



Rural Food Banks Study

**A Collaborative Approach Across Four Rural Food Banks
to Address Unprecedented Demand**



Acknowledgements



This study was truly a collaborative effort and a result of the generous time, contribution, solidarity, and vision of each Steering Committee member/rural food bank.

This work would not have been possible without the generous donation from an anonymous philanthropic donor, and Community Connections Revelstoke who oversaw the project.

As a food system network organization, Land to Table was grateful for the opportunity to work so closely with and learn from the Steering Committee, together with the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems (another great collaboration).

To the future funders and policy makers who read this study - thank you in advance for your interest and for considering the impact you can have through investments in rural communities and rural food banks - to work with us to change the system so that we are collectively moving people through food insecurity, and out the other side.



Image Credit: Golden Food Bank via www.goldenfoodbank.ca



**Community
Connections**
REVELSTOKE SOCIETY



Institute for Sustainable Food Systems

Introduction



A collaborative approach across four rural food banks to address unprecedented demand.

It is no secret that the cost of living and lasting pandemic impacts are wreaking havoc at the community level, with food banks at the front line of the fall-out. In Canada, rates of poverty and food insecurity are soaring, and food bank usage has climbed rapidly to an all-time high. Across the country in 2022, 18.4% of households were found to be food insecure [1]. In March 2023 alone, food banks across the country saw just shy of 2 million visits in a single month. From 2019 to 2023, food bank usage increased 79% (*Hunger Count 2023*, n.d.).

Last year in BC, 127 reporting Food banks saw 195,925 visits - a 57% increase since 2019 (*Hunger Count 2023*, n.d.). On top of this, an Imagine Canada survey assessing donor trends indicates that donations are down across the country. Nonprofits that rely on donations are experiencing challenges finding new donors, note that donors are not giving as much, and are having trouble retaining existing donors. They cite that charities are bracing for more donations related challenges in 2024 (January, 2024).

[1] Li T, Fafard St-Germain AA, Tarasuk V. (2023) Household food insecurity in Canada, 2022. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>



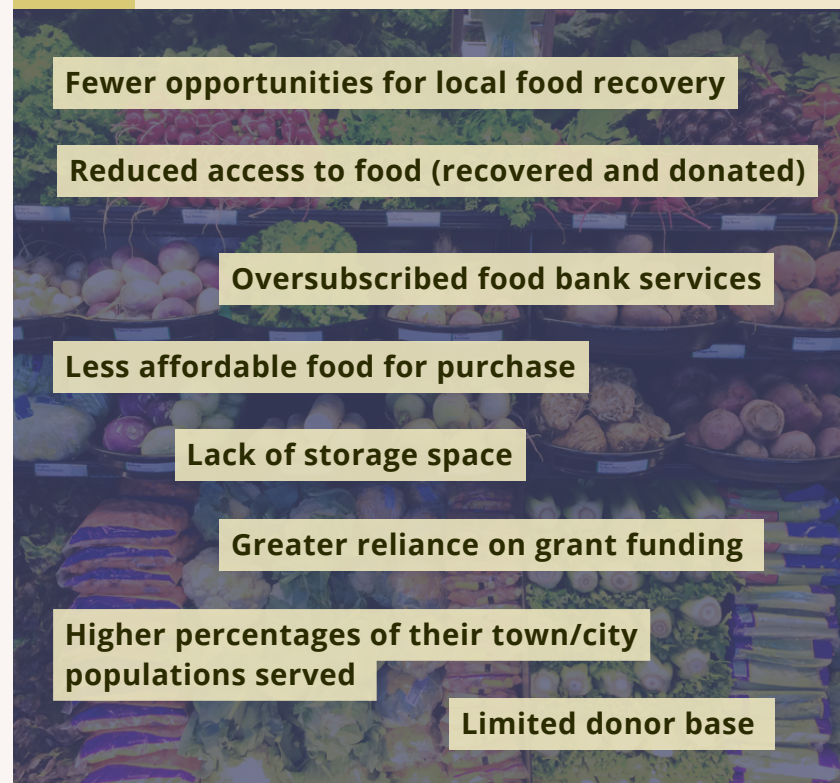
Image Credit: Golden Food Bank via www.goldenfoodbank.ca

In the East-Kootenay and Columbia-Shuswap regions of BC, the experience of four rural food banks located in Invermere (Kootenay region), Golden, Revelstoke, and Sicamous, is in line with national trends and statistics. For each food bank, increased community demand and overstretched budgets are further exacerbated by varying combinations of common rural-based challenges (though not each food bank is experiencing all of these challenges), including:

- Fewer opportunities for local food recovery due to the limited number of grocery stores, food services, and restaurants to draw from.
- Reduced access to food (recovered and donated), historically coming from urban centres, due to widespread increase in food insecurity that requires urban food banks to retain more of this supply for their own clients.
- Oversubscribed food bank services, due to fewer food access programs available in rural areas (e.g. few/no options in between food banks and grocery stores).
- Limited access to affordable food for purchase (e.g. bulk volumes at reduced pricing), due to the cost of transporting food long distances from chain stores or wholesalers to rural communities.
- Lack of storage space for larger food orders/receivals.
- Limited donor base due to smaller and more isolated populations.
- Proportionally higher reliance on grant funding (e.g. funding tied to specific projects or program deliverables), suggesting limited access to funding toward core food bank operations.
- Proportionally higher percentages of their town/city populations served than urban food banks.



Rural-Based Challenges



In early 2023, in the face of unprecedented food purchasing, budget deficits, and uncertain revenue sources, this group of four rural food banks came together to explore how collaborative solutions may help address their immediate, and growing food and budget needs. Here's why:

Data from the Community Connections Revelstoke Food Bank regarding demand and expenses over the past three years highlights alarming trends, similar to national trends: an increase in the number of households accessing the food bank from 286 in 2019 to 716 in 2022; and increased food purchasing costs that have nearly

doubled over the same period. Like others, this has resulted in Revelstoke Community Connections food bank having to cut staff and services over the past year (2023).

Similarly, the affordability crisis has steadily heightened food insecurity in Golden and surrounding areas over the past few years, deepening the struggles of low income residents and impacting more families, single working-age adults, and people with full time jobs. This is demonstrated by a high percentage of the population being served by the food bank. With over half of the food that the Golden Food Bank distributed in 2022 and 2023 having to be purchased, they are feeling the pinch just as much as the people accessing food bank services. After a couple years of budget deficits, weathered only through a one-time infusion of funding through the pandemic, they are also now looking at a reduction in staff and services.

In Sicamous, the well established food programming (under the umbrella of a broad range of services operated by the Eagle Valley Community Support Society - EVCSS), experienced an abrupt end to a robust food recovery program. With access to reasonably priced or recovered foods so uncertain, coupled with an older/aging group of volunteers who keep programs running, they are at risk of not being able to meet community need in the future.

