



Food Security

Regional Community Food Hub Initiative

2022-2023

Annual Report



United Way
British Columbia

Working with communities in
BC's North, Interior, Lower Mainland,
Central & Northern Vancouver Island



Here.
For fuller plates and hearts.



United Way
British Columbia

Working with communities in
BC's North, Interior, Lower Mainland,
Central & Northern Vancouver Island



Here. Where we work.

United Way British Columbia (United Way BC) acknowledges the homelands of the Indigenous Peoples of this place we now call British Columbia and honours the many territorial keepers of the Lands on which we work.

We recognize the many communities in which we work here:

Territorial Acknowledgment



About Regional Community Food Hubs

United Way BC Regional Community Food Hubs (RCFHs) are networks of community partners working together to improve food access in British Columbia. Hubs share resources and knowledge to create a more connected food system for all British Columbians.

Through a community-led approach, Regional Community Food Hubs have connected 120 organizations across BC to help over 228,000 people access the nourishment they need and deserve.

To address the challenges and inequities of BC's food system, and United Way BC's vision of a reliable food access system in our province, RCFH's are committed to adopting a well-rounded, multisectoral, and partnership-driven approach to the underlying issues of food insecurity such as poverty, systemic racism and inadequate social supports. We advocate for, collaborate on, and work towards systemic changes that lead to a more food-secured future.

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Community Food Access

In a broad context, community food access is closely linked to the concept of community food security. Community food security, as defined by the BC Provincial Health Services Authority, signifies a state where all citizens can access safe, personally acceptable, and nutritious food through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self-sufficiency, and equal access for everyone (Ross & Simces, 2008, p. 7; see also Bellow & Hamm, 2003). Based on this definition, we propose the following definition of community food access to guide our work as the RCFH Initiative:

When all members of a community have physical access to safe, adequate, and acceptable food through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance, and Indigenous peoples have access to their traditional foods through trade and access to land and water.

We also propose approaching community food access as a continuum in order to address food access needs that span short-term relief, capacity building, and systemic redesign.

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Food Access

Encompasses “physical access to adequate and acceptable food – impacted by factors such as geography, climate-related events, transportation, and physical mobility,” and “Indigenous peoples’ access to their traditional foods through trade and access to land and water.” (BCCDC, 2022, p. 4)

Food Fillers

United Way Food Fillers are food rescue and recovery organizations, redistributing food at risk of being wasted by businesses to community partners who can utilize it.

Food Insecurity

Occurs when external “factors outside an individual’s control negatively impact their access to enough foods that promote well-being. 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” (BCCDC, 2022, p. 2).

Food Security

When “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” (BCCDC, 2022, p. 1). Food security is comprised of eight intersecting elements: adequacy, acceptability, availability, accessibility, affordability, agency, social justice, and sustainability (BCCDC, 2022).

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Household and Individual Food Access

At household and individual levels, food access is typically described as the ability to obtain enough high-quality food to support the nutritional needs of everyone for a healthy and productive life (Leroy et al., 2015).

Hub and Spoke Model

The RCFH Hub and Spoke model empowers organizations to work together to develop long-term networks and sustainable food access solutions that are defined by, embedded in, led by, and responsive to community members’ needs.

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Steward

Funded organizations committed to leading and coordinating the RCFH’s work through developing collaborative partnerships with Spokes and community partners and convening the RCFH network.

Spoke

Funded organizations including but not limited to non-profits, faith-based organizations, local school districts, and agricultural industries that collaborate with their RCFH Steward and Spokes to provide food access programming and wrap around support. Spokes participate in collective RCFH governance, goal setting, and development. (Community partners may also participate in these activities, but do not receive funding).

Here. For each other.

United Way British Columbia Food Security Team



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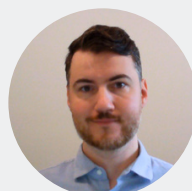
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Here. For you.

A message from our Food Security Director



As the year 2023 slowly draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on the opportunities and incredible collective efforts of the past three years to support residents across British Columbia in accessing nourishing food where it is needed. Since 2020, we have continued to learn valuable lessons about how collaboration, partnerships, and working together can truly make a difference in our communities. We understand that only through a strong network of community partners, donors, businesses, and government coming together, engaging in dialogue, and listening, can we all contribute to fostering healthy and caring communities.

Since then, we have been able to develop, implement, and build upon impactful initiatives such as Regional Community Food Hubs and Food Fillers, expand Infrastructure/Food Link by United Way BC programs to new communities, and extend support to many communities during wildfires, floods, and other emergencies. Importantly, we have also forged deeper partnerships with multiple BC Ministries, Health Authorities, and other funders.

However, our world is ever-evolving, and the need for accessing available food with dignity and care remains a priority. As we witness the need for increased food access due to inflation, we are even more dedicated to our Hub vision, supporting communities with nourishing, culturally preferred, high-quality food right at the heart of their communities.

You have all been an integral part of this journey. You have placed your trust in us and worked alongside us as we discovered how best to meet community needs and uphold our core values – dignity, equity, collaboration, and more.

Together, we have built a robust network of community partners and implemented programs that respond to community needs. As you will see in this report, the impact we have collectively made is no small feat. We are honored to steward all this information, gathered through your Year-End reports, our ongoing conversations, storytelling, Community of Practice discussions, and incredible interactions.

This report represents the culmination of all our collective work. We hope you can see your contributions reflected in it and recognize the true impact we are making for British Columbians.

As we look ahead, we begin to consider what needs to be in place five years, ten years, and twenty years down the road. We are dedicated to deepening our relationships with policy makers and community engagers alike to strengthen the food access structure that supports all British Columbians while respecting First Nations, the land, and the people.

Thank you for all you have done and continue to bring to this work. From the entire United Way BC Team, it is an honor to collaborate with you.

Alzbeta Sabova
Food Security Director
























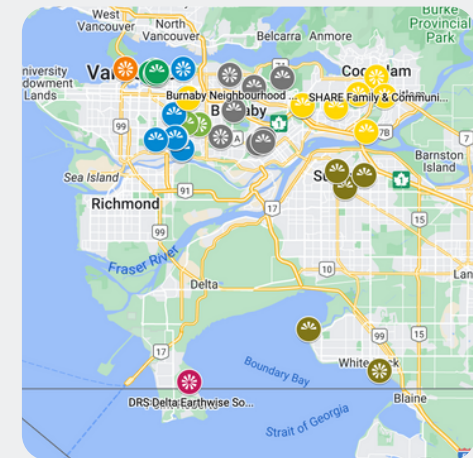
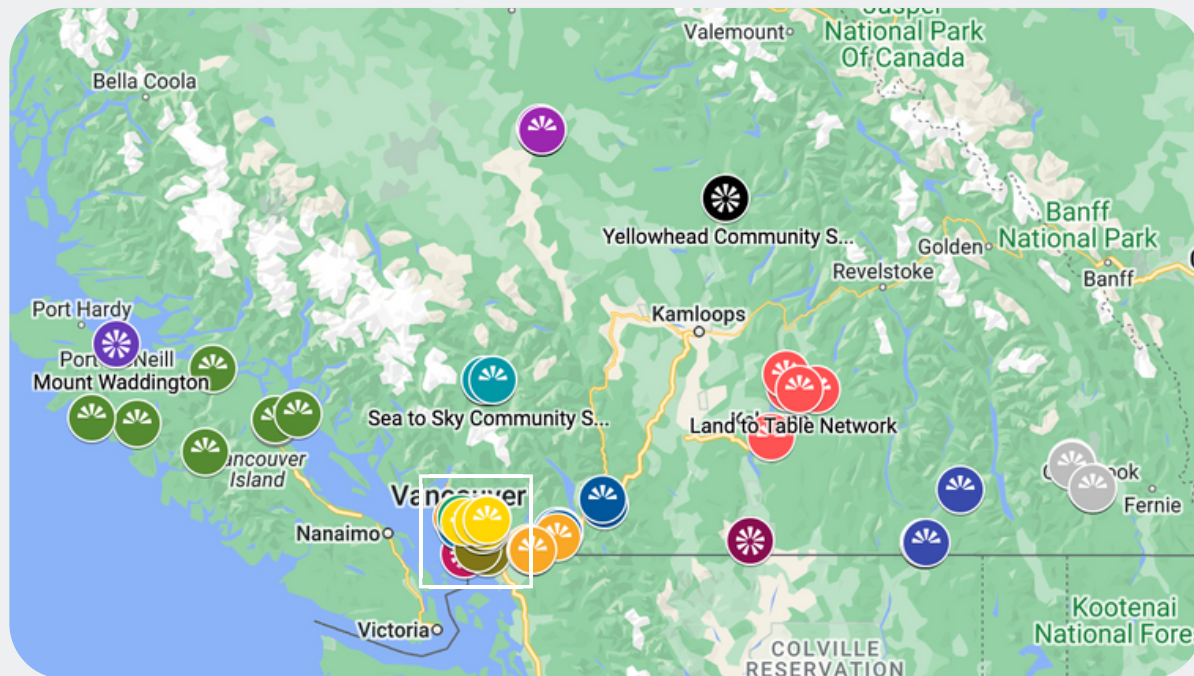
Provincial Snapshot

