and services across BC. Overall, food access programs experienced a 25% increase in the number of services and a 28% increase in the number of visits (see Table 2). The Vancouver Coastal Health region experienced the highest increase, with over 40% in both metrics.

The top three perceived factors contributing to food insecurity are high food prices, low household income, and high housing costs, which are consistent across all regions (see Table 3).



Table 2: Percentage of increased demand for food access programs from 2022 - 2023

	BC	Fraser	Interior	Island	Vancouver
Avg% Increase in Individuals Served (# Responses: 121)	25%	33%	14%	17%	43%
Avg% Increase in Individuals Visited (# Responses: 93)	28%	35%	15%	19%	41%

Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



Table 3: Perceived factors contributing to food insecurity
(Number of responses)

	BC (164)	Fraser (32)	Interior (48)	Island (49)	Vancouver Coastal (35)
High food prices	98%	100%	100%	94%	100%
Limited food supply	94%	91%	92%	92%	100%
High unemployment rates	93%	97%	90%	90%	97%
Low household incomes	69%	72%	69%	57%	77%
Inadequate social assistance	62%	50%	67%	67%	66%
High cost of housing	41%	47%	40%	31%	49%
Challenges with transportation	27%	22%	25%	29%	34%

Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



“We're also noticing... the definition of what low income looks like is changing, and that's a **reflection of who's accessing the program**. ...we're noticing it the most with anyone who's new to accessing our programs. Before they would never be considered low income, and they're falling into that now.

(Focus Group Participant)

“There's a lot of newcomers who are struggling to **navigate a new city** and are low income, trying to find work, and trying to understand what they do and do not have access to and how it all works.

(Focus Group Participant)

“Because of the type of community it is and how many people have an active job, **there's a really high percentage of young people getting injured at work**. They go from being able to afford their life and reasonably get by to instantly in low-income and cannot pay for their rent or pay for food because they're on medical EI.

(Focus Group Participant)





“Non-profit organizations and food groups are **essential to society** but not treated as so.
(Interview Participant)”

Emergency Preparedness

According to survey responses, wildfires are the most frequently cited natural disaster that food access organizations have contended with, followed closely by floods and droughts. Participants also shared that extreme weather events, such as landslides, rockslides, mudslides, heat domes, and avalanches pose ongoing risks to food access and infrastructure.

When asked what community assets were available and/or used during natural disasters or extreme weather events, respondents reported leveraging community partnerships, food storage, and local infrastructure to serve community members during times of crisis.

Despite having access to some resources and infrastructure, nearly half (47%) of respondents feel unprepared for the next emergency, with organizations in the Interior Region reporting feeling the most prepared and organizations in Vancouver Coastal Region reporting feeling the least prepared (see Table 4).

Participants indicated a need for more food storage, government support, and enhanced coordination across regions to ensure they are better equipped to deal with the next emergency.



**Table 4: Percentage of leaders who feel prepared or unprepared for the next emergency
(Number of responses)**

	BC (163)	Fraser (32)	Interior (48)	Island (49)	Vancouver Coastal (34)
Prepared	28%	25%	32%	30%	24%
Unprepared	47%	47%	30%	48%	52%
Unsure	25%	28%	38%	22%	24%

Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



“Burnout can be huge. I think that's got to be acknowledged somehow, like through the government. **We're a little community....You must be a psychologist. You must be counselor. You must work to advocate for them.** There's just so many different hats that you wear. You must be a bouncer too, some days.

(Interview Participant)”

“It's so hard for organizations to even think of innovation. They're so wrapped up in emergency and immediate responses that thinking of innovation seems so far away and not relevant in that moment. **We need to focus on all hands-on deck on controlling the current situation before we can look.**

(Focus Group Participant)”

Social, Economic, and Environmental Conditions

There are shared social, economic, and environmental conditions that are impacting food access organizations and the communities they serve. For instance, several participants across the province recalled how the COVID-19 pandemic closed their doors, disrupted food supply chains, and limited transportation services. This required organizations to quickly adapt their programming and mobilize available resources to ensure community members continued to receive food, care, and other services.

Others described their communities as being afflicted with mental health and addiction-related crises which have intensified food insecurity and the need for wraparound support services.

Leadership across the province reported that the climate crisis has made accessing and providing fresh produce to their community members increasingly challenging.



Food Access Organizational Conditions

Land/ Facility Tenure and Funding

Organizations operate under a variety of facility tenure arrangements across BC (see Table 5), which significantly influence their operational stability.

Overall, 27% of organizations own their facilities, 23% rent or lease at market value, and 20% benefit from subsidized rental agreements.

Approximately 30% of organizations use spaces provided at no cost, including churches, schools, and community centres, which helps mitigate operational expenses but often comes with limitations, such as facility adaptation and long-term planning.

“**Funding is already such a massive constraint. It's really hard to find general operating funding.** If you have been getting some of the same sources of funding for your very specific program for however many years, it can feel risky or rocking the boat by proposing a shift to your program if you're worried about getting that funding year over year.
(Focus Group Participant)”

“A lot of these organizations figured they were going to need **more than what was originally allotted for food, hampers, etc.** They didn't have that flexibility within the grant funding. And for the programs that they did initiate, the funding was not enough.
(Focus Group Participant)”



Table 5: Food access land/ Facility tenure arrangements
(Number of responses)

	BC (161)	Fraser (31)	Interior (45)	Island (51)	Vancouver Coastal (34)
Purchased (owned)	27%	32%	25%	40%	24%
Rented/ leased (market value)	23%	18%	22%	23%	33%
Rented/ leased (subsidized)	20%	12%	18%	10%	18%
Provided for free	30%	38%	35%	27%	25%

Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



“We’re a city-owned space, and we get a lease for a dollar a year. It’s stable, but **the big challenge we have is lack of space.** For the food program, we have very little space that we can grow into.
(Focus Group Participant)”

“We’re operating a food access organization out of a converted house, with a garden adjacent... **the demand for these programs... could be scaled and they’re great programs.**
(Focus Group Participant)”

“In my experience working with organizations that have been provided land for free, it would fall into short term lease opportunities... **the land that’s been given away for free has this floating temporary status and you really don’t know when you’re going to need to move out.**
(Focus Group Participant)”

While facility ownership offers a degree of stability, many organizations across BC are hindered by high operational costs and an overwhelming dependence on grants and donations, which are often restricted or inconsistent. This lack of secure, unrestricted funding is a pervasive challenge, limiting organizations' ability to cover rising operational costs, increased demand, and necessary program expansions.

To sustain and improve the quality and reach of their services, organizations across all regions expressed a need for long-term, predictable funding to cover operational costs.

For food access organizations that lease their land/facility, more than half have secured long-term leases extending over two years, with a few that have agricultural operations locking in terms as long as 20 to 35 years (see Table 6). However, approximately 18% operate under precarious annual or month-to-month leases, making long-term planning difficult.



**Table 6: Stability of occupancy/ tenure
(Number of responses)**

	BC (149)	Fraser (29)	Interior (40)	Island (47)	Vancouver Coastal (33)
Long-term lease	53%	50%	51%	47%	43%
Annual lease	13%	18%	14%	2%	14%
Monthly lease	5%	4%	6%	9%	2%
Own / provided for free	29%	29%	29%	42%	40%

Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



“Whereas we used to be able to go pick up the food and come back in an hour, now we're stuck in endless traffic. So **even our ability to pick up food and deliver food has changed.** (Focus Group Participant)”



Food Delivery Services

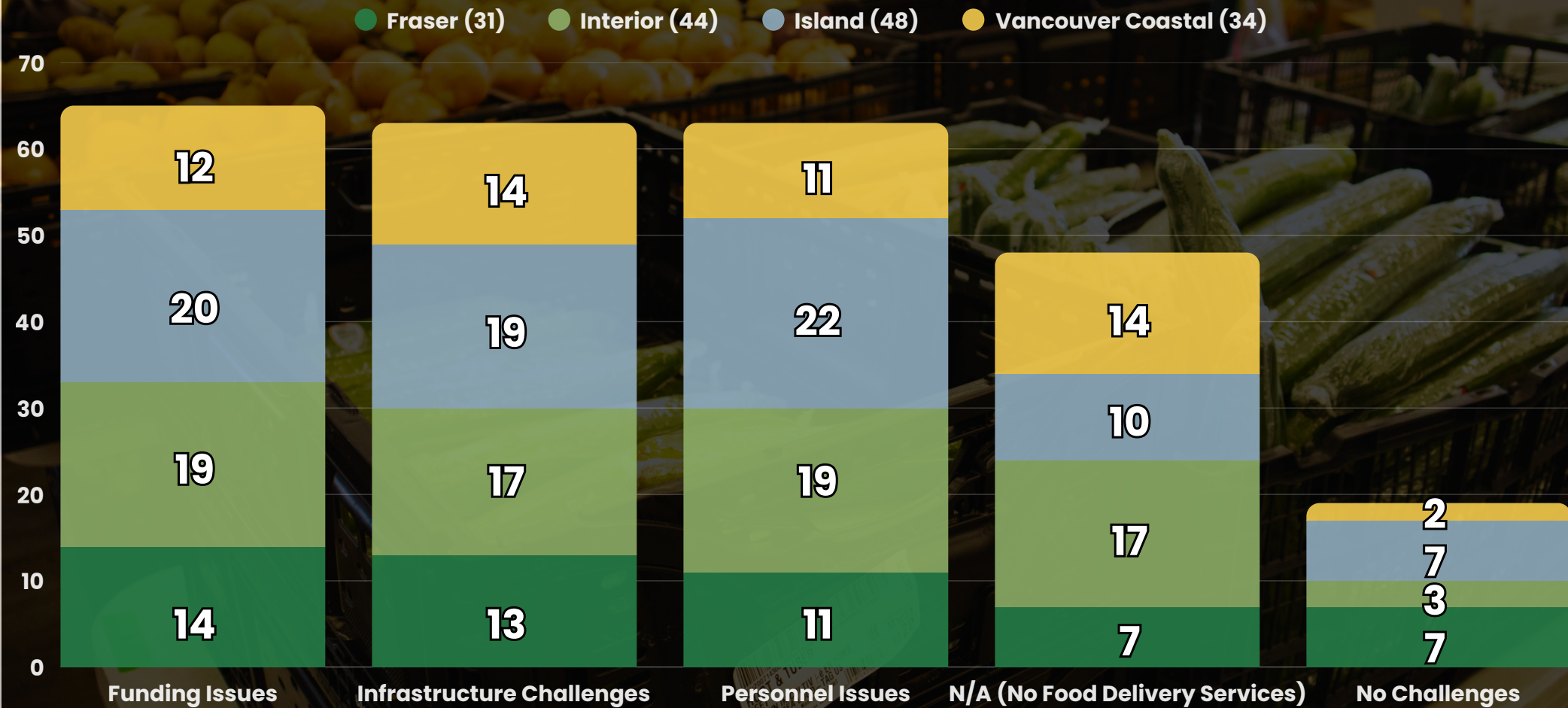
Food delivery services are particularly critical for community members with transit or mobility issues who have barriers in traveling to and from a site. Approximately 60% of food access organizations across the province are experiencing challenges with food delivery services (see Figure 4).

Many organizations struggle with staffing and volunteer shortages, often leading to burnout. Some can only manage small-scale or emergency deliveries, while others have ceased delivery programs due to limited resources. Financial constraints, including inadequate funding and high costs for vehicles and insurance, further restrict delivery services.

Logistical challenges are also widespread, including difficulties coordinating with clients, inaccessible locations like encampments, and shortages of reliable drivers or vehicles. While some organizations partner with local groups to address delivery needs, these collaborations are often constrained by limited capacity and infrastructure.



Figure 4: Food delivery challenges
(Number of responses: 157)



Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



“There's been a lot of infrastructure grants coming out; it's a crazy competitive process for those. You put so much time into them and then they're oversubscribed. It's just apologies on the other end. **There is so little in terms of staffing capacity. The leadership burnout is real.** The grant writing cycle burnout, and then looking at these grants and not even being able to see the people power in them or just having very insignificant percentages that can go towards the people...
(Focus Group Participant)”



Local Infrastructure

Across BC, local infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting food access programs, with the majority of organizations having access to floor space, cold storage, and general storage (see Table 7).

Over 70% of food access organizations identify this infrastructure as essential to their operations, while more than half also depend on technological infrastructure and cleaning equipment to maintain efficient service. While equipment such as pallet jacks, forklifts, and food processing tools are important for some operations, their availability and utilization are not uniform across all organizations.

Cold storage, storage, and physical floor space were identified as infrastructure that food access organizations need the most (see Table 8). Many organizations also indicated a need for refrigerated transportation, food processing equipment, and kitchen space. Infrastructure constraints limit the ability of organizations to serve their communities effectively and expand their programs to meet growing demand.



Table 7: Current infrastructure
(Number of responses)

	BC (157)	Fraser (29)	Interior (44)	Island (49)	Vancouver Coastal (35)
Physical floor space	80%	79%	77%	82%	83%
Cold storage	78%	66%	84%	80%	83%
Storage	77%	79%	75%	76%	80%
Kitchen/ processing space	63%	48%	68%	65%	71%
Technological infrastructure	60%	52%	57%	59%	71%
Cleaning equipment	56%	45%	45%	67%	66%
Non-refrigerated transportation	49%	59%	41%	37%	60%
Processing equipment	42%	31%	39%	47%	51%
Preservation equipment	27%	14%	32%	33%	29%
Refrigerated transportation	20%	21%	16%	24%	17%

Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



Table 8: Needed Infrastructure
(Number of responses)

	BC (147)	Fraser (28)	Interior (40)	Island (47)	Vancouver Coastal (32)
Storage	76%	71%	80%	79%	75%
Cold storage	68%	54%	75%	60%	84%
Physical floor space	59%	50%	60%	57%	69%
Refrigerated transportation	46%	39%	48%	45%	53%
Preservation equipment	43%	36%	53%	38%	47%
Processing equipment	42%	25%	58%	36%	50%
Kitchen/ processing space	41%	32%	43%	36%	53%
Non-refrigerated transportation	33%	25%	30%	36%	41%
Cleaning equipment	28%	14%	40%	15%	44%
Technological infrastructure	27%	11%	25%	30%	41%

Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



Food Access Programming and Services

Community Engagement

Community engagement plays a crucial role in shaping food access programs across BC. Currently, community members contribute to program development as workers or volunteers, participation in community needs assessments, and providing feedback on program operations (see Figure 5).

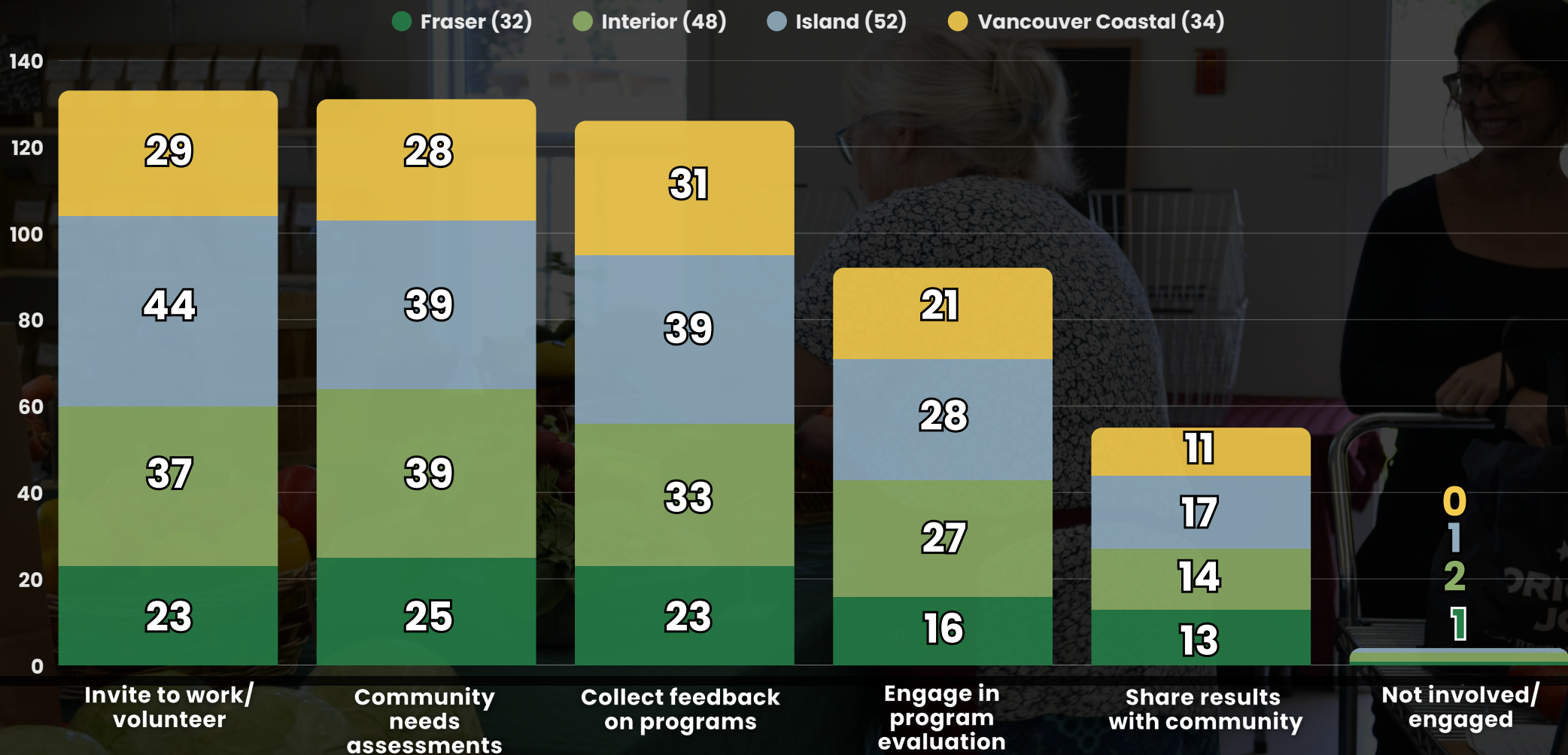
These efforts ensure that programming is tailored to the unique needs of local populations, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and inclusivity in creating effective and dignified pathways to accessing food.

“We have really incredible **participant-led programs** that we've piloted for the last few years and are now core to how we run our food skills program. Folks who access our services are the teachers and facilitators and leaders of our cooking classes.
(Interview Participant)

“Being directly involved in the program beyond just being a client was super beneficial. It wasn't something that was formally in place with the food bank, someone would just say how could they help. Working with the food banks can be super fruitful and beneficial for both sides. The volunteers are able to support their communities and maybe have a leading role with the organization, and the organization is able to tap into the **volunteers with lived experience for more insight into the communities' needs and demands.**
(Interview Participant)



Figure 5: Current Types of community engagement
(Number of responses: 166)



Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.





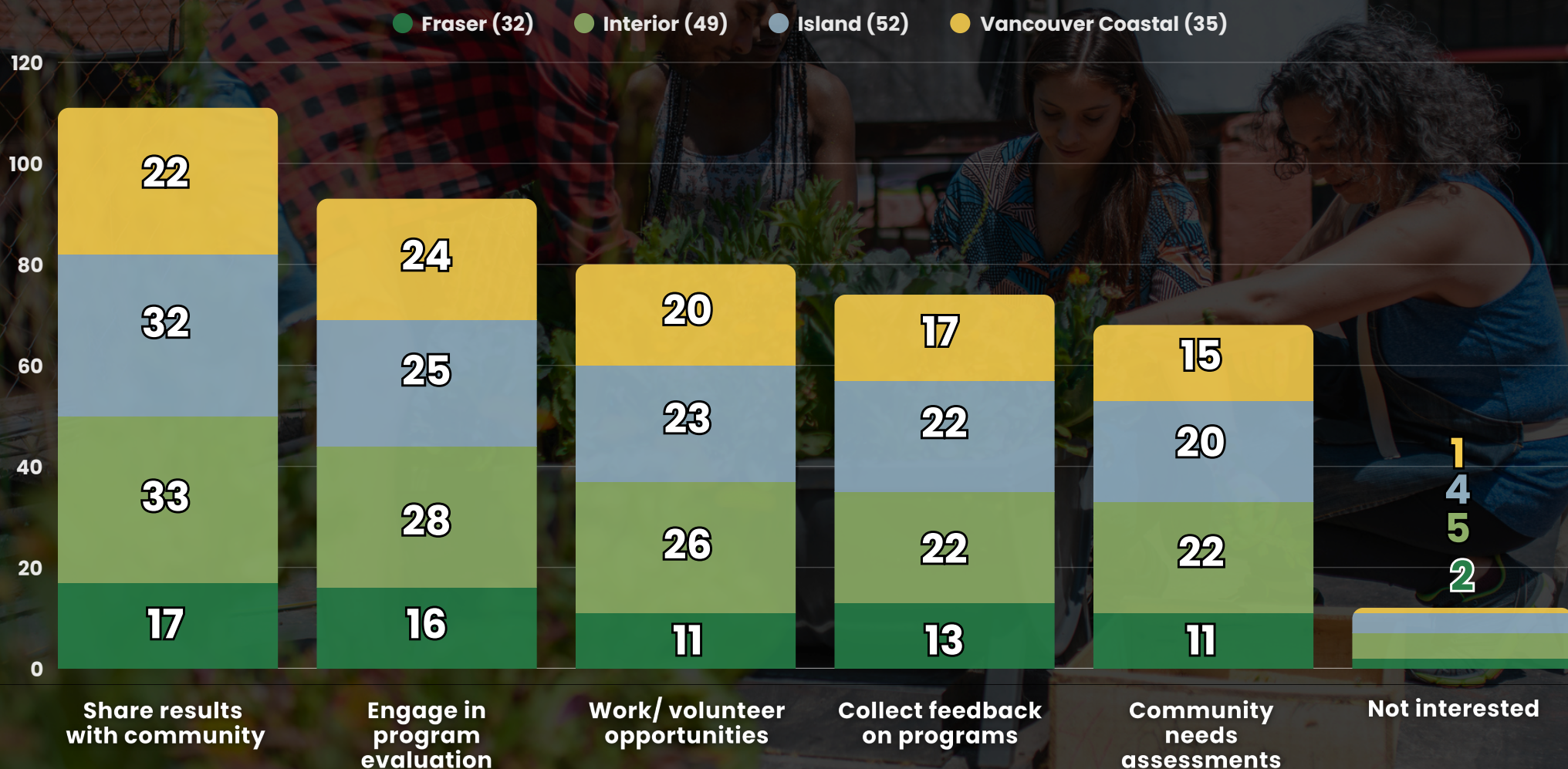
There is a strong interest in expanding community engagement activities across BC (see Figure 6).

