

Division of Community Engagement and Food Systems

Community Food Systems Development

List of Grant Recipients

for Large Scale Innovation Pilot and Ideas Lab

Supported by the Government of BC and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC) and Food Banks BC (FBBC) are working in partnership to strengthen the food systems sector in BC and increase the capacity of food-access organizations through a multipronged strategy that involves a combination of knowledge gathering efforts, networking and various streams of grant-making.

Food systems transformation is the foundational framework that was used to develop our community food systems development strategy and all the activities described below. Food Systems transformation refers to efforts being made to transform mainstream food systems to be more just, equitable, sustainable, and resilient. There are multiple entry points to accelerating this transformation, and as such, there are five projects that support this shift by addressing different leverage points within the food system. These projects aim to advance community food security, enhance local food sovereignty, and foster collaboration across sectors to build a healthier and more inclusive food system for all.

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Large Scale Innovations for Food Systems Transformation

This grant stream provides funding and coordination to targeted partnerships with organizations piloting large-scale innovation projects in different regions of Northern BC. These projects were selected based on need, capacity, and readiness of each partner project. The partnerships were informed by the learnings from the Resilient North report, as well as promising models identified in the literature that have been shown to increase resiliency in food systems (e.g., sustainably powered indoor food growing modules, cross-stakeholder food purchasing contracts, etc). Five partnerships across Northern BC were identified, and a total of $1.7 million in funds were distributed to enhance food systems transformation.

The main objectives of this granting stream are to improve food access by supporting community-led solutions and innovations that enhance resilience and drive food systems transformation. This includes piloting new models by strengthening the capacity of organizations to test, evaluate, and scale innovative food services. Capacity building is also key, with a focus on fostering knowledge exchange among food system stakeholders to address shared challenges and pursue collective opportunities. The initiative aims to drive systemic change by influencing policy, promoting collaboration, and advocating for long-term, sustainable improvements in food access. Ultimately, it seeks to enable inclusive, community-driven approaches that support a more sustainable and resilient food system in Northern BC and beyond.

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Large Scale Innovation Pilot				
Project Name	**Project description**	**Lead Organization**	**Location**	**Amount**
North Coast Food Hub	A resilient school-centred North Coast food hub that increases food security, strengthens the farm to school movement, builds greenhouse infrastructure on school grounds, strengthens the Prince Rupert local economy, and promotes sustainable, regenerative food systems. This will be achieved by increasing greenhouse capacity on school grounds, integrating school-grown food into meal programs, enhancing food processing and storage capabilities, strengthening distribution networks, advancing composting and soil-making initiatives, operating a regular market, expanding community programming, and influencing policy and advocacy work.	Ecotrust Canada Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Prince Rupert/Port Edward Society Metlakatla Development Corporation School District 52	Prince Rupert	$745,000
Indigenous Food Sovereignty networks	Boosting capacity for Ts'msyen food sovereignty, focusing on growing food, sharing culture and language through food. Support for community organization and mobilization as well as celebration of traditional practices.	Ts'msyen Culture Society	Prince Rupert	$50,000

Increasing meat processing capacity in Sik-e-Dakh	Indigenous community-driven initiative that aims to develop a dedicated space for the Sik-e-Dakh and surrounding communities to process, package and preserve meat. The project will also provide training opportunities for community members to develop food processing and preservation skills. Additionally, the facility will foster collaborations with neighboring communities and agricultural organizations, ensuring shared benefits and continued partnerships.	Sik-E-Dakh(Glen Vowell) First Nations	Sik-e-Dakh	$125,000
Fraser Lake Elementary and Secondary School Farm	Development of 1 acre of production space for a School Farm at Fraser Lake Elementary Secondary School (FLESS)(15,500 sq ft). The vision is to include a year-round 100' greenhouse, field crop plots, orchard space, an Indigenous garden plot, community garden beds, food processing, indoor growing, cold storage and outside classroom space. Food produced by the farm will be utilized for school-based meal programming at SD91, sold/distributed to other school meal programs and donated to food access organizations.	School District 91	Fraser Lake	$250,000

Commercial Kitchen	Installation of a 20 ft x 25 ft kitchen fully equipped with large commercial equipment at the Prince George Salvation Army. Commercial kitchen will be utilized by food access organizations and local businesses.	Prince George Salvation Army	Prince George	$250,000
Northern Food Distribution Network	Decentralized food distribution model that will leverage BC Bus North (operated by Pacific Western Charter) Connection routes to provide equitable food access, support Indigenous food sovereignty, and encourage local food production. The network will include the Prince George Salvation Army food hub and Peace Region Farmers' Institute food hub along with food access organizations and producers throughout the region	Prince George Salvation Army, Peace Region Farmers' Institute and BC Bus North (operated by Pacific Western Charter). Additional partners will include food access organizations like food banks, producers in the region and First Nations.	Prince George, Chetwynd, Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Hudson's Hope and others	$220,000

Ideas Lab

The Ideas Lab for Food Systems Transformation is a dynamic initiative designed to foster collaboration among multi-sectoral food stakeholders across Northern BC. Its goal is to strengthen regional food security through innovative, community-driven solutions that make local food systems more equitable, resilient, and adaptive.

