

# Community Food Assessment Guide

*March 2008*



***Prepared for Lydia Drasic  
Director, Provincial Primary Health  
Care & Population Health Strategic  
Planning***

***By Sue Ross and Zena Simces***

***The Community Food Assessment  
Guide is a project of the Community  
Food Action Initiative - a collaboration  
of the British Columbia Ministry of  
Health and six Health Authorities.***

***Provincial Health Services Authority  
700-1380 Burrard St.  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6Z 2H3 Canada  
604.675.7400  
[www.phsa.ca](http://www.phsa.ca)***

# Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction	4
1.1 Purpose of the Guide	4
1.2 Materials and Resources Used	4
2.0 What is a Community Food Assessment and Why?	5
2.1 What is a Community Food Assessment?	5
2.2 Why Do a Community Food Assessment?	6
3.0 What is community food security?	7
3.1 Definition of Community Food Security	7
3.2 Community Food Security Continuum	7
4.0 Key Elements to Get Started	8
4.1 Clarify the Purpose and Scope	8
4.2 Identify Key Players – Establish Core Team and Key Partners	10
4.3 Determine Nature of Community Involvement	11
5.0 Key Processes in Community Food Assessment	13
5.1 Environmental Scan	13
5.2 Asset and Gap Analysis	16
5.3 Community Priority Setting	17
5.4 Recommendations for Proposed Action	18
5.5 Plan of Action and Outcome Measures	18
5.6 Implementation	22
6.0 Sample Methodologies	23
Appendix	24

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of the CFAI Community Food Assessment Guide is to provide a planning tool to assist Health Authorities and community organizations in BC wishing to undertake a community food assessment in their region or community.



This guide has been developed within a health context for the Community Food Action Initiative, which is a collaborative effort of the BC Ministry of Health, Provincial Health Services Authority and five regional health authorities. It addresses requirements outlined in the BC Ministry of Health Core Food Security Program and reflects experience and expertise of the regional health authorities.

More specifically the aims of this guide are to:

- Clarify the purpose of a community food assessment - what it is and why conduct an assessment
- Identify the key elements and processes of a community food assessment.
- Provide tools to assist those who are conducting community food assessments to ensure effective and efficient methods are used.

## 1.2 Materials and Resources Used

This guide is based on:

- The experience of Health Authorities and communities in BC that have conducted community food assessments.
- Selected references from BC and other jurisdictions in Canada and the US that are directly related to a key process or methodology recommended in this guide.

See Appendix for a list of materials and resources drawn from to develop the common elements identified in this guide.



## 2.0 What is a Community Food Assessment and Why?

### 2.1 What is a Community Food Assessment?

A community food assessment is a participatory and collaborative process that examines a broad range of food-related issues and resources in order to inform actions to improve community food security. (See definition of community food security Section 3.)

Experience in BC and in other jurisdictions has shown that conducting community food assessments result in many positive changes in the food security system.



It is important to distinguish an assessment from other forms of analysis such as research, review, or evaluation.

An assessment is a critical analysis of information for the purposes of guiding decisions on complex, public issues. A key characteristic is that it involves stakeholders to ensure shared ownership of the process and results. It is conducted through an open and transparent process.

A community food assessment includes the following types of strategies:

- **Discover** - Identify the community's current resources and assets.
- **Dream** - Envision the desired future.
- **Design** - Identify priorities and develop strategies to achieve the vision. Action plans may be developed as part of the assessment process or funding approval could be obtained prior to the development of concrete actions plans.
- **Deliver** - Implement approved action plans, monitor and celebrate success.

More specifically, there is general agreement that Community Food Assessments include the following key elements<sup>1</sup>:

#### Key Elements of a Community Food Assessment

- Examines a range of food system issues.
- Involves a broad diversity of stakeholders, e.g., public, private, nonprofit sectors.

<sup>1</sup> What's Cooking in Your Food System: A Guide to Community Food Assessment (2002), written by Kami Pothukuchi, Hugh Joseph, Hannah Burton and Andy Fisher, page 15. Published by Community Food Security Coalition, Venice California, [www.foodsecurity.org](http://www.foodsecurity.org)



- Builds capacity by engaging the community in meaningful ways.
- Uses participatory and collaborative processes.
- Focuses on community assets/strengths as well as gaps and issues regarding food security.
- Uses a variety of methods to collect information.
- Is completed in a reasonable timeframe.
- Fosters awareness and understanding of the community and its food system.
- Contributes to specific actions to bring about positive change by the diversity of stakeholders in the community's food system.

## 2.2 Why Do a Community Food Assessment?

The ultimate reason for doing a community food assessment is to inform decision-making. This is done in a collaborative way that focuses on community assets. The process reveals where important changes in the community's food system and policies can lead to improved health of the community and the population.

Conducting a community food assessment can lead to important outcomes – both expected and unexpected and can generate multiple benefits<sup>2</sup>:

### Benefits of a Community Food Assessment

A Community Food Assessment can lead to:

- Improved program development and coordination.
- Positive change in public policy affecting the food system.
- Greater awareness and understanding of food-related issues.
- Development of new and stronger networks and partnerships.
- Increased community participation in shaping the food system.
- Addressing gaps in the community food security system.
- Enhancing community capacity.
- Sustainability of the community food system.



---

2 Ibid page 16

## 3.0 What is community food security?

### 3.1 Definition of Community Food Security

The following is a widely accepted definition<sup>3</sup> of community food security adapted from M.W. Hamm and A.C. Bellows<sup>4</sup>:

“Community food security exists when all citizens obtain safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self-reliance and equal access for everyone.”

### 3.2 Community Food Security Continuum

Food security is a broad, complex issue that is more effectively addressed from a community rather than an individual perspective. Individual or household food insecurity is only one part of the larger context which includes the economic, social and food systems, food policies, food culture, and the engagement of community in shaping the context.

It is useful to consider food security along a continuum. This illustrates stages of food security beginning with practices that provide short-term relief and moving toward redesigning the food and other systems.<sup>5</sup>

Communities can have all three stages happening at the same time.

#### Stage 1 – Short-term Relief (efficiency)

Short-term relief includes emergency/charitable food programs such as food banks and soup kitchens that primarily address immediate hunger.

#### Stage 2 – Capacity-building (transitional)

Capacity-building food programs, such as community kitchens and community gardens, have the potential to empower participants through education and training, and help raise awareness of food issues.

#### Stage 3 – Redesign (systemic)

Redesign of the food system, through food policy councils, implementation of food policies, social enterprises and social advocacy to address poverty, deals with the shortcomings of both the charitable and community food programs and is aimed at improving the economic, ecological and social sustainability of the food system.

---

3 This definition was accepted by the BC Public Health Alliance on Food Security stakeholders in preparing the initial Proposal for the Community Food Action Initiative for the BC Ministry of Health, May 2005.

4 Bellow, A. and Hamm, M. (2003) International effects on and inspiration for community food security policies and practices in the USA, *Critical Public Health*, 12 (2): 107-123

5 Kalina, L. (2001) *Building Food Security in Canada from Hunger to Sustainable Food Systems: A community Guide*. Kamloops, BC.

## 4.0 Key Elements to Get Started

The following are the three key elements that need to be considered at the start of a Community Food Assessment:

- Clarify the purpose and scope
- Identify key partners, and
- Determine nature of community involvement

### 4.1 Clarify the Purpose and Scope

A first critical step is to clarify the purpose and scope of the community food assessment. It is important to determine what budget is available to conduct the assessment. Clarifying purpose, scope and budget early in the process will help shape the assessment. More specifically, to get started, consider the following:

- Why is the assessment being done? What is to be achieved by conducting the assessment? What are the specific goals and objectives of the assessment?
- Next determine how comprehensive the community food assessment should be. Defining the magnitude of the community food assessment will assist in determining the extent of the research to be undertaken – what information will need to be collected and who should be involved?
- Identify the funds and other resources available and determine the overall budget. The availability of budget and resources to conduct the assessment may impact the scope of the assessment.
- How quickly the assessment needs to be done can also be a factor in determining scope.





Identified below is a menu outlining key questions and considerations for clarifying the purpose and scope of the community food assessment.

Whether a Health Authority, a community or an organization is leading the community food assessment, the following is important to consider:

## MENU - Purpose and Scope of the Community Food Assessment

Questions	Considerations
<p>1. Is the assessment to be broad or focused? <i>More specifically</i>, is the assessment to provide a broad picture of the food system or is it to focus on specific aspects of the food system such as: food access – availability and affordability, food production, food manufacturing, etc.</p>	<p>A broad assessment would look at all aspects of the community food system and address a wide range of opportunities and questions.</p> <p>How broad the assessment is to be will help determine which public, private and non profit groups and decision-makers should be involved.</p> <p>It will also determine what information will need to be collected.</p> <p>If there are specific concerns that decision-makers wish to address, then the assessment could be more focused.</p> <p>A focused assessment can choose a number of key opportunities and limit the questions to be addressed.</p> <p>Funds available may determine the scope of the assessment.</p>
<p>2. Is this assessment creating an initial baseline? It is important to have a process for follow-up/monitoring assessment.</p>	<p>If this is an initial assessment and is intended to provide a baseline for future comparison, it may need to be more comprehensive in the type of data collected.</p> <p>A follow-up assessment should build on previous information collected and work completed previously, to look for changes and improvements.</p>
<p>3. What are the geographical boundaries of the assessment? <i>More specifically</i>, is this assessment regional (more than one community) or based in a single community?</p>	<p>The selection of geographic boundaries will influence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ what relevant data are already available,</li> <li>■ who the key decision-makers are, and</li> <li>■ who needs to be involved in the community assessment process.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Is the assessment to be conducted in an urban or rural setting or both?</p>	<p>Conducting a community food assessment in large urban areas is complex. Clearly identify who from the many diverse stakeholders should be involved.</p> <p>Establish a process for setting priorities from the start. This will help address competing interests and clarify common goals.</p> <p>In rural settings, involving key stakeholders from the start and establishing a process for priority setting are equally essential and may be more readily achievable. However distances and access to resources may pose challenges and need to be addressed in advance.</p>
<p>5. Is the assessment to address specific target populations? <i>More specifically</i>, is there a focus on vulnerable populations e.g., new immigrants, Aboriginal communities, low income, etc.?</p>	<p>Consider how best to include special or target populations in the process.</p> <p>Identify assets and gaps relevant to each special or target population.</p>

Questions	Considerations
<p>6. If relevant, consider the following:</p> <p>6a. Does the assessment address the specific objectives of the Community Food Action Initiative* i.e.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Awareness about food security</li> <li>■ Access to local healthy foods</li> <li>■ Food Knowledge and Skills</li> <li>■ Community capacity to address local food security</li> <li>■ Development and use of policy that supports community food security</li> </ul> <p>6b. Is the assessment to cover the core aspects of food security identified in the BC Ministry of Health Food Security Core Program paper**: Food Policy; Programs and Services (including capacity-building); Promotion and Awareness; and Evaluation.</p>	<p>If funding is being provided by the Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI), then the assessment and any follow up should be able to demonstrate how these objectives are being addressed.</p> <p>Both Health Authorities and communities conducting Community Food Assessments will be interested in ensuring these areas are addressed.</p>

\* Community Food Action Initiative Proposal by BC Public Health Alliance on Food Security, prepared for the BC Ministry of Health, May 2005.

\*\* Model Core Program Paper: Food Security, Population Health and Wellness, BC Ministry of Health, June, 2006.

## 4.2 Identify Key Players – Establish Core Team and Key Partners

The next step is to establish the core team and identify key partners. Involving the right people is critical to a successful community food assessment.

It is important to identify the following:

- A lead person who will coordinate the community assessment – one who is respected and trusted by the core team.
- A steering or advisory committee that provides overall direction for the assessment. This committee could include:
  - representatives from groups that may be affected by the assessment
  - those involved in providing information for the assessment
  - a number of key community leaders that have decision-making authority or can influence decision-makers.
  - representatives from the community.
- A small core team that is responsible for carrying out the assessment. Select team members who have the specific skills to conduct the assessment or, if funding and expertise is available, assistance from an outside researcher/consultant would be helpful.
- Other key partners, who will actively participate in identifying needs and in taking specific actions in implementing the outcomes of the assessment, could be identified by the core team. Depending on the

nature of the assessment, this could include key individuals from organizations who represent the stages of the Food Security Continuum, municipal or regional planners, municipal council members, government ministry representatives (e.g., Agriculture and Lands, Education, Child and Family Development), producers/growers and retailers.

- Ensure a database of key contacts is maintained to support ongoing communication and future involvement.

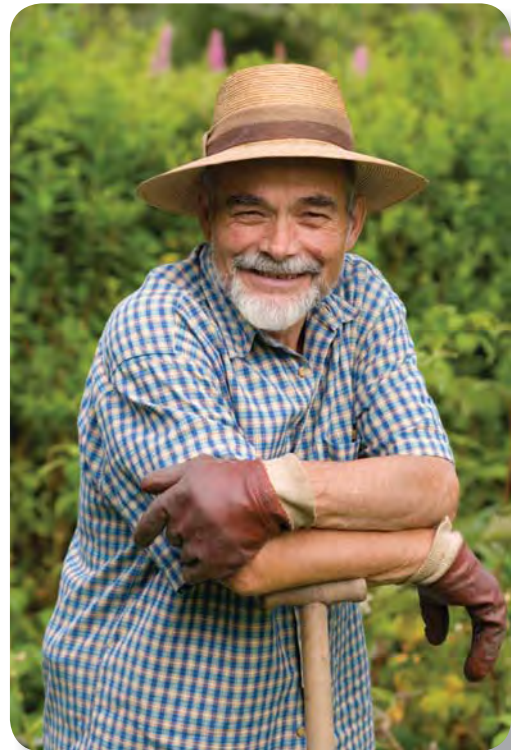
The Community Food Assessment is the beginning of positive change in a community. The more key people and relevant organizations that are included in the development, the more likely sustainable actions and change will occur.

### 4.3 Determine Nature of Community Involvement

Engaging the community<sup>6</sup> from the start is critical to ensure that the focus, the overall process and the results of the assessment address community needs and support participants' involvement in informed priority setting.<sup>7</sup> Involving community from the start fosters trust, inclusiveness and shared ownership of the process and results.

A number of key principles to ensure meaningful participation when designing your Community Food Assessment process include<sup>8</sup> :

- Agreed upon facilitator that is recognized and respected. (This does not need to be a paid position.)
- Participation is an ongoing process of learning and developing.
- Effective participation requires a planned process where agreement is reached among stakeholders on the level of participation that is appropriate.
- People will only be involved if they understand each other, gain confidence to participate, and can see some point to it.
- Participation involves agreeing upon outcomes and methods to achieve agreed to outcomes.



Meaningful participation takes time. Take the time to develop relationships of the people involved. It is important to understand their perspectives and what brought them to the group to support meaningful participation.

6 Community can be defined geographically, by target population or by common needs and interests.

7 Thought About Food? A series of occasional papers by the Food Project. Issue Number 1- Food Security, Food Policy and Public Participation by Kenton Lobe, April, 2005.

8 What's Cooking in Your Food System: A Guide to Community Food Assessment, written by Kami Pothukuchi, Hugh Joseph, Hannah Burton and Andy Fisher, Page 44.

See the checklist below for key considerations in enhancing community involvement in the community food assessment process.

### Checklist for Community Involvement in Community Food Assessments

- Identify the communities to be involved on a geographical basis, by target group or by common interest. If a food policy council exists in the community or region, this group should be involved in the process.
- Identify key community leaders and decision makers. This may require one-on-one outreach to facilitate their involvement. Engage the help of trusted colleagues.
- Establish a relationship with the media, where appropriate, to assist with raising awareness and communicating with the community. Ensure you have key messages prepared.
- Select a number of key community leaders and decision makers to be involved on the Community Assessment Steering Committee.
- Reach out to relevant groups and organizations in the community and region, engage them in dialogue and determine how they wish to be involved in the process.
- Raise awareness and provide information to the general community about the community food assessment process being undertaken.
- Hold focus group sessions and public meetings early in the process to understand community members' issues and interests, and to identify assets and gaps related to the assessment.
- Ensure community representatives are informed about research evidence and the data available. This is more than just providing information. This requires two-way communication between the community and the assessment team throughout the process.
- Engage community members in a public forum to address priority setting. This will be a more informed session given the ongoing community involvement from the earliest stages.



## 5.0 Key Processes in Community Food Assessment

The key steps in the Community Food Assessment process are:

- The Environmental Scan
- Assets and Gap Analysis
- Community Priority Setting
- Recommendations for Proposed Action
- Plan of Action including agreed-to outcome measures
- Implementation



Note: An Action Plan can be developed as part of the Community Food Assessment process and included in the final report. Or, you may not wish to develop an Action Plan until after agreement has been reached to fund the priorities identified. At this later stage, a detailed action plan can be developed that will be relevant and useful to guide implementation based on funding priorities and realities.

### 5.1 Environmental Scan

The overall purpose of conducting an environmental scan is to identify key variables that will offer opportunities to improve community food security and population health. More specifically, it involves:

- Identifying how the context (economic, social, cultural demographic, environmental, the local food system and related food policies) contributes to community food security. The type of information and data collected will be dependent upon the scope of the assessment – e.g., broad or focused.
- Creating an inventory of existing services and resources related to food security, or the particular aspect of food security being assessed. Be specific about the type of information that you want included about these services and resources.

It is recommended that a number of different methodologies be used to collect information for the environmental scan and that a number of key data sources be used. See section 6.0 on Sample Methodologies.