Organizations are particularly interested in involving community members in program evaluations, sharing the evaluation results with the community, and creating more opportunities for individuals to contribute through work or volunteering. These aspirations reflect a desire to deepen community involvement in the design and implementation of food access programs to ensure programs remain adaptable and impactful in the face of shifting demands and conditions.

Expanding community engagement across all regions will require addressing key resource limitations. Funding remains the most pressing need, followed by staff capacity to manage expanded activities (see Figure 7). Many organizations are already operating at full capacity, limiting their ability to expand community engagement activities.



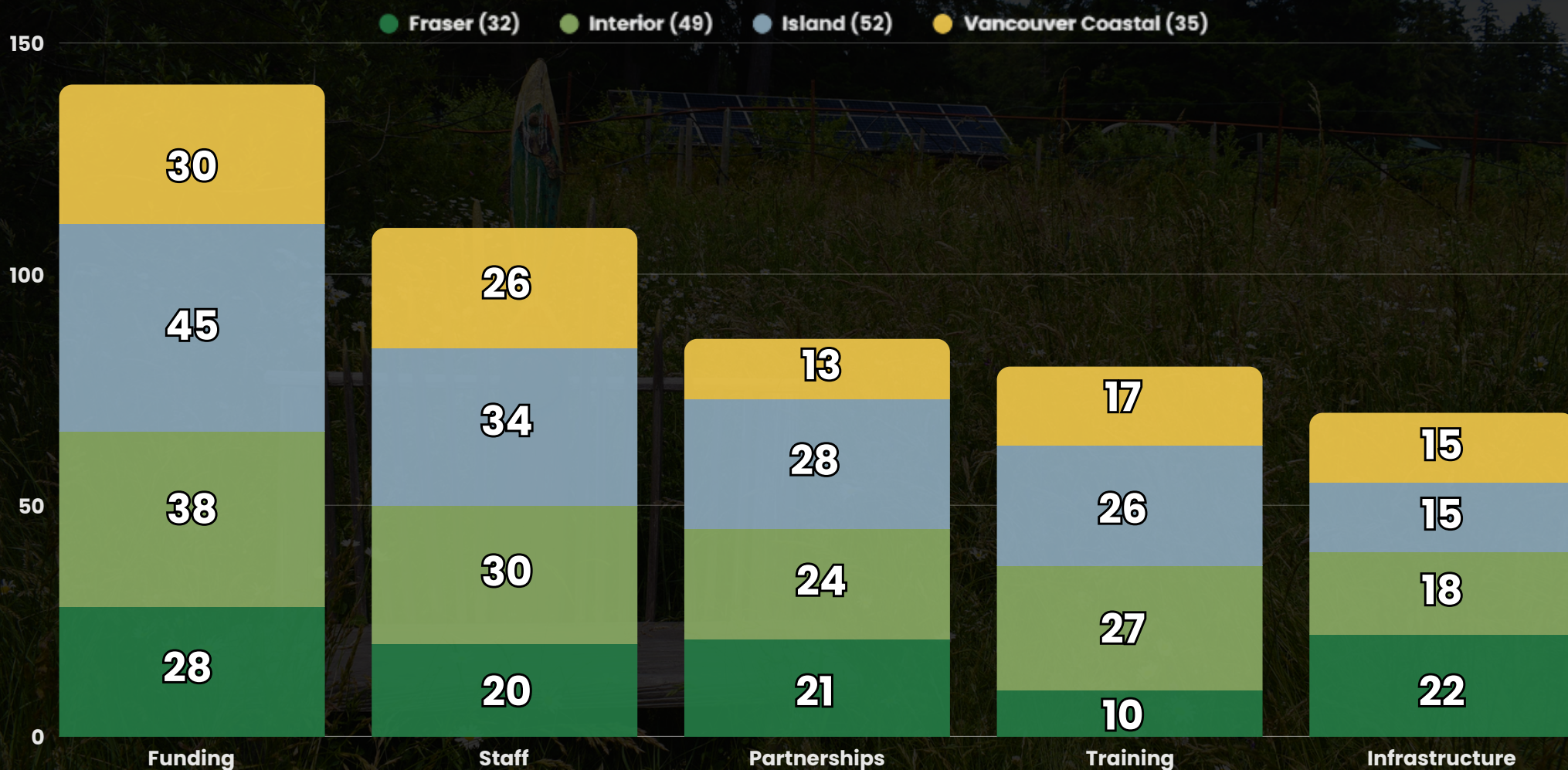
Figure 6: Interest in community engagement by type
(Number of responses: 168)



Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



Figure 7: Resources needed to expand community engagement
(Number of responses: 168)



Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



“I’m taking an approach in which I’m a **community engagement focused person**. I’m listening to the community, and then I’m working with the local government, and I’m working with other partners, and I’m working with students. So, we’ve got this cohesive mind meld...
(Focus Group Participant)”



Advocacy

Advocacy is more than policy reform in the food access space. It includes efforts that span individual, community, and provincial or national levels, with organizations aiming to address food security and systemic barriers through a variety of approaches.⁶

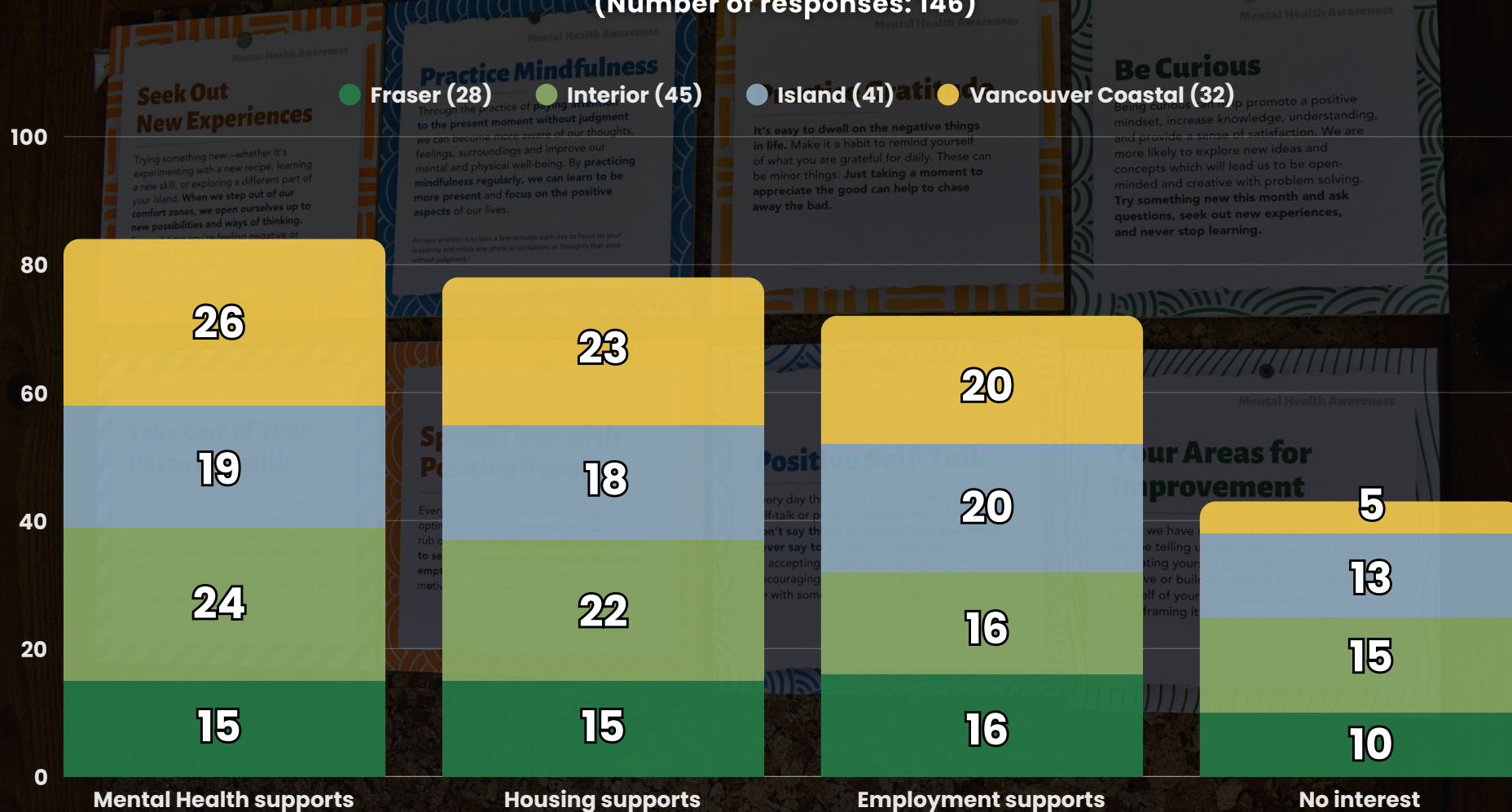
At the individual level, current advocacy efforts focus on providing mental health support, housing assistance, and employment-related guidance (see Figure 8).

Many organizations expressed interest in expanding individual-level advocacy activities, particularly in areas such as mental health, housing, and employment support (see Figure 9).

However, about one-third of respondents indicated a lack of interest in individual-level advocacy due to other community-based organizations already specializing in these areas.



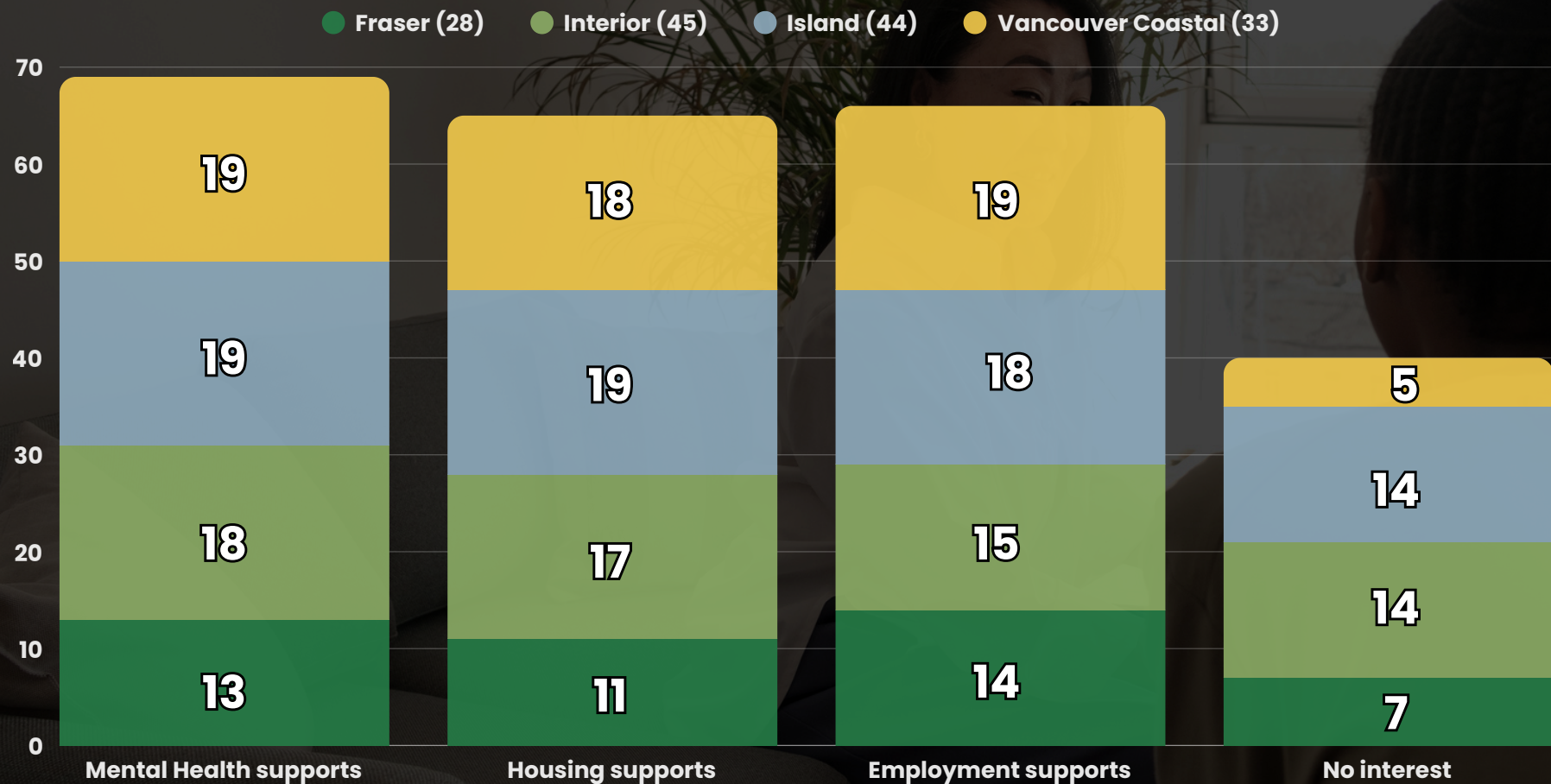
Figure 8: Current engagement in individual-level advocacy
(Number of responses: 146)



Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



Figure 9: Interest in individual-level advocacy
(Number of responses: 150)



Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



In terms of advocacy at the community level, organizations are actively collaborating with others to enhance communication about how the public can provide quality food to community members and collaborating with other organizations to ensure meal programs are offered multiple days and times throughout the week (see Table 9).

These are the most common forms of community-level advocacy. However, there is notable interest in moving beyond collaboration to actively engage in education campaigns that aim to shift public perceptions of food insecurity (see Table 10).

This reflects a growing recognition of the importance of addressing stigma and shaping public opinion and understanding.



“We offer a community engagement program. It recognizes that, while food security is our focus, people who are living on low income are often looking for resources and other kinds of wrap around services that we might not be able to provide...**It's about connecting and creating channels for referral systems through other organizations.** (Interview Participant)



Table 9: Current Engagement in Community-Level Advocacy
(Number of responses)

	BC (152)	Fraser (31)	Interior (42)	Island (45)	Vancouver Coastal (34)
Collaborate – communicate on public provided food	58%	68%	52%	58%	56%
Collaborate – meal programs offered multiple days	59%	58%	52%	53%	71%
Education campaigns – shift food insecurity perception	38%	45%	33%	33%	41%
Collaborate with local farmers – establish food markets	36%	26%	38%	40%	41%
Collaborate with school boards on food procurement	37%	45%	33%	38%	32%
Create affordable transportation system	22%	26%	21%	13%	26%
Not yet engaging in advocacy	9%	6%	12%	9%	9%

Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



Table 10: Interest in Community-Level Advocacy
(Number of responses)

	BC (143)	Fraser (29)	Interior (38)	Island (44)	Vancouver Coastal (32)
Education campaigns – shift food insecurity perception	65%	66%	61%	61%	72%
Collaborate – communicate on public provided food	61%	66%	61%	50%	69%
Collaborate with local farmers – establish food markets	59%	59%	58%	57%	63%
Collaborate – ensure meal programs offered multiple days	54%	48%	58%	52%	59%
Collaborate with school boards on food procurement	45%	55%	45%	32%	50%
Create affordable transportation system	40%	45%	45%	25%	44%
Not yet engaging in advocacy	4%	0%	3%	7%	6%

Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



“A lot of these organizations don't have the opportunity to be speaking to one another and then more or less are doing the same thing. They end up fighting for the same pots of funding, and it might be duplicating the exact same services because of a lack of awareness and a lack of communication. **How can we better make use of the resources we have by not duplicating services or having those fragmented efforts?** Just making the whole system a little bit more efficient. That goes hand in hand with cross-sector collaborations or just that overall collaboration in general.
(Focus Group Participant)”

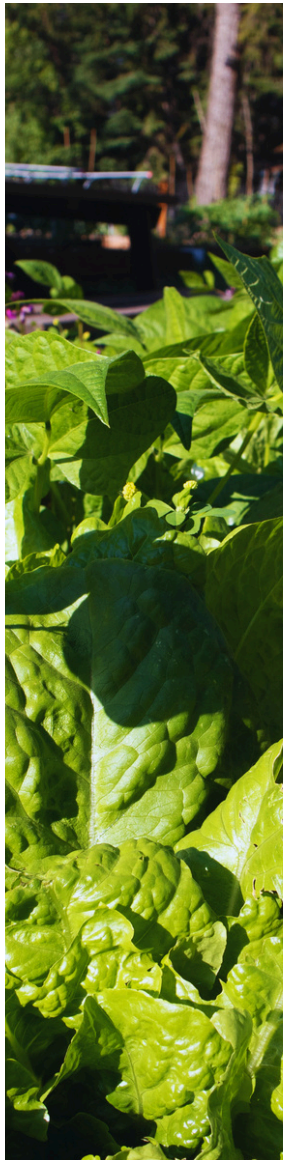




“What does a network do? So, keeping us on a network track of providing backbone support for other organizations, creating common goals and objectives that we can collectively move toward, and developing strong communications to bring the network together. **These are practices of collective impact and network building.** They've continued to bring us back to that purpose, which has made a big difference. And continuing to justify why we don't deliver programs so that we can hold the bigger picture, coordinate a network of people, and support those who are boots on the ground, without having to be the boots on the ground. *(Interview Participant)*”



“**If we have the time and staff capacity to build coalitions or dedicate toward building coalitions,** then what those coalitions can do to support bigger, broader transformation in terms of advocating for municipal level policy change or service development that can go towards operational costs of these organizations in the community, and then moving up maybe to provincial or federal advocacy from there.
(Focus Group Participant)



In terms of provincial and national advocacy, nearly half of respondents report no current engagement in activities at these levels (see Table 11). Nevertheless, there is significant interest in initiatives that promote systemic change.

Participants expressed the most interest in campaigns that recognize food as a human right, advocate for national or provincial subsidies on fruits and vegetables, and advance Indigenous food sovereignty (see Table 12).

These priorities highlight a desire to address structural inequities that perpetuate food insecurity.

Expanding engagement in advocacy efforts across the individual, community, and provincial/national scale requires additional resources. Funding remains the most critical need, followed by staff capacity and training (see Figure 10).



Table 11: Current engagement in Provincial/ National-Level Advocacy
(Number of responses)

	BC (142)	Fraser (27)	Interior (43)	Island (43)	Vancouver Coastal (29)
Not yet engaging in advocacy	48%	41%	51%	53%	45%
Support food as a human right	31%	37%	21%	21%	45%
Create affordable housing	26%	30%	26%	16%	31%
Income supports	25%	30%	21%	9%	41%
School meal programs	23%	26%	23%	23%	21%
Support of living wages	22%	22%	19%	16%	31%
Mental health counseling and addiction services	21%	22%	26%	14%	21%
Advance Indigenous food sovereignty	18%	15%	23%	12%	24%
Campaigns regarding harm reduction	15%	15%	19%	9%	17%
National/ provincial subsidies on fruits and veggies	15%	15%	19%	9%	17%
Support programs for those leaving incarceration	6%	11%	2%	7%	3%
Expand PharmaCare plans	5%	27%	5%	5%	3%

Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.





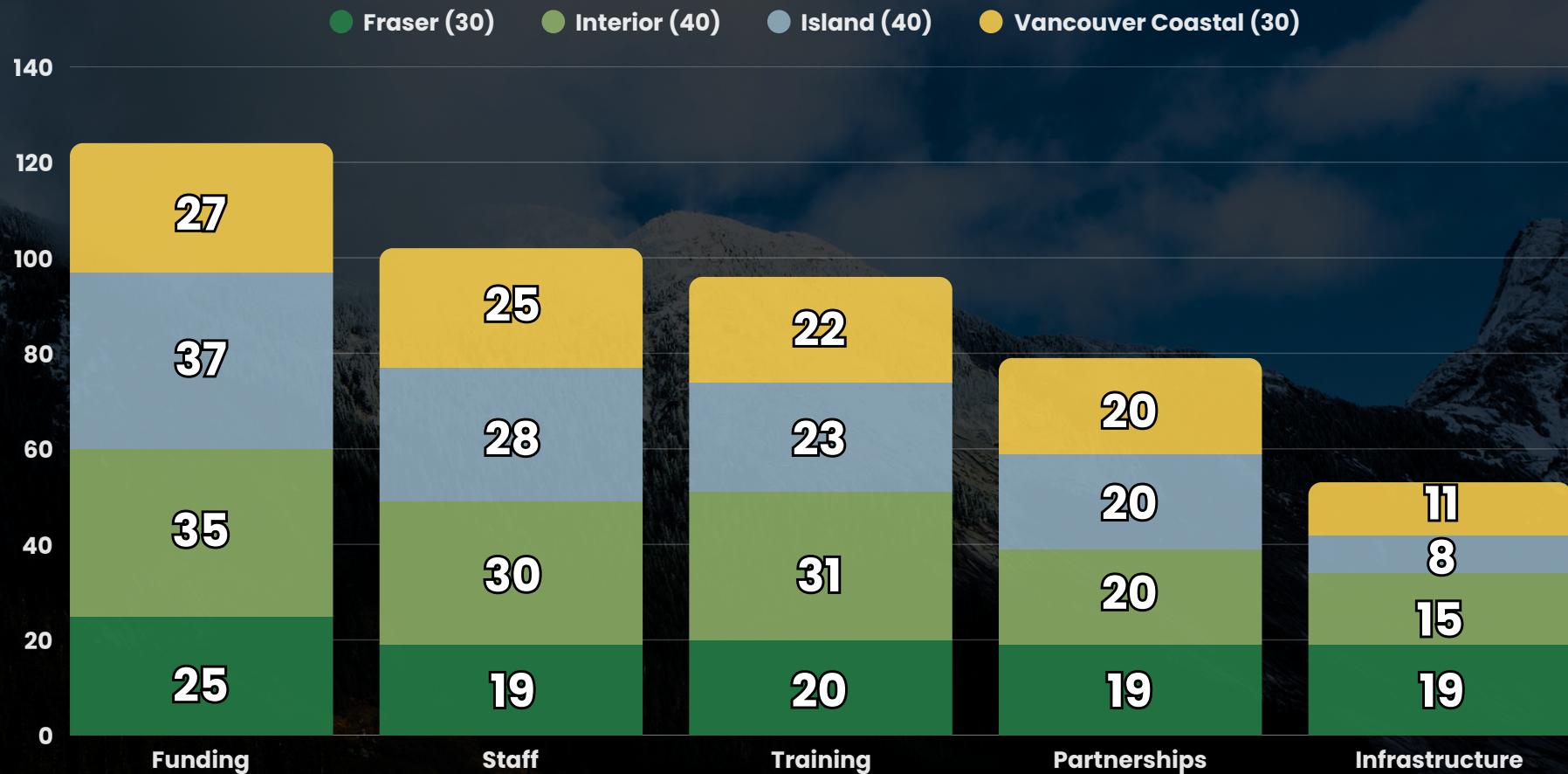
Table 12: Interest in Provincial/ National-Level Advocacy
(Number of responses)

	BC (134)	Fraser (26)	Interior (40)	Island (40)	Vancouver Coastal (28)
Support food as a human right	54%	62%	38%	50%	68%
National/provincial subsidies on fruits and veggies	48%	50%	50%	38%	54%
Advance Indigenous food sovereignty	44%	38%	50%	35%	54%
Income supports	42%	50%	38%	28%	54%
Support of living wages	38%	38%	38%	30%	46%
School meal programs	39%	62%	38%	28%	29%
Create affordable housing	38%	42%	30%	28%	54%
Mental health counseling and addiction services	29%	31%	33%	18%	36%
Campaigns regarding harm reduction	25%	27%	28%	15%	32%
Support programs for those leaving incarceration	20%	23%	18%	13%	25%
Expand PharmaCare plans	18%	23%	20%	13%	18%
No interest	17%	8%	23%	23%	14%

Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



Figure 10: Resources needed to expand advocacy
(Number of responses: 140)



Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



“We’ve made a shift in our visioning and strategizing about how we’re going to be moving forward, and that includes that social enterprise piece. The projects we’re working on must incorporate some sort of social enterprise piece in order to keep us going. If we have a **complex web of programs** that can help sustain each other.

(Interview Participant)”

“We are working towards a system where there is a **centralized way of collecting food over a large geographical area** to ensure that every nonprofit in that large geographical area has the food they need to thrive.

(Focus Group Participant)”

“As far as our vision is concerned, we exist to disrupt cycles of food insecurity. We work to do that through access to healthy and affordable food. That is our complete purpose in this world...We do this by bridging the gap that exists between food banks and traditional retail grocery stores...We bridge that gap by providing a grocery shopping experience for those who need us based on three principles: **dignity, access, and sustainability.**

(Interview Participant)”



Food Access Service Models

Survey responses (n=148/168) reveal a diverse range of service models used by organizations to improve food access. A breakdown of the following six selected service models represents the spectrum of food access interventions across the province:

Some organizations selected one model, while others selected multiple models.

The latter is an indication of the prevalence of food access organizations across the province that offer multiple types of programming to improve food access in their community.

Among the 148/168 respondents, 63 (43%) organizations selected only one service model, while 85 (57%) selected multiple service models.



105
71%

Charity-Based Models:

offer food hampers, market-style distribution, and/or shopping-style services. This model is the most common among respondents.

79
49%

Community Food Hubs:

are part of a network of partners working collectively to improve food security, including contributing to a central point for food distribution.

43
29%

Community Gardens:

offer community gardens as part of their food access strategy, providing fresh produce to the community.

35
24%

Institutional Procurement:

are involved in institutional procurement, which includes supplying food to schools, daycares, hospitals, or other institutions with meal programs.

32
22%

Social Enterprises:

are engaged in social enterprises that generate revenue through food-related activities while maintaining their focus on social good.

16
11%

Indigenous Food Sovereignty: focus on promoting Indigenous food sovereignty by supporting traditional food practices, preserving cultural food knowledge, and providing access to culturally significant foods.





Role in Supporting Local Food Systems

The primary source of food for programs across BC is donated or rescued food, with 78% of respondents identifying this as a key supply (see Figure 11). Local grocers, food businesses, and large chain grocery stores also play a significant role, with more than half of respondents sourcing food from these outlets.

By contrast, community-grown food and direct purchases from local farmers are less common, chosen by about 35% of respondents. Hence, reliance on the local food system is lower in all regions. This trend is particularly pronounced in Fraser Health, where few participants reported sourcing community-grown food and purchasing directly from local farmers.

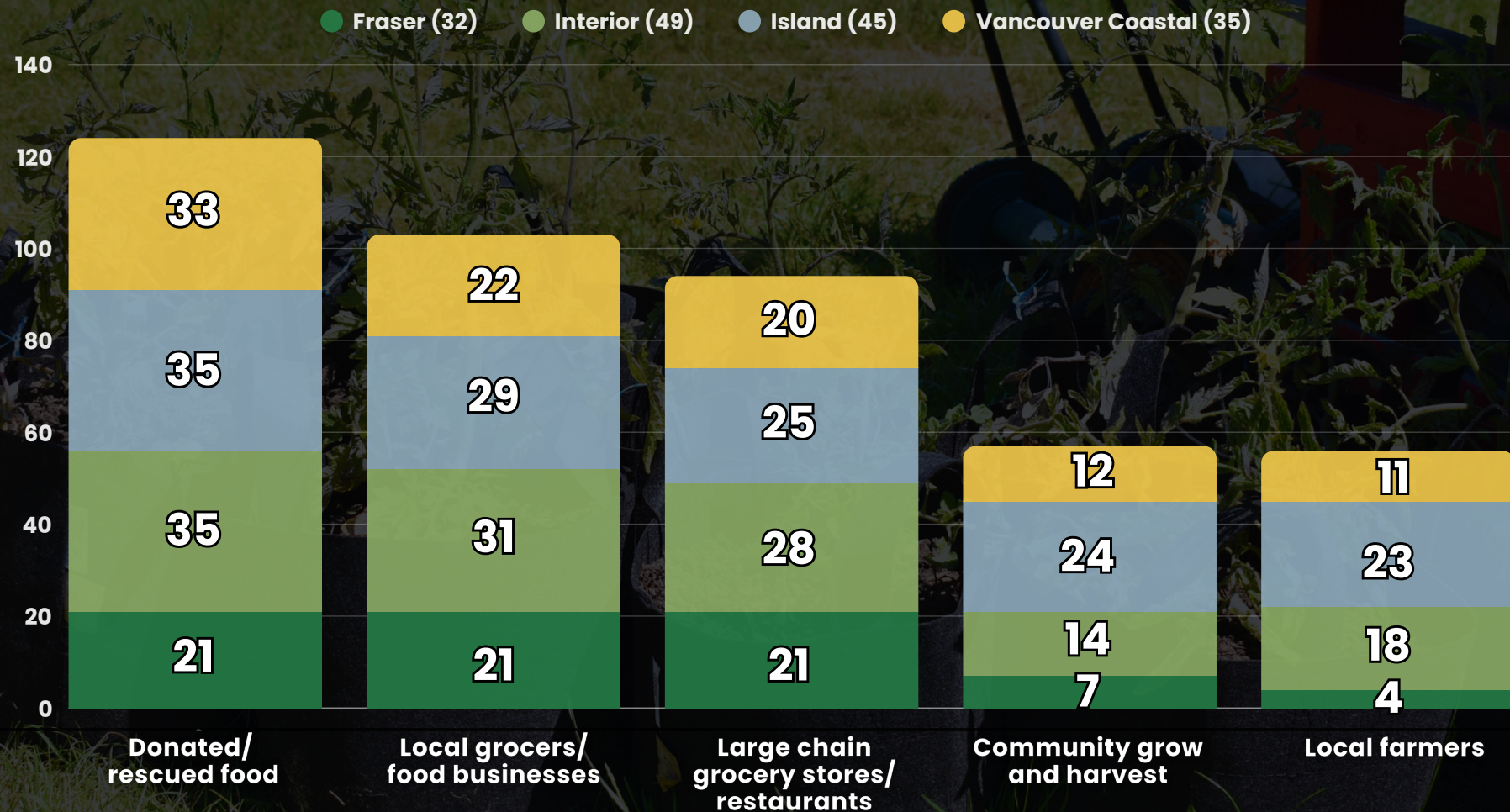
Some organizations benefit from seasonal produce donations from farms and participate in food recovery partnerships or purchase from wholesale distributors. Overall, donated and rescued food, combined with partnerships with grocery stores and distributors, form the backbone of food supply for food access programs across the province.

“There is this invisible network of **food distribution and recovery** that gets little acknowledgment and support.
(Interview Participant)”

“Our approach always centers support for **small and medium scale farmers**. What can we undertake that support those farming businesses being able to thrive, but also grow over time.
(Interview Participant)”



Figure 11: Where food is sourced
(Number of responses: 161)



Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.



For organizations that do source their food directly from local farmers, donations are the most common method, utilized by 60% of respondents (see Figure 12). Purchasing food from farmers, either at regular or discounted prices, is less frequent, with Fraser Health showing the lowest rates of regular-price purchases and the highest number of programs not sourcing from farmers at all.

“I'm excited that we get to directly serve wonderful fresh food that's organically grown, right at the school. Farmers genuinely want their food to go to all community members, but we acknowledge that small and medium farmers are not subsidized, which means we need a certain price on the food to break even. Most of the time small and medium farms are losing money annually. **The system is broken, but small-scale farmers are so excited that their food can be subsidized for families.** (Interview Participant)”

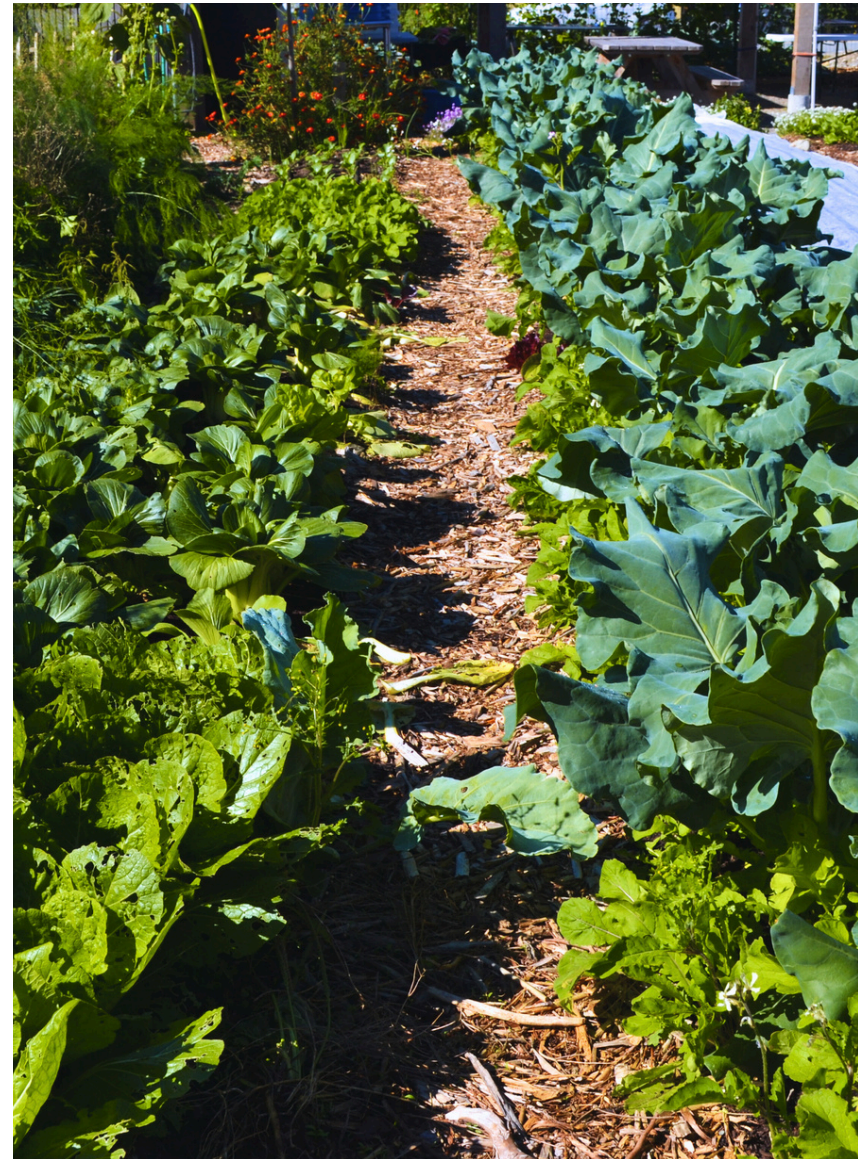
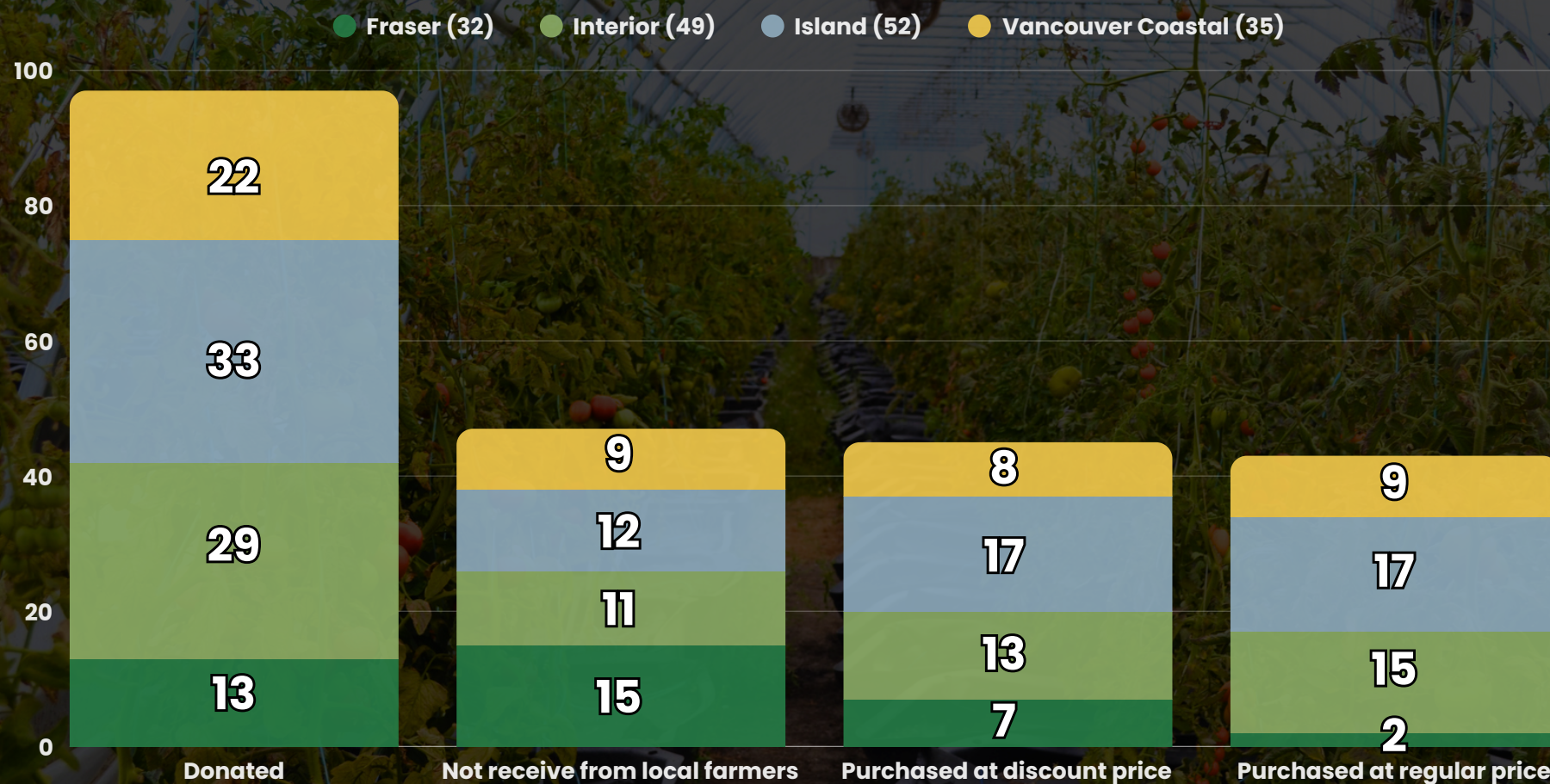
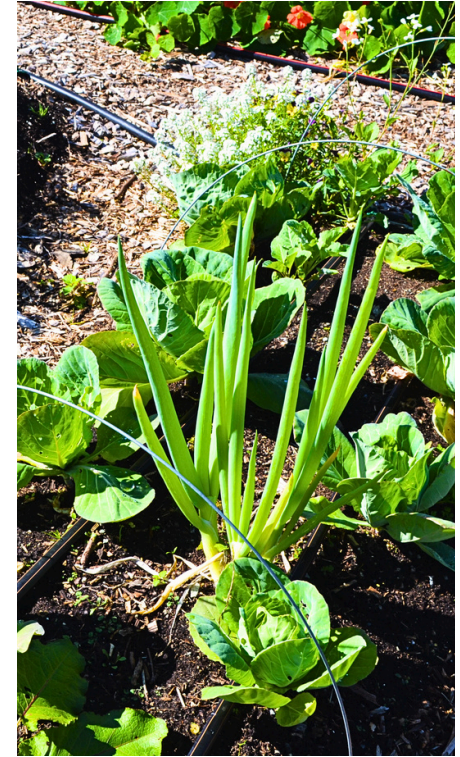
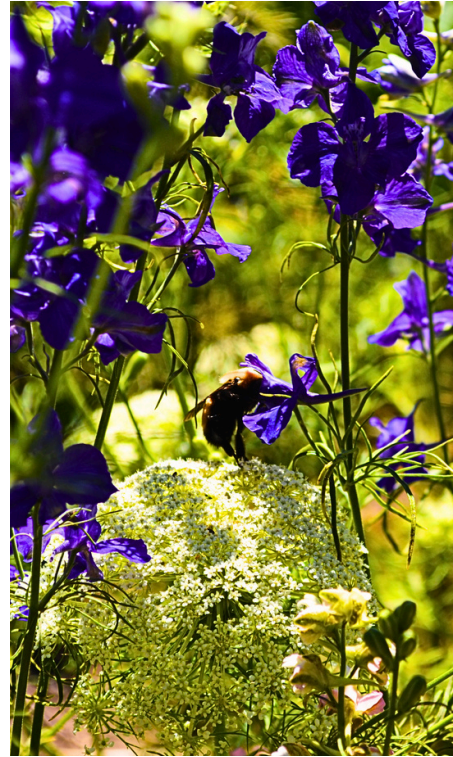


Figure 12: How food is sourced from local farmers
(Number of responses: 168)



Source: BC PHABC Food Access Provider Survey (Excluding Northern Health) 2024.