MAP OF RCFHS IN BC

United Way BC Regional Community Food Hubs (RCFHs) are an innovative, local response to food security. Our RCFHs mobilize thousands of volunteers to sort, prep and deliver fresh, nutritious food to those who need it most. It's just another way United Way BC builds strong, vital connections to support our communities.

LEGEND

-  Abbotsford
-  Burnaby
-  Upper Fraser Valley
-  Central Cariboo
-  Clearwater
-  Collingwood
-  Delta
-  Downtown Eastside
-  Hastings- Sunrise
-  Kimberley- Cranbrook
-  Lower Columbia
-  Lower Similkameen
-  North Okanagan
-  Mount Waddington
-  North Pemberton
-  South Vancouver
-  Surrey- Central
-  Surrey- Guildford- Whalley
-  Strathcona
-  Tri-Cities
-  West End Vancouver



Hubs are located in communities across BC. To find the one nearest to you visit our [interactive map](#).



2022-2023 IMPACT STATISTICS

REGIONAL COMMUNITY FOOD HUBS

RCFH Growth

- 3** Food Fillers funded for food recovery
- 20** RCFHs established
- 60** Staff roles funded
- 102** Community organizations received funding

Individuals Served

- 134,245** People reached
- 81,651** Individuals directly supported
- 16,091** Volunteers engaged
- 1,472** Food access programs & workshops

Demographics

All RCFHs served:

- Children and youth
- Indigenous populations
- People living with mental illness
- People who are low income or living in poverty
- Seniors and Elders not living in care
- People who use drugs

Partner Organizations

Types of new partners added:

- Faith-based organizations
- Food recovery organizations
- Grassroots food security organizations
- Retail and agriculture organizations
- First Nations organizations



BURNABY RCFH
Here. Serving growing demand.

*We are now seeing a **steep increase** in numbers [at our RCFH].*

*We jumped from a weekly average of 40 people fed, in the spring term, to an average of 140 people fed as of September and it is expected that the number will **continue to climb** as more and more folks are learning about the service.*



MEALS & FOOD HAMPERS

A food hamper, sometimes referred to as a meal hamper or food basket, is a package of food items that are assembled and distributed to provide individuals or families with essential food items and ready-to-eat meals in an accessible way.

KEY STATS

3,134,562 Meals provided by RCFHs and Food Fillers

215,726 Food hampers provided in 2022-2023

10.8 Average number of meals provided by food hampers

3.5-36 Range of meals provided by RCFH food hampers

ITEMS IN A TYPICAL FOOD HAMPER

Staple Items: fresh produce, dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese), meat (fresh & frozen), non-perishables (cereal, meal helpers, rice, pasta, noodles), eggs, canned proteins (beans, tuna), bread, crackers, oils, flour, premade items (pasta sauce, soup, sandwiches, deli items, salad kits), gluten & dairy free items (Daiya pizza, cheese), honey, jam, nut butter, spices, tea, coffee, cookies, bakery items (fresh buns)

Cultural foods: Halal meat, Ooligan grease, sushi

Produce: broccoli, tomatoes, potatoes, turnips, beets, peppers, bok choy, gailan, squash, kale, carrots, lettuce, radishes, cucumbers, onions, apples, pears, kohlrabi, hakurei turnips, green garlic/green onions

Non-food items: toilet paper, diapers, sanitizing wipes



PRIORITY FOOD ITEMS

Below is a list of the top 12 priority food items, across all 20 Regional Community Food Hubs.

1. Milk
2. Eggs
3. Produce
4. Protein
5. Bread
6. Vegetables
7. Grain
8. Dairy
9. Soup
10. Cereal
11. Fruit
12. Potatoes



WORKSHOPS

During the 2022-2023 year, RCFHs conducted a total of 1,472 workshops. The top 6 most common workshop themes were:

Cooking

- Meal preparation
- Baking
- Low-cost cooking
- Recipe demonstrations
- Multicultural cooking
- Classes focused on youth and seniors

Gardening

- Composting
- Microgreens
- Sustainable plant cultivation
- Herb gardens
- Soil health
- Gardening practices for children

Indigenous & Cultural

- Indigenous knowledge teachings & cultural activities
- Bannock making
- Storytelling
- Medicine teachings
- Elder dinners
- Indigenous gardening



Training (Safety & ProD)

- Food safety practices
- Food careers training
- Food Safe certification
- Financial literacy
- First Aid certification
- Naxalone
- Conflict resolution

Seeding & Canning

- Seed starting webinars
- Seed library events
- Seed sowing
- Preservation
- Dehydrating
- Canning

Organizational

- Team meetings
- Food asset scanning
- Volunteer onboarding
- Community planning
- Council meetings
- Conferences

GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

At the beginning of the year, each RCFH was asked to set their own annual goals as part of a trust-based and relational approach to supporting each Hub's unique, place-based development. Below are the degrees to which each Hub reported achieving the goals they set for themselves at the beginning of the 2022-2023 year.

RCFH GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

Between the 2021-2022 year and the 2022-2023 year:

- The average percentage of goal achievement rose 4%
- The minimum goal achievement rose 10%

In the 2022-2023 year Regional Community Food Hubs:

- Achieved 83% of their target goals on average
- 11 out of 16 Hubs achieved 80% or higher of their goals



GOALS, BARRIERS & NEXT STEPS

GOALS ACHIEVED

The top three types of goals RCFHs achieved in the 2022-2023 year included: expansion and development of programming, community engagement, and network development and collaboration. Other goals achieved reflected themes of capacity building and development, Indigenous engagement, data collection, and assessment.

BARRIERS

The most common barriers to achieving Hub goals included capacity constraints, networking or partnership development-related delays, finances, and logistics.

NEXT STEPS

The most common themes regarding Hub's next steps include developing community collaborations and partnerships, program development and expansion, communications and visibility, and data collection and utilization.



BURNABY RCFH
Here. To learn together.

Through our combined effort and through sharing resources, United Way has helped the community integrate support, build capacity within community, model healthy foods and share cultural/cross-cultural knowledge and support. [...] United Way has helped us fill the gaps when we needed it most.



