



WHAT WE HEARD

West Shore and Sooke Food Security Collective June 2026

On June 11, 2026, members of the West Shore and Sooke Region Food Security Collective met to review and discuss findings from the Sooke–West Shore Food Assistance Survey, summary report, and presentation. Facilitated by the Village Initiative, the session focused on key findings, emerging priorities, and opportunities to strengthen regional food security efforts.

The survey identified service gaps and opportunities to strengthen regional food security efforts. Key challenges include high demand for food assistance services, insufficient food supply, inequitable access, limited transportation supports, infrastructure constraints, and a reliance on volunteers and short-term funding, all of which impact organizational capacity, service continuity, and long-term sustainability.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Seventeen organizations remain actively engaged in delivering food assistance services across the West Shore and Sooke region.

A diverse range of individuals and families are being supported through a low-barrier approach, helping to ensure access for those experiencing food insecurity. Organizations report notable successes in meeting community needs. There is an opportunity to improve coordination of service hours, locations, and types of support offered across the region to better address

community needs and reduce transportation and accessibility barriers. Many organizations are experiencing capacity pressures within their current operating models. Recruitment and retention of both volunteers and staff continue to be ongoing challenges.

Numerous partnerships exist among service providers, helping to leverage resources, reduce duplication, and maximize community impact. There is strong interest in expanding collaborative efforts and developing additional partnerships.

The importance of meaningful consultation and engagement with regional First Nations and Indigenous organizations was identified as a priority. Participants emphasized the need to ensure Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and priorities are reflected in future planning, decision-making, and delivery of regional food security initiatives.

The survey identified both service gaps and opportunities to strengthen food assistance across the region. Key challenges include inequitable access to services, dispersed service locations, limited transportation supports, insufficient refrigeration and storage capacity, and other infrastructure constraints. These issues are compounded by a reliance on volunteers and short-term funding, which limit organizational capacity, service continuity, and long-term sustainability.

Strategic Opportunities

- Identifying regional food deserts and addressing associated service gaps.
- Ensuring strategies effectively respond to the needs of unhoused individuals.
- Reducing competition among providers for rescued food resources and funding through greater coordination.
- Planning for food hubs in key locations (Sooke, West Shore, and Juan de Fuca) to improve access and ensure equitable regional coverage.
- Strengthening the ability to collect, analyze, and utilize client and service data to inform planning and decision-making.
- Adopting a more strategic approach to coordination, resource sharing, and funding could strengthen capacity, extend service reach, and enhance overall support.
- Exploring a collaborative partnership with Sooke School District to strengthen food distribution infrastructure and transportation capacity by leveraging school assets to assist with moving resources across the region.
- Exploring potential for strategically located food hubs using repurposed sea cans, by accessing CRD and Sooke School District land, could increase storage and distribution capacity.
- Providing coordinated training and support to volunteers across food assistance organizations
- Engaging in meaningful consultation and engagement with regional First Nations and Indigenous organizations to ensure Indigenous perspectives are included in food system planning.
- Strengthening relationships with Food Banks Canada and Food Banks BC could increase access to resources, funding, best practices, and advocacy support.

SUMMARY

The discussion highlighted the importance of advancing food assistance services through a regional lens, recognizing that many challenges and opportunities extend beyond individual communities and organizations. Participants emphasized the value of coordinated planning, service delivery, resource sharing, and advocacy to address shared priorities across the region. There is strong support for a more strategic and collaborative regional approach, including coordinated funding and resource development efforts. Participants noted that working collectively would strengthen the region's ability to leverage resources, enhance advocacy, secure sustainable funding, address service gaps, and maximize the impact of existing services.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Continue to strengthen collaboration, shared resources, and coordinated action to support long-term sustainability, while working closely with the Community Social Planning Council to ensure a seamless transition of coordination responsibilities and ongoing support for the collective's goals, priorities, and regional food security efforts.

This engagement was facilitated by:

