

Food Economy and Food Hub Assessments

Food and Agriculture are Significant Parts of Our Region's Culture, Environment, and Economy

The RDBN updated and approved the RDBN *Food and Agriculture Plan* in March 2020. *The Foundations Report* is a companion document to the Plan and provides key background information and analysis. Through this process, the RDBN heard that there is a desire to increase access to regional food and increase the marketability and distribution of the products both within and outside of the region. The RDBN Food and Agriculture Plan identifies eight priority areas, including: Priority 3: *Develop the RDBN food and agriculture sector and market(s)*. Actions to address this priority include undertaking a food hub feasibility study and a regional food economy assessment. Implementation funding for this action is provided through the RDBN's Northern Capital and Planning Grant.

This assessment has two main components: 1) Assessing the Regional Food Economy and creating a plan to shift to 5%, 10%, and 25% to regional local food and 2) Assessing the feasibility of multiple food hub models and how the RDBN can work with non-profits to implement findings. The RDBN is interested in better understanding the value of the regional food economy (e.g. how many jobs, how much is spent) and strategies in how to grow the regional economy. The RDBN is also interested in the BC Food Hub Network being promoted by the BC Ministry of Agriculture as well as working with communities and non-profits to implement recommendations in the food hub assessment.

Project Objectives are to:

1. Assess the economic, cultural and environmental contribution of the regional food and agriculture economy.
2. Engage mainstream agriculture, emerging agriculture, indigenous communities, and a wide range of businesses participating in the regional food system space in identifying both gaps and opportunities for expanding the regional food economy.
3. Project the cultural and economic benefits of a 5%, 10%, and 25% shift to foods that are consumed regionally, supported by implementable strategies.



4. Develop and test the viability of a model for investing in food hub infrastructure as well as develop 2-3 pilot project ideas for implementation in cooperation and collaboration with communities and non-profit groups in 2021.

Project Process:

The process to undertake these assessments will include engagement with a wide-range of stakeholders and potential collaborators including non-profit organizations, indigenous community economic developers, mainstream producers, small to medium scale producers and food businesses, restaurants, grocery stores, butchers, bakers, food processors, foragers, farmers markets, and other supporters (e.g. industry associations, funders, senior levels of government, post-secondary). The project team will use multiple techniques to safely and effectively connect with individuals and organizations. These include but are not limited to:

- Establishing a project advisory (Food and Agriculture Working Group 2)
- Holding extensive one-on-one phone interviews
- Webinars and on-line conferences
- On-line surveys
- Take-home engagement kits

Project timeline:

This project has been initiated in March 2020 and is scheduled for completion in December 2020.

Project Deliverables:

- State of the Regional Food Economy Report
- Regional Food Economy Assessment and Shift Plan
- Market Research for Food Hub(s) in the RDBN Report
- Food Hub Viability Assessment and recommendations for pilot projects and partnerships to begin implementation in 2021

Project web site:

To find out more, please visit: <https://www.rdbn.bc.ca/departments/agriculture>

Project Team and Contact

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