PROCUREMENT PATTERNS

While most Hubs have food rescue/recovery and production built into their programming and/or partnerships, food purchasing is still sometimes required to meet rising community needs. Emerging themes identified with respect to Hubs' food procurement patterns include:

CHALLENGES

- Decrease in food donations
- Decrease in food rescue work
- Variety and volume of food impacted by food costs (especially during winter)
- Limitations in cultural/nutritional diversity
- Dependency on donations
- Sustainability of programs
- Inflation and rising costs

OPPORTUNITIES

- Culturally appropriate foods
- Providing specialty & baby foods
- Bulk and wholesale ordering
- Deepening relationships with local producers
- Partnerships with other food access organizations
- Participant feedback and specific sourcing
- Exploring alternative food sources
- Grants and funding

NEEDS

- Protein, dairy, produce and bread
- Increasing storage capacity
- Increasing access to health food donations
- Grant funding
- Increase in food recovery & direct purchasing
- Community kitchen items
- Additional resources and funding

SUCCESSES

- High-quality food donations
- Bulk and wholesale ordering
- Participant-centric adjustments
- Partnerships for low-cost fresh produce
- Supporting local food production
- Food rescue projects

FOOD ACCESS STATISTICS

FUNDING TOWARDS FOOD PURCHASING

Dollar amount of funding towards food purchasing	Percentage of RCFHs
0-19K	53%
20-39K	18%
40-59K	18%
60-79K	6%
80K+	6%

\$23,353

Average amount of funding spent on food purchasing

\$0 - \$83,500

Range of funding that went towards food purchasing across all 20 RCFHS



IMPROVING FOOD ACCESS

In the 2022-2023 year, the Regional Community Food Hub Initiative has both grown and identified a need for further expansion based on increased demand. As it stands, the RCFH Initiative encompasses 20 RCFHs, each uniquely situated in communities across the province. Through analyzing feedback from each Hub, a range of experiences have emerged that reflect both the individualized experiences of each Hub and broader themes in improving community food access.



CHALLENGES

Challenges include a reduction in the quantity and quality of food donations, increasing food costs, and limited program funding. Especially for organizations dependent on receiving donations, shifting to direct purchasing lowers food variety and availability, impacting the nutritional needs of vulnerable populations and organizations' ability to buy diverse and multicultural foods.

NEEDS

The acquisition of key food items is the primary need to meet increased demand and maintain quality food access. There is a need to increase food access through donations, direct purchasing, and food recovery methods from reliable partners, local farmers, and community groups. Food purchasing-specific funding is consistently needed. Expanding storage to handle larger food donations and purchasing, especially for organizations not registered as food banks, is vital.

OPPORTUNITIES

Emerging opportunities lie in creating more cost-effective procurement pathways through collaboration with local farmers and fishers, bulk ordering, and partnerships among food access organizations. Some Hubs also cited ensuring increased food access through extending opening hours and availability of food on weekends, allowing wider distribution windows, and offering delivery services (especially to seniors).

SUCCESS

Key points of success across Hubs include collaborative efforts to share produce, bulk ordering, and participant-centric adjustments. Some organizations cited consistent food procurement from food rescue projects and donations. Other RCFHs pivoted towards bulk and wholesale ordering, allowing for more efficient and cost-effective food procurement (especially for cultural food items). Food purchasing adjustments based on participant feedback have resulted in sourcing specific items that are highly valued by the community.



Initiative Progress

COLLECTIVE LEARNING

Learning and growing collectively are the heart of the RCFH Initiative. Beyond RCFH-embedded opportunities such as the Community of Practice and United for Food Summit, Hubs participated in a range of learning opportunities and trainings, spanning domains such as sustainable food systems, advocacy, well-being and healthy relationships, Hub operations, and decolonization and cultural safety. Hubs also attended local, provincial, and national conferences, and hosted gatherings in their communities.



FOOD SYSTEMS SUSTAINABILITY

Hubs attended a variety of workshops and gatherings on topics such as sustainable food production, funding resilient regional food sheds, and local organic program development. Strathcona RCFH participated in BC Fisheries for Communities gatherings and round tables and the BC Young Fisherman's forum, highlighting the fact that sustainable food systems rely upon the health of our oceans and waterways.



ADVOCACY

To further their advocacy work, Kimberley Cranbrook RCFH presented to their city council as a collective, and Burnaby RCFH participated in municipal-level work to build a community-held food charter. Hubs also engaged in non-profit specific learning opportunities such as the United Way Public Policy Institute and the Vantage Point Change Network Food Security Campaign.



WELL-BEING AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Many Hubs participated in trainings to support well-being and healthy relationships, such as restorative justice, trauma-informed practice, compassionate listening, harm reduction, health and safety for working groups, and non-violent crisis intervention.



HUB OPERATIONS

Some Hubs pursued learning opportunities to support Hub operations, which covered topics such as case management, strategic development, grant and reporting writing, inventory management, warehouse worker training, and driver training.

DECOLONIZATION AND CULTURAL SAFETY

Learning about decolonization, cultural safety, and culturally appropriate food was a priority across the Hub network. Hubs engaged in trainings on Indigenous Cultural Safety, Cultural Competency & Sensitivity, and Truth & Reconciliation, and participated in learning opportunities such as the Nuu-chah-nulth Indigenous Food Sovereignty Table and the Young Agrarians Indigenous Food Sovereignty workshop with Jacob Beaton of Tea Creek (a land-based Indigenous food sovereignty organization in Northern BC).

Some Hubs sought out Indigenous cultural learnings directly from local First Nations, such as Downtown Eastside RCFH, which participated in a workshop series with Robert Williams on intergenerational trauma and the legacies of the Indian Act. Mt Waddington RCFH also sought to center local Indigenous knowledge in their work:

“We had a First Nations Knowledge Keeper speak to our Hub about cultural sensitivity, land acknowledgments, and the traditional food system.

We have only touched the surface of this work and plan to continue the work together every time we gather.”

Culturally appropriate food was another priority learning area. South Vancouver RCFH identified the need for collective learning on this topic and developed a learning session to address it:

“We asked our RCFH Spoke Advisory group what everyone was interested in learning and discussing last year. One topic that came up was culturally appropriate food.

[We] organized a learning session around culturally appropriate food for our January 2023 Spoke meeting, and guest speakers from Yarrow and House of Omeed joined to present on their food distribution programs. We were able to see the similarities and differences between our programs and talk about how each program embodies its values.

The result of the session is that we made connections and learned from other models, and it inspired us to think more deeply about how we can provide culturally appropriate food across more of our participant demographics next year.”





COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Events are a popular way for Hubs to foster community connections. As Collingwood RCFH shared:

“Our RCFH offers celebrations and gathering spaces so that community members can connect with one another and receive vital resources at the same time. We want to create spaces of connection so that we can do more than just fulfill a service. We are building community too.”

As Downtown Eastside RCFH shared, hosting community events around food is a vital pathway to building community and strengthening the food system:

“Sharing food, tending to the land, and participating in cultural activities are incredibly powerful and positive contexts in which to strengthen community connections. Working together to meet local needs while building a more resilient food system enhances intersectional solidarity and community building.”

During the 2022-2023 year, Hubs hosted or collaborated on events such as:

-  **Cellars to Soils Event**, a movie screening of First We Eat: Food Security North of 60 with the filmmaker Suzanne Crocker (Central Cariboo RCFH)
-  **Chilliwack & Fraser Cascade Food Sovereignty Meetup** (Upper Fraser Valley RCFH)
-  **Community Food Security Planning Session** (North Okanagan RCFH)
-  **Frog Hollow Harvest Festival; Kiwassa’s Pandora Park Community Markets** (Hastings Sunrise RCFH)
-  **Summer BBQ** at South Vancouver Family Place; **Annual Harvest Festival** at South Vancouver Neighbourhood House; **Ukrainian celebration** event with Peace Church & PIRS (South Vancouver RCFH)

GATHERINGS & CONFERENCES

Hubs participated in regional gatherings such as:

Hubs attended provincial conferences such as:

At the national level, representatives from Hastings Sunrise RCFH attended:



STAYING CONNECTED

FOUNDATIONS

Stewards employ a variety of strategies to stay connected with their Spoke network. Email, phone calls, and Zoom meetings form the foundation of Hub communications. Some Hubs, like Sea to Sky RCFH, tailor their communications according to the specific needs and preferences of their Spoke organizations, for example:

“[We were] introduced to surveys and feedback platforms for Indigenous communities and organizations to share insight into food security in their communities [... our] RCFH shared this with our two Indigenous Spoke partners.”

DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Hubs also use digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Google Groups, Drives, and Docs to share information. According to North Okanagan RCFH, a “helpful tool has been using Google Docs to create living documents that Spokes can edit on their own time or in real-time during meetings with feedback.”

