

Sooke-West Shore Food Assistance Services Survey Results: Report

June 2026



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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a survey of seventeen organizations providing food assistance services in the Sooke–West Shore region, conducted in February to April 2026. The survey aimed to better understand the current landscape of food assistance service provision, identify key challenges, and highlight opportunities to strengthen food assistance services across the region.

The findings indicate that food assistance service providers play a critical and wide-reaching role, offering a range of programs including food banks, school-based meal programs, neighbourhood food pantries, delivery services, and community meals. Collectively, these programs serve diverse populations, including newcomers, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, individuals with low-incomes, individuals experiencing homelessness, children and youth, single-parents, veterans, and racialized communities.

However, the data also point to a system under increasing pressure. Demand for food assistance services has grown for most programs (85%) over the past year, with one quarter reporting that they are already operating beyond capacity. Many organizations face ongoing challenges related to insufficient infrastructure, limited funding, constrained human resources, and difficulty securing a consistent and diverse food supply. The heavy reliance on volunteers further highlights vulnerabilities in the current system’s capacity to respond to sustained or growing need.

Despite these challenges, there are strong opportunities to enhance food assistance services in the region. Service providers identified the importance of strengthening coordination and collaboration, investing in infrastructure, increasing public awareness of food security services, and expanding service delivery to better meet community needs. There is also interest in using data more effectively to identify service gaps and inform planning.

Importantly, the findings reinforce that while food assistance services are essential for addressing immediate needs, food insecurity is fundamentally driven by broader structural factors, including the high cost of living, housing affordability, and income inequality. As such, meaningful and sustained improvements in food security will require both continued investment in frontline services and coordinated action across sectors to address these root causes.

Overall, the Sooke-West Shore region benefits significantly from a committed and collaborative network of food assistance service providers. With targeted investments, strengthened coordination, and attention to upstream drivers of food insecurity, there is a clear opportunity to build a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable local food system.

Glossary of Terms Used in this Report

(Definitions reflect terms as used in this report)

Capacity

A program's reported ability to meet community demand within existing constraints related to space, staffing, funding, infrastructure, and food supply.

Community meals

Free or low-cost prepared meals that are provided in a shared setting, such as at a church or community center.

Food insecurity

Inadequate or insecure access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food due to financial or other resource constraints. Food insecurity can range from worrying about running out of food to reducing food intake, skipping meals, or experiencing hunger because of limited access to food.

According to the BC Centre for Disease Control: "food insecurity exists when factors outside an individual's control negatively impact their access to enough foods that 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" (1).

The Canadian Community Health Survey measures food insecurity based on a standardized set of 18 questions (2). It defines the following levels of food insecurity: marginal (exactly one indicator of difficulty with income-related food access), moderate (indication of compromise in quality and/or quantity of food consumed), and severe (indication of reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns).

Food bank

An organization that collects, stores, and distributes food to individuals, families, and partner agencies to address food insecurity and provide emergency food assistance. Some food banks also provide personal and household goods to those in need.

Food delivery service

A program model in which food or meals are delivered directly to participants rather than accessed at a physical location.

Food literacy

Food literacy refers to the set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable people to obtain, understand, prepare, and make informed decisions about food.

Food rescue

Recovery and redistribution of surplus food from retailers, producers, distributors, or other sources to reduce food waste and support food access initiatives.

Food assistance service providers

Organizations, programs, or agencies that provide food-related services to individuals or communities, including food banks, meal programs, community kitchens, food rescue organizations, school food programs, and other initiatives that support food access and food security.

Local Health Area (LHA)

The Island Health region is divided into 14 local health areas (LHAs) – geographic areas defined by the Ministry of Health. Island Health's [LHA profiles](#) provide information about that area's population, health status, and how often health services are used.

Low-income households

Defined as households whose adjusted household income is 50% or less of the median income in Canada. "Adjusted" means that the formula considers the number of persons in the home, to account for the needs of the households and its members when assessing income status.

Median total household income

Median total household income is the middle point of an income distribution: exactly half of all households earn more than this amount, and half earn less.

Neighbourhood food pantry

An informal, community-based food access point, often unstaffed, that offers free food to individuals and families.

Racialized identities

Defined in the BC SPEAK Survey as anyone who does not identify as white (European descent) (3).

Background

Demographics of Western Communities

The Western Communities Local Health Area (LHA) encompasses the communities of Langford South, Sooke, Colwood, Langford North / Highlands, Metchosin, and the Juan de Fuca Coast (4) (Figure 1). Western Communities LHA includes the traditional lands of the Paačiinaʔath, T'Sou-ke, and Scia'new First Nations.