Identified below is a chart outlining the key trends and types of information that could be considered in the environmental scan.<sup>9</sup>

## Environmental Scan

Trends	Type of Information – key examples
<p><b>Demographic</b></p> <p>Consider what demographic changes are occurring or anticipated in your community or region that could influence community food security.</p>	<p>Percentage of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ women-led families</li> <li>■ school-aged children</li> <li>■ aboriginal people</li> <li>■ different multicultural groups</li> <li>■ new immigrants – (immigration and emigration rates)</li> <li>■ families</li> <li>■ parenting youth</li> <li>■ seniors</li> </ul> <p>Childbearing rates</p> <p>Level of education - percentage of population aged 20 years and above who do not have grade 9 completion.</p>
<p><b>Economic</b></p> <p>Consider data that will demonstrate the degree of economic vulnerability in your community or region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Income differences of consumers</li> <li>■ Median annual family income</li> <li>■ Percentage of families living below the Low Income Cut off (LICO)</li> <li>■ Unemployment rates</li> <li>■ Social assistance rates</li> <li>■ # of homeless</li> <li>■ Percentage of income spent on food</li> <li>■ Percentage of households that spend more than 30% of income on shelter</li> </ul> <p>Cost of healthy food*, in particular fresh fruits and vegetables.</p>

<sup>9</sup> For trends, see Community Food Assessment Guide for Regional Health Authorities in British Columbia, produced by FORC for the Provincial Health Authority, November, 2006. Trends also based on important elements identified by Vancouver Coast Health in their CFAI funding agreements with community groups.

Trends	Type of Information – key examples
<p><b>Community Food Production</b></p> <p>Consider what changes are occurring or anticipated that could impact local food production.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Number of farms</li> <li>■ Availability/affordability of agricultural land</li> <li>■ Farming employment and income</li> <li>■ Agriculture land use</li> <li>■ Agri-food organizations and programs</li> <li>■ Availability of local food</li> <li>■ Hunting and Gathering</li> <li>■ Key regulations governing food production</li> </ul>
<p><b>Food Access and Distribution Network</b></p> <p>Consider factors that influence fluctuations in availability and distribution of nutritious food.</p> <p>Consider the different elements and programs that influence the ability of different people to access food in your community or region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Wholesalers</li> <li>■ Retailers</li> <li>■ Restaurants</li> <li>■ Alternative retailers such as co-ops, farmers markets</li> <li>■ Local Food sources – grocery and convenience stores, etc.</li> <li>■ Charitable Food Sector – Emergency/ short term food relief</li> <li>■ Community food programs</li> <li>■ Food policy, and food system redesign.</li> <li>■ See also Section 5.2</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health</b></p> <p>Consider in what ways population health and, in particular, diet-related health status is changing in your community or region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Prevalence of dietary-related diseases, e.g., rates of chronic diseases, mental health</li> <li>■ Mortality from dietary-related disease</li> <li>■ Rates of obesity/overweight</li> <li>■ Per cent low birthweight</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social/cultural</b></p> <p>Consider social and cultural factors that impact community food security.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Accessibility of Transportation</li> <li>■ Values placed on healthy eating</li> <li>■ Food and nutrition buying habits</li> <li>■ Availability of culturally relevant and/or traditional food</li> </ul>

\* Cost of Eating in BC Annual Report 2006. Dietitians of Canada

## 5.2 Asset and Gap Analysis

This phase involves assessing the available information on:

- The needs of the target population(s)
- Strengths and assets within the community, region and within existing programs and services supporting food security
- Gaps in programs, services, policies, structures, community capacity, etc.

The key information sources for this step of the process include review of existing documentation, mapping of current services and programs and direct input not only from service providers and administrators or community leaders but also from community members themselves. As indicated, it is critical to engage community members in workshops and focus groups to assist in identifying assets and gaps. See Section 3 - Checklist for Community Involvement in Community Food Assessments and Section 6.0 Sample Methodologies.

The chart below outlines the type of assets and gaps to consider.

### Asset and Gap Analysis

Type	Key Examples
<p><b>Short-term relief</b></p> <p>Programs providing food to relieve hunger</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Food banks</li> <li>■ Soup kitchens</li> <li>■ Meals on wheels</li> <li>■ Good Food Box</li> <li>■ Drop-in programs that serve food</li> <li>■ School meal programs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Capacity-building</b></p> <p>Programs developed in the community by the community to improve the availability and access to nutritious food.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Community gardens</li> <li>■ Community kitchens</li> <li>■ Farmers markets</li> <li>■ Family gardens</li> <li>■ Community garden</li> <li>■ Educational and awareness programs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Redesign</b></p> <p>Actions designed to enhance the community food system, integrating key elements and improving the potential for long term sustainability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Food policy councils and other food security coordinating bodies</li> <li>■ Food policies e.g., in schools, hospitals, municipal government,</li> <li>■ Food system re-design to increase availability of fresh local fruits and vegetables</li> <li>■ Food sector community economic development/social enterprises.</li> </ul>

## 5.3 Community Priority Setting

This phase involves presenting the results of the environmental scan and asset and gap analysis to the community and engaging the community in identifying the key priorities to improve community food security.

As indicated, to have meaningful involvement at this stage requires informing and engaging the community during the entire process. See Section 4.3 Checklist for Community Involvement in Community Food Assessments.

It is also important to involve key decision-makers in order to be able to influence decisions about community food security and food policy. To influence decision-making, ensure you know<sup>10</sup>:

- Your issues
- What you want to achieve – your specific goals and objectives
- The decision-making and policy process
- The decision-makers and policy makers
- The right stakeholders to engage to influence decision
- The correct timing for introducing change



### Helpful Hints regarding Community Priority Setting

- Involve community stakeholders at the start of the process.
- Understand how the different stakeholders define success.
- Ensure that a process for priority setting is agreed to from the start.
- Keep the key decision-makers and community members informed and engaged throughout the process.
- Ensure evidence-based information is readily accessible to all key stakeholders.
- Align desired results with the agreed to purpose and scope of the community food assessment and the relevant objectives of CFAI and the BC Ministry of Health Food Security Core Program.
- Have the priority setting session facilitated by an independent facilitator with no vested interest.

<sup>10</sup> Based on ideas from - Thought About Food: A Workbook on Food Security and Influencing Policy Draft Edition Developed by the Food Security Projects of the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council and the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre.

## 5.4 Recommendations for Proposed Action

This phase of the process focuses on the identification of priority actions to be taken and results to be achieved, drawn from the environmental scan, asset and gap analysis and the priority setting process.

The Community Food Assessment Steering Committee has an important role to play in shaping and supporting recommendations for priority action.

Recommendations should incorporate solutions that address:

- short-term concerns
- capacity building requirements
- system redesign that targets underlying social, economic or political causes of food security.

The recommendations should be sufficiently specific to guide the development of the action plan and to clearly identify the critical desired outcomes and indicators of success.

Recommended outcomes should be aligned with Health Authorities Food Security Performance Improvement Plan, CFAI objectives, BC Ministry of Health Food Security Core Program and other current provincial or regional healthy eating strategies.

Seek formal approval of the Community Food Assessment and its findings and recommendations. Health Authorities would seek approval from their Executive Committee; while community groups would seek approval from organizational and municipal leaders and from their Regional Health Authority. Ideally, if the process has been iterative and has involved key decision-makers from the start, the community food assessment should be readily received and approved.

Note: In many situations, the action plan is part of the overall community food assessment. In other situations, once there is an agreement about funding priorities, a detailed action plan with agreed to outcomes and indicators of success can be developed.

## 5.5 Plan of Action and Outcome Measures

Develop an action plan based on the results of this process. The action plan should include an outcome measurement framework<sup>11</sup> which identifies inputs, activities, outputs and related outcomes and indicators of



<sup>11</sup> Splash & Ripple. Using Outcomes to Design and Guide Community Work. Produced and written by PLAN:NET LIMITED, Calgary. Philip Cox, Sherry Kozak, Louise Griep, and Lisa Moffat.



success. The action plan should also include identification of timeframes, resources and responsibilities. See templates below for developing an Outcome Measurement Framework and Action Plan.

## Outcome Measurement Framework

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Indicators	Source of Information	Methods/frequency	Responsibility
Resources you need to create the plan	What activities you need to carry out to create change	The project deliverables	Short-term Intermediate Long-term	Measures of success – which indicate whether your outcomes have been achieved	Where information is to be obtained to measure the outcome	What methods are to be used to obtain the information and how often	Who will be responsible for collecting this information

## Action Plan Template

Activity	Actions to be taken	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Responsibility
Agreed to activities stemming from the Outcome Measurement Framework	Specific actions to be carried out	Specify completion dates	Budget Staff Space	Who is responsible for carrying out the activities and for results

## Outcomes and Indicators for Community Food Security

A number of key outcomes and indicators have been identified for community food security and should be considered in the community food assessment. Key indicators to be considered by Health Authorities and communities in BC can be drawn from current work, in particular from the following references<sup>12</sup>:

- Model Core Program Paper: Food Security, BC Ministry of Health, June, 2006 (see pages 18, 19 and 20; chart on page 29).
- Reports on the Community Food Assessments completed by the BC Regional Health Authorities and their communities.
- Food Security - Performance Improvement Plans completed by each Health Authorities to meet the BC Ministry of Health Core Program for Food Security requirements.
- Making the Connection: Food Security and Public Health, Community Nutrition Council of BC, June 2004 (page 31 and 32).