Other Hubs, such as Kimberley Cranbrook RCFH and Downtown Eastside RCFH, are exploring how digital platforms could simplify their communications. Downtown Eastside RCFH is “planning to develop shared digital infrastructure (i.e., online databases and collaboration software) to streamline information capturing and sharing between partners.”

MEETINGS

Monthly meetings are a popular way for Stewards and Spokes to connect. Many Hubs would like to meet in-person more often, although time constraints and travel are barriers to increased meeting frequency. Burnaby RCFH acknowledges that “our biggest challenge has been carving out opportunities to meet and share as a larger group.”



Mt Waddington RCFH would like to make their meetings more intentional, and so encourages Spokes to reserve part of their funding to participate in Hub-specific meetings:

“I’d like to do more in-person meetings. I have asked each Spoke to set aside some of their funds to support travel & time to attend meetings. I meet in-person with each Spoke at different [planning] tables and in different contexts. I’d like to formalize these meetings so they are intentional and not just happening by chance.”

When Stewards and Spokes gather, they employ a variety of strategies to promote inclusion, provide support, and adapt as needed. Mt Waddington RCFH ensures everyone is on the same page through a “rolling” note taking system:

“We use a ‘rolling agenda’ and ‘rolling meeting minutes’ so if someone misses a meeting they can see what was discussed. This is also effective for staff turnover - this way new people can read up on the workings of the Hub and easily see who is involved and how. This is a great system - highly recommended!”



South Vancouver RCFH regularly carves out time for program updates and follow-up conversations in their Hub meetings:

“We make time for program updates during each monthly meeting. If something arises that impacts certain Spokes, we schedule specific conversations to find a way forward.”

North Okanagan RCFH has adapted United Way BC’s quarterly reporting system to facilitate ongoing conversations with their Spokes:

“The Spokes all indicated that they really enjoyed the verbal reporting [with United Way BC] in October 2022, so we have continued this style of reporting and meeting and use it as both a place for Spokes to share achievements and challenges, and for us to share new information.”



SHARED GOVERNANCE

MEETINGS & GATHERINGS

Many Hubs reported that gathering in person was fundamental to effective collective decision making. As Sea to Sky RCFH shared, “collective decision-making occurred more organically during meetings held in-person vs. online meetings.” Gathering types that supported collective decision making included monthly, bi-annual, and annual Hub meetings; Hub advisory meetings; and Hub retreats.

Some Hubs, such as Upper Fraser Valley and Downtown Eastside, are working to include community members in their Hub decision-making process. For example, Upper Fraser Valley RCFH is interested in “growing monthly opportunity for folks from the region to connect and inform [RCFH] decisions – likely at CoP meetings,” while Downtown Eastside RCFH shared that “our annual Community Strategic Planning Meeting & Feast casts an even wider net of community members, partner organizations, and other stakeholders that are invited to come together and share a meal and spend the day planning for the coming year.”

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Hubs implement a variety of practices and strategies to foster inclusion and facilitate shared governance. Hastings Sunrise RCFH and Strathcona RCFH make collective decisions by consensus, rather than majority. Other Hubs, such as North Okanagan RCFH, facilitate collective decision making through an “iterative process of consultation with the individual Spokes, taking into account their goals, needs, and limitations, and our funding availability, coordination time, and Hub/organizational goals. This process occurs through individual and group meetings and live Google Docs.”

One strategy identified to increase Spoke participation in decision making involved clarifying that Hub member organizations have a responsibility to collaboratively determine Hub goals, and that this responsibility shouldn’t fall solely on the Hub coordinator(s). This approach helped to mitigate a common barrier to Spoke participation in Hub decision-making: low engagement due to lack of time and overwhelm.

Another strategy to mitigate this barrier was “following up and reaching out to check in with Spoke members who were less engaged due to being busy/overwhelmed,” according to Kimberley Cranbrook RCFH. Looking forward, some Hubs, such as South Vancouver RCFH, identified Spoke participation as a priority area for growth:

“One opportunity to grow in the next year will be involving Spokes in our long-term strategy development and implementation – by doing so, we will strengthen our collective decision-making and build capacity for Spokes to determine which role they play and how that can be resourced in the long-run.”

MODELS & RESOURCES

Some Hubs, such as Central Cariboo RCFH, have been working to develop a shared governance model to support collective decision-making. Others, such as North Okanagan RCFH, plan to develop their own Community Agreements to guide their work together more clearly.





Several Hubs reflected on the benefit of sharing their experiences and learning from others, no matter where they are located in the province. As Upper Fraser Valley RCFH put it:

“Being able to hear from another agency who is already running a program and learning from them what the barriers were, supports us in how we can go forward. As well, hearing similar struggles from other Hubs is somewhat comforting in knowing we aren’t alone and what we are struggling with across the province [is] not isolated to our region. Having real conversations about the barriers and strong problem-solving conversations about the barriers would be incredibly valuable.”

Increasing Inclusivity

Many Hubs suggested that increasing the inclusivity of the CoP would enhance its value to their Hub and Spoke networks. As South Vancouver RCFH shared:

“Participating in the CoP makes me feel less alone in doing the work, like a support group, but it’s not a space that is open to the rest of my team or our Spokes to join.”

Several Hubs indicated that they would like their Spokes to be able to participate in CoP workshops, discussions, “spotlights,” and sessions that support their goals.

For example, North Okanagan RCFH suggested that:

“We would also love to see structured workshops or discussions that bring Spokes into the conversation. We feel this will help the Spokes see themselves as part of something bigger, provide education on broader issues (e.g. food security vs. food insecurity), and may also provide them networking opportunities to troubleshoot program issues/ideas from outside of the region.”

Another suggestion to increase the inclusivity of the CoP was to support multiple participants from each Hub to attend. As Kimberley Cranbrook RCFH shared:

“I like the idea of alternating participation amongst Hub members, rather than just 1 person attending. I think there’s huge value in connecting with other communities and sharing/listening.”



UNITED FOR FOOD SUMMIT

In October 2022, Hubs attended United Way BC's first *United for Food Summit* in Delta, BC. The Summit was an in-person event for Regional Community Food Hubs with over 50 attendees from across the province. The Summit provided an opportunity for all regions to build relationships and community, as well as to learn from each other through small and large group discussions focused on advancing advocacy in the food movement, rethinking reporting, and how to effectively facilitate multi-stakeholder conversations.

SUMMIT IMPACT

Feedback about the Summit was overwhelmingly positive, with many Hubs citing the opportunity to form in-person connections, share knowledge and experiences, and increase their understanding of how United Way BC stewards the RCFH initiative, as highlights of the event.

CONNECTING IN-PERSON

Gathering in person as a RCFH network for the first time was especially powerful, as it allowed Hubs to build upon their virtual CoP connections in a present and engaged way.



For example, Sea to Sky RCFH shared that being able to interact in person – during time protected from other meetings and responsibilities – amplified the impact of the event:

“Like the CoP meetings, the United for Food Summit helped to create a support system to learn from one another’s successes and barriers, as often they are similar if not the same. There is no shortage of work when looking to improve food security in your community and the CoP meetings have been a great chance to not only be inspired about the possibilities but to stop and reflect on what we have already accomplished. As [the United for Food Summit] was in person, I felt that the takeaways were that much stronger and provided an opportunity to pause and fully participate, compared to a day of online meetings when you are having to switch between different projects and objectives.”

-Sea to Sky RCFH



Echoing the value of setting time aside for face-to-face connection, Mt Waddington RCFH reflected on the value of eating together during the event and taking time away from their own Hub work to gain perspective and insight:

“I made good connections with other Hub representatives [at the United for Food Summit]. Being able to share meals at the Summit and outside of the Summit [at the hotel] were invaluable. Time away from my own Hub also allowed me the opportunity to take a break from my focused work and see the bigger picture of what we are trying to achieve. I always like seeing the common threads we are facing.”

-Mt Waddington RCFH

SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Highlighting the event as an opportunity to share knowledge and experiences, Burnaby RCFH remarked:

“What a pleasure it was to gather with like-minded colleagues and connect, engage, share and have our knowledge broadened by the diversity of experiences in the room! Showcasing other organizations and regions work allowed us to envision a much wider scope of possibilities.”