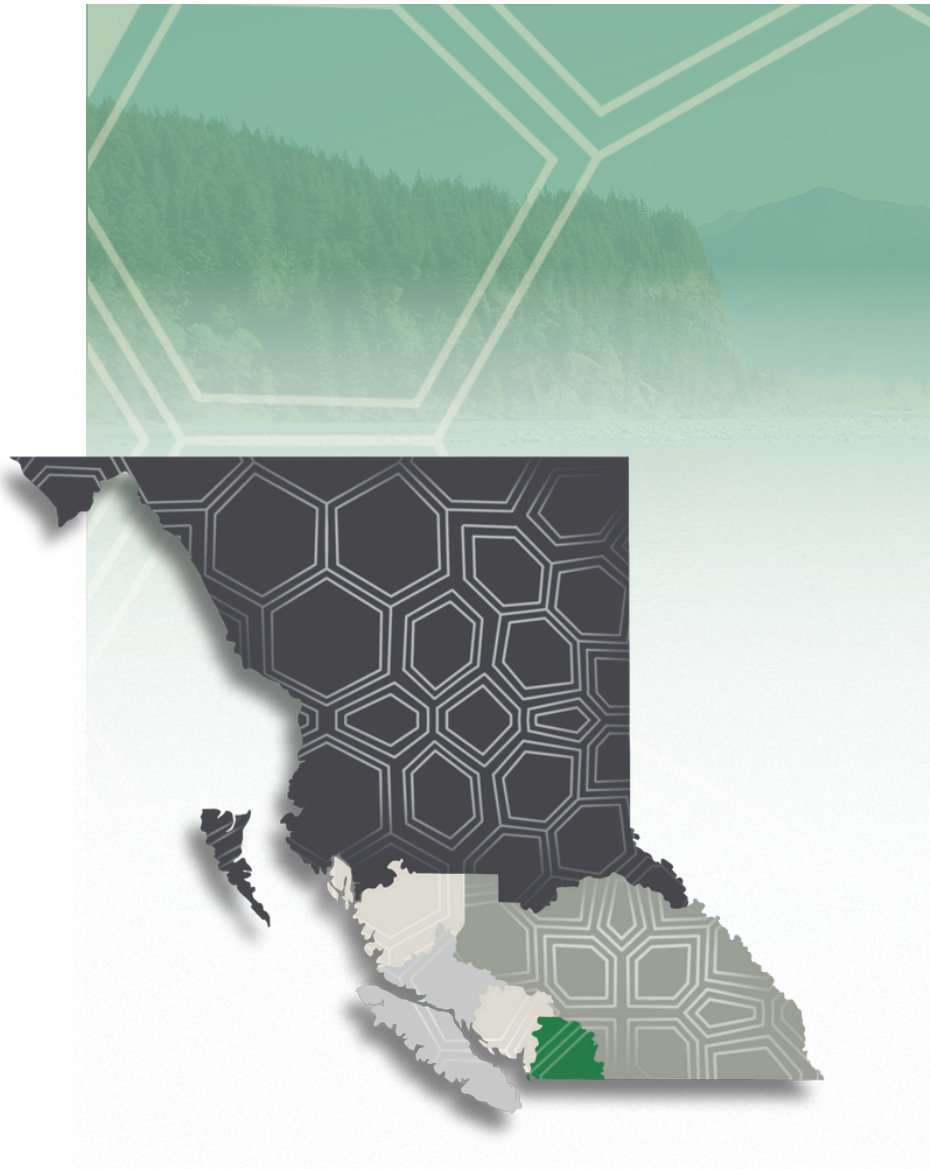






Regional Highlights





Fraser

The Fraser Health region is distinctively characterized by its increasing cultural diversity, with a notable influx of refugee claimants requiring specialized programming and culturally appropriate food options.

The region faces unique challenges from heat domes and mudslides, which have led to the development of food security emergency management plans in some organizations.

While some facilities benefit from commercial kitchens and designated shelter spaces, many organizations struggle with limited food storage facilities and a reliance on non-governmental funding.

High living costs particularly impact families, Indigenous groups, and immigrant communities. Organizations in this region also stand out for their engagement in private sector partnerships to support food rescue and food delivery efforts.





Interior

The Interior Health region stands out for its challenging rural and mountainous geography, making it especially vulnerable to extreme weather events like wildfires, floods, and avalanches, which frequently disrupt food distribution and agriculture. The region's demographic shifts show a unique increase in migrant workers, students, and working families seeking food assistance for the first time.

Organizations in this region have developed distinctive adaptive strategies to mitigate environmental risks, including initiatives to enhance biodiversity and reduce forest fuel loads.

The region's isolation has led to innovative solutions, such as specialized emergency contact systems for elderly residents and strong partnerships with local suppliers. Although the heavy reliance on volunteer drivers and personal vehicles raises concerns about sustainability, organizations demonstrate a strong commitment to community-driven solutions, including the development of community food assets like refrigerated storage and gardens.





Island

The Island Health region faces unique challenges due to its critical dependence on ferry services, which impact food security during extreme weather events and service disruptions. This vulnerability is particularly acute for organizations serving the Gulf Islands, where windstorms and power outages frequently complicate food access.

The region has distinctive concerns regarding declining fish populations and water licensing restrictions, which specifically impact Indigenous and small-scale fishing communities.

Organizations have developed unique approaches to community engagement, emphasizing volunteer appreciation through regular community dinners and events. They are notably focused on moving away from traditional charitable models toward programs that prioritize dignity and autonomy, while leveraging local partnerships and non-perishable food storage solutions to build resilience in their food systems.

Despite these efforts, ongoing challenges like limited cold storage and high transportation costs remain significant barriers to building resilience.





Vancouver Coastal

The Vancouver Coastal Health region is distinguished by its dense urban environment and unique demographic needs, serving a growing population of Indigenous clients, large families, and immigrants and refugees in an environment of high housing costs and poverty rates.

The region benefits from a comprehensive network of community food assets, including shared spaces, warehouses stocked with non-perishable items, and a fleet of trucks, but it faces distinctive urban challenges such as restricted road access for large vehicles.

Organizations in this region have developed innovative urban farming initiatives and are particularly proactive in collaborating with local governments on food security policies. They stand out for their approach to community engagement, offering stipends to encourage participation in decision making processes and maintaining a strong focus on developing sustainable urban food systems through initiatives like food corridors and urban farms. Additionally, they are advocating for equitable policies that support Indigenous and culturally diverse populations.





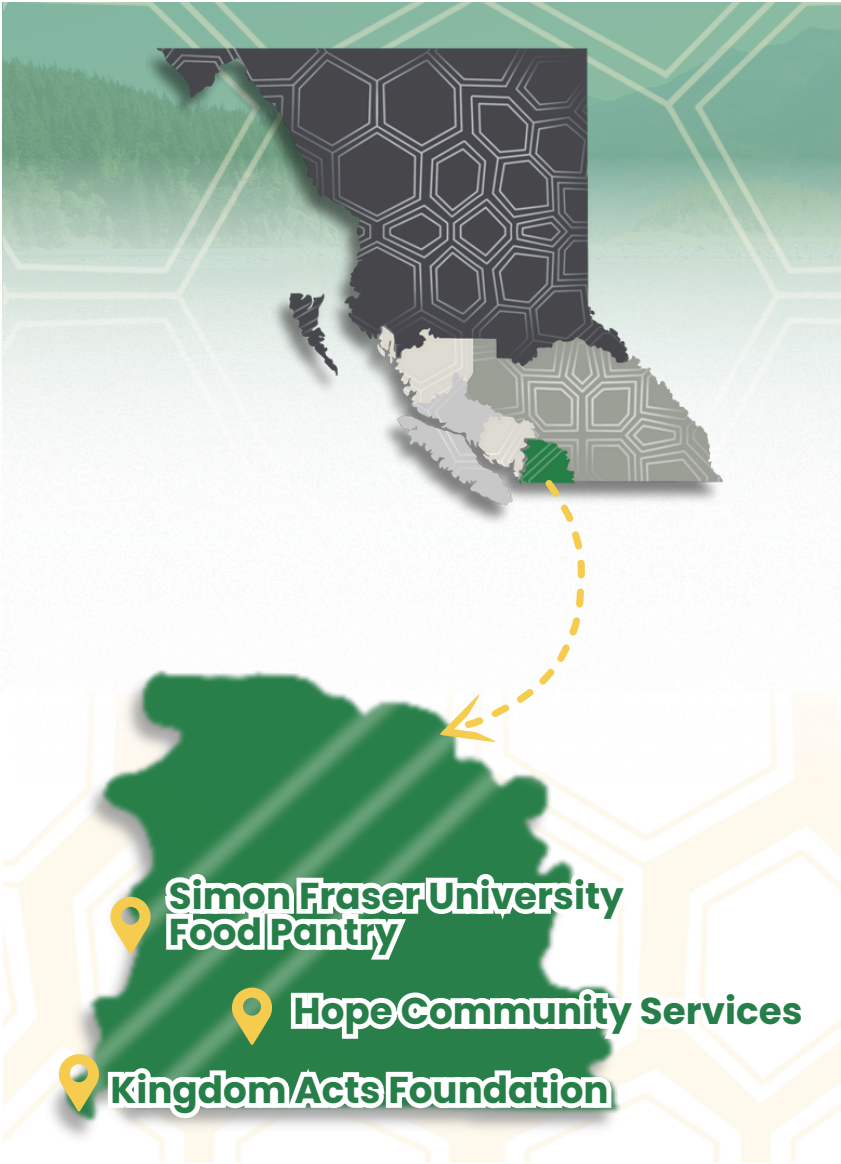
Site Visit Summary

Tables 13-16 below provide an overview of the 22 site visits conducted by the team across the province. These visits included three sites in Fraser Health (Burnaby, Surrey, and Hope); six sites in the Interior (Lytton, Kamloops, Shuswap, Golden, Nelson, and Cranbrook); six sites in Vancouver Island Region and (Galiano, Cowichan Valley, Greater Victoria, and Gabriola); and seven sites in the Vancouver Coastal Health region (Sunshine Coast, Squamish, East Vancouver, and the Downtown Eastside).

To ensure diverse representation, the site visits included programs in urban areas such as Surrey and Vancouver, peri-urban communities such as Kamloops and Cowichan Valley, and rural and remote regions like the Kootenays and Gulf Islands. The programs observed also represent a broad spectrum of service models, including food banks, community garden programs, meal programs, Indigenous reserves and health cooperative programs, community food centers, school food programs (including K-12 and post-secondary), and more. While this approach provided the team with a comprehensive understanding of various geographical and community contexts, we acknowledge that many smaller communities and other food access programs could not be reached due to resource and logistical limitations.



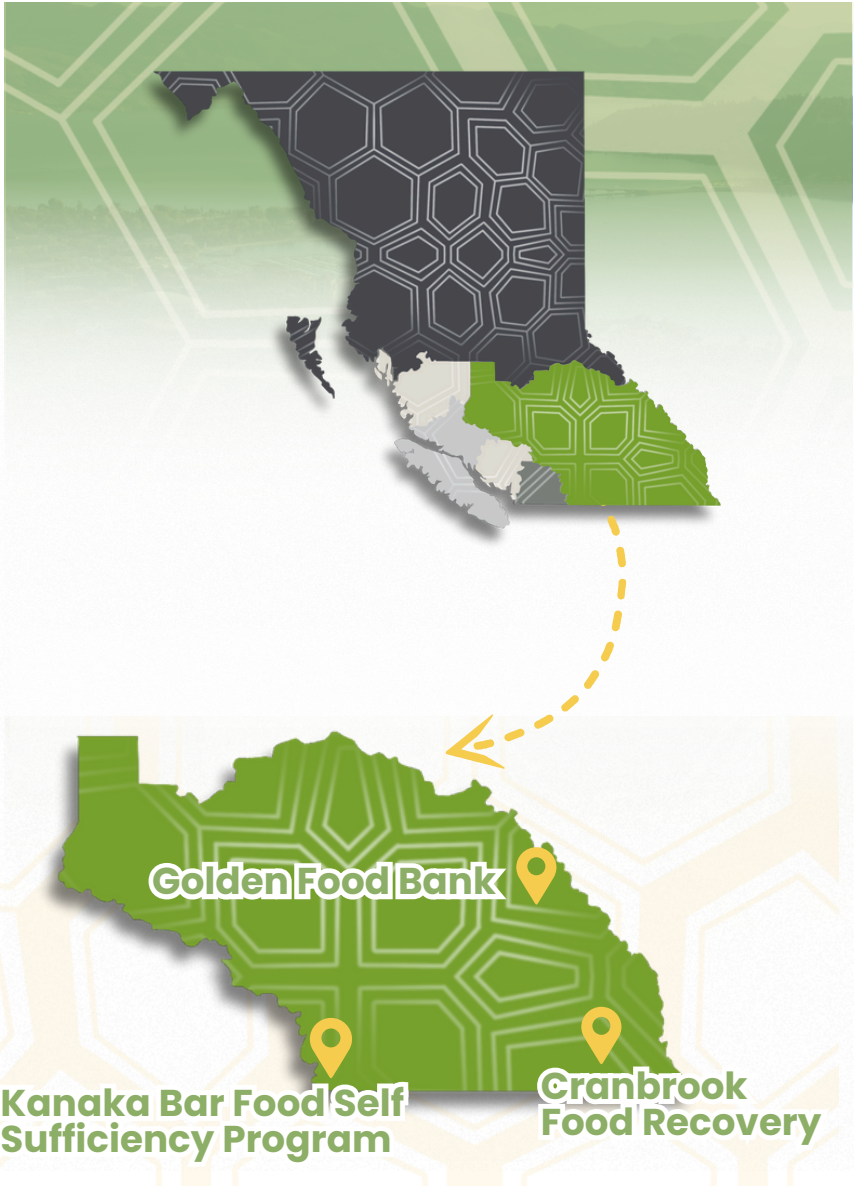
Fraser Table 13: Overview of sites visited



Organization	Hope Community Services	Kingdom Acts Foundation	Simon Fraser University Food Pantry
Area	Hope, Rural	Surrey, Urban	Burnaby, Peri-Urban
FBBC Member	Yes	No	No
Number of Staff; Volunteers	4; 30+	6; 100	2; 10-12
Food Access Programming	 Food Hampers  Food Pantry  Meal Kits  Community Meals  Community Gardens	 Food Pantry	 Food Pantry  Community Fridge
How Food is Sourced	 Rescued/ Donated  Local Grocers  Large Chain Grocers  Grown and Harvested	 Rescued/ Donated  Large Chain Grocers  Local Grocers  Local Farmers	 Rescued/ Donated  Large Chain Grocers



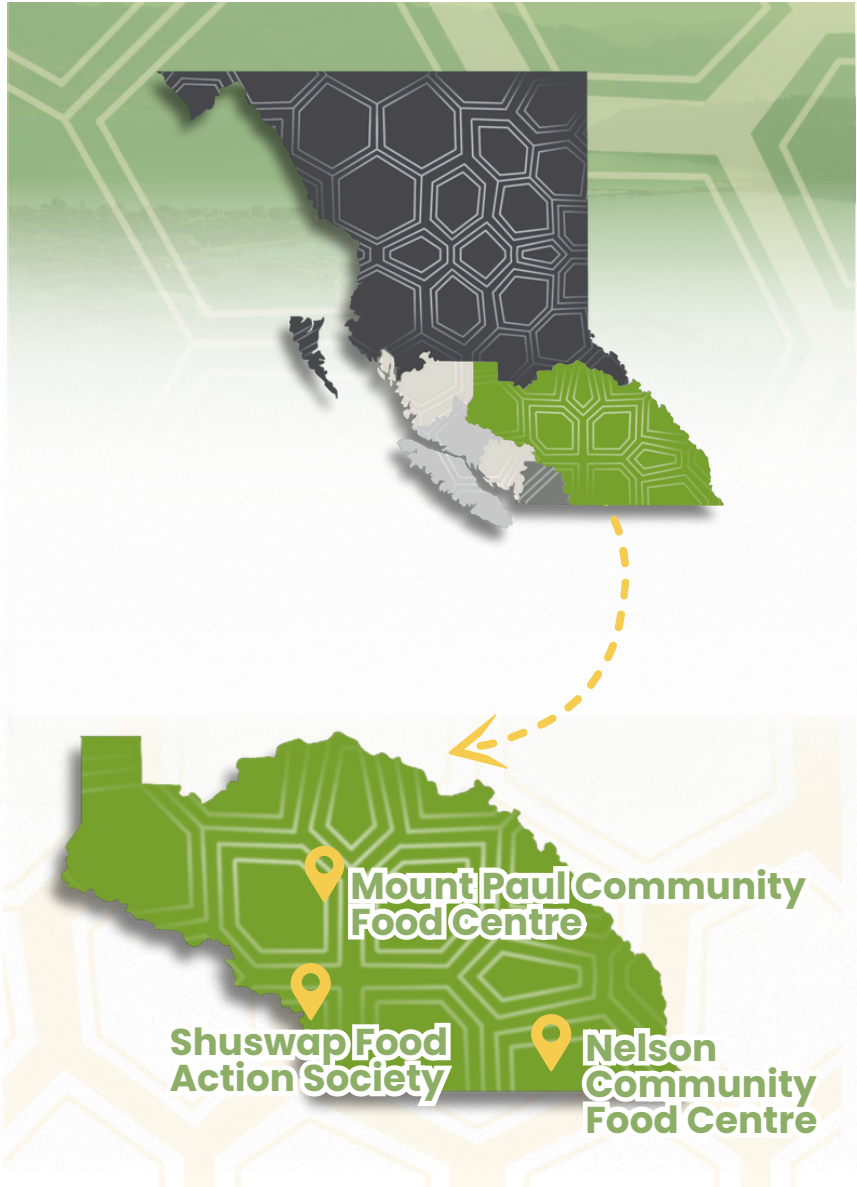
Interior Table 14: Overview of sites visited (part 1 of 2)



Organization	Cranbrook Food Recovery	Kanaka Bar Food Self Sufficiency Program	Golden Food Bank
Area	Cranbrook, Rural	Lytton, Reserve	Kootenays, Rural
FBBC Member	No	No	Yes
Number of Staff; Volunteers	5; 25	5	4; 18
Food Access Programming	 Food Hampers  Community Meals  Community Gardens	 Community Meals  Community Gardens  Food Forest  Traditional Foodways  Beehives	 Food Hampers  Food Pantry  Affordable Market  Community Meals
How Food is Sourced	 Rescued/ Donated  Large Chain Grocers  Grown and Harvested	 Grown and Harvested  Traditional Foodways	 Rescued/ Donated  Local Farmers  Local Grocers  Large Chain Grocers  Grown and Harvested



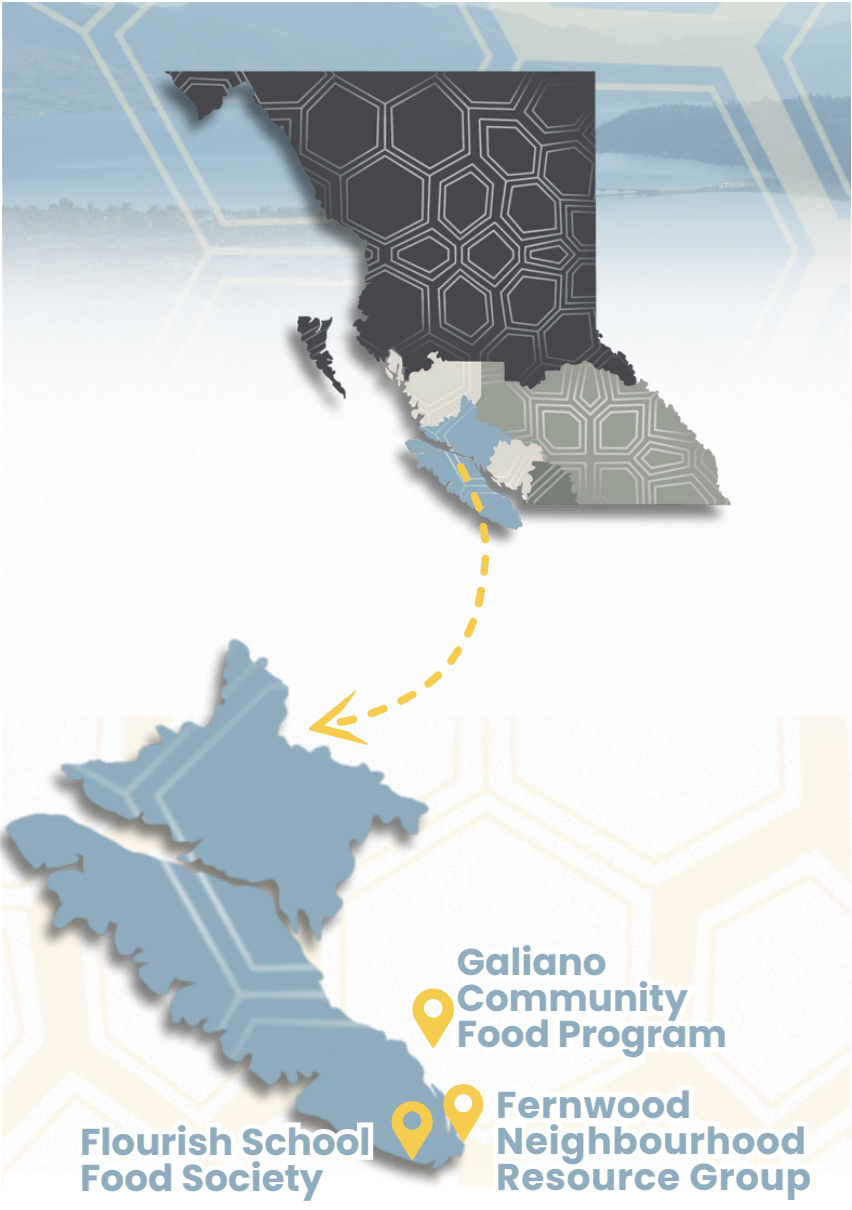
Interior Table 14: Overview of sites visited (part 2 of 2)