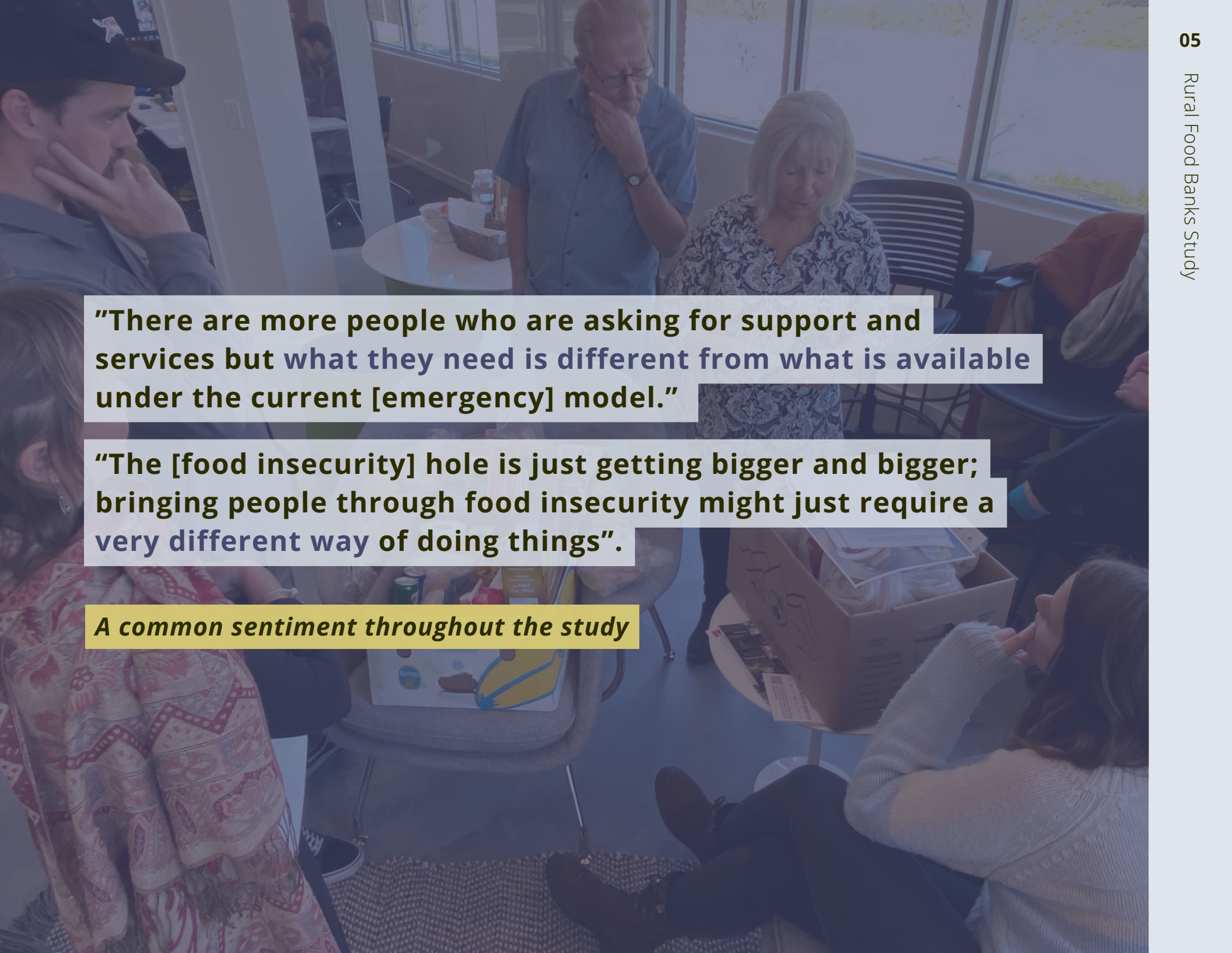
And in Invermere, at the Columbia Valley Food Bank, early 2023 trends showed an ongoing and rapid increase in food bank use, that come August, showed a 46% increase in food bank use compared to the previous year. Local social service agencies feel that a lack of employment opportunities coupled with inadequate wages to meet the increasing costs of living are stacking up against the Invermere community and surrounding areas - for them organizational relationship building will be key to addressing need.

While the structure and operations of these four food banks is quite different -(see **Appendix II**) - the common themes that brought the group together include: stretched budgets and staff coupled with ever changing circumstances amid ever increasing demand. What began as an opportunity to seek collective procurement solutions as a way to reduce food costs, resulted in a collective questioning of the current food banking model altogether.

Rural food banks *can* build the capacity and relationships required to procure food at higher volumes (with some savings and increased opportunity by working collaboratively with other food banks). However, it would only be possible to sustain serving higher volumes of the population in the traditional food banking model with sufficient and consistent funding from government and granting agencies; suggesting that more than ever, funders need to invest in rural food banks, recognizing their unique challenges and financial constraints.

In this study's pursuit to examine the factors contributing to the struggles of rural food banks, and to share this work in the hopes that it may provide benefit (i.e. replicability) for other rural food banks, there is a clear outcome:

Food banks cannot continue to afford to purchase food to distribute for free and meet the growing needs of community.



"There are more people who are asking for support and services but what they need is different from what is available under the current [emergency] model."

"The [food insecurity] hole is just getting bigger and bigger; bringing people through food insecurity might just require a very different way of doing things".

A common sentiment throughout the study

Study Purpose



Through Executive Director connections between and across the four food banks, and with an increasing awareness of the challenges stacking up against them and their communities (with no signs of easing), the group undertook this study, with support from a research team, led by Land to Table (L2T) in partnership with the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems (ISFS) at KPU. Purposes of this study include the following:

Find joint purchasing solutions to collectively reduce food purchasing costs, considering the entire supply chain.

Develop tools that consider cost effectiveness (as prices fluctuate).

Better understand rural-specific obstacles and limitations compared to urban counterparts, particularly regarding access to provincial funding and national food bank programming.

Create strategy options (short - long-term), and recommend pilot project actions to undertake together.



Image Credit: Golden Food Bank via www.goldenfoodbank.ca



In short, what began as an exploration of how to reduce budget costs through collective bulk food procurement, where plenty of data was collected to demonstrate marginal cost-effectiveness, has resulted in greater understanding and awareness of how current food bank operations, services and programming in rural communities in particular, are no longer working. Furthermore, this awareness has grown to concern that if the status quo continues, rural food banks may be further entrenching reliance on “emergency food” to address an ever deepening and chronic affordability problem.

With this in mind, a new study purpose developed to: create a narrative to appeal to local partners, donors, funders, community members and organizations, regarding the critical state of local food bank services - and how a collaborative approach to develop alternative program options is the way forward.

In the following pages we will highlight why a shift toward cost-recovery programming is required of rural food banks to meet the needs of a growing number of clients who cannot quite afford the grocery store, but as a result of living in a rural community are left with few or no options but to rely on free hand-outs at the food bank.

Furthermore, we’ll share why this understanding points to the recommendation for this group to continue to work together, through a shared and co-funded Coordinator position; to engage other organizations in a process to develop cost-recovery programs in addition to continuing to address ongoing, critical food needs; and to consider how the development of shared infrastructure can support a shift or expansion, to bring people through food insecurity, rather than simply ‘growing’ food banks.

JUL 2023**Early July:**

Introductions and project plan

Jul 11: SC Meeting #1

Jul - Aug: Site visits and in-depth food bank surveys and interviews

SEP 2023**Sep 6:** SC Meeting #2

Sep: SWOT Analysis of each food banks' operational and procurement processes and follow-up interviews with each food bank

OCT 2023

Oct 25: SC Meeting #3 in Revelstoke

Oct - Nov: Identified group priority procurement items; Food costing and transportation data collection and analysis

NOV 2023

Nov 10: Meeting Public Health Dieticians for input on priority items for purchase

Nov 21: SC Meeting #4 Dietitians share input

Nov 30: Meet with Sysco about potential food recovery opportunities

DEC 2023

Nov - Dec: Funding and financial data analysis

Dec 6: SC Meeting #5 Presentation of joint procurement strategy options

Dec 15: Submit pilot strategies and funding analysis

JAN 2024

Jan 17: Consultation with the Gathering Markit (Cost Recovery Example)

Jan 24: SC Meeting #6 Review Draft Report for final feedback

FEB 2024

Jan - Feb: Pivot strategy to focus on cost recovery models

Feb: Update report with final feedback and recommendations

Study Timeline

Research Team



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The Rural Context



Understanding the rural context and what the data demonstrates.