-Burnaby RCFH

Similarly, Upper Fraser Valley RCFH found it reinvigorating to connect with Hubs who shared their passion:

“We absolutely loved participating in the Food Summit and we hope there are more. Being able to connect with the other Hubs in person was an incredible experience. The entire day was very rejuvenating and grounding by being around so many folks with a shared passion.”

-Upper Fraser Valley RCFH

While a deep passion for and commitment to their work brought attendees together, a shared understanding of the challenges inherent to community food access work catalysed a sense of solidarity amongst the Hubs. As Upper Fraser Valley RCFH put it:

“A key learning for me was that all of the organizations involved in food security are facing similar challenges around reporting, sourcing food, managing change, addressing increasing number of clients in need, and that when we come together and have an opportunity to share concerns and ideas, we leave with renewed hope, vigor, and enthusiasm!”

-Upper Fraser Valley RCFH

Sharing knowledge and experiences at the event had a lasting impact. For example, Burnaby RCFH was inspired by the showcased community food garden model, Delta RCFH formed a partnership with Tsawwassen First Nation (who provided the event’s land acknowledgment), and Upper Fraser Valley RCFH hosted their first Chilliwack & Fraser Cascade Food Sovereignty Meetup due to Summit inspiration.



UNDERSTANDING UNITED WAY BC

In addition to sparking connection and inspiration amongst Hubs, the United for Food Summit also shed light on how United Way BC holistically supports the Regional Community Food Hub initiative. Staff from across United Way BC's Community Impact and Investment department attended the event which, as West End RCFH stated, helped hubs "understand the different departments at United Way, and better understand how they are supporting the food programs we participate in."

Spending the day in conversation with United Way BC's Food Security team was also valuable for Hubs. For example, North Okanagan RCFH reflected that:

" [Attending the event allowed us to] better understand [...] the way in which RCFH staff endeavor to help hold the larger pieces [of the RCFH initiative], from government advocacy and policy change to creating more effective reporting tools."

-North Okanagan RCFH

Such understanding generated feelings of authenticity and connection in Hubs like Kimberley Cranbrook RCFH, who shared that:

"Being able to connect in with the team at United Way British Columbia in a concrete way [through the Summit], I feel more connected and grounded in what the United Way BC is trying to do moving forward. Our Hub draws inspiration from the direction that United Way BC is going and the real evidence of their commitment to listen to what is happening on the ground, to flip the relationship so there's less of the power dynamic in the funder-recipient sense, and recognizing the real people in the room. The real authenticity of everyone there was super great, useful, and inspiring."

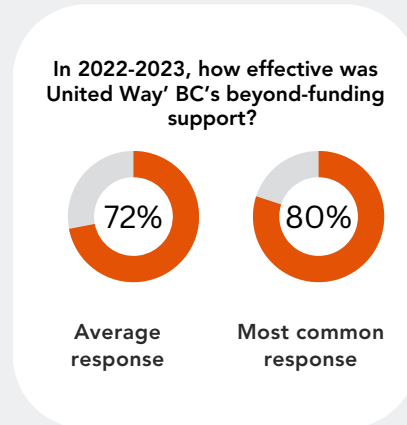
-Kimberley Cranbrook RCFH



UNITED WAY BC SUPPORT

When asked for their feedback, Hubs identified several areas in which they would appreciate continuing and/or enhanced support from United Way BC. These areas included beyond-funding support such as facilitating access to the public policy process, provincial advocacy channels, and specialized training opportunities; leveraging funding support such as supporting funding acquisition from other funders; and funding-related support such as adapting the RCFH funding model and providing additional funding.

BEYOND-FUNDING SUPPORT

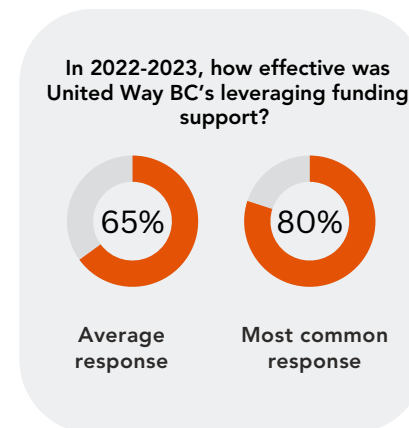


Suggestions to improve beyond-funding support included "amplify[ing] our voices at the provincial and federal level," and "continuing to do long-term advocacy with the provincial government." Hubs also requested support accessing and building specialized skills and knowledge, such as through partnership with post-secondary institutions and organizations that can provide in-kind support.

South Vancouver RCFH shed light on this need and opportunity, sharing that:

"I would love to see UWBC offering support or tools to RCFHs that we don't always have the resources or expertise to do, but are needed, like fundraising and marketing. Support or resources with convening communities and/or food systems organizers would be super helpful, as I think we all have the desire to build better systems together, but our teams don't have the time/capacity/resources to do so."

LEVERAGING FUNDING SUPPORT



In the 2022-2023 year, Hubs leveraged United Way BC funding in the following ways:

Securing grants as a RCFH Hub and Spoke network

"As we are a collective group, funding is more accessible as granters favour larger collaboration in community."

- Burnaby RCFH

"We leverage our UWBC core funding, partnership and RCFH status with every grant application we write. This support was instrumental in helping us secure 2-year [...] funding [from another donor] in 2022-2023, as it was very important to them that we have sustainable core funding beyond their support."

- South Vancouver RCFH

Supporting Spoke funding applications

"RCFH funding has supported the Hub in drafting grant applications for Spokes to help further their projects through increasing capacity [...] and] transferring knowledge."

- North Okanagan RCFH



Growing their capacity

“The funding from UWBC has helped us to support the expansion of our team to both meet the growing need in our communities while working to improve the quality and availability of our services.”

- Sea to Sky RCFH

Fostering collaboration and building partnerships

“Through UWBC funding we have been able to engage the community in the food security work at the Community Food Security Planning Session to increase community awareness and connection to the Hub and create resiliency in the form of connection and collaboration.”

- North Okanagan RCFH

“Utilizing collaborative processes, the community partners have started exploring opportunities that respond to shared needs and interests [...] and] have shared information and explored relevant funding opportunities.”

- Tri-Cities RCFH

Demonstrating the credibility of their initiatives

“[RCFH funding] provides legitimacy of [...] initiatives that results in inclusion of others seeking to address systemic issues.”

- Delta RCFH

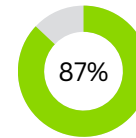
Suggestions for Improvement

Suggestions to improve leveraging funding support included providing additional information about how to access “provincial funding” and navigate “the circles of government grants,” and facilitating “networking opportunities with funders or suppliers” that are not currently available to Hubs.



FUNDING SUPPORT

In 2022-2023, how effective was United Way BC's funding support?



Average response



Most common response

“We really can't think of any ways to improve UWBC's support: it has been great! We truly appreciate how UWBC approaches its work with adaptability, inclusivity, and curiosity, and at our current scale, our budget has been sufficient in meeting our annual project goals.”

- Central Cariboo RCFH

“UWBC funding itself is [...] extremely impactful in making our program high quality, and helpful because so many other grants are restricted to purchasing food. We so value this partnership!!”

- South Vancouver RCFH

Suggestions to improve funding support included adapting the RCFH funding model to incorporate multi-year funding & core funding support and increasing funding in response to inflation. As Hastings Sunrise RCFH stated, “more funding would allow us to level up our work and better support the work of others in our region,” a sentiment that many Hubs share.

Another suggestion to improve funding support involved creating opportunities for subsidized food access to reduce a need for direct food purchasing (and associated funding). North Okanagan RCFH proposed that:

“It would be amazing to see United Way BC partner at a higher level to access resources or funds for subsidized food opportunities to share with the Hubs in place of direct purchasing as we all try to shift from emergency response to food insecurity, to more sustainable food security programming, it would help to make that transition if there were other opportunities [for Hubs to be supported in and] share how they are moving away from direct purchasing of food with Hub funding and still supporting their local food system.”