Organization	Mount Paul Community Food Centre	Nelson Community Food Centre	Shuswap Food Action Society
Area	Kamloops, Peri-Ubran	Nelson, Rural	Shuswap, Peri-Urban
FBBC Member	No	No	No
Number of Staff; Volunteers	6; 200	6; 36	6; 50
Food Access Programming	 Food Hampers  Food Pantry  Affordable Market  Community Meals  Community Fridge  Community Gardens  Traditional Foodways	 Food Hampers  Bread Program  Food Pantry  Community Meals  Community Gardens  Food Literacy	 School Food Program  Food Hampers  Food Literacy  Community Garden  Farmers Market  Coupons
How Food is Sourced	 Rescued/ Donated  Local Farmers  Local Grocers  Large Chain Grocers  Grown and Harvested  Traditional Foodways	 Rescued/ Donated,  Local Farmers  Large Chain Grocers	 Local Farmers



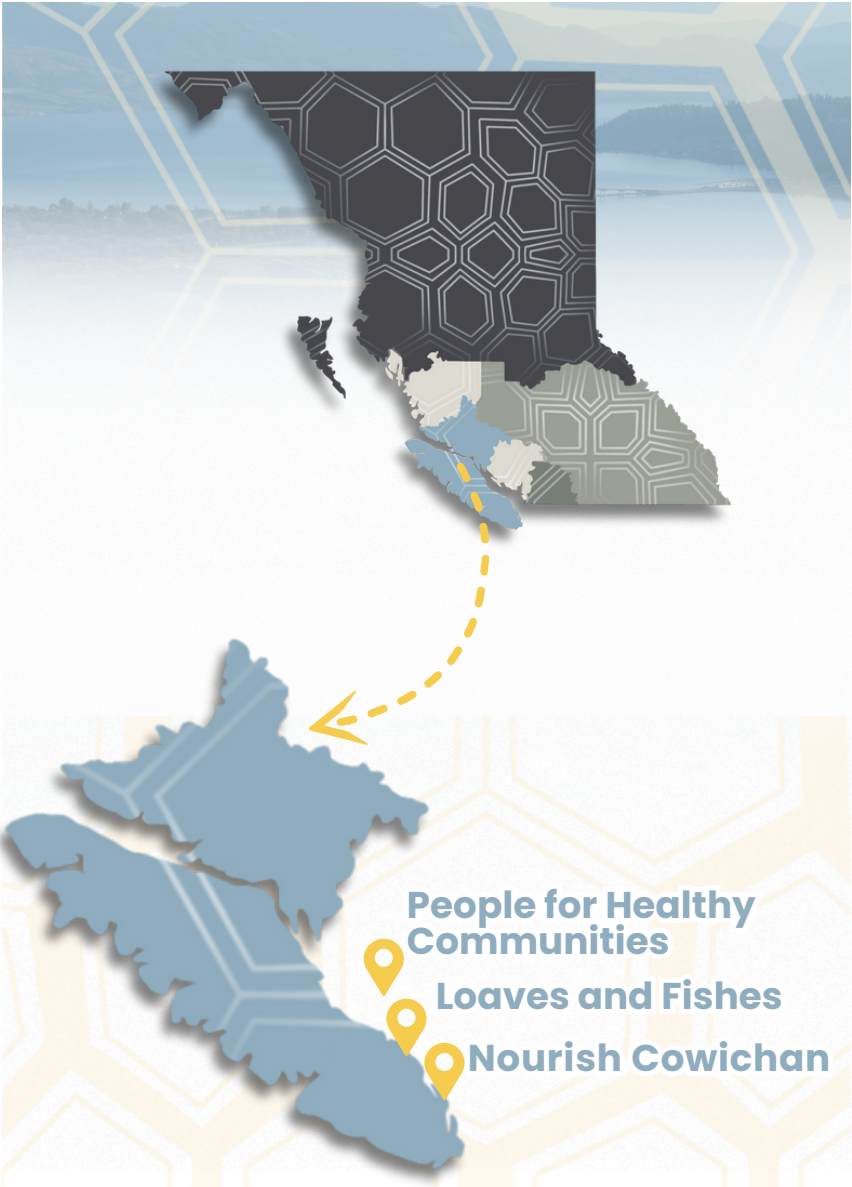
Island Table 15: Overview of sites visited (part 1 of 2)



Organization	Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group	Flourish School Food Society	Galiano Community Food Program
Area	Victoria, Urban	Victoria, Urban	Galiano Island, Rural
FBBC Member	No	No	No
Number of Staff; Volunteers	9; 50	13; 15	3; 70
Food Access Programming	Food Hampers Community Meals Community Gardens Mothers Group Farmers Market Coupons	School Food Program School Gardens Food Literacy	Food Pantry Affordable Market Community Meals School Food Program Meal Kits School Gardens Food Literacy
How Food is Sourced	Rescued/ Donated Local Farmers Local Grocers Large Chain Grocers Grown and Harvested	Rescued/ Donated, Local Grocers Local Farmers	Rescued/ Donated Local Farmers Local Grocers Large Chain Grocers



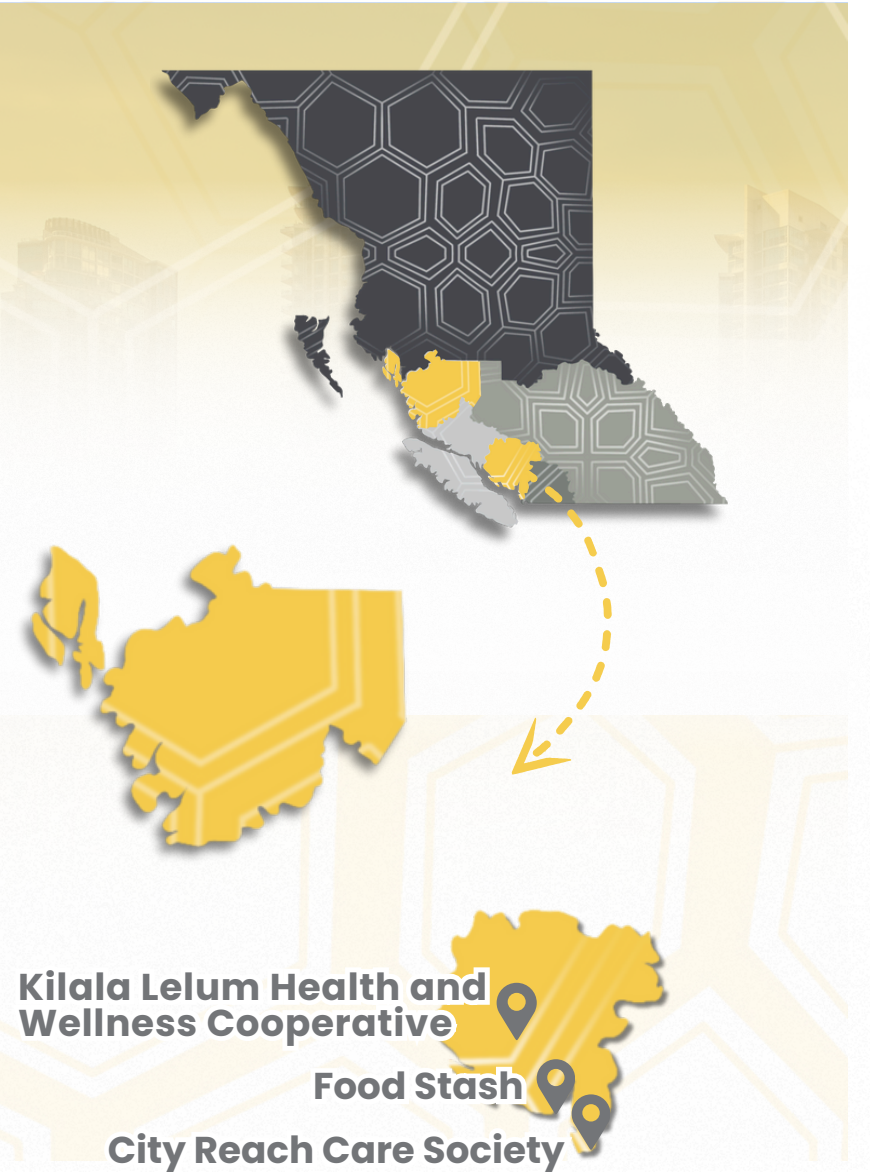
Island Table 15: Overview of sites visited (part 2 of 2)



Organization	Loaves and Fishes	Nourish Cowichan	People for Healthy Communities
Area	Nanaimo, Urban	Cowichan Valley, Peri-Urban	Gabriola Island, Rural
FBBC Member	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Staff; Volunteers	50; 230	3; 70	12; 30
Food Access Programming	 Food Recovery  Food Distribution	 Food Hampers  Food Pantry  School Food Program	 Food Hampers  Food Pantry  School Food Program  Community Gardens
How Food is Sourced	 Rescued/ Donated  Local Farmers  Local Grocers	 Rescued/ Donated  Large Chain Grocers  Grown and Harvested	 Rescued/ Donated  Local Farmers  Large Chain Grocers  Grown and Harvested



Vancouver Coastal Table 16: Overview of sites visited (part 1 of 3)



Organization	City Reach Care Society	Food Stash	Kilala Lelum Health and Wellness Cooperative
Area	Vancouver (Renfrew), Urban	Vancouver (East Vancouver), Urban	Vancouver (DTES), Urban
FBBC Member	Yes	No	No
Number of Staff; Volunteers	7; 100	17; 80	20; 0
Food Access Programming	 Food Hampers  Community Meals  School Food Program	 Food Hampers  Affordable Market  Community Fridge	 Food Hampers  Community Meals  Traditional Foodways
How Food is Sourced	 Rescued/ Donated  Local Farmers	 Rescued/ Donated  Local Farmers	 Rescued/ Donated  Large Chain Grocers  Local Fisher



Vancouver Coastal Table 16: Overview of sites visited (part 2 of 3)



Organization	Kiwassa Neighbourhood House	Sole Food Street Farms
Area	Vancouver (Hastings–Sunrise), Peri-Urban	Vancouver (East Vancouver), Urban
FBBC Member	No	No
Number of Staff; Volunteers	3; 20	6; 2
Food Access Programming	Food Hampers Affordable Market Community Meals School Food Program Community Kitchen Food Literacy	Affordable Market Community Meals CSA Boxes Urban Farm Beehives Food Literacy
How Food is Sourced	Rescued/ Donated Local Farmers Local Grocers Large Chain Grocers	Rescued/ Donated Grown and Harvested Large Chain Grocers



Vancouver Coastal Table 16: Overview of sites visited (part 3 of 3)



Organization	Squamish Climate Action Network		Sunshine Coast Community Services Society	
Area	Squamish, Peri-Urban		Sunshine Coast, Rural	
FBBC Member	No		Yes	
Number of Staff; Volunteers	9; 100		3; 35	
Food Access Programming	 School Food Program  Urban Farms  Community Gardens  School Gardens  Traditional foodways  Food Literacy		 Food Hampers  Affordable Market  Community Meals  Community Garden  Farmers Market Coupons	
How Food is Sourced	 Local Farmers  Grown and Harvested		 Rescued/ Donated  Local Farmers  Large Chain Grocers  Grown and Harvested	



Key Findings



To meet the needs of BC residents under challenging social and environmental conditions, food access organizations continue to find new and innovative ways to support the growing number of community members who are experiencing poverty and/or struggling to cope with the rising cost of housing, food, gas, and more.

Spectrum of Food Access Organizations in B.C.

To cope with persistent infrastructure limitations, organizations across BC have developed partnerships with other community groups, establishing resource sharing arrangements that maximize the utility of local infrastructure.

Coupled with an expressed interest and engagement in supporting local food systems, the variety of adaptive measures that food access organizations have taken demonstrate shifts underway in the food access landscape in BC.





To better represent the spectrum of food access programming across BC, we compiled and quantified the number of food access organizations that identified as a charitable service model, community food hub, providing a community gardens, institutional procurement, social enterprise, and/or advancing Indigenous food sovereignty (see Table 13).

One key learning was that over half of food access organizations (57%) operate multiple programs simultaneously. For example, a single food access organization might engage in institutional procurement, run a community garden, and operate a social enterprise. Hence, to better reflect the prevalence of multi-component programs, we added a seventh category that captures organizations that offer a combination of three or more types of food access programs.





Table 13: Spectrum of food access models in BC (n=148)

Food Access Program Type		Features	Total	Fraser	Interior	Island	Vancouver Coastal
Charitable Model		Offers food hampers, food pantries, market-style services, meal programs.	36	9	11	9	7
Community Food Hub		Member of a network of partners collaborating to enhance food security, including creating a central site for food distribution.	30	8	5	9	8
Institutional Procurement		Provides schools, hospitals, or other institutions with food or meal programs.	12	1	6	4	1
Community Garden		Provides land access and resources for community members to grow food.	8	4	2	2	N/A
Social Enterprise		Generates revenue through food-related activities while maintaining their focus on social good.	4	1	1	2	N/A
Indigenous Food Sovereignty		Promotes Indigenous food sovereignty by supporting traditional food practices, preserving cultural food knowledge, and providing access to culturally significant foods.	4	N/A	2	1	1
3+ Combinations		Combination of 3 or more of the above food access program types.	52	6	15	20	11



The traditional food bank model where people line up to receive a bag or box of donated food no longer reflects the diversity of food access programming and services offered in BC.

Food access organizations are now offering markets where community members could shop for food for free or at subsidized rates. Collaborations and partnerships are forming to create new food distribution networks that source food directly from local producers, thereby connecting community members to locally grown produce.

Schools and school districts are partnering with organizations that are delivering nutritious meals made from locally produced food. Some organizations are growing the number of community food assets across the province, providing community members access to grow and celebrate food with their neighbours through community gardens, community meals and kitchens, food literacy workshops, and more.

Organizations are engaging in social enterprise to diversify their funding and sustain their operations under challenging and insecure funding conditions. Some are advancing Indigenous food sovereignty through establishing food forests on reservations and revitalizing traditional food sharing practices.





Most food access organizations that participated in this study are active in 3 or more types of food access programming.

The evidence tells us that community food security is improved when food policies and programming are designed to address a diversity of issues, such as emergency food access, community development and social cohesion, environmentally sustainable and viable local food systems, and community economic development.⁵⁰ Hence, clarifying the diversity of food access programming being offered in BC is the first step to accurately articulating how the food access sector contributes to community food security and local food systems transformation.

Future studies should continue to work collaboratively with food access organizations to develop a framework that clearly defines the different service models, as well as develops an assessment tool for measuring the different community food security and food system transformation outcomes. Doing so will not only provide a clearer understanding of the contributions of the food access sector on these fronts but will also support more effective coordination of community food systems development across the province.





Food access organizations as food systems change agents

Much of the discourse on food systems transformation focuses on desired outcomes rather than the steps needed to achieve them. Recent research, however, is drawing attention to the need to focus on processes that address social tensions and conflicts inherent in food systems.

These processes are often prerequisites or precursors to facilitating a just transformation of the food system, such as competency and capacity building, as well as engagement in networking, knowledge and resource sharing, and other collective/collaborative activities that often seed innovation and food system transformation (see [Just Food Systems Evaluation Framework](#)).⁵¹

Informed by our investigation of food systems transformation and our exploration of food access organizations as change agents, we gained a better understanding of the diverse community food systems development efforts underway in BC; and how these efforts align with recommendations for accelerating a just transition to more equitable and sustainable food system.



“Institutional food programs play a unique role and have unique potential for food systems change, as they can help with the scale that’s needed – **we need on the ground orgs that are in touch with community**, as well as standards and provincial evaluative frameworks and metrics.
(Interview Participant)



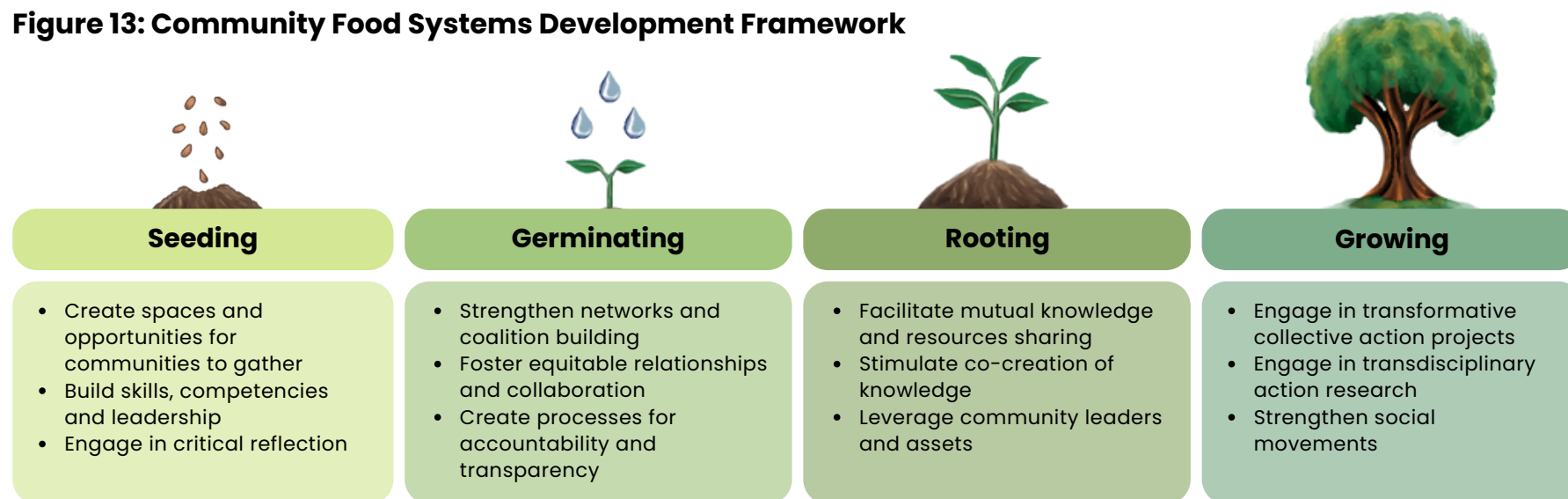
The results of this project confirm that some food access organizations are cultivating community food systems development across the province. For instance, there are food access organizations that are creating spaces and opportunities for communities to gather, as well as building skills, competencies and leadership within the communities they serve.

Many are fostering collaboration and coalition building, while also creating processes for accountability and transparency. Others are resource sharing and leveraging community leaders and other assets to raise community awareness and engagement in food security issues.

There are also several organizations who are engaged in collective action and collaborative projects that are transforming local food systems, including connecting local farmers to consumers as well as creating new local food distribution networks.

To better capture the breadth and value of these efforts, we created a Community Food Systems Development Framework that articulates the multitude of ways the food access sector in BC is activating local food systems transformation in their communities (see Figure 13 and Appendix 8).

Figure 13: Community Food Systems Development Framework



Examples of the Food Access Sector Activating Community Food Systems Development

Our deep exploration of the food access landscape in BC has revealed an exciting outcropping of innovative approaches to connecting community members to food while also activating local food systems transformation. The following six food access organizations represent a small sample of the innovation happening across the food access landscape in BC and are merely a snapshot of the transformative work unfolding around the province (see Figure 14).