To begin work together, the research and consulting team undertook a deep dive into individual operations with each food bank. Operational data was gathered through a survey, site visits, one-on-one interviews, and review of annual reports and financials. In addition, we gathered data for urban food banks in Vancouver and Calgary to identify differences and disadvantages experienced rurally (in comparison). In most cases data for Kelowna food bank was either not publicly available (online) nor accessible via interview (though efforts were made to obtain it).

Where quantitative data was not available, complete, or comparable (across all four food banks), the research team worked to fill gaps through qualitative data collection. This information is represented through the report and explicitly as “Data Story” boxes below.

Information and data collected was reported back during group Steering Committee (SC) meetings (x 6 between June 2023 and January 2024), made up of representatives from each food bank (and/or their umbrella organization), Food Banks BC and the Land to Table/ISFS study research team. These meetings were designed to: discuss what the data was showing and not showing, learn about and from each other, and understand/identify the greatest food need for joint procurement (i.e. the initial focus for group procurement).



The following sections highlight important data, relating back to the key challenges experienced by rural food banks, including: geographic area and population served, food procurement (purchasing and recovery), and food bank revenue sources and donations. Data is also compared to urban counterparts where possible. This data is accompanied by stories that provide greater nuance of the rural experience (and implications on current operations), and highlights the strengths and weaknesses to draw on and address through collective action (i.e. next step - pilot project outline).



Image Credit: Golden Food Bank via www.goldenfoodbank.ca

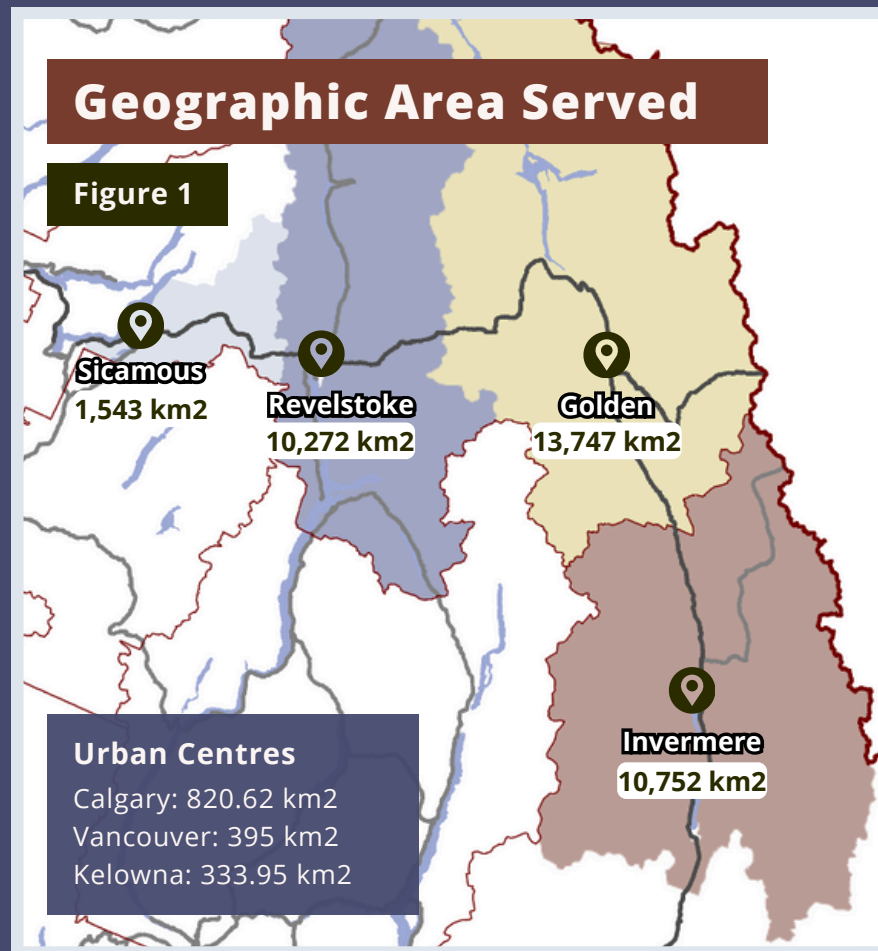
Where is Rural?



The four food banks in this study are located in the Columbia-Shuswap and East Kootenay regions of BC, along the BC-Alberta border. Sicamous, Revelstoke, and Golden are located along highway 1 from west to east, with Invermere located south of Golden along highway 93. The map on the next page (**figure 2**) shows distances to urban centres (where Food Banks BC regional hubs are located in or near).

In contrast to major urban food banks, these food banks serve a large rural area (including regional district electoral areas, unincorporated communities, as well as rural towns), up to 35 times larger than urban areas served (e.g. when comparing Golden to Vancouver) - as depicted in **Figure 1**.

In order to provide greater understanding of the rural food banks operations, services, statistics, and revenue structure, profiles of each are outlined in **Appendix I**.