COMMUNITY IMPACT

IMPROVING COMMUNITY FOOD ACCESS

Beyond quantitative measurements such as numbers of meals/hampers distributed and individuals served, Hubs demonstrated their positive impact on community food access through feedback from program users and observations about the multi-faceted benefits of Hub programming.

In the 2022-2023 year...

Hubs strengthened food access for families, children and youth, seniors, individuals experiencing isolation, newcomers, and people living in rural and remote communities. Food recovery and fresh produce provision played an important role in improving food access, as did wrap-around service delivery and availability of year-round food access supports. However, rising food costs and inflation mean that there is still unmet need in many communities.



IMPROVED FOOD ACCESS

HUBS ARE IMPROVING FOOD ACCESS FOR...

FAMILIES

DELTA RCFH

The Harvest Box program is fantastic for our families. We receive a handful of boxes each week within the season and Earthwise [Steward of the Delta RCFH] is so thoughtful in how they put these boxes together. With families struggling to keep up with the rising cost in food, these boxes make a big difference and our families look forward to receiving them every week. Thank you [...] for your continued commitment to food security.

SOUTH VANCOUVER RCFH

During the pandemic I was unable to make my ends meet as a single parent. At times, I wrote down my shopping list before going to the supermarket I often struggled to decide whether I should strike some of the items off the list in order to lower my spending of the week. However, with your help I was able to pick up those items again that were substantially important to my daily consumption.

BURNABY RCFH

Because of the Burnaby Neighborhood House RCFH, our family can eat twice a day instead of once a day.

PEOPLE EXPERIENCING ISOLATION

BURNABY RCFH

Five of our single neighbours come to [Burnaby RCFH] Food Hubs - once or twice a week. They pool the food we give them and cook meals to share together. It has brought us out of isolation and into community.



NEWCOMERS

TRI-CITIES RCFH

Each of the [RCFH] partners makes information about the various food programming in the community available to the families who come to access their service [...] The material is available in a number of different languages. Through increased awareness about the various food support available, the families' access to food is improved.

SOUTH VANCOUVER RCFH

We provide language support through translated materials and offering/recruiting volunteers and staff who speak members' languages.



HUBS ARE IMPROVING FOOD ACCESS FOR...

CHILDREN AND YOUTH



“

WEST END RCFH

Youth are an extremely difficult group to engage and encourage consistent attendance. Our youth breakfast programs has fostered a sense of community and has strong regular attendance. We were able to partner with the school directly, and provide a unique and place-based solution.

”

“

SEA TO SKY RCFH

The Pemberton Food Hub provides funding [...and] recovered food and donations with School District 48's Breakfast and Lunch programs. Through this partnership both principals have reported an increase in the number of students accessing the program and [...] a reduction in stigmatization.

”

RURAL AND REMOTE RESIDENTS

“

STRATHCONA RCFH

Our Hub has directly been a part of the start up of small-scale food banking systems in the [remote] communities of Sayward, Gold River and Tahsis through in kind coordination, paid staff and advocacy/lobbying at the municipal level.

”

“

MT. WADDINGTON RCFH

More agencies and schools are accessing and distributing food available through Loaves and Fishes. Our pilot Good Food Box program filled up quickly and has a waiting list - this was with the help of Spokes and partners spreading the word.

”

SENIORS AND ELDERLY

“

DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE RCFH

Living on a fixed income especially with grocery prices rising makes buying groceries very difficult. As well, some days it is very hard to get out of the house to access foods. Knowing that I will have some food coming in, especially eggs and proteins and fruits and healthy foods like ginger and lemons in wintertime, is hugely beneficial to me.

”



ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS

Hubs support people experiencing intersecting systemic barriers through collaboration, grounding their work in equity-based and decolonizing frameworks, prioritizing leadership opportunities for equity-seeking groups, and providing wrap-around supports and referrals.

All Hubs include Spokes and partners who serve diverse demographics, many of whom work together to identify and address systemic barriers. For example, Upper Fraser Valley RCFH shared:

"We have valued the opportunity to collaborate with Spokes throughout the region to remove barriers for people in accessing food resources. Some ways we have seen this play out is the transportation supports Spokes provide their clients to ensure access to food [... and] sharing bulk resources with agencies who have relationships with clients."

-Upper Fraser Valley RCFH

Hubs also strive to incorporate equity-based frameworks and center the voices of equity-seeking communities, such as Burnaby and West End RCFH:

"The partners in our RCFH collaborative have been chosen with an eye to increasing our overall ability to address divergent populations."

- Burnaby RCFH

"We have embedded aspects of decolonization, anti-racism, and poverty reduction into all areas of our food programs and organizational work. We work strongly with our community advisory board and management team, which are both composed of a majority of individuals who represent equity-seeking communities."

- West End RCFH





This equity-based approach can include reserving spots in Hub programs for underserved populations, like Hastings Sunrise RCFH:

"[We] partnered with Lu'ma Medical Health Centre and Aboriginal Mothers Centre reserving at least half of the fully subsidized spots in [...our] Market Greens Prescription program for Indigenous participants."

- Hastings Sunrise RCFH

It can also involve providing volunteer and employment opportunities for folks experiencing systemic barriers, and prioritizing peer led programming, such as Kimberley Cranbrook RCFH and Strathcona RCFH:

"[We] support adults with diverse abilities to contribute to volunteer activities and provide employment when possible, with the help of specialized wage subsidies."

- Kimberley Cranbrook RCFH

"[We] provide peer-led programming at the Hama?elas Community Kitchen and the Campbell River Food Bank. These programs link folks facing housing insecurity or substance misuse to food and wellness supports."

- Strathcona RCFH

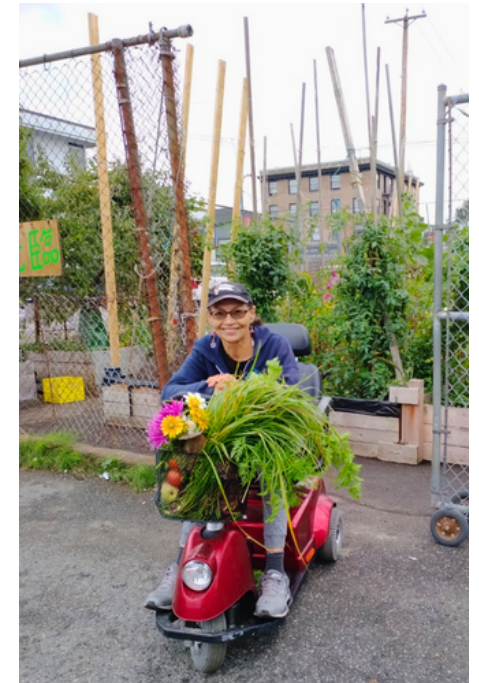
Across the RCFH initiative, wrap-around services and referrals play an essential role in supporting folks experiencing systemic barriers:

"Our Community Food Navigator and additional Spoke intake staff conduct a low-barrier needs assessment with community members during intake and connect people to holistic referrals and supports, including government benefits, childcare, housing, employment, counseling and family programs."

- South Vancouver RCFH

"Many of our clients are living on PWD [Person With Disability] benefits, CPP [Canada Pension Plan], or are newcomers to Canada. We connect with Settlement services, healthcare providers, and housing support to ensure that we can do more than provide food. We want to ensure that the underlying causes of food insecurity are addressed so that we can move people out of the survival mode created by these systemic barriers."

- Collingwood RCFH



Priority Impact

IMPACT STORIES

Regional Community Food Hubs are about collaborating, networking and doing what we can do together that we can't do alone. Although the needs of each region are unique, RCFHs across the province are united through the shared goal of increasing dignified and equitable community food access. Based on our community-informed work and in alignment with current research, our RCFH Initiative areas of focus include:



Improving food access in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities



Strengthening food redistribution



Supporting school food programs and policy



Building food systems resiliency



Increasing the accessibility of culturally appropriate food



Supporting low-income households



Food Forest

Improving food access in under-resourced areas such as rural and remote communities; and Indigenous communities

Strathcona RCFH connects rural, remote, and Indigenous communities across the heart of Vancouver Island (from Campbell River, to Gold River, to Kyuquot) through an intricate network of partnerships with grassroots organizations, First Nations, businesses, and non-profits. Through shared capacity, coordinated programming, and knowledge sharing, this network of partners supports one another to improve food access and build a more resilient food system for Central Vancouver Island.