“One of the big takeaways with doing systems change and working closely with local government is **having the capacity as an organization to continue keeping food access and food systems work a priority.**
(Focus Group Participant)

“Our region is doing a lot of transformation work, but we're not all in the growing stage. We need folks that are in different spectrums of each stage to be able to actually do the system transformation. A smaller organization that is maybe hitting a very niche population of folks, to support them in ways that are unique to that population -- we need them in that seeding stage. They don't need to always understand the full growing transformation stuff, but they need to see themselves as playing an important role. **We need organizations in all different stages.**

(Focus Group Participant)



Figure 14. Location of selected innovative food access models across B.C.



Cranbrook Food Recovery ***Cranbrook, Interior Health***

Cranbrook Food Recovery (CFR) is a non-profit program that operates under the Community Connections Society of Southeast BC. It emerged after a climate change symposium which highlighted the social impacts of climate change and its role in agricultural production and the rising cost of food. Recognizing these challenges, CFR leveraged its existing relationships with local food support organizations and grocery stores to form a coalition aimed at optimizing food recovery efforts.

In 2019, Save-On-Foods approached CFR to manage food recovery operations seven days a week. From the start, CFR carefully avoided duplicating the efforts of its partner organizations, who were already giving food donations to the community. Instead, they adopted a unique and innovative approach, focusing not solely on food access but on reducing food waste as a key strategy.

CFR prepares 450–500 community meals weekly using recovered food. These meals are distributed to homeless shelters, partner organizations, seniors, Indigenous communities and the general public. For the general public, the program operates on a “donations accepted, not expected” model which aims to change the dynamics and stigma associated with



using food access program. This approach emphasizes that community members are active participants who contribute to the program's sustainability, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship between community members and the program.

Their model recognizes the importance of an upstream approach to food insecurity and works to break stigma surrounding traditional food bank models which are largely dependent on donations that can be perceived as transactional. Additionally, CFR is developing an urban farm to produce fresh greens year-round. By selling these greens to community members and organizations, the program aims to evolve enhance their social enterprise activities to ensuring longterm sustainability and resilience.

Within the above Community Food Systems Development (CFSD) Framework, CFR is actively **seeding** CFSD by creating spaces and opportunities for collaboration while addressing the root causes of food system challenges. The innovative model reflects a commitment to critical reflection on the current food system, challenging perceptions and reducing stigma associated with traditional food access models. By empowering community members to actively engage in food waste reduction by purchasing their recovered meals and educating about food recovery, CFR positions these community members as key

contributors to the program's sustainability. CFR is also **rooting** CFSD through its focus on capacity building at an organizational level.







Flourish! School Food Society **Victoria, Island Health**

Established in 2022, Flourish! School Food Society emerged from the collaborative efforts of food access organizations in the Greater Victoria region.

The foundation of Flourish followed a successful pilot project in the Sooke School District, which provided daily meals to 200 students across eight schools for 100 days. This initiative was built upon years of groundwork and momentum fostered by the School Food Shift Collaborative, a network of organizations in the Victoria area focused on improving and transforming school food environments.

Flourish goes beyond providing school meals, it aims to transform the culture and environment around school food. The program emphasizes the importance of nourishing, diverse and easily accessible meals.

The organizations integrates food literacy into the curriculum through hands-on learning opportunities like school gardens and kitchens. As demand has grown, Flourish has scaled up its meal services, now preparing 850 meals daily. Meals are cooked in a central commercial kitchen, with hot lunches delivered fresh each day. Meals are served buffet style, allowing students to choose what they eat.



The meals incorporate seasonal ingredients sourced from local farmers and fisheries and are guided by student input to ensure meals remain engaging and culturally diverse. By creating a warm and open atmosphere, Flourish builds trust and fosters a positive relationship between students and food.

For schools unable to fully participate in the meal program, Flourish offers grocery deliveries of staples and snacks, ensuring access to nourishing food and supporting schools to gradually integrate food programming in a meaningful way.

Flourish is active in all stages of the CFSD framework. The organization is **seeding** and **nourishing** CFSD through fostering the strong social networks that exist in the school food environment in the region and harmonizing multiple organizations to create a pathway for transforming school food.

Additionally, Flourish's integration of student feedback into meal planning speaks to their commitment to transparency, accountability and community engagement. Flourish is also **rooting** and **growing** CFSD through collaborations with local farmers and fisheries that demonstrate a commitment to strengthening the local food system and reshaping the school food culture to emphasize trust, diversity, and sustainability.

Their focus on reshaping the school food environment and culture highlights their commitment to future generations, introducing youth to the realities of food systems and fostering food awareness and literacy. Every initiative is designed with intention, addressing systemic barriers to food access and prioritizing a gradual and sustainable integration of nourishing school food. Their innovative methods demonstrate their commitment to enacting systemic change at a local level.



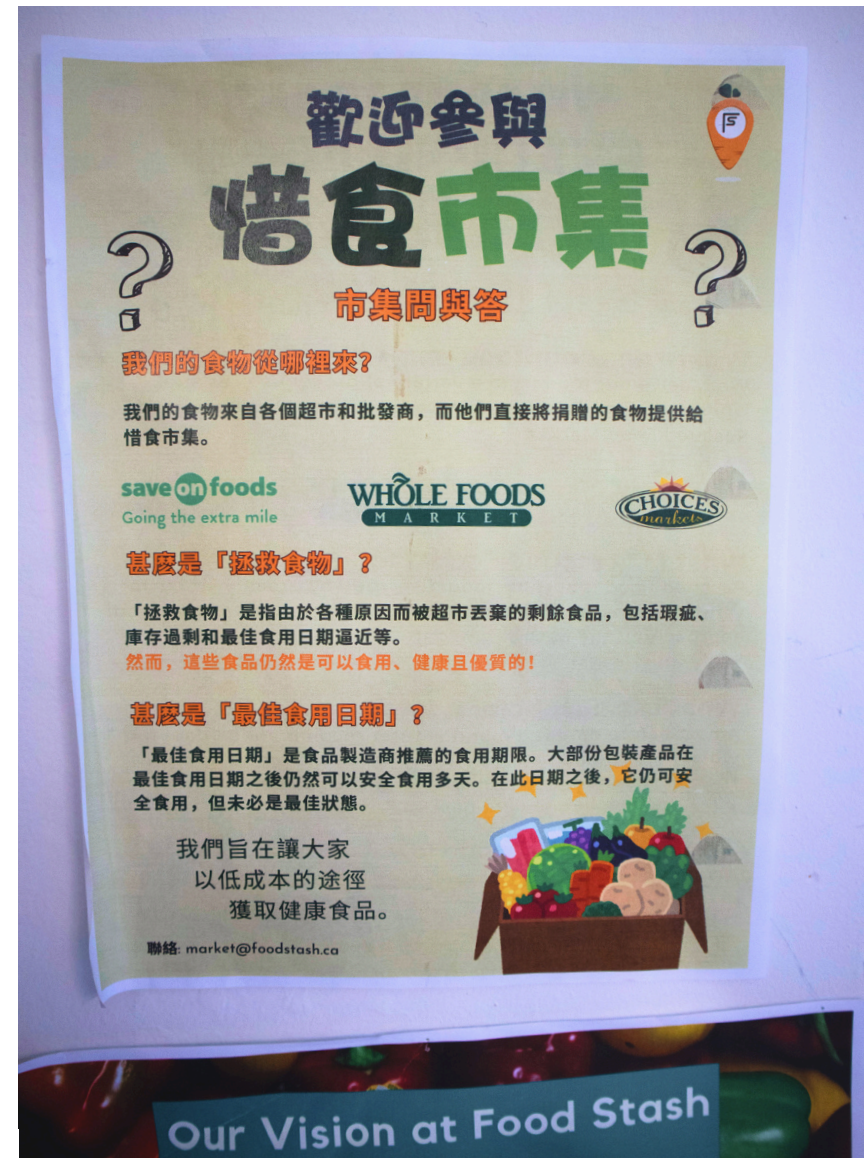
Food Stash Foundation East Vancouver, Vancouver Coastal Health

Food Stash Foundation, a registered charity, was founded in 2016 by a high school teacher inspired by the documentary Just Eat It. Motivated to address food waste, the founder established partnerships with grocers to recover food and re-distribute it locally.

With the support of volunteers, they began delivery services to charities and creating food boxes for struggling families. Over time, Food Stash shifted its focus to supporting low-income and physically challenged community members, securing additional funding to expand their impact.

Food Stash operates three core programs to distribute the rescued food: (1) a delivery program for 40 local nonprofits in neighbouring areas including the Downtown Eastside, (2) a home delivery program and (3) an affordable market.

Approximately 80% of the rescued food is redistributed in the delivery program for other nonprofits and the remaining 20% of the rescued food is redistributed through the home delivery and market programs.





The home-delivery program is available for low-income members with physical barriers. In contrast, the affordable market is available for members who are physically able to come pick up their food.

Food Stash also supports the Vancouver Community Fridge Project. Both their home delivery and affordable market program have long waitlists, reflecting the ongoing need for these services in the community.

Despite the demand, Food Stash recognizes that its existence highlights systemic issues that require broader solutions to address community food insecurity. The organization advocates for policies and solutions to reduce food waste and address income inequality noting that community building around food can and should occur without the shadow of poverty.



Food Stash Foundation represents both the rooting and growing stages of the CFSD framework through its innovative approach to food recovery and redistribution.

In the **rooting** stage, the organization fosters mutual knowledge and resource sharing by partnering with farmers, wholesalers, and grocers to recover surplus food, strengthening community networks and building capacity.

In the **growing** stage, Food Stash transforms the food system by shifting from a wasteful linear model to a circular one, repurposing surplus food to create more inclusive and sustainable food environments. Its advocacy for income-based policies to tackle systemic food insecurity highlights the organization's commitment to addressing root causes to lead to larger systemic transformation.





d		Preferences Allergy to CABBAGE & WHEAT
MEAT	⚠️	Prefers red meat; no ground pork; pork chops okay
MILK	⚠️ 🐄	ONLY 0-1% and 1 L of milk
YOGURT	🐄	ONLY 0-1%
PRODUCE	⚠️	ONLY tomato, pepper, carrot, zucchini, potato, orange sweet potato, package spinach/kale
EGGS	✅	Yes
CHEESE & BREAD	✅	NO BREAD (allergy) Green House juice if possible cheese okay



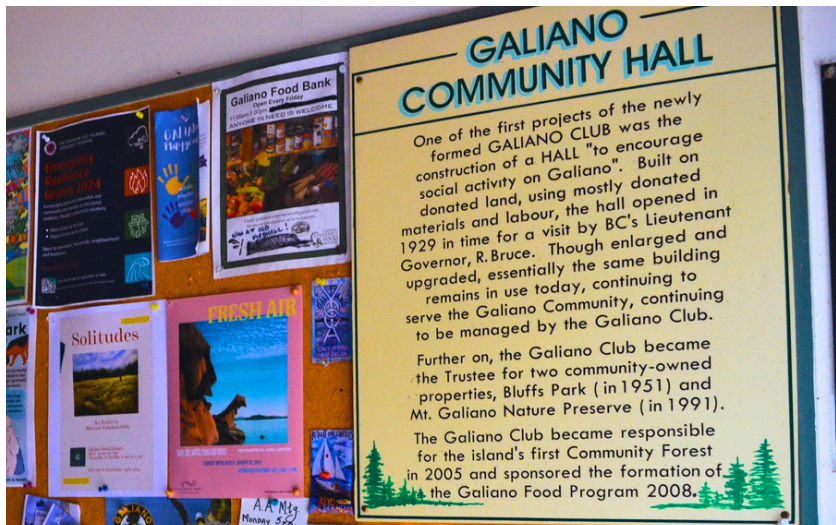


Galiano Club Community Food Program ***Galiano Island, Island Health***

The Galiano Community Food Program (GCFP), a non-profit organization founded in 2008, serves the residents of Galiano Island and neighbouring island communities. The program's mission is to build a thriving, food-secure community where residents are empowered to actively contribute to their local food system.

With a population of just under 1,400, Galiano Island faces unique challenges related to food access. Limited to a handful of markets—many with significant cost markups—residents rely on ferries to reach larger towns for more affordable and diverse food options. However, this dependency introduces vulnerabilities, particularly in the face of climate change, adverse weather conditions, and potential natural disasters that can disrupt ferry services and the delivery of food. GCFP is heavily supported by volunteers, who form the backbone of its operations alongside four part-time staff coordinators.

Despite its small size, the program has become a blueprint for neighbouring communities, inspiring similar initiatives across the region. Its impact extends beyond Galiano Island, contributing to broader community food systems in the area.



The GCFP offers a wide range of programs aimed at improving food access, enhancing food literacy, and fostering community engagement. These include initiatives such as weekly soup and bread, frozen meals, a food bank, school lunch programs and gardens, gleaning programs, annual festivals, potlucks and picnics, good food boxes, an equipment lending library, and workshops on gardening and greenhouse growing.

The weekly soup and bread program is a cornerstone of GCFP's efforts, producing approximately 140 meals per week. This program continues to grow each year, driven by the contributions of 25 dedicated volunteers who handle preparation, cooking, serving and cleanup. Ingredients for meals are sourced from grocery stores and local farmers, and a portion is from GCFP's school and community gardens.

The GCFP aligns with the seeding, germinating and growing phases of the Food Systems Transformation (CFSD) Framework. In the **seeding** phase, GCFP creates opportunities for community empowerment through its extensive programs, addressing root causes of food insecurity and fostering a sense of shared responsibility for the local food system.







Its support from volunteers and the inspiration it provides for neighbouring communities highlight its role in cultivating regional food resilience. In the **germinating** phase, GCFP demonstrates how food programming can serve as a catalyst for community building and social bonding. Initiatives like the soup and bread gatherings and the island-wide Nettlefest prioritize creating spaces for connection and interaction. Many residents regard these events as essential for socialization, noting that they can reliably count on seeing friends and neighbours there each week.

Unlike models that focus solely on food as a transactional emergency service, GCFP uses food as a convenor to cultivate belonging and engagement within the community. Lastly, the GCFP program represents the **growing** phase, with their activities reflecting a broader goal of creating a food secure community for Galiano. The program aims to transform the existing food system that is dependent on deliveries and large food change models into one that is resident driven and sustainable.



Kanaka Bar Indian Band: Food Self Sufficiency Program *Lytton, Interior Health*

The Food Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) at Kanaka Bar was introduced by Chief Patrick Michell in 2016 to prioritize feeding community members for free and incorporate Indigenous food sovereignty principles, particularly in response to challenges with food access during natural disasters such as wildfires and floods.

The current Chief Jordan Spinks continues to champion this work and has been instrumental in promoting program activities within the community and beyond. The program serves the 274 Kanaka Bar members, including the 180 who live on the reserve, and has been instrumental in supporting the Band's efforts to bring residents back to the reserve following the 2022 wildfire that devastated Lytton and forced widespread evacuations. Housing developments on the reserve are intentionally designed to integrate community food assets, promoting self-sufficiency and fostering resilience.

The FSS program has established a diverse and multi-component food system that includes a major commercial greenhouse, a smaller greenhouse, community gardens, an orchard, food forests, root cellars, livestock, and a honey hut, with plans to add a farm stand. Food literacy initiatives are also central to the program and include providing seedlings for easy



growing, an extensive seed library with guides, and incorporating multiple raised garden beds near housing developments. Members are encouraged to utilize the food assets through activities like berry picking and beekeeping workshops.

Knowledge exchange with nearby Bands further supports regional resilience by promoting collaborative learning and prioritizing traditional Indigenous foodways. The program highlights the diversity of its community food assets through engagement models such as distributing meat from the livestock to residents. While their honey hut and farm stand function generate income by offering products at a subsidized price for all band and community members.

Within the CFSD Framework, the FSS program at Kanaka Bar demonstrates the seeding, germinating, rooting, and growing stages. Their multicomponent food access program **seeds** CFSD through activities such as workshops, seed starters, and volunteer opportunities, creating spaces for the community to gather and enhance food literacy skills.

These activities not only bring the community together but also encourage members to critically engage with the current food system and take an active role in shaping it.

The FSS program **germinates** CFSD through establishing community food assets that serve as catalysts for community development, knowledge sharing and resilience building. The Band's initiative to embed food sovereignty into the reserve's housing developments and integrating food assets directly into the lives of community members, strengthens ties between individuals and local food systems.

The FSS program is **rooting** and **growing** CFSD by embedding Indigenous food practices and sustainable structures into the community landscape, ensuring resilience and self-sufficiency in the event of a natural disaster. The FSS program establishes this through its multi-component food system that not only addresses immediate food access needs, but also creates long-term infrastructure that supports food security.

Through all of these activities the FSS program moves beyond addressing immediate food security challenges to building a sustainable and resilient food systems that provides a blueprint for long-term self-sufficiency.







Squamish Climate Action Network *Squamish, Vancouver Coastal Health*

Squamish Climate Action Network (Squamish CAN) was founded in 2009 as a grassroots organization, inspired by local conversations around climate action. These discussions centered on key areas such as food, water, active transportation, zero waste and sustainability. Squamish CAN's mission is to empower community members to build a sustainable and resilient food system. This mission is achieved through advocacy and policy development at both local and regional levels, where the organization advises on neighbourhood plans, official community plans, and policies designed to protect community food assets.



Squamish CAN offers a wide range of food access programs, including edible school gardens cared for by students with the guidance of educators, teaching them how to maintain garden beds, plan planting schedules, and make decisions about what to grow. Produce harvested during the summer months is sold at a Market Stand, with profits reinvested into the maintenance and programming of the gardens. They also incorporated an Indigenous plant garden to the Downtown School Farms that educates the community on Indigenous plants, integrating traditional Skwxwú7mesh language, cultural significance, and pronunciation.

Additional initiatives include three community gardens with year-round educational workshops, a seed library, community farm projects, CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) boxes, and market stands, all of which enhance food accessibility and build resilience. Their flagship school farm project, the result of years of collaboration, policy development, community engagement, and partnerships with Indigenous leaders, City Council, the school district, and other stakeholders, is a key achievement. Squamish CAN also addresses food systems through a policy lens, establishing the Squamish Food Policy Council in 2015, which comprises 17 organizations and community groups focused on creating a resilient local food system and advancing key initiatives.



Within the CFSD Framework, Squamish CAN represents an organization actively engaging in seeding, germinating, and growing CFSD. Through initiatives such as school gardens, community spaces, and their flagship school farm project, Squamish CAN creates opportunities for hands-on learning, fosters food literacy, and engages the next generation in food growing while promoting systems thinking at an early stage, exemplifying the **seeding** phase. Squamish CAN also **germinates** CFSD by acting as a hub for collaboration between institutions and residents, with hands-on community programming that not only enhances food literacy but also strengthens social networks and fosters equitable relationships by addressing the unique needs of Squamish residents.

Furthermore, Squamish CAN is particularly recognized for its food policy initiatives, its ability to rapidly implement agricultural plans and its influence at a municipal level. These activities exemplify the **growing** phase of the CFSD Framework, as they disrupt reliance on large-scale food systems while advancing the development of resilient and equitable local food systems. Furthermore, as municipalities across BC work to introduce food policies and charters, many turn to the framework established by Squamish CAN for guidance. Although Squamish is a smaller community of 30,000 people, the impact of its work extends across the province. Their achievements activate local food systems transformation and demonstrate the power of grassroots advocacy to create meaningful change.









Community Engagement Impact and Feedback

After engaging with over 40 food access organizations across the province, we recognized the unique role of this provincial project, and our ability to create meaningful impact within these communities of food systems advocates.

The response to the study activities was overwhelmingly positive, with many participants expressing enthusiasm and a willingness to engage. One organization noted that the survey was “better than most that they have been involved in so far,” and 80% of interview participants reported being satisfied with the interviews. One participant remarked that the interview provided an opportunity to “share some of the hopes and future of our food program and to be heard.” Similarly, site visits were praised for being “well prepared” and for the team’s consideration of each community’s needs, and many stated it “was easy to participate”.

The vast majority, (80%) of focus group participants expressed satisfaction with the activities, stating, “The PHABC team is well organized, and I trust the work will be advanced in a good way due to the level of analysis and responsiveness.” For the specific questions asked in our feedback form, refer to Appendix 7.



Qualitative and anecdotal feedback from interviews and site visits revealed recurring themes across organizations. Many expressed frustrations with the current food bank model, appreciating that Food Banks BC is actively working to restructure and innovate within this space. Participants welcomed the focus on smaller, innovative program models, recognizing that traditional food bank models often fail to sustain or empower communities to build resilience and self-sufficiency.

Despite differences in structure and approach, recurring tensions emerged, particularly around funding models. Participants highlighted challenges with funding systems that emphasize short-term, innovative programs while providing little to no support for sustainable, repeat funding. Organizations also pointed out the lack of financial resources for essential administrative and operational costs—such as scheduling, staffing, and materials—which are critical to the continuity of long-standing food access programs.

Leaders and organizational representatives expressed gratitude for the safe space provided to voice grievances, share concerns, and offer recommendations. Many emphasized the importance and uniqueness of this project's provincial scope, recognizing its potential to act as a convenor for collaboration and partnerships among food access organizations. Similarly, organizations shared that they felt that their voices were being heard by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR) and appreciated SDPR's support for an initiative that prioritizes building connections along data collection.