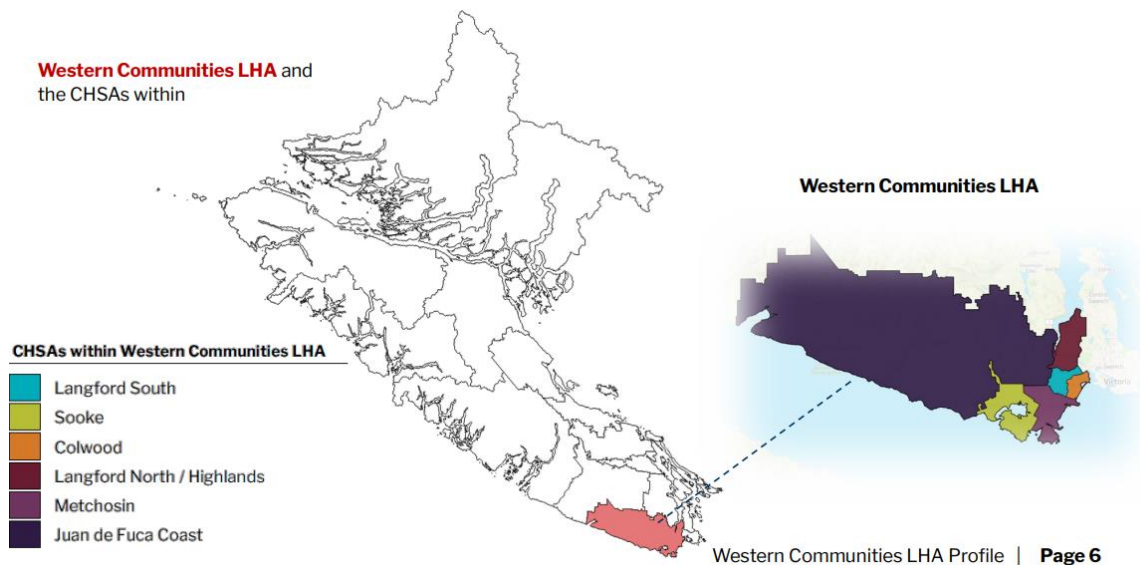


Figure 1. A map of the communities included in the Western Communities LHA. Figure from Island Health's LHA profile for Western Communities (4).

As of 2023, Western Communities represent approximately 11.8% of Island Health's total population of 908,627 (4). According to the 2021 Census, 6.1% of people living in Western Communities identify as Indigenous and 11.8% identify as a visible minority (4). The population of Western Communities tends to be younger than the Island Health region or the province overall, with the 20-44 age group representing 36.7% of the Western Communities population as of 2023 (4). As of 2021, approximately 14.4% of families in Western Communities were one-parent families (4).

Population Projections

The population of Western Communities is expected to increase by 26.7% by the year of 2032, and is projected to reach 159.9 thousand people by the year 2044 (4). All age groups are expected to see substantial growth in population, with the 75+ age group projected to grow the most (143.7% by 2044) (4).

Income, Employment, and Education Status

In 2021, the median household income in the Western Communities was \$95,000, higher than the Island Health region (\$80,000) and BC (\$85,000) (4). Approximately 7.2% of children and youth aged 18 or younger and 9.7% of seniors lived in low-income households in 2021, with the highest proportions of low-income households residing in the Juan de Fuca Coast (4). The proportion of individuals who are members of low-income households is lower, in every age group, compared to either the Island Health region or BC (4).

The unemployment rate in Western Communities (6.1%) in 2021 was lower than rate provincially (8.4%) and across the Island Health region (7.5%) (4). As of 2021, 62.6% of adults aged 25-64 across the Western Communities have completed some level of post-secondary education (4).

Affordability Challenges

Across Vancouver Island, many individuals and families are experiencing affordability challenges. As of 2021, 17.5% of homeowners and 37.2% of renters in Western Communities were spending more than 30% of their income on housing, with the highest proportion of housing unaffordability occurring in Langford/Highlands, Sooke, and the Juan de Fuca Coast (4).

Food affordability is also a concern. In 2022, the average monthly cost of a nutritious food basket for a reference family of four was estimated to be \$1386 in the South Island, which was higher than the BC average of \$1263 (5). For many lower-income families, the cost of a nutritious diet is unsustainable (5).

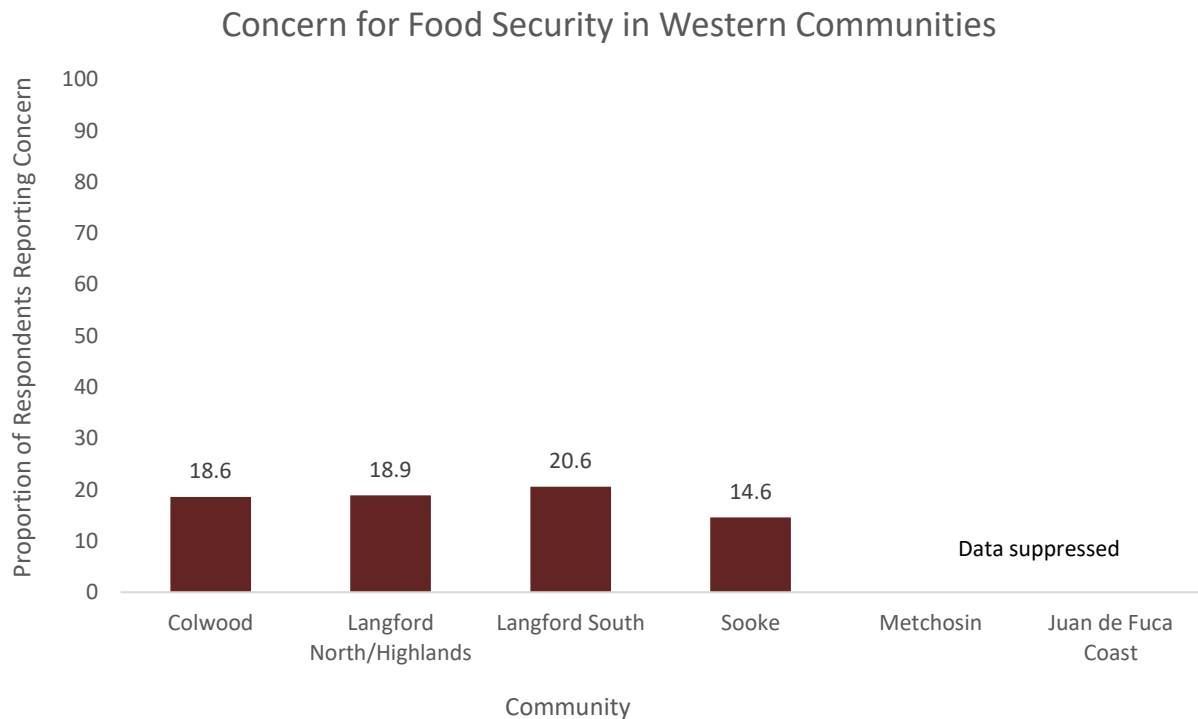
Food Insecurity

The results of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) indicate that approximately 17.2% of the population of South Vancouver Island is experiencing marginal, moderate, or severe food insecurity as of 2023; this proportion is relatively similar to the provincial average (17.8%) (2). Importantly, data from the same survey indicates that 27.3% of individuals identifying as Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuk/Inuit) in South Vancouver Island are experiencing marginal, moderate, or severe food insecurity as of 2023, a proportion much higher than the population average of 17.2% (2).