<sup>12</sup> These documents are available through the BC Ministry of Health's website <http://www.gov.bc.ca/health/> or through BC Regional Health Authority websites [www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/socsec/](http://www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/socsec/) or by contacting the Provincial Health Services Authority Community Food Action Initiative.


- Key outcomes identified for Community Food Action Initiative Evaluation under the auspices of the Provincial Health Services Authority.

For easy reference to common outcomes and indicators, see chart below.

### Community Food Assessment – Outcomes and Indicators

Outcome Category	Examples of Key Indicators
Food Security Policy	Establishment and implementation of a health authority food policy plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ % organizations and communities that have implemented healthy food policies</li> <li>■ % of communities with intersectoral food councils</li> <li>■ % of communities with a food security needs and assets assessment</li> <li>■ % of hospitals, long term care and schools districts with a healthy food policy</li> </ul>
Food Security Programs and Services	Establishment and implementation of a health authority food action plan for the delivery of food security programs and services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ % of organizations and communities that have completed a food action plan</li> <li>■ % of hospitals, long term care and schools districts with a food action plan</li> </ul>
Food Security Education and Awareness	Existence of a health authority communication strategy and plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ % of people who indicate an awareness and understanding about community food security</li> <li>■ % of people knowledgeable about local healthy food sources</li> </ul>



Outcome Category	Examples of Key Indicators
Surveillance, Monitoring and Evaluation of Food Security	<p>A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Health Authorities have an evaluation framework for food security programs</li> <li>■ Baseline data are available</li> <li>■ Health authorities and communities have an ongoing process for collecting and monitoring surveillance data</li> </ul> <p>B.</p> <p>Population-based Indicators to assist in surveillance and monitoring include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Proportion of the population that experience food insecurity, e.g.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ % of people indicating they ran out of or skipped meals due to a lack of food in the past month*</li> <li>■ % of people indicating they did not have sufficient funds to buy food in the past month**</li> <li>■ Number of people (over 15 years of age) using food banks more than once a year***</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Percentage of the population at risk for hunger and a lack of food security, e.g., % of people living under the poverty line****</li> <li>■ Affordability of healthy foods – the annual cost of a nutritious food basket in BC*****</li> <li>■ Proportion of the population that has healthy food</li> <li>■ Patterns of chronic disease linked to a lack of food security. e.g., prevalence of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, # low birthweight babies per 1000 births</li> </ul>
	
<p>Short Term Outcomes</p> <p>Increased availability of affordable healthy locally produced foods</p> <p>Improved local healthy buying practices</p> <p>Increased consumption of affordable healthy locally produced foods</p>	
<p>Long Term Outcomes</p> <p>Increased food security of the population of BC</p> <p>Improved population health</p>	

\* Canadian Community Healthy Survey (CCHS)

\*\* ibid

\*\*\* The Canadian Association of Food Banks produces an annual report titled "Hunger Count"

\*\*\*\* Statistics Canada Low-Income Cutoff data

\*\*\*\*\* "The Cost of Eating in BC", annual reports published by the Dietitians of Canada, BC Region and the Community Nutritionists Council of BC.

## 5.6 Implementation

Once the action plan has been developed and approved, an implementation strategy should be put in place. This includes:

- Identifying who is to be responsible for overseeing the implementation of various aspects of the action plan.
- Setting in motion the actions to be implemented.
- Ensuring actions are monitored and evaluated against the identified success criteria.

The results of the monitoring, surveillance and evaluation will guide the need for further community food assessment activity. As required, the community food assessment process can begin again by determining which outcomes have been achieved and what further information is required, identifying additional outcomes and indicators, collecting information, setting priorities, establishing recommended action, and developing an action plan for ongoing improvement of community food security and population health.



## 6.0 Sample Methodologies

A review of community food assessments conducted to date indicates that there are a number of effective methodologies at each step of the process that should be considered. See chart below on Sample Methodologies and possible data sources.