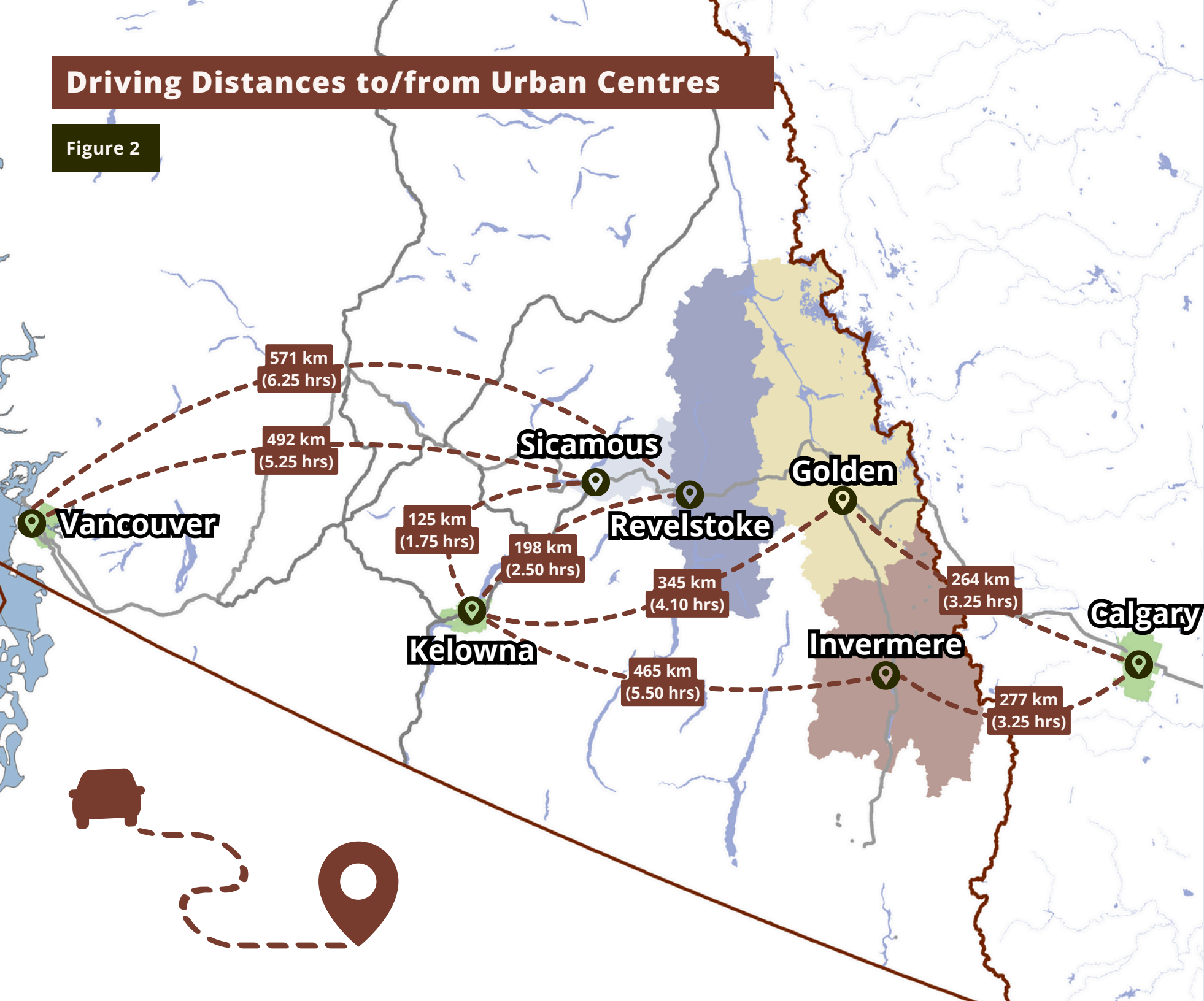


Our rural food banks serve geographic areas up to **35 times larger** than urban geographic areas served.



Driving Distances to/from Urban Centres

Figure 2



Populations and Clients Served



In an effort to understand who the rural food banks are serving and how that has changed over time, a series of data was gathered for clients, populations and area served, over 2022 to 2023, as highlighted in **Table 1**. Service areas for rural food banks include both town populations and electoral area populations based on the 2021 Census.

This information helps to situate rural food banks in comparison to two urban food banks. While the number of clients served in rural communities compared to urban centers are vastly different in scale, what stands out most is that the four food banks are serving between 13.2 - 20.5% of their entire town/city's populations! In comparison, Vancouver and Calgary are serving 4.2% - 5.8 % (respectively).

When paired with anecdotal data from conversations with the steering committee, **Table 1** demonstrates that rural food banks are supporting large percentages of their population, with minimal food spending budgets (\$13,900-\$82,813 across the four food banks). See **Appendix I** for each food bank's food spending budget.

In some cases, food banks are also fulfilling the role of social service agencies, otherwise absent in the community, which are often offered as referable services in urban areas. For example, Eagle Valley Community Services Society, who houses food banking services, also provides early years; child, youth, and family; senior; and disabled supports, as well as counseling and tax

preparation help. What this tells us is that even small investments into rural food banks can have a large impact on the community, since funding to food banks can be leveraged to support food access through other programming.



Rural food banks are supporting large percentages of their population, with minimal food spending budgets.

Population and clients served in 2022 and 2023, by food bank

Table 1	Invermere	Golden	Revelstoke	Sicamous	Vancouver	Calgary
No. of clients served (annually) (2022)	606	538	1,125	285	20,781	68,794
Clients as % of service area (2022)	5.2	7.4	12.6	7.1	1.8	5.3
Clients as % of town/city (2022)	15.5	13.5	13.6	14.0	3.1	5.3
No. of clients served (annually) (2023)	715	816	1,229	270	27,730	88,399
Clients as % of service area* (2023)	6.1	11.6	13.8	6.8	2.4	6.8
Clients as % of town/city (2023)	18.3	20.5	14.9	13.2	4.2	5.8



*Percentages derived using data from: Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023.

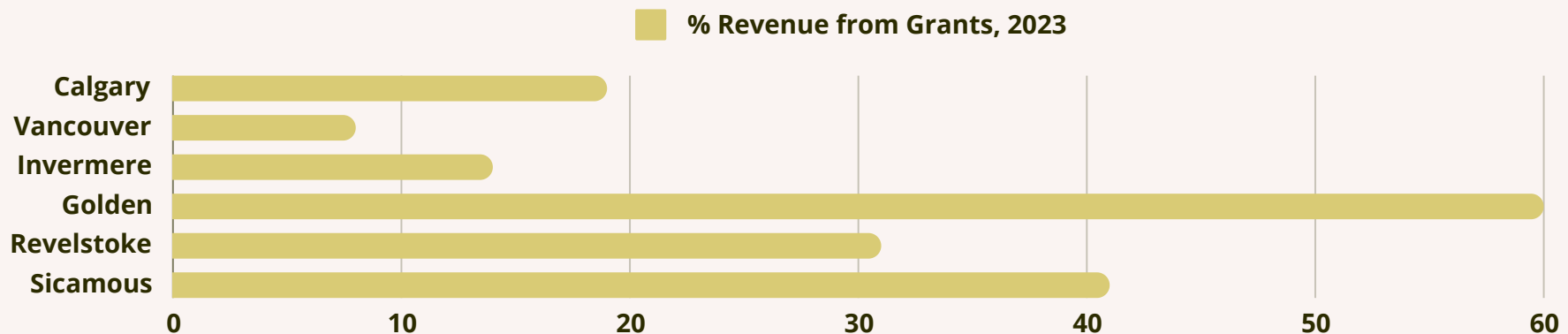
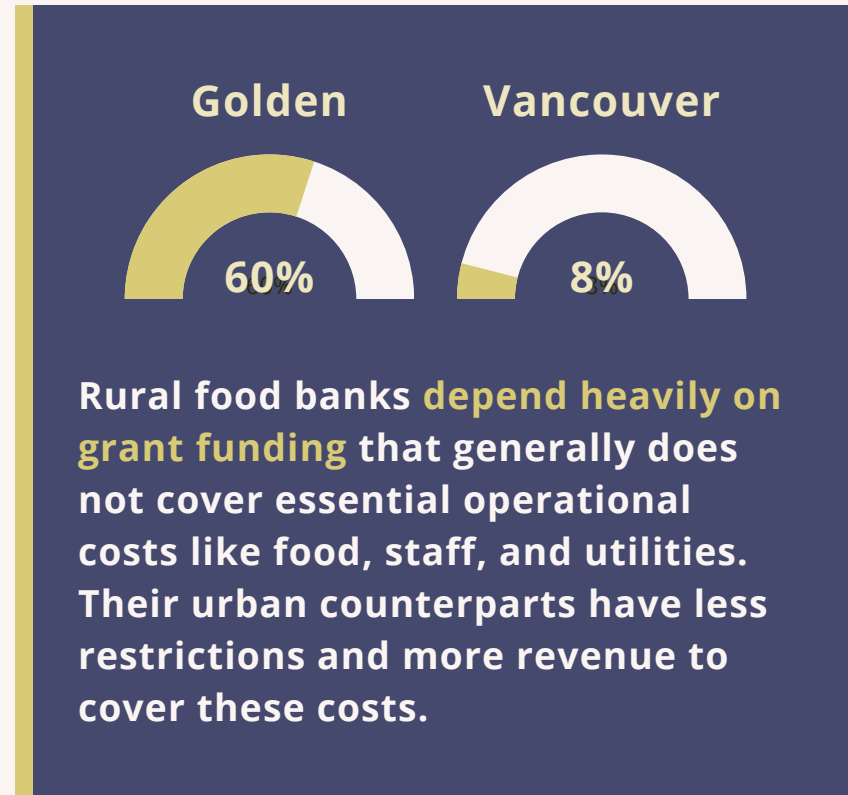
Revenue Comparison



A comprehensive outline of each rural food bank's revenue composition is depicted in the profiles in Appendix I as graphs; whereas **Appendix III** provides comparative information to urban food banks.