In 2023, the proportion of respondents across the Western Communities that expressed concern for food insecurity in the BC SPEAK Survey was highest in Langford South (20.6%) and lowest in Sooke (14.6%) (data was suppressed for small communities like

Metchosin and Juan de Fuca Coast) (6) (Figure 2). Across demographic groups in the South Island, concern for food insecurity is highest for young adults, those with lower levels of education, women, households with children, those with lower household incomes, and individuals with racialized identities (6).

Figure 2. Proportion of residents expressing concern for food security in Western Communities – BC SPEAK Survey (2023)



Amongst children and youth in grades 7-12 in the Sooke School District, 11% reported going to bed hungry at least sometimes because there was not enough money for food at home (8).

Summary

The population of Western Communities is growing rapidly. Though the region enjoys a higher median income and lower unemployment rate than the Island Health region (as of 2021), many individuals and families are experiencing affordability challenges. A substantial proportion of the population has indicated that they are concerned about food security and 1 in 10 children and youth are going to bed hungry at least sometimes. Food insecurity appears to disproportionately impact Indigenous communities, as well as younger adults, families with children, and those with lower incomes, lower education levels, and racialized identities.

Survey Aims and Data Collection

Origins and Aims of the Survey

In October 2025, food assistance service providers in the West Shore and Sooke region came together to explore the benefits of a collaborative approach to food service provision. As part of this meeting, food assistance service providers expressed the need for a survey of existing services as a key step to examining and strengthening their collective efforts. To meet this need, a survey was developed by the Village Initiative, with input from Flourish! Food Society, the Community Social Planning Council, and the Island Health Public Health Nutrition team.

The aim of this survey was to assess the current state of services that support food security in the Sooke-West Shore region, with a focus on identifying existing challenges and opportunities to improve food assistance service provision in the region.

Data Collection

Individuals affiliated with 17 local food assistance organizations in the Sooke-West Shore region were asked to complete the survey, which was distributed via email by the Village Initiative. The survey included a mix of multiple-choice questions to assess the characteristics of existing food assistance service programs as well as open-text responses that allowed service providers to describe existing challenges and opportunities to improve food security in the region.

Data Analysis

The results of the survey were analyzed by James Fraser and Raquel Burgess, PhD, Community Health Promoters for the Capital Region with Island Health, with input from Erica Camfferman, RD MAL, Public Health Dietitian for Greater Victoria, Island Health and Cindy Andrew, Director of Community Partnerships at the Village Initiative. For questions about the results, please email: raquel.burgess@islandhealth.ca.

Survey Results

Participating Organizations

Seventeen organizations operating across the Sooke-West Shore Region responded to the questionnaire, reflecting a 100% response rate. These organizations are listed below. Where applicable, program names are provided in italics.

Anglican Church of the Advent
Canadian Veterans Services Society - *Veterans' Foodbank of Victoria*
Community First Foundation - *Backpack Buddies*
Flourish! School Food Society - *Hot Meals for Schools, Food Aggregation and Distribution*
Goldstream Food Bank Society
Little Free Pantry Belmont Road
Little Free Pantry Leigh Road
Living Edge Community - *Living Edge Neighbourhood Markets*
Soroptimist International Victoria Westshore - *Food Box Program*
Sooke Meals on Wheels
Supporting Humanity In Finding Togetherness Society - *SHIFT Food Security & Community Resilience Program*
The Farm at Royal Roads
The Mustard Seed - *Capital Region Food Share Network*
The Salvation Army Connection Point Church and Resource Centre - *Emergency Food Pantry, Connect Café Drop-In Program, Life Skills Cooking Class*
The Sooke Food Bank
Vancouver Island Kids Klub Centre Society
West Shore Food Share

Services and Types of Food Provided

The 17 participating organizations described offering 20 services and programs. These corresponded to food banks (5/20 programs, 25%), school-based programs (5, 25%), neighborhood food pantries (3, 15%), food delivery services (3, 15%), community meals (2, 10%), food rescue and distribution network (1, 5%), and food literacy support (1, 5%) (Figure 3).

The types of food provided as part of these programs include non-perishable foods (offered by 13 of 20 programs, 65%), perishable foods (13, 65%), food hampers (7, 35%), dietary-specific items (7, 35%), prepared meals (5, 25%), and infant formula (6, 30%) (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Types of programs and services offered by the organizations that participated in the survey.