Over a 16-month period, project teams co-developed proposals for systems redesign—an iterative, user-centered process that improves the performance, efficiency, and adaptability of existing food systems. The Ideas Lab facilitates this process by providing seed funding, educational resources, and skill-building opportunities focused on systems innovation, social change, and design thinking.

To launch these collaborative projects, the Ideas Lab convened regional roundtables in Northern BC. Priority needs and areas of interest emerged from these meetings and $300,000 in grants were distributed across 13 projects in March 2025. The funding will support a wide range of activities including but not limited to a food hub feasibility study, Indigenous food sovereignty, hydroponics, establishing a land trust, innovative food transportation, farmer apprenticeship training, fish access, and increasing meat processing capacity.

Ideas Lab				
Project Name	**Project description**	**Lead Organization**	**Location**	**Amount**
Food Hub Feasibility Study	Community engagement and research to inform the development of a regional food hub, co-op retail space, and feasibility of a mobile, certified kitchen facility to service the region. In addition, the project aims to establish a regional food policy council.	Nechako Healthy Community Food Alliance	Vanderhoof	$14,231.25
I-NURTURE (Indigenous Networks Uniting Resources, Traditions, Understanding, Resilience and Education)	Series of workshops/gatherings including members of the Tsilhqot'in, Nazko, ?Esdilagh, Lhtako Dene and Lhoosk'uz Dene First Nations. Workshops will focus on developing Indigenous food security and sovereignty and developing a model to share this knowledge.	ECHEN Healing Society	Quesnel	$16,600
Northern Fresh Food Centre Hydroponics Green Project	Staffing hydroponic unit to grow fresh produce for the local community year-round while supporting Connaught Youth Centre's existing food programming and community engagement.	Connaught Youth Centre Society	Prince George	$19,000

Connecting School Food to Regional Procurement	Convening a Local Food in Northern B.C. Schools network and networking event on getting local food to schools throughout the region. Bringing together northern school districts, food producers, farmers, processors, and potential distributors to explore how to build new distribution pathways to support initiatives currently underway in schools, healthcare and post-secondary.	School District 91 - Nechako Lakes	SD91 and SD52	$31,972.50
Northcoast Vegetable Production book	Educational guidebook for vegetable production specific to the climatic, geographical, and cultural conditions of the north coastal region (Prince Rupert).Showcases success stories of local farmers/gardeners. Explores the development of agricultural economy on the coast	Rainbow End Enterprises	Prince Rupert	$18,500

Reframing Access to Fish	Bringing in locally caught salmon into SD52 School Meals project. Initial funding for BC Salmon dinner fundraiser and to purchase local fish. Group will host annual fundraiser to sustain initiative.	School District 52	Prince Rupert	$12,500
Podcast for Knowledge Translation	A podcast based on the Everybody Eats Project and potentially the projects that come out of the Ideas Lab. Podcast will analyze food production, processing, and distribution models in the region and advocate for more agency.	Oldtown Storytellers' Society	Hazleton/Smithers	$14,960

Supporting & Celebrating Food Production in NW/Gaps in food production	By supporting on-farm apprenticeships and training programs offered by partner organizations, this project cultivates essential skills, leadership, and knowledge-sharing among current and future producers, reinforcing food sovereignty efforts and creating pathways for a more just, equitable, sustainable, and resilient food system. This project strengthens community connections through regional workshops highlighting locally grown, raised, traditional and foraged foods to guide more meaningful relationships with food systems.	FarmFolk CityFolk Young Agrarians Groundbreakers Tea Creek	Hazleton	$32,988

Sustainability Plan and Toolkit for Livestock Services/NW Abattoir study	Livestock processing assessment for Northwest/Northern Interior BC. Information gathering around enhancing processing capacities such as designing abattoirs and mobile stationary processing unit. Creation of Livestock Services Scholarship Program to support labor components to train meat processors.	Society for Making Agriculture Sustainable in the Hazeltons	Hazleton/Bulkley-Nechako	$32,790
Food Cycle Project	E-cargo bike for distribution of recovered and gleaned food to processing sites and food insecure community.	Recycling and Environmental Action Planning Society (REAPS)	Prince George	$23,750
Sustainable Food Systems Coordinator Proposal	A coordinator to create sustainability in Prince George food systems transformation initiatives such as the Empower North Community Greenhouse and Urban Farmscape initiatives.	University of Northern British Columbia	Prince George	$23,000

Sharing the Garden	Grassroots community-based solution that integrates land-based healing with agricultural activities. This initiative empowers individuals with physical and developmental disabilities to actively engage in food production and community life, and to gain employment skills. Weskachak will leverage both community volunteers and employed individuals with disabilities to plant, grow, harvest, package and deliver over 11,000 pounds of potatoes. Food will be delivered to food banks, food kitchens, Indigenous elders and individuals in need.	Weskechak Garden Association	Dawson Creek	$22,150
Land Trust for Community Farming	Establishment of an agricultural land trust charity and advisory committee for the northern interior and northeast BC.	District C Farmers' Institute	Prince George	$32,000

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