It is worth highlighting some of the rural/urban differences here, demonstrating the constraints of revenue in relation to access to donations, unrestricted revenue streams, and dependence on grant funding.

For example, the majority of the rural food bank revenue sources rely heavily on grant funding in comparison to urban food banks. Golden's revenue is made up of 60% grant funding and Sicamous' revenue is 41% grant funding, compared to Calgary, whose revenue is 19% grants, and Vancouver, whose revenue is 8% grants. Since most grants will not cover expenses related to operating core programs, what this suggests is that urban food banks have more revenue to cover core operational costs (e.g. food, staff, utilities, storage space, maintenance, etc.)



Donations are also a key component of revenue sources that vary across each food bank, illustrated in each food bank profile (**Appendix I**) and highlighted in the data story as follows:

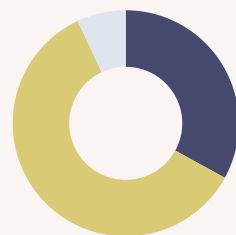
Data Story: Vancouver and Calgary donations makeup 63-73% of their total revenue, respectively. These percentages are close to double the donor contribution in Golden (33%), who struggles to justify the growing demographic of people at the food banks to their community and therefore is struggling to maintain or increase donorship. To compensate, 60% of Golden's revenue comes from grants, which require additional administration. Grant spending is often restricted to building new programming/projects that require additional labour beyond the day-to-day operations of the food bank.

However, for comparison and nuance, we found that Invermere revenue streams, when it comes to donations, are more in line with urban food banks as a result of a small but highly engaged donor base. This is thought to relate to Invermere's seasonal residents coming from Calgary, who have both funding and time to engage in food bank initiatives. State of the Basin data (for the Columbia basin area - not including Sicamous) corroborates the anecdotal findings, as outlined for "occupation of usual resident" or full-time residents, where 74% of private dwellings were occupied by full-time residents in Invermere, versus 92% for Golden and 90% for Revelstoke [1]. What this helps indicate is the potential for the other three food banks to draw on second homeowners, part time residents, and tourist-based communities to increase food bank donations, ideally in partnership with resorts and the local tourism sector.

[1] State of the Basin. (2023) Occupation by Usual Residents. Retrieved from: stateofthebasin.ca/economy/housing/dwelling-occupation.

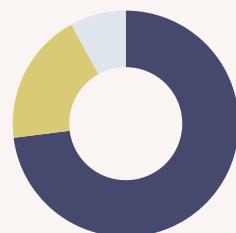


Revenue Sources



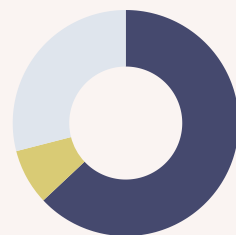
Golden Revenue Sources

- Donations:** \$116,686 (33%)
- Grants:** \$209,995 (60%)
- Other:** \$24,010 (7%)



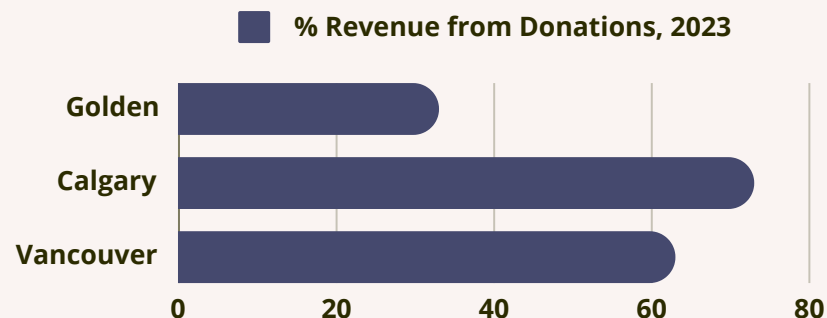
Calgary Revenue Sources

- Donations:** \$16,274,150 (73%)
- Grants:** \$4,326,000 (19%)
- Other:** \$1,727,254 (8%)



Vancouver Revenue Sources

- Donations:** \$12,556,059 (63%)
- Grants:** \$1,558,893 (8%)
- Other:** \$5,760,046 (29%)



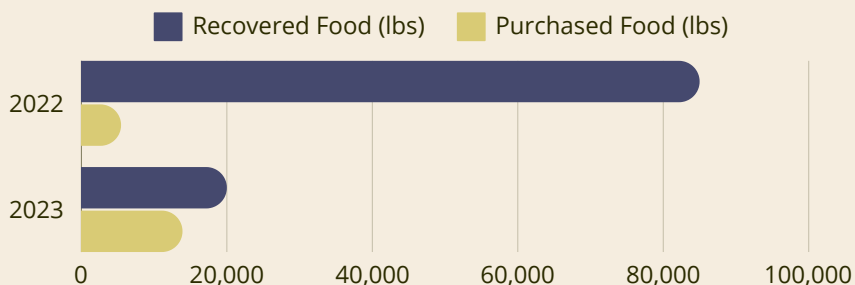
Recovered Food vs Food Purchased



Food recovery is defined as actions to collect and distribute food fit for human consumption which otherwise would be disposed of. As discussed above, a serious pinch-point for rural food banks is limited and dwindling recovery options. The following data stories help demonstrate the difference between rural and urban food banks, captured in this study, and highlight the need for increased food purchasing and subsequent budget pressure.

Sicamous Food Bank Data Story

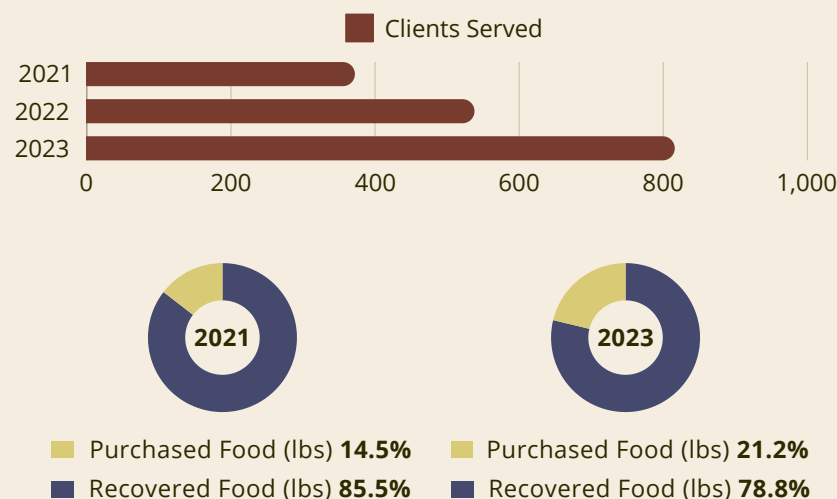
Between 2022 and 2023, Sicamous food bank (EVCSS) lost AG Valley Foods as a major food recovery channel, due to a change in personnel (and therefore loss of a strong relationship). Ultimately, a lack of commitment/interest from AG Valley Foods corporate headquarters to maintain this channel for recovered food, on their routes through Sicamous, has resulted in a **76.5% (65,000 lbs) decrease in EVCSS' recovered food** in 2023 and going forward.