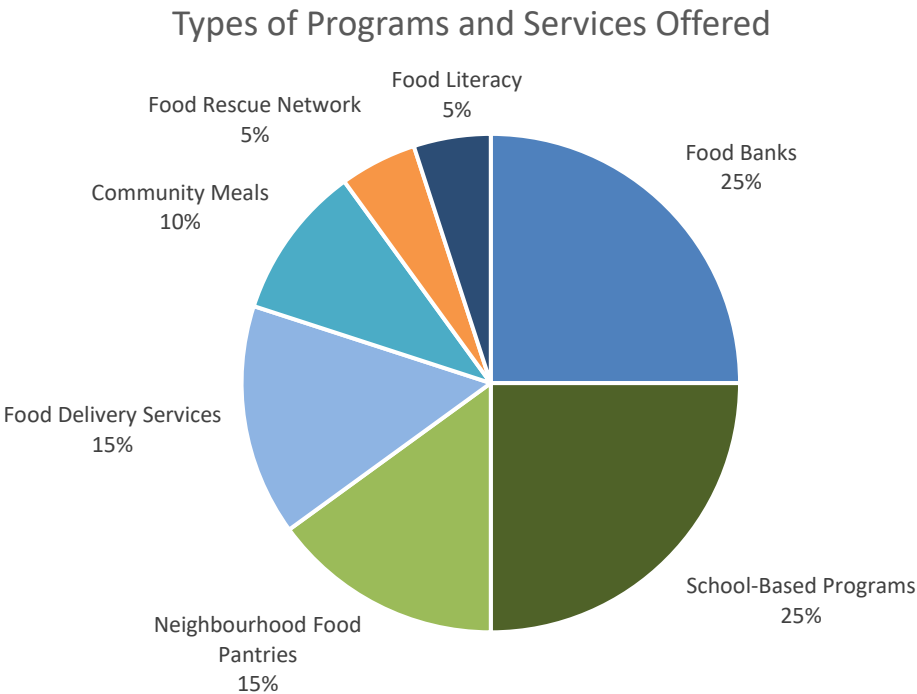
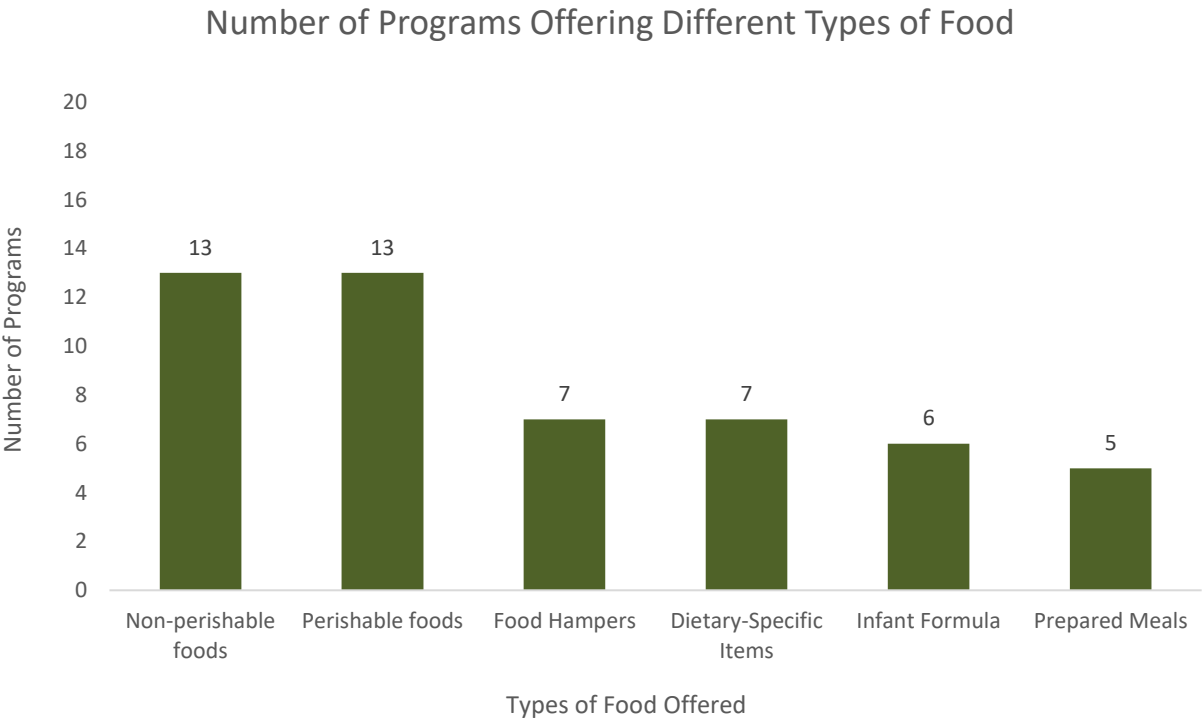


Figure 4. Types of food offered by the 20 programs and services captured in this survey.



Food Sourcing

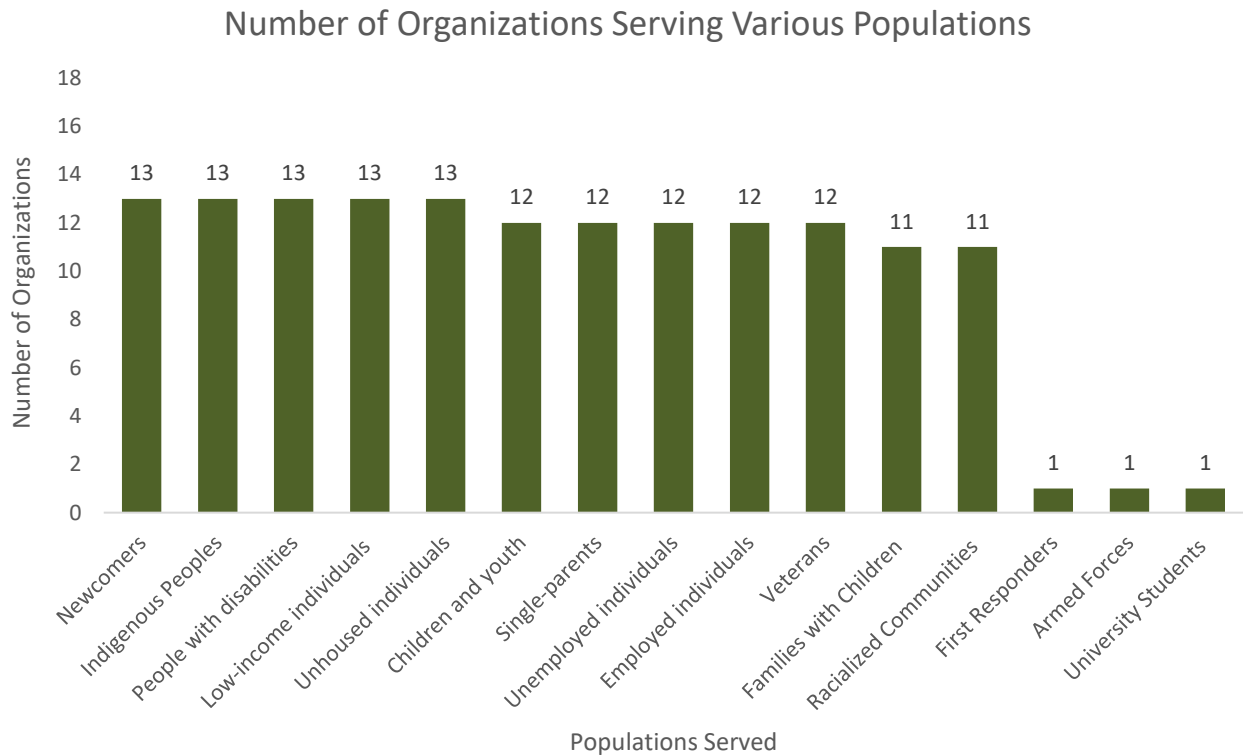
Food was sourced from a variety of different sources, including personal donations, retailer donations, and purchasing food directly from retailers. Six programs sourced their food via food rescue. Many of these organizations reported being members of the Mustard Seed's Capital Region food rescue and distribution service, while at least one organization reported interacting directly with grocery stores to source rescued food. Mustard Seed reported having capacity to distribute more food to Sooke-West Shore organizations, however there is a need to have more grocery stores partner with Mustard Seed. One organization (the Farm at Royal Roads) grows their own food for distribution.