While collaboration requires significant time and effort, participants highlighted that this project could break down the silos and play a pivotal role in fostering these connections and driving impactful change across the province. They expressed enthusiasm for future opportunities to continue building these relationships and for creating spaces and projects that offer knowledge exchange and collaboration for food systems organizations to come together across BC.





CityReach Care Society



Cranbrook Food Recovery



Fire Pit Cultural Drop In Centre



Food Stash Foundation



Galiano Community Food Program



Golden Food Bank





Flourish School Food Society



Hope Community Services



**Kanaka Bar Food
Self Sufficiency Program**



Kilala Lelum Health Centre



Kingdom Acts Foundation



Kiwassa Neighbourhood House





Mount Paul Community Food Centre



Nelson Community Food Centre



Nourish Cowichan



CMHA Northern BC, Nourish Food Bank



People for Healthy Community



Prince George Native Friendship Centre





Simon Fraser University Food Pantry



Shuswap Food Action Society



Sole Food Street Farms



Squamish Climate Action Network



Sunshine Coast Community Services



Conclusion



The challenges faced by food access organizations, such as inadequate funding, rising food prices, unemployment, and the impacts of climate change, underscore the importance of a coordinated and holistic approach to food systems transformation.

The development of community food systems in British Columbia is a multifaceted and dynamic process that addresses immediate hunger, builds capacity across the food access landscape, and fosters local food systems transformation.

The diverse and innovative spectrum of food access programs, from market-style food banks to community kitchens and social enterprises, highlights the sector's adaptability and commitment to meeting the evolving needs of communities. These programs not only provide essential food services but also promote community engagement, cultural connections, and long-term solutions to food insecurity.





By leveraging local assets, fostering cross-collaborations, and engaging in multi-scalar advocacy efforts, food access organizations can play a pivotal role in creating resilient and sustainable food systems. This project has identified key pathways for activating the food access sector, emphasizing the need for community-driven interventions and the importance of addressing the root causes of food insecurity.

Moving forward, it is crucial to continue building on the strengths and insights gained from this project. By working collaboratively with food access organizations, policymakers, and community members, we can develop a comprehensive roadmap for achieving equitable and sustainable local food systems. This collective effort will ensure that all residents of British Columbia have access to nutritious, culturally appropriate food, and that the food systems are resilient, socially just, and environmentally sustainable.





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Appendix



Appendix 1 Survey

The survey was administered to staff in leadership roles at food access organizations. It contained 85 questions that were divided into four distinct sections 1) General Information, 2) Food Service Model, 3) Descriptive Data, and 4) Local Food Systems. The survey was open for just under a month, from March 20th to April 14th 2024, and respondents received a \$75 stipend to acknowledge their contributions. The survey was intended to be completed by leadership at the organization, such as an executive director or lead staff member. However, in cases where food access programs operated as standalone initiatives with minimal overlap with other programming, organizations were encouraged to designate a staff member with a comprehensive understanding of both the organization's overall operations and its food programming to complete the survey.

Survey Questions

1a. Please provide the following information:

- Name of Organization
- Name of Person completing the survey
- Position/Role
- Phone
- Email

1b. What is your preferred method of contact?

- Phone
- Email

2. Who is your regional health authority?

3a. Do you only serve communities within your regional health authority?

- Yes
- No



3b. If no, please list other regional health authorities you service. 4. Is your organization a Food Banks BC member?

4. Is your organization a Food Banks BC member?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know, not sure

5a. What type of role does food play in meeting your organization's mandate?

- It is a core part of our work and is embedded in every part of our programming.
- It is one aspect of our work but not in every program.
- It is not a common aspect of our work and not in every program.
- It has only become part of our work because of an emergency (e.g., wildfire, flood, COVID-19 pandemic, etc.).
- I don't know, not sure.
- Other

5b. If other, please describe. 6a. What service model best describes your program?

- Charity (e.g., food hampers, market, or shopping style)
- Institutional procurement (e.g., school meal programs, hospital meal programs)
- Community food hub (e.g., good food boxes, includes distribution and aggregation)
- Community garden
- Social enterprise
- Indigenous food sovereignty
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

6b. If other, please describe.



7a. Is your organization interested in shifting/changing its service model?

- Interested in shifting to food hampers.
- Interested in shifting to a market or shopping style service model (e.g., community members select food products; space mimics a grocery store or farmers market).
- Interested in institutional procurement (e.g., school meal programs, hospital meal programs).
- Interested in a community food hub model (e.g., good food boxes, includes distribution and aggregation).
- Interested in establishing a community garden.
- Interested in creating a social enterprise.
- Interested in improving access to culturally appropriate staples and/or hunted meats.
- Interested in advancing Indigenous food sovereignty.
- No, there is no interest in shifting/changing our service model.
- I don't know, not sure.
- Other

7b. If other, please describe.

8a. What resources are needed to support any interest in shifting/changing the organization's service model?

- Training
- Funding
- Staff
- Infrastructure
- Partnerships
- I don't know, not sure
- Other 8b. If other, please describe. 9a. We want to understand how your programs are designed and who is involved in them.
- Community-driven (people who are accessing the program(s) help shape the mandate and service model).
- Leadership-driven (staff and management shape the mandate and service models).
- People who receive services are sometimes staff.
- People who receive services are sometimes volunteers who run programs/workshops.
- I don't know, not sure.
- Other



9b. If other, please describe.

10a. We want to understand other ways community members may inform/shape your program(s).

- Community needs are assessed.
- Community members engage in program evaluation.
- Results of needs assessments and program evaluations are shared with community members.
- Feedback is collected from community members on how to strengthen programs.
- Community members are invited to work/volunteer for the program.
- Community members are NOT yet involved or engaged in these ways.
- I don't know, not sure.
- Other

10b. If other, please describe.

11a. Does your organization have an interest in engaging in or expanding its community engagement activities? What community engagement activities are you interested in?

- Conduct community needs assessments.
- Offer opportunities for community members to engage in program evaluation.
- Share results of needs assessments and program evaluations with community members.
- Collect feedback from community members on how to strengthen programs.
- Offer opportunities for community members to work/volunteer for the program.
- No, there is no interest in engaging/expanding community engagement activities.
- I don't know, not sure.
- Other

11b. If other, please describe.



12a. What resources are needed to support any interest in growing/expanding the organization's community engagement activities?

- Training
- Funding
- Staff
- Infrastructure
- Partnerships
- I don't know, not sure.
- Other

12b. If other, please describe.

13a. Critical reflection is a process for identifying, questioning, and assessing deeply-held assumptions that shape our knowledge, beliefs, biases, and actions. It has been identified as an important process for ensuring JEDI (justice, equity, decolonization, and inclusion). Does your organization engage in critical reflection activities?

- Cultural competency trainings are provided to volunteers and staff
- Training on the history of the area from an Indigenous perspective is provided (i.e., colonization, dispossession of land, residential schools, and current policies that recreate intergenerational trauma)
- Processes and measures are in place for building relationships with community members
- Processes and measures are in place for understanding the lived experiences of community members
- Processes and measures are in place for checking assumptions about community members
- Our organization does NOT yet engage in critical reflection
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

13b. If other, please describe.



14a. Does your organization have an interest in engaging or expanding its engagement in critical reflection activities? What critical reflection activities are you interested in?

- Offer cultural competency trainings to volunteers and staff
- Offer training on the history of the area from an Indigenous perspective
- Implement processes and measures for building relationships with community members
- Implement processes and measures for understanding the lived experiences of community members
- Implement processes and measures for checking assumptions about community members
- No, there is no interest in engaging/expanding critical reflection activities
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

14b. If other, please describe.

15a. What resources are needed to support any interest in growing/expanding the organization's engagement in critical reflection activities?

- Training
- Funding
- Staff
- Infrastructure
- Partnerships
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

15b. If other, please describe.



16a. Does your organization engage in individual-level advocacy to help community members access and apply for other supports?

- Housing supports (e.g., warming centres/shelters, affordable housing services, emergency rent assistance)
- Mental health supports (e.g., counselling services, harm reduction, addictions services)
- Employment supports (training, placement, etc.)
- Our organization does NOT yet engage in individual-level advocacy for community members
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

16b. If other, please describe.

17a. Does your organization have an interest in engaging or expanding its engagement in individual-level advocacy? What kinds of individual-level advocacy are you interested in?

- Housing supports (e.g., warming centres/shelters, affordable housing services, emergency rent assistance)
- Mental health supports (e.g., counselling services, harm reduction, addictions services)
- Employment supports (training, placement, etc.)
- No, there is no interest in engaging/expanding our individual-level advocacy
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

17b. If other, please describe.



18a. Does your organization engage in community-level advocacy with other organizations to ensure services are being coordinated and programming is designed to meet the needs of your community?

- Collaborate with other organizations to ensure meal programs are offered multiple days and times throughout the week
- Collaborate with other organizations to coordinate communication on how the public can provide quality food to community members
- Collaborate with school boards on quality food procurement strategies for schools
- Collaborate with local farmers to establish mobile, affordable food markets in various neighbourhoods or remote communities
- Create an affordable transportation system for community members (e.g., volunteer driver system, funding drives to pay for monthly bus passes or taxi tokens, etc.)
- Engage in education campaigns to shift public perception of people experiencing food insecurity
- Our organization does NOT yet collaborate with others to engage in advocacy at the community level
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

18b. If other, please describe.

19a. Does your organization have an interest in engaging or expanding its engagement in community-level advocacy? What kinds of community-level advocacy are you interested in?

- Collaborate with other organizations to ensure meal programs are offered multiple days and times throughout the week
- Collaborate with other organizations to coordinate communication on how the public can provide quality food to community members
- Collaborate with school boards on quality food procurement strategies for schools
- Collaborate with local farmers to establish mobile, affordable food markets in various neighbourhoods or remote communities
- Create an affordable transportation system for community members (e.g., volunteer driver system, funding drives to pay for monthly bus passes or taxi tokens, etc.)
- Engage in education campaigns to shift public perception of people experiencing food insecurity
- No, there is no interest in engaging/expanding our community-level advocacy
- I don't know, not sure
- Other



19b. If other, please describe.

20a. Does your organization engage in provincial/national-level advocacy, including advocating for policy changes to reduce the need for community members to access emergency food?

- Campaigns or efforts that advance Indigenous food sovereignty
- Campaigns that support food as a human right
- Advocacy in support of living wages
- Advocacy for income supports (e.g., universal basic income, increasing minimum wage)
- Advocacy for creating or expanding affordable housing
- Advocacy for national/provincial subsidies on fruits and vegetables
- Advocacy for school meal programs
- Advocacy for expanding PharmaCare plans
- Advocacy for support programs for those leaving incarceration
- Campaigns regarding harm reduction
- Advocacy for programs offering mental health counselling and addiction services
- Our organization is NOT yet engaging in advocacy at the provincial/national level
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

20b. If other, please describe.



21a. Does your organization have an interest in engaging or expanding its engagement in provincial/national-level advocacy?

What kinds of provincial/national-level advocacy are you interested in?

- Campaigns or efforts that advance Indigenous food sovereignty
- Campaigns that support food as a human right
- Advocacy in support of living wages
- Advocacy for income supports (e.g., universal basic income, increasing minimum wage)
- Advocacy for creating or expanding affordable housing
- Advocacy for national/provincial subsidies on fruits and vegetables
- Advocacy for school meal programs
- Advocacy for expanding PharmaCare plans
- Advocacy for support programs for those leaving incarceration
- Campaigns regarding harm reduction
- Advocacy for programs offering mental health counseling and addiction services
- No, there is no interest in engaging/expanding our provincial/national-level advocacy
- I don't know, not sure
- Other
-

21b. If other, please describe.

22a. What resources are needed to support any interest in growing/expanding the organization's engagement in advocacy?

- Training
- Funding
- Staff
- Infrastructure
- Partnerships
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

22b. If other, please describe.



23. How many volunteers (unpaid) worked for your food program(s) in 2022 and 2023?

24. How many paid staff worked for your food programs in 2022 and 2023?

25. Have you faced challenges recruiting and/or maintaining adequate staff and/or volunteers for operations?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know, not sure

26. What was your total operating budget for 2022 and 2023?

27. What percentage of the total operating budget was spent on food programming?

28a. What type of food access services do you currently offer?

- Food hampers (i.e., donated produce and/or staples)
- Food pantry (i.e., community pantry, community fridge)
- Market or shopping style (i.e., community members select food)
- Good Food Box (i.e., local produce and/or staples)
- Farmers market
- Hot meal service
- Cold meal service
- Meals or snacks as part of childcare or out of school care program
- School breakfast, lunch or snack program
- Hospital meals
- Community garden program
- Gleaning program
- Community redistribution of traditional food harvesting
- Food literacy or food education (e.g., cooking workshops)
- Food delivery
- Gift cards
- Resources on where to access food (i.e., information on where to find free or affordable food in your community)
- I don't know, not sure
- Other



28b. If other, please describe.

29a. If you deliver food to clients, have you experienced any challenges trying to deliver food or supplies to clients?

- Not applicable, we do not offer food delivery services
- Yes, personnel issues (e.g., difficulty finding drivers, limited volunteer capacity, etc.)
- Yes, infrastructure challenges (e.g., limited vehicles, limited storage, far distances, etc.)
- Yes, funding issues (e.g., unable to pay for gas, vehicle maintenance, insurance, drivers, etc.)
- No, we have not experienced any challenges
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

29b. If other, please describe.

30a. If you offer gift cards/vouchers, please check type of gift cards/vouchers you provide.

- Not applicable, we do not provide gift cards
- Large retail chains (e.g., Walmart, T&T Supermarket, Save-on-Foods, Thrifty's, etc.)
- Fast food chains (e.g., McDonalds, Tim Hortons, etc.)
- Local grocer(s) (e.g., Choices Market, Village Grocer, Persia Foods, East West Market, Punjab Food Centre, Sprout Organic Market, Kim's Mart, etc.)
- Local farmers' market(s)
- Local food retail (e.g., local bakeries, cafes, restaurants, etc.)
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

30b. If other, please describe.

31. Are there restrictions on what clients can purchase with the gift card/voucher? If yes, please explain.



32a. Are there language barriers that pose challenges to understanding and meeting the needs of your community? If yes, please check which languages are spoken by community members but your organization has limited/no capacity to communicate in.

- English
- French
- Panjabi (Punjabi)
- Cantonese
- Chinese, n.o.s.
- Mandarin
- German
- Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)
- Korean
- Spanish
- Persian (Farsi)
- Hindi
- No, there are no language barriers
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

32b. If other, please describe.



33a. What languages are written materials about the programs you offer provided in?

- Not applicable, no written materials are provided
- English
- French
- Panjabi (Punjabi)
- Cantonese
- Chinese, n.o.s.
- Mandarin
- German
- Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)
- Korean
- Spanish
- Persian (Farsi)
- Hindi
- I don't know, not sure
- Other
-

33b. If other, please describe.

34a. Do you offer culturally preferred foods?

- Halal
- Kosher
- Asian foods
- African foods
- Latin Foods
- Middle Eastern foods
- Indigenous / Traditional foods
- No, we do not offer any of the above
- Other

34b. If other, please describe.



33a. What languages are written materials about the programs you offer provided in?

- Not applicable, no written materials are provided
- English
- French
- Panjabi (Punjabi)
- Cantonese
- Chinese, n.o.s.
- Mandarin
- German
- Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)
- Korean
- Spanish
- Persian (Farsi)
- Hindi
- I don't know, not sure
- Other
-

33b. If other, please describe.

34a. Do you offer culturally preferred foods?

- Halal
- Kosher
- Asian foods
- African foods
- Latin Foods
- Middle Eastern foods
- Indigenous / Traditional foods
- No, we do not offer any of the above
- Other

34b. If other, please describe.



35a. Is there a need to either offer or offer more culturally preferred foods to better meet the needs of your community members?

35b. If other, please describe.

36a. Do you offer specialized food to match community member needs?

- Low sodium
- Gluten free
- Vegetarian
- Vegan
- Dairy free
- Sugar free / low sugar
- No, we do not offer any of the above
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

36b. If other, please describe.

37a. Is there a need to either offer or offer more specialized foods to better meet the needs of your community members?

- Low sodium
- Gluten free
- Vegetarian
- Vegan
- Dairy free
- Sugar free / low sugar
- No, there is no need to offer / offer more specialized food
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

37b. If other, please describe.



38. Do participants get to choose / select the food they receive?

- People can select the type of food they receive (have choice)
- People can select some of the food (limited choice)
- People cannot select the type of food they receive (no choice)

39. Do you offer food programming / services to anyone regardless of their religious or non-religious status? If no, please describe.

40a. Are there requirements for accessing food?

- Open-access (no ID required)
- Registration (ID required)
- Income or means testing
- Other 40b. If other, please describe. 41a. How do community members access food?
- Food is free
- Food is made more affordable (cost of food is reduced)
- Food is made available on a sliding scale (pay what you can)
- Other

41b. If other, please describe.

42. We are interested in knowing whether your organization offers multiple days and times for community members to access your food services/programming. Please indicate what day(s) and time(s) your food services/programming is made available for community members. Example: Mondays 10:00–12:00 pm, Fridays 2:00–4:00 pm, Monthly food delivery (every third Thursday)

43. Are specific time slots offered to certain client groups? If yes, please describe.

44. Do community members have to wait in line to receive food or participate in the program?

- Yes, community members line up inside
- Yes, community members line up outside
- No



45a. What spaces do community members have access to during service hours?

- Space(s) for community members to sit
- Bathrooms for community members to use
- Area with information and resources for community members to read (e.g., bulletin board)
- Area for children to play with toys
- Areas accessible by wheelchair or with a walker
- Spaces that provide access to computers and/or wifi
- Spaces for culturally important activities such as ceremonies
- Spaces where mutual support networks can meet or social justice groups can organize
- None of these spaces/areas are provided
- Other

45b. If other, please describe.

46a. Do community members have access to any of the following during service hours?

- Water or other cold beverage
- Tea or Coffee
- Hot meal to consume during their visit
- Cold meal to consume during their visit
- None of the above services are provided
- Other

46b. If other, please describe.



47a. What type of community-building activities do you offer?

- Food education programs (i.e., cooking, nutrition classes, etc.)
- Programs that share traditional Indigenous knowledge and practices
- Programs that share cultural/religious foods
- Networking and connecting events (i.e., community kitchens, potlucks, etc.)
- Personal and professional development (i.e., budgeting, leadership skills, volunteering opportunities, etc.)
- Opportunities for community members to engage in collective action and advocacy
- No community building activities are offered
- Other

47b. If other, please describe.

48. Are there any food access organizations that have innovative models or programs that you are inspired by or interested in learning more about? If yes, please describe.

49. Is there anything you would like for us to know about your organization and the food access services you provide?

50a. What type of funding supported your operations in 2022?

- Grants
- Cash or cheque donations
- Core funding (annualized operational budget)
- Income generating activities
- Other
-

50b. If other, please describe.



51a. What type of funding supported your operations in 2023?

- Grants
- Cash or cheque donations
- Core funding (annualized operational budget)
- Income generating activities
- Other

51b. If other, please describe.

52a. Did you have trouble paying your organization's overhead cost in 2022 or 2023?

- Utility bills
- Transportation
- Staff time
- Rent
- We did not have trouble paying our organization's overhead cost
- Other

52b. If other, please describe.

53. Currently, how long do you think you will be able to sustain your organization's food operations? (Range)

54. Please expand on your organization's most critical type of funding, resources, or sustainability needs (e.g., infrastructure like cold storage or vehicles, staffing, food, etc.)



55a. What population(s) do your food access programs target?

- White
- South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)
- Chinese
- Black
- Filipino
- Arab
- Latin American
- Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai)
- West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan)
- Korean
- Japanese
- Indigenous
- People living with physical disabilities
- People living with mental disabilities
- People with severe and chronic health issues
- 2SLGBTQIA+
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

55b. If other, please describe.



56a. What population(s) do your food access programs serve?

- White
- South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)
- Chinese
- Black
- Filipino
- Arab
- Latin American
- Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai)
- West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan)
- Korean
- Japanese
- Indigenous
- People living with physical disabilities
- People living with mental disabilities
- People with severe and chronic health issues
- 2SLGBTQIA+
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

57. Please share the number of individuals served by your food program(s) in 2022 and 2023.

58. Please share the number of visits to your food program(s) in 2022 and 2023.



59a. What factors contribute to food insecurity in the communities you serve?

- High food prices, food is not affordable
- Food is not available, limited food supply (i.e., lack of food markets, grocers, etc.)
- High unemployment rates
- Low household incomes
- Inadequate social assistance
- High cost of housing
- Challenges with transportation
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

59b. If other, please describe.

60. If a climate (e.g., forest fire, flood) or health emergency (e.g., global pandemic) arises, do you feel prepared or equipped to meet a possible rise in demand for your services?