Golden Food Bank Data Story

Golden Food Bank used to rely heavily on excess recovered food from Calgary Food Bank, despite being located 270 km away (3 hour drive). However, as demand on food banks increased nationwide, Calgary struggled to provide recovered food to Golden. In 2023, Golden received 41.5% less food from Calgary compared to 2021 (6,690-pound decrease in food recovered from Calgary).

At the same time, Golden's annual client base more than doubled (438 increase) from 2021 to 2023, forcing them to purchase a greater proportion of food than previous years. Golden spent \$39,388.27 more on food in 2023 compared to 2021; an additional 11,189.85 pounds of food purchased to meet the rising demand.



The Study Pivot



“The unsustainability of current purchasing trends, under a single food provision/programming model, is undeniable”

When the Steering Committee began its work together the focus of the Rural Food Banks Study, and desired outcome expressed by study member food banks, was to investigate effective strategies to procure foods collaboratively for increased cost-effectiveness and cost-savings. This included an assessment of shared immediate need, existing strengths and weaknesses, and operational capacity (e.g. shared coordination and storage space). Ultimately this led to the creation of procurement opportunities the group could undertake over the short, medium and long term (shared at the December Steering Committee meeting), looking at ten targeted non-perishable food items as well as three fresh food items.

The detailed cost assessment included analysis of procurement and shipping comparing across the following: retail stores locally (like Save-On Foods in Golden and Revelstoke); large retail located in neighbouring towns (e.g. Walmart in Salmon Arm); and sourcing from wholesalers (e.g. delivering from warehouses in Calgary, the Lower Mainland, and as close as Armstrong), as well as from the For Good Foundation (a national program that offers a limited number of products).



Image Credit: Golden Food Bank via www.goldenfoodbank.ca

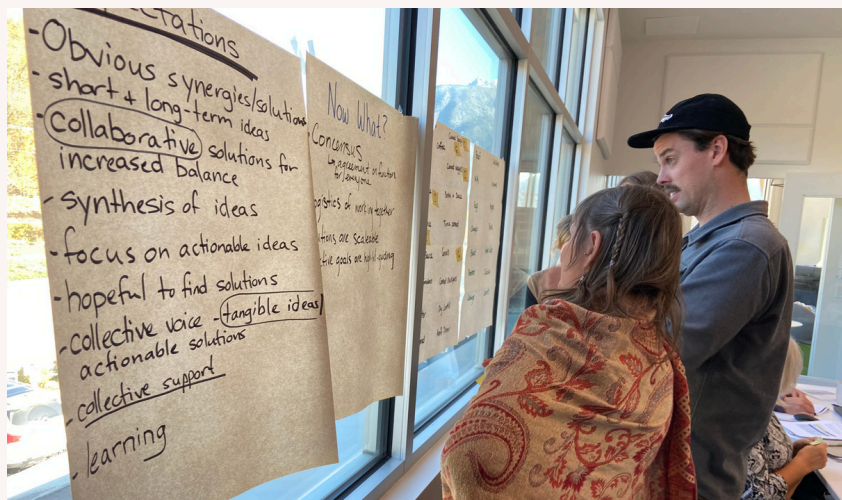
A series of shipping and trucking businesses and associated costs to get from point of purchase to and across the four food banks was also collected. Finally, cost combinations of purchasing and shipping were analyzed for cost-effectiveness and flexibility to see which options would best benefit each food bank (based on predetermined indicators of success).

Based on a comprehensive analysis of months of data collection for all three ordering options as well as local critical fresh items (i.e. meat, eggs, and milk), the data showed that bulk collective procurement on its own was not a *silver bullet* to address the food banks' need for more cost-effective food procurement. Cost savings failed to or barely broke even with the food banks' current purchasing options given the discounts food banks already receive locally with their retailers and the cost to transport any food from afar, even when unit prices are lower. All price comparisons across retail, wholesale, For Good Foundation, and local producer channels can be found in this study's accompanying **Technical Report**.

Over six months, from when the project began, to when the draft report was being prepared, much had changed for the food banks in terms of the reality and urgency that current service provision (solely under an emergency food provision model) is simply no longer sustainable (to varying degrees across the four food banks).

After combing through purchasing data, the group began to pivot toward opportunities to introduce cost-recovery programming. The four food banks met in January and determined unilaterally that "the unsustainability of current purchasing trends, under a single food provision/programming model, is undeniable". What was initially being considered as medium and long-term strategies to reduce costs, have become the immediate program pivot. Whatsmore, the four food banks continue to see strong opportunities to work together toward individual/community focused program development.

The following pages elaborate further on the group's thinking behind the pivot and the opportunities, challenges, and considerations that new program development and delivery represent.



Cost-Recovery Program



Opportunities, Considerations, and Challenges

Through a cost-recovery program or distribution option, the food banks would create an additional food and/or meal offering available to clients at a cost, to lessen the burden on the food bank to provide an abundance of free food. A cost-recovery model can help serve the growing population of people attending food banks who may have income for food, but not quite enough for the grocery store, but who are topping up at the food bank because there are no other options rurally. Models like a Good Food Box, Recipe of the Week, meal kits, or frozen meals, provided at a nominal or set cost (e.g. \$2, \$5, \$10, or even \$20), may help meet the needs of a struggling demographic, who have some to give toward food programming, while covering some of the cost to operate the program.

Sourcing and even preparing cost-recovery options as a collective, creates the opportunity to utilize each food bank's procurement, storage, food prep, and distribution strengths (e.g. see **Appendix II**), and tap into local and cross-regional partnerships, for benefit to the region as a whole. There's more on this in the following recommendations.

As a late phase of this study, the group began to explore models of food procurement and distribution that diverge from the traditional, free-food-distribution model. For some, cost-recovery models have been identified as a way to move clients through food insecurity by providing them with necessary food at a nominal or minimal cost, while maintaining dignified practices that encourage community engagement (in some cases) rather than perpetuating models of emergency food and scarcity mindsets (as the only option).

Our research and stakeholder engagement indicate common aspects of successful cost-recovery models that include: referral processes through partnering social agencies; more frequent and consistent programming to provide adequate food access; programming that incorporates relationship building and develops support systems to destigmatize the experience while developing community; and food literacy and educational opportunities that offer clients a sense of agency and the skills to work towards food security, if/when skills are needed. (see the Technical Report - pages 53-54 for more detailed descriptions of cost-recovery examples in BC)

For some, cost-recovery models have been identified as a way to move clients through food insecurity.

Cost-Recovery Models



Good Food Box

A Good Food Box is an accessible produce buying cooperative that increases access to affordable fresh foods at a set, consistent price. Through bulk food procurement, and volunteer capacity, a Good Food Box program can access reduced, wholesale pricing. Cost savings are then passed on to customers, who pay a consistent affordable rate for a food box they pick up on a regular schedule. The GFB model can also: prioritize the local food system by featuring seasonal local food from producers; include recipes, which offer food literacy/education around the seasonality of local food and how to prepare it; and connect community to local farmers.

Affordable Market

An “affordable market” is a program, set up as a store setting, that sells food at a modest cost to meet the needs of individuals who are being left behind by price increases in the commercial market. The model offers ready-made meal kits (e.g. ingredients for dinner, lunch, and baking kits) and food items at affordable prices (e.g. \$2-\$5). The market’s cost saving is realized through recovery/donations from restaurants, small retailers, and farmers in the community, as well as bulk purchasing, which is then portioned into kits or packaging for singles and families.