Direct food purchasing was described by one organization as necessary to maintain consistency and meet criteria such as shelf stable meals and kid-friendly flavours.

Populations Served

The participating organizations reported serving between 1-2500 households per day. They served a variety of different populations, including newcomers (13 of 17 participating organizations reported serving this population, 76%), Indigenous Peoples (13, 76%), individuals experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity (13, 76%), and children and youth (12, 71%) (Figure 5). In open-text responses, one organization also mentioned serving first responders and members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and another indicated that they serve university students.

Figure 5. Number of Participating Organizations Serving Various Populations.



Geographic Regions Served

Organizations frequently reported serving more than one municipality. Commonly served communities included Colwood (13 of 17 organizations reported serving this region, 76%), Langford (13, 76%), Sooke (11, 65%), View Royal (10, 59%), Metchosin (10, 59%), and Highlands (7, 41%). Six organizations (35%) also reported serving Juan de Fuca communities, including Port Renfrew, Jordan River, Shirley, and Otter Point.

A map of service locations can be found [here](#).

Access Pathways

Most programs and services were accessed by their clients at least once or multiple times per week (12 of 20 programs were accessed this much, 60%). Seven other programs (35%) were offered on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. One neighbourhood pantries (5%) was not sure how often their services were accessed by the same clients, as this information is not tracked.

Hours of access varied greatly depending on the service. Most neighborhood food pantries are open 24/7. School-based programs tended to be offered during school hours, though Backpack Buddies provides groceries to children and youth for the weekend and Flourish! occasionally offers school-based family food markets when schools are not in session. Most food banks tended to be open during the typical work week (Monday – Friday between 9 am and 5 pm), though the Sooke Food Bank provides emergency food hampers that are available 24/7.

Many programs were low barrier with limited eligibility criteria for access. Three programs (15%) required residency in the Sooke-West Shore region to access the service. Seven programs (35%) had restrictions on the frequency with which they could be accessed.

Most programs were drop-in or could be accessed by children and youth at school, while four programs delivered food directly to their clients.

In terms of accessibility features, organizations reported that 12 of 20 programs (60%) had wheelchair access, 4 (20%) could be accessed using automatic doors, 4 (20%) using elevators, and 1 (5%) has an accessible washroom (Figure 6). In addition, 3 programs have translation services available (15%), 2 had multi-language signs and resources (10%), 1 has low sensory hours (5%), and 1 has peer support available (5%). No organizations reported that they had American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation available. Accessibility features were not relevant for all programs and services (such as those that delivered food).

Figure 6. Number of Programs Offering Accessibility Features for Clients to Access Food Services.



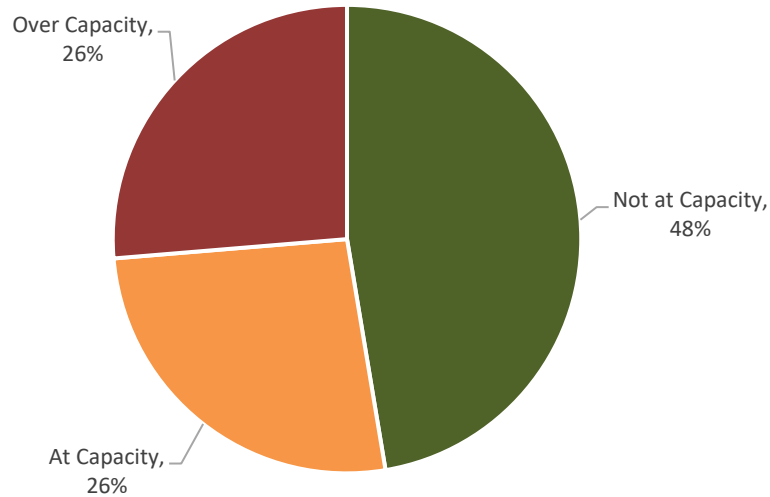
Demand and Capacity

Importantly, demand for programs and services has grown for 17 of the 20 programs (85%) over the past year, with only 3 programs (15%) reporting no change in demand.

Of the 19 programs that provided a response to the question about whether their program was at capacity, 9 were reported as not at capacity (48%), 5 were at capacity (26%), and 5 were over capacity (26%) (Figure 7). Over capacity programs included the Salvation Army's Emergency Food Pantry and Life Skills Cooking Class, the Little Free Pantry (Leigh Road), and Backpack Buddies. The Mustard Seed Food Rescue Network also reported being over capacity. Though they have capacity to serve more Sooke-West Shore organizations, they are limited by an insufficient number of grocery store partners.