61. What existing support, resources, or infrastructure do you have that help you prepare for these emergencies?

62. What support, resources, or infrastructure do you need to better prepare for these emergencies in the future?

63a. What emergencies have already impacted the communities you serve?

- Wildfire
- Flood
- Drought
- I don't know, not sure
- Other

63b. If other, please describe.

64. Is there anything we should know about the unique social and/or environmental conditions in your region?



65a. What infrastructure do you currently have to support your food access programs?

- Physical floor space
- Storage
- Technological infrastructure (e.g., wifi, technology for intake, data, or coordinating delivery)
- Refrigerated transportation
- Non-refrigerated transportation
- Cold storage (fridge or freezer)
- Kitchen/processing space (e.g., sink, countertop)
- Processing equipment (e.g., slicers, mixers, food processor, etc.)
- Preservation equipment (e.g., canning, vacuum sealing, dehydrator, etc.)
- Cleaning equipment (e.g., dish washer)
- I don't know, not sure
- Other (e.g., forklift, pallet jacks, etc.)

65b. If other, please describe.

66a. What additional infrastructure do you need or need more of?

- Physical floor space
- Storage
- Technological infrastructure (e.g., wifi, technology for intake, data, or coordinating delivery)
- Refrigerated transportation
- Non-refrigerated transportation
- Cold storage (fridge or freezer)
- Kitchen/processing space (e.g., sink, countertop)
- Processing equipment (e.g., slicers, mixers, food processor, etc.)
- Preservation equipment (e.g., canning, vacuum sealing, dehydrator, etc.)
- Cleaning equipment (e.g., dish washer)
- I don't know, not sure
- Other (e.g., forklift, pallet jacks, etc.)

66b. If other, please describe.



67. How did you acquire your organization's building space?

68. Do you have secure / stable occupancy of your location (e.g., long term lease vs. month-to-month agreement)?

69. Have you experienced any transportation / delivery challenges in receiving food from any suppliers (e.g., grocery stores, Food Banks BC, etc.)? If yes, please explain.

70. Do you have access to a butcher and/or abattoir to process meat (whole animals)/ game?

71. If yes, how do you access these services?

72a. Have you experienced any challenges or barriers accessing these services?

- Not applicable
- Long wait times / wait lists
- High cost / too expensive
- Distant location / long commute
- No challenges or barriers
- Other

72b. If other, please describe.

73. Is there anything we should know about the existing infrastructure and community food assets (or lack thereof) that is critical to improving food access in your region?

74a. Where do you get food from?

- Purchase food directly from local farmers
- Purchase food from local grocers and local food businesses
- Purchase from large chain grocery stores and restaurant chains
- Use donated and/or rescued food
- Grow and harvest food for community purposes
- Other



74b. If other, please describe.

75. Do you receive food from local farmers?

- Purchased at regular price
- Purchased at discounted price
- Donated
- None

76a. What would help you to receive more local food?

- Storage space
- Processing space
- Technological infrastructure
- Funding to purchase from farmers
- Help building relationships with farmers
- Other

76b. If other, please describe.

77a. Do you receive hunted and/or harvested food (i.e., not from farmers)?

- Yes
- No

77b. If yes, please describe the kinds of proteins you receive (e.g., fish, wild game, etc.)



79a. What resources exist to help make locally produced food available to the community?

- Farmers' markets
- Roadside stands
- Community Supported Agriculture
- Local food stores
- Local restaurants that source food from local farms
- School meal programs that source food from local farms
- Hospitals purchase and provide food sourced from local farms
- Other

79b. If other, please describe.

80. Do you think there is enough government (political and economic) support for community efforts such as farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture, community gardens, Indigenous food sovereignty, etc.?

- Yes
- No



81a. What types of partners are involved in your food access program(s)? This can include organizations that donate money, provide volunteers, pick-up locations, or other types of support. Please select and indicate your level of satisfaction for partners involved in your food access program(s). Scale: 1-very dissatisfied, 2-dissatisfied, 3-neutral, 4- satisfied, and 5-very satisfied.

- Local Food Producers (e.g., farmers)
- Second Harvest/Loop
- Local Grocers
- Natural Resource Industry (e.g., oil, gas, lumber, mining, etc.)
- Other Businesses (not involved in the food sector)
- Neighbourhood houses
- Friendship Centres or other Indigenous organizations
- Faith-based groups or organizations
- Other non-profits
- Community members or engaged citizens
- Researchers/academics
- Municipalities
- First Nations/Metis governments
- Provincial government
- Federal government
- Health authority
- Schools
- Hospitals

81b. Please list and indicate your level of satisfaction for additional partners that are not listed above.

82a. What food-related communities of practice are/were you a part of? Please select and indicate your level of satisfaction. Scale: 1-very dissatisfied, 2-dissatisfied, 3-neutral, 4-satisfied, and 5-very satisfied.

- Edible Education Community of Practice
 - BC Food Security Gateway
 - BC Food Hub Community of Practice (United Way)
- 82b. Please list and indicate your level of satisfaction for additional communities of practice that are not listed above.



Appendix 2: Interview

The interview consisted of 10 questions, lasting approximately 90 minutes. Between May and August of 2024, 26 interviews were conducted across the four regional health authorities. Interviews were held via Zoom with a staff member in a leadership role at the participating food access organizations. Participants received a \$50 stipend to acknowledge their contributions.

Interview Questions

1. Can you tell us about your organization and describe the food programs you offer? What is your role and responsibilities?
2. We are interested in knowing more about your organization's history and the details behind the inception of your food program(s). (Prompts: When was your organization founded? When did you begin offering your food program(s)?)
3. What shifts, if any, occurred in your organizational structure? What shifts, if any, occurred in the design and implementation of your food programs? (Prompts: Why did these shifts/changes occur? Who was involved in implementing these changes? Who were the decision makers?)
4. We are interested in knowing who is involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of your food program(s). For example, how are service days and times determined? How are community needs assessed? Do you coordinate or collaborate with other organizations? (Prompt: Can you describe whether and how community members are engaged in the design, implementation, or evaluation of food programs?)
5. We would like to know more about the community members that utilize your food programs. Have you seen changes in the number of community members you serve? Are there specific demographics or groups that you cater your food programs toward? (Prompts: Can you describe which groups you target and why? Are there groups that you feel are being left out? Why do you think there's been an increase or decrease in demand? Or if demand is stagnant, why do you think demand is not decreasing?)
6. We understand that lack of funding is a significant challenge that many food access organizations deal with. Can you describe any funding challenges your organization experiences? What would help you resolve these funding challenges? (Prompt: What changes would you like to see in the funding landscape? What impact would these resolutions have on your food program(s) and organization)?



7. We would like to better understand how leaders on the ground are perceiving food and related policies; both policies that are having a positive or negative impact on food security in your communities. From your perspective, are there policies that have impacted food production, distribution, and access? (e.g., zoning rules on supermarket development, food purchasing regulations for local schools or institutions, policies on the use of city-owned land for community gardens) (Prompts: Are there any agricultural land reserve (ALR)/ farmland preservation issues affecting the viability of or potential for food production in your area? Are there any transportation policies that affect food access in your area?)

8. Do you think there is enough local, provincial, and federal government (political and economic) support for community efforts such as farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture, community gardens, Indigenous food sovereignty, and more? (Prompt: What support has been successful in your community? What support is still needed in your community?)

9. More partnerships and collaboration were identified in the survey as an important and needed resource/activity. What kinds of partnerships and collaboration does your organization engage in? If given the proper resources, what kinds of partnerships and collaboration are you interested in fostering? Describe why.

10. We are interested in hearing directly from people on the ground on what they perceive to be the biggest challenges to improving food security and also what they perceive to be the best or most appropriate food security interventions. What are the 3 biggest challenges to improving food security in your area? What are 3 interventions that you believe will have the greatest impact on improving food security in the communities you serve?

11. Do you envision any future shifts/changes in your food program(s)? What changes, if any, would you like to see?

12. Is there anything else that we didn't cover that you would like me to know? Do you have any questions for me?



Appendix 3: Codebook for semi-structured interviews

Both deductive and inductive coding was carried out in Microsoft Word. The deductive coding began with identifying and compiling content that fit into a preliminary list of four clearly defined themes based on the project objectives – i.e., food access typology, local context/conditions, food systems transformation, and proposed interventions.

Inductive coding involved identifying emergent themes (or sub-themes) to reveal deeper insights into participants' perspectives and experiences. This iterative deductive and inductive coding approach ensured alignment with the project goals while also remaining open to unexpected insights that surfaced during analysis. Finally, to ensure consistency, themes and sub-themes were regularly revisited throughout the analysis.

Processes and reflections related to theming and sub-theming decisions were also documented to maintain transparency with how content was being interpreted, allowing for multiple perspectives and interpretations to be considered in the final analysis.



CATEGORY	CODE	THEME	SUB-THEMES
FOOD ACCESS TYPOLOGY	Organizational & program description	Goals Structure History Development Design Implementation Shifts Expansion Implementation	Food distribution, food recovery Mission, low-barrier, community, urban farm Program inception, needs-driven Social enterprise Grant-driven, collaborative Equitable, recovery focus COVID-19 pandemic, values Climate, education, social enterprise, culturally appropriate, networks Non-profit role, school meals, innovation, leadership Lack of dignity
	Human resources	Staffing Volunteer	Burnout, training, capacity Sustainability, program participants, COVID-19 attrition
	Quality improvement	Reporting Evaluation Feedback	Annual, quarterly Participatory, lived experience, cost limitations Member-led, participatory, advisory committee
	Infrastructure	Successes Challenges	Cross-organization collaboration Transportation, logistical
	Funding models	Income generating Operational Programmatic	Bottle drive, social enterprise Feeding Futures, proposal-driven Food-focused, gardens, skills



LOCAL CONTEXT/ CONDITIONS	Demographics Need & demand Funding conditions Budget & program costs Staffing & volunteer conditions Environment & climate Government support Partnerships & collaboration	Decreased High Increased Opportunities Challenges Successes Opportunities Opportunities Challenges Concerns Local/municipal Provincial Federal Opportunities Challenges Food access	Demand-based, refugees, immigrants, migrant workers CERB-related Unsustainable need Community, COVID-19 pandemic, inadequate funding, un-met needs Community-oriented, corporate accountability, government grants Time constraints, program limitations, inflexible, jurisdiction Infrastructure, Standards of Excellence, community support, partnerships Sliding scale, revenue generation, garden access COVID-19-related funding Sustainability, inadequate funding, high turnover, aging volunteers, inadequate wages, burnout, capacity Disruptions, changing food landscape, policy, agriculture, fires, crop loss, limited interventions Stigma, inadequate funding, advocacy High poverty rates, inadequate programs, Farmers Market Coupons School Food Program, nonprofits filling gaps, political Local farmers, diversity, local food, food security strategy, research, competition for resources, food policy council Time constraints, large food bank monopolies, lack of capacity
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FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

Policies

Food security
issues
Seeding
transformation

Germinating
transformation

Rooting
transformation

Growing
transformation

Social
Implementation
Community food
security

Proposed
Interventions

Inflation, agriculture, inaccessible, meat processing,
food safety regulations, cost of local food,
bureaucracy, grocery oligopoly
Income, poverty, high cost of living, complex systems
Lack of buy-in
Access to land, municipal transparency, local food
economy, geography, food deserts, local farmers,
backyard agriculture, climate

Income inequality, poverty, band-aid solutions, food
prices, global food economics, cost of living crisis,
intersecting systemic issues, wages, intersecting
social crises
Economic, income supports, housing, education, skills

Community engagement programs, qualitative data
collection through stories, reducing food
program-related stigma
Social enterprise, prioritize local food suppliers
Community food hub, Official Community Plans,
regional food hubs
Community-wide income advocacy, intersectional
poverty reduction roundtable



Appendix 4: Site Visit

These visits occurred from June to September 2024 and included a wide range of food access initiatives, such as food banks, food markets, meal programs, urban agriculture sites, Indigenous reserves and collectives, neighbourhood houses, school food programs, and more. Each visit lasted between 45 minutes to 1.5 hours, and participating organizations received a \$50 stipend to acknowledge their time.

Site Visit Questions 1. Can you tell us how and where you source your food? (Check all that apply)

- Rescued/ donated food
- Purchased from local farmers
- Purchased from local grocers and/or local food businesses
- Purchased from large chain grocery stores and restaurant chains
- Grew and harvested food for community purposes
- Obtained through traditional food ways – e.g., hunting, fishing, or gathering
- Other: _____

2. Can you describe how this food is shared with community members? (Check all that apply)

- Food Hampers
- Food Pantry
- Affordable Market
- Community Meal Program
- Institutional Food Procurement – e.g., School Meals, Hospital Meals
- Community Food Hub – e.g., CSA Boxes, Good Food Boxes
- Community Food Asset – e.g., community garden, kitchen, food literacy
- Traditional Food Ways – e.g., gifting, ceremonies, communal gatherings
- Other: _____



3. Can you tell us how many food programs/services does your organization offers?

- Total number of programs: _____
- Can you tell me the number of staff and/or volunteers that you rely on to run your food program(s)/service(s)?
- Paid Staff (insert number): _____
- Volunteers (insert number): _____

4. Can you tell me approximately how many community members are supported by your food program(s)/service(s) monthly?

5. Is there an eligibility or registration criteria for people to access your food programs/services? (Yes/No)

6. Can you show and describe the infrastructure that is used by your food program(s)/service(s)? Check all that are present at site:

- Food Storage – i.e., spaces where food is stored, freezers, refrigerators
- Food Preparation – i.e., spaces where food is prepared/cooked, kitchens
- Food Service Space – i.e., spaces where food is distributed to community members, such as where meals are served or food hampers are delivered
- Staff/Volunteer Area(s) – i.e., spaces utilized by staff/volunteers only
- Community Area – e.g., spaces where children can play, ceremonies occur, community members can gather
- Community Resources – e.g., bulletin boards, areas containing resources
- Accessibility – e.g., wheelchair ramp
- Washrooms – i.e., available for community member use
- Multi-gendered option(s) available
- Drinking fountains – i.e., available for community member use
- Food production – e.g., community garden, orchard, greenhouse, hydroponics

7. Note any other reflections you have including impressions of the site.



Appendix 5: Focus Group Discussion

The four focus groups were conducted via Zoom from September to October 2024. Invitations were sent via email to organizations that participated in the interviews and/or site visits, with a Doodle Poll used to determine the best availability. Each focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes and was recorded for transcription purposes. During the sessions, survey and interview findings were reviewed via a PowerPoint Presentation and participants were given the opportunity to provide additional insights that might not have been captured earlier. The second half of each session involved a collaborative activity using Zoom Whiteboard, allowing participants to write directly on the whiteboard and contribute more freely. Participation varied, with 3 to 6 organizations attending each session. To acknowledge their contributions, each participant received a \$100 stipend.

Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. Participatory Analysis

- Verify survey and interview findings.
- Regional differences – What did we get right/wrong? What's missing? What's surprising?

2. Activities (occur via Zoom Whiteboard)

- Mind map of regional context – What are the most common drivers of food insecurity in your region? What existing resources support emergency preparedness? What resources are needed to improve/sustain emergency preparedness? What are important social and environmental conditions to consider?
- Mind map of organization conditions – Are the spaces and facilities provided by organizations for food access programs stable? What are the challenges organizations face with transportation and food delivery? Are there any limitations to their infrastructure? What community assets could be leveraged to address these challenges?
- Starburst brainstorm of food access typology – What considerations are essential when developing a food access typology, including components like purpose, dimensions, features, outcomes, and measures? What aspects might be missing from the current approach?
- Diagram the role of food access orgs in global and local food system diagram – In what other ways might food access organizations contribute to the local or global food system that haven't been discussed? How are these organizations driving changes within these systems?
- Feedback on food system transformation framework – Could you provide feedback on the stages of food system transformation? Regarding this working draft of the framework, what aspects are most compelling or resonate the most with participants?

3. Final Question: Defining 'community food systems development'

- What do you believe is the "recipe" for community food systems development in your community?



Appendix 6: Focus groups - deductive and inductive coding

Both deductive and inductive coding was carried out in Microsoft Word. The deductive coding began with identifying and compiling content that fit into a preliminary list of four clearly defined themes based on the project objectives – i.e., food access typology, local context/conditions, food systems transformation, and proposed interventions. Inductive coding involved identifying emergent themes (or sub-themes) to reveal deeper insights into participants' perspectives and experiences. This iterative deductive and inductive coding approach ensured alignment with the project goals while also remaining open to unexpected insights that surfaced during analysis. Finally, to ensure consistency, themes and sub-themes were regularly revisited throughout the analysis. Processes and reflections related to theming and sub-theming decisions were also documented to maintain transparency with how content was being interpreted, allowing for multiple perspectives and interpretations to be considered in the final analysis.



CATEGORY	CODE	THEME	SUB-THEMES
FOOD ACCESS TYPOLOGY	Organizational & program description	Structure Shifts Expansion Implementation	Wrap-around services Food distribution, challenges Scaling up, School meals, innovation, new programs
	Human resources	Staffing Volunteer Evaluation	Lack of dignity Burnout Diminishing volunteer base
	Quality improvement		Funding, accurate data, inconsistent measurements, lack of capacity
LOCAL CONTEXT/ CONDITIONS	Program conditions Demographics	Challenges	Access barriers, transportation, time, safety concerns, stigma, navigation, cultural safety, unsustainable funding
		Shifts Challenges	Higher incomes accessing, rising newcomer population Injured workers, exclusions, elderly, families
	Need & demand	High Increased	Population density Post COVID-19 inflation, COVID-19 spike, Inadequate community supports, capacity concerns, scope creep Unmet needs
	Funding conditions	Challenges Opportunities Challenges Successes	Funding for staff, shorter application processes Time constraints, program limitations, inflexible, jurisdiction Infrastructure, Standards of Excellence, community support, partnerships
	Environment Staffing & volunteer Government support	Geography Challenges Local/municipal	Disruptions, changing food landscape, policy Wage-related attrition OCP accountability, zoning, best practices, food systems planning



Appendix 7: Food Access Organizations Feedback Form

1. Did you or somebody from your organization participate in our online food access survey back in April 2024? 2. Please indicate your overall experience with the survey.

- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Satisfied

3. Please share any feedback you have about the survey. (open-ended)

4. Did you or someone from your organization participate in our online interview over the summer?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5. Please indicate your overall experience with the interview.

- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Satisfied

6. Please share any feedback you have about the interview. (open-ended)

7. Did we conduct a site visit at your facility?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. Please indicate your overall experience with the site visit.

- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Satisfied



9. Please share any feedback you have about the site visit. (open-ended)

10. Please indicate your overall experience with the focus group.

- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Satisfied

11. Please share any feedback you have about the focus group (open-ended)



Appendix 8: Community Food Systems Development Framework

STAGES	FEATURES	SOURCES
Seeding CFSD Captures activities that are necessary precursors to food systems transformation.	• Create spaces and opportunities for communities to gather; serve as incubators for making connections while recognizing difference within communities • Build competencies and skills (i.e., systems thinking, food literacy, food justice, collective impact, leadership, and understanding the root causes of hunger and poverty) • Create opportunities to engage in critical reflection	Sumner, 2015; ⁵² Cramer et al., 2019; ⁵³ Nicol and Taherzadeh, 2020 ⁵⁴
Germinating CFSD Captures activities that nurture food systems transformation.	• Strengthen social networks and support coalition building • Foster equitable relationships, partnerships, and collaboration • Organize think-tanks to harmonize goals, manage risks, and identify shared transformation pathways, role models, and best/promising practices • Link farmers and consumers, rural and urban communities • Create processes that ensure transparency and accountability	Hubeau et al., 2017; ⁵⁵ Baldy and Kruse, 2019; ⁵⁶ Bené, ⁵⁷ 2022; ⁵⁸ Ruben et al., 2021. ⁵⁸
Rooting CFSD Captures activities that capacitate stakeholders to engage in food systems transformation.	• Facilitate mutual knowledge and resource sharing • Stimulate community involvement and the co-creation of knowledge to ensure the legitimacy and credibility of knowledge claims (e.g., communities of practice) • Leverage community leaders and assets • Build capacities through resource generation (i.e., funding, staff, etc.)	Hubeau et al., 2017; ⁵⁵ Baldy and Kruse, 2019; ⁵⁶ Nicol and Taherzadeh, 2020. ⁵⁴



Growing CFSD

Captures activities that transform the food chain and food environment to be more just, equitable, sustainable, and resilient.

- Engage in advocacy and collective actions to transform policies, governance (e.g., inclusive and participatory), food chain (e.g., from linear to circular systems based on resource recycling), and food environments
- Engage in transdisciplinary action research to stimulate experiments on radical innovations
- Strengthen social movements, build more localized economies, and empower collaborative networks

Hubeau et al., 2017;⁵⁵
Bené, 2022;⁵⁷ Sage et al.,
2021;⁵⁹ Lee et al., 2020;⁶⁰
Ruben et al., 2021.⁵⁸







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