Frozen Meals or Soup

Food banks with access to commercial kitchens can process excess recovered food, food nearing its expiration date, and/or seconds or “ugly food” purchased at discounted rates into nourishing meals and soups. These meals can be frozen for storage, and sold as affordable ready-made meals to clients. A meal program can create an accessible option for families or individuals without access to a full kitchen; without cooking skills; with disabilities that make cooking difficult; or who struggle to find time to cook.

Recipe of the Week

A Recipe of the Week model features non-perishable and (when available) fresh foods in a meal-kit style package. Each Recipe of the Week will include the main ingredients and a recipe to show how to cook pantry staples into nourishing meals or snacks/baked goods. Meal kits can be comprised of bulk-purchased, recovered foods, or a combination of both. Similar to a good food box, a recipe program can also tap into local food access and connections to local producers (e.g. featured farmer produce and recipes).



Cost-Recovery Challenges and Considerations

As cost-recovery becomes the standout opportunity for food banks to better feed their communities, create dignified food access, and contribute to organizational sustainability, it is important to note that there are concerns, questions and challenges that this model presents for rural food banks.

For example, the group is concerned that creating accessible food boxes may be seen as competition by local food retailers. Framing these offerings in a way that shows the program is not in direct competition will be important to preserve local retail partnerships. Purchasing food from local retailers for resale in boxes/kits seems out of the question. However, purchasing bulk products from suppliers external to the community that are repackaged or combined in meals - in volumes or kits (e.g. baking kits or meal ingredients) not otherwise available (e.g. 8 cups of flour instead of 2kg's) may present a way around this.

For larger communities with many social agencies, it would be a more simple solution to pass on a cost-recovery model to a neighbouring organization or create it as a separate service. However in small rural towns, there is often no one else to reduce the need for food assistance and develop a long-term response to hunger. And so, as the collective anticipates making changes to their individual operations, they are faced with the challenging question of identity- can a traditional food bank be both an emergency food service and a cost-recovery program provider - designed to move folks through food insecurity?

This question represents a tension in the current Food Banks Canada's Ethical Foodbanking Code which says that food banks should “not sell donated food” and also that “food banks are not a viable long-term response to hunger and [should] devote part of their activities to reducing the need for food assistance”. The study team brought this tension to Food Banks Canada (FBC) to clarify the potential for food banks to adapt programming to a cost-recovery model utilizing procured food.

Currently, Food Banks Canada secures about 20 million dollars worth of food donations annually from large corporations who require them, through legal agreements, to ensure that the food banks receiving these donations do not sell the donated food. However, this does not mean that all donated food or recovered food cannot be repurposed or re-packaged into a cost-recovery model. The Ethical Foodbanking Code is meant as a high level guide to create consistency and collaboration across the country when it comes to food banking. This code is not enforced through ongoing evaluation, but rather reflects larger scale agreements. A food bank will not be questioned by FBC about their adherence to the code, unless a complaint is brought forward. FBC realizes the need and inclination for food banks to innovate. They recognize food banks as the “soul of small communities”, with the need for opportunities to collaborate with community partners. FBC suggests that food banks ensure they are clear with their donors if there is intention to sell donated or recovered food, and to develop agreements to ensure mutual understanding of the use of food. This advice comes from a place of ensuring transparency both for the donor and for the public, who may not agree with the resale of donated food, which could impact public donor support.

FBC does not wish to limit food banks in their ability to adapt their programs to meet growing need. The cost-recovery or “social enterprise” model is being discussed frequently at the FBC level, as food banks across Canada are finding creative ways to sustain themselves and get more food to people in need. There are numerous examples of food banks offering social enterprise activities: delivering for a service fee rather than selling food; providing food for service for other community organizations or school meals; growing food for programming; preparing cooked food for sale; etc.

The FBC Standard of Excellence as an accreditation program takes into account the Ethical Foodbanking Code, but is not meant to thwart or inhibit growth or innovation, but rather encourage consistency and quality service delivery. FBC can share contacts and examples of food banks offering adapted cost-recovery or social enterprise models and is open to discussions and supporting processes required for adapting food banks to serve their community.

The Ethical Foodbanking Code also encourages the food banks to acquire and share food, which is the foundation of this study and the collaborative purchasing and distribution models examined. In fact, over the course of this study, the food banks have already found new ways of sharing recovered food - where Revelstoke is now sharing excess recovered bread using existing transportation to fill a supply gap for Sicamous.

As these four rural food banks continue to develop their models, having trust-based relationships and partnerships, both as a collective, and within each food bank's individual community, and with donors, will be key to developing adapted, sustainable programs.

Collaborative Findings and Study Recommendations



Over the past year the four food banks and their affiliate and umbrella organizations have made the time to meet consistently, grapple with difficult circumstances and questions, and try out ways to share recovered food. At each steering committee meeting, learning about each other's systems, operations, approach, and pivots has resulted in clear connection and understanding for how and why continuing to work together feels like an important path forward. Further collaboration is viewed as an opportunity to: draw on each other's strengths and collectively address weaknesses, stop funneling community members solely into emergency food services, step out of a crisis situation, and adapt rural food banks.

To this effect, key study findings that inform recommendations for continued collaboration are outlined across the following six categories:



Staff Capacity

Program Development

Food Procurement

Inventory Management

Relationship Building

Infrastructure Development

Staff Capacity - A Shared Position

Findings

Food bank staffing (required to meet increased community demand) is restricted by lack of core operational funding and over-reliance on volunteers and Board members.

As a result of relationships developed through this study, there is strong potential and desire to continue to work together through a shared Coordinator position/role.

Recommendations

Create a shared coordinator position to serve all four food banks to reduce duplicating efforts toward food procurement (e.g. recovery and purchasing opportunities) and create funding opportunities (through collaboration). The shared cost of a coordinator will reduce the financial burden of individual food banks to pay full or even part-time staff to do the same job, will allow the group to capitalize on joint purchasing opportunities, creates a low risk option to test out a new procurement focused role, and/or allows existing staff and volunteers to shuffle food procurement from their workload (and demonstrate the value of paid staff).

Beyond sharing coordination efforts for procurement, the ongoing engagement of food bank leadership may create opportunities to explore if/how to expand shared roles to encompass the following: creating communications material/templates (e.g. social, email, print, press-releases); developing food literacy programs or materials for clients; undertaking a joint policy/advocacy focus or campaign (e.g. advocating local government to work with

the collective). Over time, food bank leadership may consider whether a dedicated coordinator can also act as the voice of the collective (e.g. to gather stakeholders and funders, to share study findings in the short-term, and undertake larger projects with more partners, in the longer-term); or if that is best placed at the Executive Director level going forward.