Figure 7. Current Capacity of Food Service Programs Offered by Participating Organizations.

Current Capacity of Food Service Programs

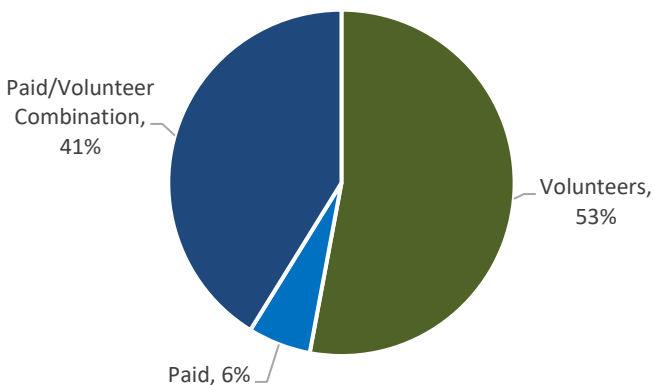


Staffing

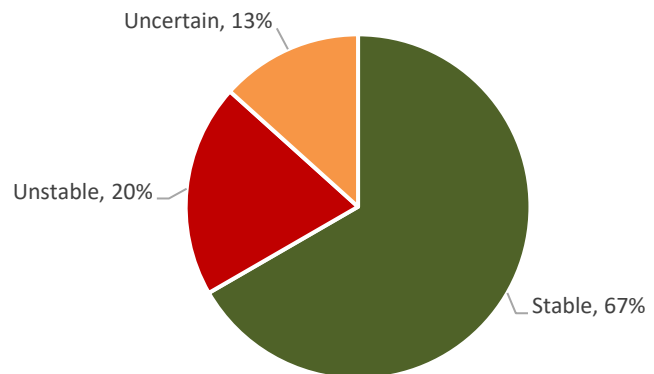
Volunteer involvement is central to many of the food assistance services offered in the Sooke-West Shore region. Nine of the seventeen (53%) participating organizations relied on volunteers, one (6%) relied on paid staff, and seven (41%) relied on a combination of paid staff and volunteers (Figure 8). Of the fifteen organizations that responded to a question about staffing stability, ten (67%) reported that their staffing model is stable over the next twelve months, three reported it was unstable (20%), and two (13%) were uncertain (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Staffing model used by organizations and stability over the next 12 months.

Staffing Model



Staffing Stability



Collection of Data on Impact

Participating organizations had differing approaches to collecting data related to the clients that they serve. For 7 of the 20 programs/services (35%), basic information such as date of birth, gender, income, and address was collected. For two services/programs (10%), more detailed evaluations were being conducted to assess outcomes and client satisfaction, using methods such as surveys and focus groups. Six other programs (30%) reported not collecting any data; sometimes this was done purposefully to respect client's privacy. A response was not available or not applicable to 5 of the 20 (25%) programs and services.

Key Challenges

In an open-text response, organizations reported facing several challenges that hindered their programs' ability to meet local food needs. These challenges included insufficient food supply (reported for 5 of 20 programs, 25%) and a need for greater diversity in the food supply (3 programs, 15%), such as access to gluten-free items, perishables, and non-perishables. Other commonly reported challenges included inadequate funding (6 programs, 30%), high or increasing demand (5, 25%), and the need for improved infrastructure, including transportation vans, larger spaces, and cold storage facilities (8, 40%). Organizations also identified a need for additional volunteers and greater human capacity (6 programs, 30%) and reported struggling with rising operational costs (3, 15%) and the emotional labour associated with running the program (1, 5%).

Ways to Improve Food Assistance Service Provision in the Sooke-West Shore Region

Participating organizations described a variety of ways to improve food assistance service provision in the Sooke-West Shore region. These opportunities corresponded to:

Cost of Living: Organizations described the importance of lowering the cost of housing and food and increasing incomes to address the root causes of food insecurity.

Funding and Support for Service Providers: The need for adequate and consistent funding for food assistance service providers was described, as well as the need for stronger support from local municipalities.

Availability of Food Infrastructure: Organizations suggested that service delivery could be enhanced by increasing the availability of food-related infrastructure, such as cold storage, greenhouses, and community kitchens.

Donation Process: Streamlining the process for businesses to donate food was described as an opportunity to increase the food supply.

Hours of Operation: Expanding hours of operation, such as having food banks open in the evenings and at weekends, was mentioned as way to meet the needs of local communities.

Support for Priority Populations: Alongside expanding hours, one organization described the need to enhance support for priority populations, especially newcomers and international students.

Use of Data: To address potential service gaps, one organization mentioned how data could be used to identify the locations with the greatest need.

Public Awareness: Increasing public awareness of food security programs (leading to more donations) and enhancing awareness of the food rescue system were also described as potential strategies for improving food assistance services in the region.

Opportunities for Collaboration Amongst Food Service Providers

Participating organizations also provided insights into potential opportunities to enhance collaboration amongst service providers and food system partners. These opportunities are summarized below:

Coordination Amongst Food Banks and Meal Delivery Services: There is potential to increase or maintain coordination amongst the various food banks (e.g., Sooke Food Bank and Goldstream Food Bank), meal delivery services (e.g., Sooke Meals on Wheels), and neighborhood food pantries to ensure that food is accessible through various methods and at various times. Neighborhood food pantries were seen as a potential stop gap for emergency food provision when food banks were closed.

Collaboration Amongst School-Based Programs: There is also an opportunity to strengthen collaboration amongst school-based programs, including Flourish!, The Farm at Royal Roads, Community First Foundation (Backpack Buddies), and the Vancouver Island Kids Klub Centre Society. The Backpack Buddies program specifically mentioned that the families they serve experience barriers to accessing their services when schools are on break, as groceries are provided to children through the schools while school is in session. They indicated that partnerships with other organization during school breaks would help reduce barriers to access for families in need.