One notable project to arise from this network is the Food Forest at Campbell River Hospital. The development of the food forest was grounded in permaculture principles and powered by the commitment of volunteers, stewarded by Greenways (a Strathcona RCFH partner). Incredibly, almost everything within it is edible. While a hospital may seem like an unusual location for a food forest, it has provided immense - and unexpected - value for the community.

As Chuck, a leader in the food forest project who serves on Greenway's board, shared, "it's more than just a place to grow food. We build health. The garden is about beautiful things you can offer to people."

Beautiful things like a sunflower for an ailing friend: Chuck recounted the story of a visitor who came to see a friend who was hospitalized with brain cancer. This patient had requested a sunflower to brighten his day. When the visitor stumbled across the food forest outside the hospital entrance - bursting with sunflowers in bloom - he was encouraged to pick a sunflower, making his ailing friend's wish come true.

And beautiful things like sun-ripened memories in trying times: Chuck also shared about a family with a young child who were visiting an ill relative at the hospital. When they entered the food forest, the little girl's face lit up at the sight of strawberries in bloom. In Chuck's words, "the little girl went crazy for the strawberries." He invited the family to pick berries to their hearts' content. As they were leaving, the little girl exclaimed, "I love the hospital. Can I come back to the hospital again?"





Recovered Rhubarb

Strengthening food redistribution

Food redistribution can improve community food access, reduce food waste, and create a more sustainable food system. Kimberley Cranbrook RCFH, which connects organizations in communities across the East Kootenays, plays a pivotal role in regional food redistribution.

Food redistribution can include rescuing leftover or imperfect produce from farmers' fields, recovering surplus goods from food retailers, and doing value-added processing such as cooking, canning, and preserving. Kimberley Cranbrook RCFH engages in multiple aspects of food redistribution, and includes Spoke organizations like Cranbrook Food Recovery and Healthy Kimberley Food Recovery Depot (HKFRD) for whom food redistribution is their primary mandate. Stories shared by these Spokes illustrate the vital role that food redistribution plays in their communities.

For example, HKFRD shared the impact that their recovered rhubarb had on a 94-year-old woman and her family:

"We have started providing meals made from recovered food directly to the public. People can pick up a meal and donate what they can, which goes right back into supporting the program. A family has begun purchasing meals for their 94 year old mother who has very specific dietary preferences. She was excited for stewed rhubarb, which is one of her favourite things ever! Being able to purchase the right kind of food for their mother was an awesome moment for this family. Locally, it's hard to find ready-made food that nourishes people and provides that comfort piece."

Cranbrook Food Recovery also shared an example of how their food recovery relationships with local farmers benefit both local agriculture and community food access:

"We donate excess recovered food to a local farmer who feeds it to his pigs. When he had had surprise piglets, he offered us one! We will have the meat cut and wrapped to share with our community when it is time to harvest it in the spring."

Bokashi Compost

Building food systems resiliency

On a sunny Saturday in late April, members of the Collingwood RCFH network gathered at a rooftop garden in East Vancouver. They were joined by partner organizations such as Grandview-Woodlands Food Connection, the Vancouver Urban Food Forest Foundation, and Ancestral Foodways - all of whom are deeply committed to building food systems resilience together.

Collingwood RCFH, based in the Joyce/Renfrew neighbourhood, shares a transformative vision with their network of partners: to nurture a corridor of Indigenous plants across the city, a living testament to shared language, values, and land-based work. Recognizing that the corridor must be rooted in healthy soil, they gathered with their network on the rooftop to create bokashi compost.

Bokashi is a Japanese word meaning fermentation and this live, fermented compost contained forest microbes, oceanic nitrogen, and most importantly – salmon of the great rivers and oceans.

While “to some, this compost may just be a pungent pile of dirt [...] for us, it is a symbol of our joint efforts toward a more equitable, just, and climate-resilient food future for our communities.”

The bokashi workshop not only taught composting techniques but also contributed to a larger vision: connecting the land and waterways across the city, and strengthening Indigenous relations.

Salmon heads for the compost were generously gifted by Martin Sparrow and the family of the Musqueam Nation; the soil for the compost was gathered from Squamish territory; the ash was collected from Tsleil-Waututh Nation ceremonies; and the corn husks were harvested from Mayan gardens. As these ingredients were churned into compost, they connected the soil with the land and people.

One participant shared that the workshop left them “feeling grateful” knowing it marked the beginning of more collaborative projects aimed at restoring the connection between land and waters in the Coast Salish territory, and building greater food systems resilience for generations to come.





Growing Beyond Gardens

Increasing the accessibility of culturally appropriate foods & medicines

Mount Waddington RCFH connects rural, remote, and Indigenous communities across Northern Vancouver Island. For Kwakiutl First Nation, a RCFH Spoke based in Fort Rupert, growing traditional foods and medicines is a vital component of their work towards Indigenous food sovereignty.

With the support of Mount Waddington RCFH, a team of dedicated Kwagu't gardeners, allies, and land stewards have revitalized their garden beds, greenhouses, forests, and waterways using both traditional and innovative growing practices. Amanda, a garden coordinator, shared that they plant corn, butternut squash, and beans together in the greenhouse according to the traditional Indigenous planting method used by other Indigenous peoples such as the Iroquois and Cherokee. Called "Three Sisters planting," this method helps each crop survive and thrive. She also shared that they care for their gardens with an experimental mindset:

"It's been a learning year [...] I like to have plan A, B, C, in case something doesn't work out."

Amanda and her team harvest and cultivate traditional foods and medicines beyond the garden as well. For example, they pick salal and huckleberries along a shady forest trail (a favourite summer pass-time for local children), and care for a wild crab apple orchard that their ancestors have stewarded for generations.

The Food Connections team cultivates rice root, devil's club, and wild ginger deep in the forest and along the creek, integrating youth from the community in the planting, tending, and harvesting of the foods and medicines. Rice root is a traditional Kwagu't estuary food and devil's club is a traditional Kwagu't medicine plant.

In the future, the Kwagu't Food Connections team plan to build additional garden boxes for growing even more traditional foods & medicines, which is essential to the health of their community today and in the future. As Kwagu't Gigame' O'axstakalagalis 'Walas 'Namugwis (Kwagu't Hereditary Chief David Mungo Knox), shared:

"Without food we can't grow. We need proper nourishment for our young ones."

Photo Credit: Mt Waddington

Breakfast Is Served

Supporting school food programs and policies

West End RCFH provides low-barrier access to nutritious food for people and families in Vancouver's high-density West End neighbourhood. One of their greatest success stories involves helping students fuel up for school through their Youth Breakfast Program:

"Our youth breakfast program provides dignified, nutrient-rich, free, and culturally appropriate food for all high school students in our community. Youth participants and volunteers are actively engaged and involved in the program through menu creation, food preparation, cleaning and sanitizing, volunteering, and serving their peers."

"Before the program, many youth went to school on an empty stomach. This important program encourages youth to arrive for class on time, and supports their learning by making sure they have an equal chance to learn, and helps them reach their full potential."

Gordon Neighbourhood House, Steward of West End RCFH, partnered with their local high school to develop the Youth Breakfast Program as "a unique and place-based solution," to improve food access and build community:

"Many youth who attend our youth breakfast program have developed friendships and strengthened social connections amongst their peers as a result of attending this program [... socializing] with peers and program staff has re-centered the focus of the program away from food, and as a result has reduced the shame and stigma of attending an emergency food program. Many youth now come to school earlier and socialize in the cafeteria. Whereas in the past many when students were shy, reserved, and did not engage with staff, many students [now] volunteer and take an active role in program decision-making and program delivery."

Through working with students and staff to understand the lived experience of youth food insecurity, West End RCFH helps students start the school day with fuller bellies and hearts.