It is important to:

- Use multiple methods to enhance corroboration of results and include both quantitative and qualitative data.
- Create stories/pictures as part of the qualitative data, to paint a snapshot of community food security that will enrich the quantitative data.
- Capture as much data as possible from secondary sources (information that has already been collected) e.g., existing reports, census data, population health data, reports, mapping, etc.
- Identify appropriate primary sources of data (original information collected) that can be employed within budget restrictions, e.g., surveys, interviews and focus groups.
- Document the methods you use.

Key Phases	Possible Methods/Data Sources
Environmental Scan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Review of existing Health Authority, CFAI and Ministry of Health, Agriculture, Education, Employment and Income Assistance reports</li> <li>■ GIS mapping of existing resources</li> <li>■ Conduct Literature searches</li> <li>■ Review of census data and other population data to develop a population profile</li> <li>■ Review of data from Canadian Community Health survey</li> <li>■ Survey individuals and groups – through email</li> <li>■ Conduct Interviews or focus groups session with key stakeholders</li> </ul>
Asset and Gap Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Review of all data from environmental scan</li> <li>■ Conduct Focus groups</li> <li>■ Engage community through - Community meetings, Public Forum, Open Space dialogue, Future Search, etc.</li> </ul>
Setting priorities	Through public forum, community consultation and engagement (see above) and through special workshop sessions.
Developing an Action Plan and Outcome Measures Framework	Can be developed through a 'Splash and Ripple' model* of outcome management. This model is designed as a way of approaching community or program plans so it is clear how goals and actions are linked to desired change in a community.

\* Splash & Ripple. Using Outcomes to Design and Guide Community Work. Produced and written by PLAN:NET LIMITED, Calgary. Philip Cox, Sherry Kozak, Louise Griep, and Lisa Moffat.



# Appendix

## Material and Resources Used to Develop the Guide

A baseline assessment of food security in British Columbia's Capital Region, Capital Region Food and Agricultural Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR), January 2004.

Bella Coola Valley Food Action Plan, Bella Coola Valley Sustainable Agricultural Society, May 2006.

Community Food Action Initiative Proposal by BC Public Health Alliance on Food Security, prepared for the BC Ministry of Health, May 2005.

Community Food Assessment Guide for Regional Health Authorities in British Columbia, report by FORC (C. Miewald, H. Barbolet et al) for PHSA-CFAI November 2006.

Community Food Security Assessment, Health Promotion and Prevention Services, Fraser Health, May 2007.

Community Food Action Initiative Report, Bella Bella.

Community Food Action Initiative – Food on EVERY Table. Final Report by L. Szymanski and K. Sutherland, Sea to Sky Community Services Society for VCH, August 2006.

Food Security Action Initiative Report, report by N. Baker for Sunshine Coast Community Services/VCH, June 2006.

Food Security for All: North Shore System Assessment and Community Food Action Plan, report by SPARC BC for VCH (SMART Fund), August 2006.

Making the Connection: Food Security and Public Health, Community Nutrition Council of BC, June 2004.

Model Core Program Paper: Food Security, Population Health and Wellness, BC Ministry of Health, June, 2006.

Powell River Community Food Action Initiative Report, Powell River Employment Program Society, August 2006.

Richmond Food System Assessment, Environmental Scan & Action Plan, by Coyne and Associates for Richmond Poverty Response Committee/Family Services of Greater Vancouver/VCH, September 2006.

Splash & Ripple. Using Outcomes to Design and Guide Community Work. Produced and written by PLAN:NET LIMITED, Calgary. Philip Cox, Sherry Kozak, Louise Griep, and Lisa Moffat.

Thought About Food: A Workbook on Food Security and Influencing Policy Draft Edition Developed by the Food Security Projects of the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council and the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre.

What's Cooking in your Food System? A Guide to Community Food Assessment, 2002, written by Kami Pothukuchi, Hugh Joseph, Hannah Burton, And Andy Fisher, edited by Kai Siedenburg and Kami Pothukuchi, funded by University of California Sustainability Research and Education Program, California Department of Health Services and the California Nutrition Network, with funding support from the national Food Stamp Program, US Department of Agriculture, and the US Department of Agriculture Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program, published by Community Food Security Coalition, Venice California, [www.foodsecurity.org](http://www.foodsecurity.org)

Vancouver Community Food Action Initiative, Three-Year Action Plan, report by FORC for Vancouver Coastal Health, August, 2006.