Additional Partnerships: Finally, participating organizations described how additional partnerships with businesses and local farms would also be helpful. Organizations not currently affiliated described how a partnership with Mustard Seed could be beneficial.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this survey and suggestions from the participating organizations, the following recommendations to food service providers, municipalities, funders, and partner organizations are provided to enhance food assistance service provision in the Sooke-West Shore Region. These are suggestions only and are listed here with the intention of sparking discussion. It is possible that not all the ideas mentioned are feasible or desirable. Moreover, there are likely many other ideas that could enhance food assistance service provision and food security in the region that are not listed here.

Recommendations for Food Service Providers

The following recommendations have been identified for food service providers. These recommendations are categorized into the following themes: enhancing collaboration, expanding support, promoting equity, and using data to inform service delivery.

Enhancing Collaboration

Recommendations for enhancing collaboration include:

1. **Maintain the West Shore and Sooke Food Security Collective:** Continue to advance and maintain momentum for the West Shore and Sooke Food Security Collective. Consider seeking funding for a coordinator to support the efforts of the collective.
2. **Develop a Children and Youth Food Subgroup:** Consider establishing a subgroup of the West Shore and Sooke Food Security Collective, specifically for organizations focused on children and youth, to strengthen coordination amongst these service providers.
3. **Strengthen Relationships with Other Networks:** Create, maintain, and improve relationships with related regional food networks, such as [CRFAIR](#), [Sooke Region Food CHI](#), [The Good Food Network](#), and [First Peoples Food Sovereignty Table](#), to advance collaborative action in the region and reduce duplication.
4. **Strengthen Relationships with Local Nations:** Develop and strengthen existing relationships with local Nations to identify ways to better meet the needs of Indigenous families and individuals.
5. **Coordinate Coverage:** It may be useful to coordinate hours of operation across service providers to ensure coverage across the week.
6. **Create and Maintain a Calendar and Map of Food Availability:** Maintain the [existing Greater Victoria Food Resources by Community](#) resource and assign responsibility to

one organization to keep it up-to-date. It may be useful to develop an associated calendar and [map](#) so that individuals and families in need can easily identify when and where they can access food.

7. **Develop a Collaborative Strategy for Attracting Volunteers:** As discussed at the West Shore and Sooke Food Security Collective roundtable in October, recruitment of additional volunteers is central to being able to maintain services. The Collective could consider partnering with relevant organizations, such as local universities, retirement communities, faith-based organizations, and neighbourhood associations to collaboratively recruit volunteers for multiple organizations.

Expanding Support

The following recommendations relate to expanding food service support. Of course, the ability of food assistance service providers to extend existing services is dependent on funding and human capacity (see recommendations to funders and municipalities below).

1. **Expand Hours of Operation:** If possible, extend hours of operation for food banks to increase access for clients. Providing emergency food services, such as the emergency food hampers provided by the Sooke Food Bank, and well-stocked neighborhood pantries may serve as important stop gaps when food banks are not open.
2. **Consider Providing More Prepared Meals and Dietary-Specific Items:** If possible, having more prepared meals available may reduce barriers for clients that have limited time to prepare food. Cooking classes and food literacy initiatives may also support clients in being able to prepare cheap, healthy meals. Similarly, expanding offerings of dietary-specific items may support clients with allergies or other food sensitivities.
3. **Expand Services in the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area and Highlands:** The Juan de Fuca Electoral Area and Highlands are the least served communities in the region, with six and seven of the seventeen participating organizations reported serving these communities, respectively. Consider expanding support to this region to ensure residents in need can access services.
4. **Streamline the Donation Process:** Discuss and identify ways to streamline the donation process for businesses to donate food to local service providers.
5. **Increase Public Awareness of Food Assistance Service Programs:** Consider initiating a print and/or online campaign to increase awareness of the West Shore and Sooke

Food Security Collective and the efforts of member organizations. Increased awareness may lead to additional volunteers and more donations by the public.

6. **Advocate for Food System Priorities:** Review existing municipal plans and advocate for local food system priorities that align with existing municipal goals, such as the District of Sooke's commitment to growing local food systems (9) and the Capital Region's efforts to foster a resilient food and agricultural system (10). While potentially impactful, this strategy would require significant human capacity.

Promoting Equity

The following recommendations relate to promoting equity for clients that are served by food assistance service organizations:

1. **Enhance Support for Priority Populations:** Discuss opportunities to enhance support for newcomers and university students. This could include offering translation services, which are currently offered by three of the seventeen participating organizations.

Using Data to Inform Service Delivery

The final recommendation relates to using data to assess needs and inform service delivery.

1. **Collect Data to Identify Client Needs:** Consider collecting qualitative and quantitative data from clients to better understand needs and gaps in service coverage.
2. **Conduct a Regular Survey of Food Assistance Organizations:** Repeat this survey on a regular basis to identify trends in demand and key challenges for service providers. Consider leveraging partnerships with organizations such as Island Health's Population and Public Health team or the University of Victoria to provide support and capacity in conducting and analyzing the survey.

Recommendations for Municipalities, Funders, and other Key Partners

The following recommendations have been identified for municipalities, funders, and other key partners. These organizations provide the backbone support that is necessary for food service providers to deliver effective and comprehensive services in the region. They also play a key role in addressing the root causes of food insecurity.

1. **Provide Consistent Funding to Food Assistance Service Providers:** Provide multi-year, renewable funding that covers operational costs and capacity building and is not tied to specific projects.

2. **Invest in Infrastructure:** Offer funding for essential infrastructure, including transportation vans, larger spaces, and cold storage facilities.
3. **Provide Space:** Municipalities could support space needs by providing access to publicly owned facilities or offering leases at below-commercial rates.
4. **Create a West Shore-Sooke Food Policy Council:** Food policy councils are collaborative bodies that bring together stakeholders from across the food system, including elected officials, municipal staff, Indigenous partners, community organizations, food producers, and representatives from partner institutions such as school districts, health authorities, and public libraries. Their purpose is to examine the local food system, identify challenges and opportunities, and develop recommendations for policies and actions that support a more healthy, equitable, sustainable, and resilient food system. The [Vancouver Food Policy Council](#) provides a useful British Columbia example of this model.
5. **Strengthen the Local Food Economy:** Support a more resilient and sustainable local food system by protecting agricultural land, expanding community gardens and urban agriculture initiatives, supporting local food producers and markets, and increasing opportunities for community food growing, harvesting, processing, sharing, and distribution. Investments that strengthen local food production and access can improve food security while generating economic, social, and environmental benefits.
6. **Lower the Cost of Living:** Increase the housing supply, improve transportation networks, increase access to childcare, and support job creation. Consider advocating for income-related solutions from provincial and national governments, including increasing the minimum wage, increasing welfare incomes, and lowering income taxes for low-income households.

Summary

The findings of this survey highlight food assistance service system in the Sooke-West Shore region that is deeply committed, collaborative, and responsive to community needs, yet increasingly under strain. Demand for food assistance is rising across the region, while many programs face limitations related to funding, staffing, infrastructure, and food supply. The heavy reliance on volunteers and short-term funding further underscores the vulnerability of the current system.

At the same time, there are clear opportunities to strengthen and sustain food security services. Enhancing coordination among service providers, investing in infrastructure,

leveraging data to identify needs, and expanding services in targeted ways could significantly improve system efficiency and reach. Importantly, the findings reinforce that while food programs play a vital role in meeting immediate needs, long-term improvements in food security will require addressing broader structural factors, including the cost of living, housing affordability, and income inequality.

Overall, the results point to a system with strong foundations and a high degree of local engagement, but one that will require sustained investment, strategic coordination, and upstream policy action to meet growing demand and ensure equitable access to food for all residents.

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Appendix: Questionnaire Distributed to Participating Organizations

Organizational Information

1. Organization name

2. Organization's primary address

3. Key contact (name, role and email address)

4. Geographic area(s) served (click all that apply)

☐ View Royal

☐ Colwood

☐ Langford

☐ Highlands

☐ Metchosin

☐ Sooke

☐ Port Renfrew

☐ Other

5. Organization type (check all that apply)

- ☐ Non-profit / charity
- ☐ Indigenous-led organization
- ☐ Municipal or regional government
- ☐ Faith-based organization
- ☐ School-based
- ☐ Other

Program Information

Please complete this survey once **for each food-related program/service** your organization provides (i.e., complete the survey and click the link again to start another).

6. Program/service name

7. Key program/service contact (name, role, and contact information IF different than organizational details provided above)

8. Program/service location (IF different than organizational address provided above)

9. Approximate capacity of the program/service:

- ☐ Not currently at capacity
- ☐ At capacity
- ☐ Over capacity/waitlist

10. If you answered " Over Capacity/waitlist" to the previous question, do you currently have a waitlist or have to turn away clients?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

11. If you answered "Yes" to the previous question, approximately how many clients are on the waitlist?

12. **The majority of clients access this program/service:**

- ☐ One-time
- ☐ A couple times a year
- ☐ Once or twice a month
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Multiple times per week
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Other

13. **Types of food-related assistance offered (check all that apply)**

- ☐ Prepared meals
- ☐ Perishables (produce, meat, dairy)
- ☐ Prepared hampers or Good Food Boxes
- ☐ Non-perishables
- ☐ Infant formula
- ☐ Dietary-specific items (e.g., low sodium foods for people with hypertension, low GI index breads for people with diabetes, gluten-free food products, halal)
- ☐ Community Meals
- ☐ Workshops (gardening, nutrition, food budgeting)
- ☐ Cooking classes or community kitchen
- ☐ Other

14. **Hours and days of operation**

15. **Client eligibility criteria**

16. **How do participants access the program/service? (check all that apply)**

- ☐ Drop-in
- ☐ By appointment
- ☐ Third party pick up
- ☐ Other

17. **Is there a limit to how many times a person/household can access the program/service?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

18. **If "Yes" to the previous question, please describe**

19. **Average number of households assisted per day by your service operations (approximate)**

20. **Has demand for this program/service changed within the past year?**

- ☐ Increased
- ☐ Decreased
- ☐ Stayed the same
- ☐ Unsure

21. Accessibility and inclusion features (check all that apply)

- ☐ Automatic doors
- ☐ Elevator
- ☐ Wheelchair access
- ☐ Low-sensory hours
- ☐ Translation services
- ☐ ASL interpretation
- ☐ Multi-language signs and resources
- ☐ Other

22. Program/service staffing

- ☐ Paid staff
- ☐ Volunteers
- ☐ Combination
- ☐ Other

23. Is your staffing model stable over the next 12 months? Do you have funding or human resource support secured?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Uncertain

24. Where do you source your food from for your program/service(s)? Please list.

25. What other organizations or agencies do you think it would be beneficial to collaborate with to deliver this program/service?

26. Type of collaboration desired (check all that apply)

- ☐ Referrals
- ☐ Shared food sourcing
- ☐ Joint programming
- ☐ Shared space / logistics
- ☐ Coordinated intake
- ☐ Advocacy / systems change
- ☐ Other

27. Which populations do you serve? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Children and youth (under 18 years) directly
- ☐ Families with children under 18 years of age
- ☐ Seniors (65 years and up)
- ☐ Newcomers to Canada
- ☐ Employed Individuals
- ☐ Unemployed or Underemployed Individuals
- ☐ Veterans
- ☐ Indigenous Peoples
- ☐ People with disabilities
- ☐ People experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity
- ☐ Single-parent households
- ☐ People living on low or fixed incomes
- ☐ Racialized communities
- ☐ Other

28. Do you collect information about individuals served by your program? If yes, please share what information you track.

System Gaps & Priorities

29. What are the top 1–3 challenges your program faces in meeting food needs?

30. What changes would most improve food security in your community?

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