Maria's Story

Support for low-income households

Maria is a single mother of three living in a high-poverty Surrey Whalley neighborhood, who juggles multiple part-time jobs to make ends meet. However, due to systemic issues like housing unaffordability, rising cost of living, and skyrocketing food prices, she often struggles to provide her children with nutritious meals, leaving her feeling guilty, frustrated, and yearning for a sustainable solution.

After connecting with Surrey Whalley RCFH, a network of partners providing dignified food access in her community, Maria and her family began accessing the fresh produce available at Kingdom Acts Foundation, a Spoke of Surrey Whalley RCFH. This alleviated her financial stress and improved her children's health and well-being.

Surrey Whalley RCFH provided Maria's family with more than just access to nutritious food.

Maria also attended their Single Mothers workshops, where she learned how to prepare healthy, budget-friendly meals:

"These workshops were a revelation. I learned to create wholesome meals that my children love without breaking the bank."

Through the support and encouragement Maria received at Surrey Whalley RCFH, she evolved into a community leader. Maria now volunteers at the RCFH to ensure other low-income families can access nourishing food when they need it most:

"The RCFH [...] gave me hope and a sense of community. It empowered me to feed my family and make a difference in my community."

Maria's story is not uncommon. As food costs rise - the cost to feed a family of four in the Lower Mainland is now over \$1300 a month - many RCFHs have seen an increase in need in their communities. That's why, as Surrey Whalley RCFH puts it,

"Beyond just providing food, we are empowering individuals, fostering community ties, and working towards a future where food insecurity is a thing of the past."

RCFH VISION

VISION FOR 2023 AND BEYOND

At United Way BC, we have set our sights on a future where every individual across British Columbia has equitable access to nourishing food, where dignity and community values are upheld, and where partnerships and advocacy create lasting change.



FUNDING COMMITMENT

In the fiscal year 2022/2023, we secured a significant commitment of \$3 million from multiple sources, including United Way BC Donor Funding, the Province of British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR), and the Interior Health Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI) grant. Notably, the Ministry of SDPR has pledged \$7.5 million over the next five years towards our Regional Community Food Hub Initiative, with a goal of expanding this initiative into 40 communities by the end of 2028.

PARTNERSHIPS

Our commitment to collaboration remains unwavering. We will continue to work and deepen relationships with our dedicated United Way BC donors and partners. Furthermore, we are proud to collaborate with organizations such as the Ministry of SDPR, Interior Health, Food Banks BC, and the Ministry of Health to amplify our impact and reach.

ADVOCACY

In the coming years, our advocacy efforts will focus on securing long-term funding to strengthen a dignified food access model across British Columbia. We will actively engage with the Provincial government, sector leaders, and partners to ensure that our work remains place-based and community-driven. We are also dedicated to working alongside Indigenous communities to uphold their right to sovereignty and traditional ways of hunting, harvesting, and cultivating.

OUR TEAM

To effectively drive these initiatives, we anticipate the growth of our United Way BC team, allowing us to support multiple areas of focus, including: Regional Community Food Hubs, Food Infrastructure, and Food Link by United Way BC. Collaboration will be at the core of our approach, engaging United Way BC staff across the province to collectively advance community food access from a regional and provincial perspective.

PROJECTED GROWTH

Our growth plan for the fiscal year 2023/2024 is ambitious and reflects our commitment to serving communities across the province:

- 1** We aim to expand the Regional Community Food Hub initiative, adding four more Hubs to reach a total of 24 by the end of 2024.
- 2** We will restructure Food Recovery and Redistribution Grants, deepening our engagement with Food Fillers in collaboration with Regional Community Food Hubs.
- 3** Recognizing the challenges posed by the rising cost of living, we will provide increased support to regions disproportionately impacted.
- 4** We remain committed to our current communities, offering ongoing support for expansion and adaptation of food access programming.
- 5** We will provide funding for the technical integration of Food Link by United Way BC in four Regional Community Food Hub regions.
- 6** We will intensify our infrastructure support efforts, with a focus on rural, remote, and Indigenous communities, climate resiliency, and critical infrastructure support.



**Thank you for being
here with us and making
this work possible!**

As we look ahead, our vision is crystal clear: a future where no one in British Columbia goes hungry, where collaboration knows no bounds, and where every community thrives. Together, we will continue to make this vision a reality.



Here. For each other.

IN OUR COMMUNITIES. FOR OUR COMMUNITIES.



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United Way British Columbia



United Way
British Columbia

Working with communities in
BC's North, Interior, Lower Mainland,
Central & Northern Vancouver Island

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Prepared for United Way BC by Mikaela Hudson and Lian Boltwood.

APPENDIX - List of Regional Community Food Hubs 2022-2023

Abbotsford

- Archway Community Services (Steward)
- Ground Zero Ministries
- 5&2 Ministries
- Sts'olemeqw Guardians for Generations

Burnaby

- Burnaby Neighborhood House Society (Steward)
- Simon Fraser University
- House of Omeed
- Southside Community Church
- Burnaby End Homeless Society
- School District 41
- Ryan's Rainbow Outreach
- Gordon Presbyterian Church

Central Cariboo

- Social Planning Council of Williams Lake and Area (Steward)
- Women's Contact Society
- Salvation Army
- Society of St Vincent de Paul
- Boys and Girls Club Williams Lake
- Cariboo Friendship Society

Collingwood

- Collingwood Neighborhood House (Steward)
- CityReach Care Society
- Fresh Roots
- Working Group for Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Cranbrook and Kimberley

- Community Connections Society of Southeast BC (Steward)
- Cranbrook Food Recovery
- Healthy Kimberley Food Recovery Depot
- Kimberley Food Bank
- Cranbrook Food Bank

Delta

- Delta Earthwise (Steward)

Downtown Eastside - Vancouver

- Single Rent Occupancy- Collaborative (SRO-C) (Steward)
- Watari Counselling and Support Services Society (Steward)

- Aboriginal Front Door
- Skundaal Bernie Williams
- Erica Grant
- Fiona and CRAB Park
- Dude's Club

Hastings Sunrise Community Food Network

- Kiwassa Neighbourhood House (Steward)
- CityReach Care Society
- Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
- Hastings Community Centre
- Thunderbird Community Centre

West Kootenay

- Nelson Community Food Centre (Steward)
- Trail United Church Food Bank

Similkameen Valley

- Lower Similkameen Indian Band (Steward)

Mt Waddington

- Mount Waddington Community Food Initiative (Steward)
- Kwakiutl First Nation Health Department
- Building Blocks
- Mount Waddington Health Network

North Okanagan

- Land to Table c/o SPARC BC (Steward)
- White Valley Resource Centre
- Good Food Box
- 60+ Food Boxes
- Okanagan Indian Band

North Pemberton

- Sea to Sky Community Services Society (Steward)
- School District 48
- Qwalimak Nlepcalten/ Lil'wat Farm
- Southern Stl'atl'imx Health Society

South Vancouver

- South Vancouver Neighbourhood House (Steward)
- Pacific Immigrant Resource Society
- Peach Church on 52nd
- CityReach Care Society
- ReFood Rescue Foundation

Strathcona - Central Northern Vancouver Island

- Laichwiltach Family Life Society (Steward)
- Kyuoquot Community Food
- Ehattesah First Nation
- Hama?Elas Community Kitchen
- Gold River Food Network
- Sayward Futures Society
- Linnaea Farm

Surrey - Central

- Sources Community Resources Society (Steward)
- Alexandra Neighbourhood House
- God's Gift Ministry
- Options Community Services Society
- Umoja

Surrey - Guildford/Whalley

- CityReach Care Society (Steward)

Tri Cities

- Share Family & Community Services (Steward)
- CityReach
- House of Omeed
- People's Pantry
- School District 43
- Coquitlam Alliance Church
- Kwikwetlem First Nation

Upper Fraser Valley

- Chilliwack Community Services (Steward)
- Salvation Army
- Chilliwack Bowls of Hope Society
- Agassiz School District 78
- Shxwhá:y Village (Skway First Nation)
- Hope Community Services
- Downtown Chilliwack Community Market

West End Vancouver

- Gordon Neighbourhood House (Steward)