



WHAT WE HEARD

West Shore and Sooke Food Security Roundtable

On June 23, 2025, service providers in the West Shore and Sooke region who are working to tackle food security issues were invited to meet and explore developing a foundation for a more unified, regional effort.

Through collaborative discussion, they explored ways to enhance communication, coordination, and collaboration, ultimately improving the services and impact for individuals facing food security challenges across the region.

ENGAGEMENT GOAL

To examine current service realities and how coordinated approaches can enhance capacity for service providers and those they serve.

WHO PARTICIPATED

Goldstream Foodbank - Wendy Nelson
Salvation Army - Demetric Cofield & Pat Humble
Relmagine Westshore - Shannon Carman
The Mustard Seed - Emily Palimaka
Church of the Advent - Ingrid Andersen
West Shore Food Share - Jennifer Ronald
Flourish School Food Society - Matthew Kemshaw
Thrive/TVI Community of Practice - Heather Yu
Royal Roads University Gardens -
Solara Goldwynn
The Village Initiative - Cindy Andrew

Efforts were made to include all regional service providers and resources contributing to Westshore's food security effort to participate including:

- Sooke Meals on Wheels
- Sooke Food Bank
- Living Edge

Regrets were shared by:

- CRD Foodlands Access Services - Noah Brotman
- Sooke Region Food Systems - Levi Megenbir

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Service providers are actively engaged in all aspects of traditional Food Security practice pillars, focusing on supply, access, utilization, and stability. Their current efforts involve numerous partnerships among various providers aimed at leveraging resources to enhance the overall impact.

While there are existing connections and a clear intent to maximize resources, there is a need for improved communication and coordination among all parties involved. There are significant service gaps that need to be addressed, including unequal access to services among communities, long wait times

for accessing services, and a lack of additional user support resources, including options to transport food once received, refrigeration needs, and other practical resources to help service users safely and effectively transport and use food effectively.

These gaps, along with an over-reliance on community volunteers and unstable funding sources—including grant applications and fundraising efforts—detract from the overall quality and continuity of services.

Current Risks

- Many sources of free food are being accessed to their limits
- Users run into barriers navigating services
- Volunteerism cannot grow to meet need
- Lack of strategic volunteer engagement
- Managing supply seasonality
- Service providers competing for resources

Future Opportunities

- Connect food literacy and sovereignty work (ie community gardens and local growers) with food access work
- Expanded partnerships to better coordinate reach and services
- Secure larger space(s) to coordinate food storage, sorting and distribution, and potentially also host community programming (ie an integrated Food Hub)

Summary There is a need to reframe efforts in the region

The discussion during the session highlighted the importance of rethinking food security within the framework of public health services.

It was pointed out that partners in health, social services, and education support the integration of food into their services and daily practices across the region. They recognize the critical role that food plays in social well-being, safety, and health.

This perspective underscores the necessity of providing consistent and reliable access to food for all residents of the region. This thinking further reinforces the importance of ensuring consistent and reliable access to food.

WHAT'S NEXT?

With a focus on community development, service providers examined how a more coordinated approach could address regional issues, enhance well-being, and promote positive change.

Participants agreed to identify realistic and achievable goals aimed at improving communication and collaboration. They also agreed to support further discussions to secure resources to support regional coordination efforts.

This engagement was facilitated by