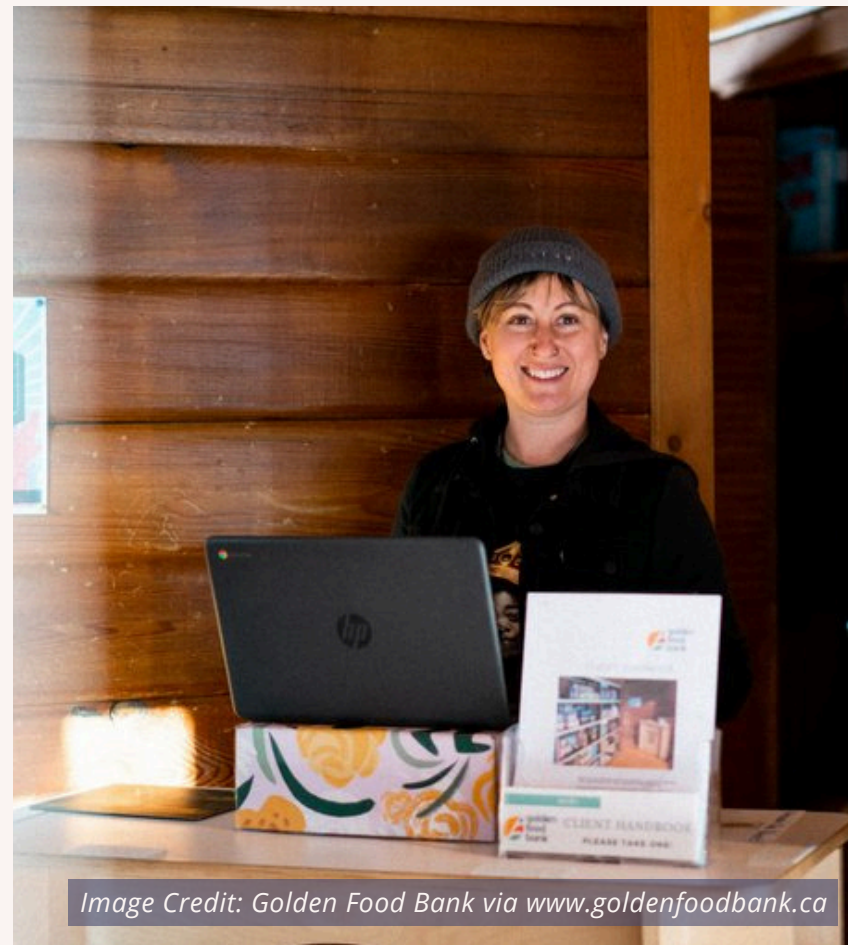


Image Credit: Golden Food Bank via www.goldenfoodbank.ca

Program Development

Findings

Purchasing at levels of the last two years to meet growing demand is financially and operationally untenable going into 2024. Food banks facing the greatest budget squeeze will require near term adjustments, including reducing the amount of food being given through emergency food distribution programs, and by introducing new/separate cost-recovery programs.

Recommendations

Food banks should continue to work together to decrease cost and increase efficiencies through joint food purchasing and recovery toward new program development and implementation.



Food Procurement

Findings

There is a clear need and desire for shared procurement of shelf-stable and bulk stocking purchases as well as fresh food.

Recommendations

The coordinator, on behalf of the collective, should capitalize on the opportunities for food procurement from pathways and channels identified through this study, and by trialing joint food procurement.

Collective joint procurement will help to establish efficient systems for: placing orders, temporarily storing large orders (e.g. through shared/rented space as needed), and organizing distribution. In the process of establishing and testing these systems, the collective will form a common understanding of their individual carrying capacities and inventory needs.

It is possible that collective procurement becomes more feasible/appealing in combination with purchasing for cost-recovery programs, and/or helps create important channels for large quantities of food to be procured, and offers 'proof of concept' should warehousing space become available.



Inventory Management

Finding

There is a shared understanding that standardized inventory tracking, used across all the food banks, would make shared coordination more efficient and valuable.

Recommendations

Food banks work together (perhaps through Coordinator support) to develop individual food inventory systems (tracking food in and out of food banks) that is the same across all four. This will help with cost and purchasing projections for food and provide more detailed information on what products are needed, when.

Inventory management is a part of the Food Banks Canada Standards of Excellence. Aside from supporting collective, larger scale purchasing, a robust inventory management system could also show the amount of food going to other community organizations or programming, to demonstrate community impact to funders.

Where there is an opportunity to do so, the collective should seek joint funding to introduce, update, or complete inventory tracking systems - as it makes sense to do so.



Relationship Building

Findings

In communities where local government involvement and community partnerships are strong, there is greater support for food banks, resulting in: more food recovery opportunities, better volunteer participation, higher donations, and greater community awareness (e.g. community understands and values food bank activities). Relationships are key!

Further to this, as experienced through this study, relationships are the glue that bring innovative ideas and opportunities to life; and solidarity, in approach and effort, can be a strong catalyst to address difficult questions and circumstances, and to access funding dollars.

Recommendations

Share study findings with key community partners and funders in order to broaden collaboration efforts, continue to engage in conversation about how to expand food programming to meet increasing and changing demand, and invite new voices, partners, and funders to the table (e.g. via events, meetings, project collaborations).

Ongoing relationship building and partnership development should consider the following stakeholder groups and suggested actions. We also recommend hosting a rural food banks summit, inviting all partners listed, (especially elected officials from all involved districts) to share findings and identify how to better address community food insecurity and inspire collective action toward recommendations outlined here.

1. Food Procurement and Recovery Channels

A shared Coordinator to act as the point of contact to build relationships with suppliers and distributors to find the most cost-effective options (e.g. across local, regional, provincial and national businesses and suppliers), and with local farmers/producers and processors to access fresh foods (at wholesale pricing, and donations when possible).

2. Food Banking Bodies

Continue to build relationships with FBC/FBBC regional hubs (e.g. in East Kootenays and the Lower Mainland) to explore opportunities to funnel their excess food into emergency programming, and reduce purchasing costs; and/or to discuss a rural food bank becoming a sub-hub. In addition, reach out to Food Banks Canada and food banks across Canada and North America to discuss successful examples of adapted food recovery models that may seem most replicable locally.

Relationship Building

3. Local Government

Share study findings as an opening to discuss how food bank services overlap with municipal jurisdiction/planning/community development and how to work together to address topical issues for local government. E.g. poverty reduction and emergency preparedness.

5. Local School Districts and Schools

Through Feeding Futures Funding and programming, connect with schools to better understand collaboration opportunities to support school meal program development and delivery.

4. Funders

Share study findings with key funders (e.g. the United Way) to show opportunities for greater impact through cross-regional collaboration (e.g. through shared coordination, and program development). Consider how collective work helps make the case for shared transportation and infrastructure development over the longer term.

6. Other Opportunities

Immigration settlement services - Learn how to meet the needs of newcomers and direct advocacy efforts to higher levels of government.

Tourism - Work with local tourism departments to encourage visitors to donate to their 'secondary communities/food bank of choice.

Regional Resorts - Share about the services food banks provide to resort employees, and to receive food or cash donations at the end of resort operating seasons.

Infrastructure Development

Findings

Infrastructure development is needed to support the growth of a cross-regional and sustainable model of food banking (e.g. considering: co-op style, cost-recovered food security programs, and preparation for emergency response).

Recommendations

Over time, through actioning above listed recommendations and relationship building, the food banks to consider permanent infrastructure needs that enable expansion of systems to better serve collaborative procurement, recovery, storage (cold and dry), and potentially emergency preparedness/response. For example, renting or building warehouse space will facilitate: supporting larger orders when prices are lowest, increasing procurement from local producers/processors (rather than ordering through wholesalers/retailers), and the ability to minimize the cost per pound of food when procured for/at the regional scale.

Warehouse space opens up the potential to:

Become a Food Banks BC regional hub/sub-hub, to receive Food Banks Canada and NFSS food distribution, but also to receive larger orders from organizations like the For Good Foundation.

Become a wholesale distributor - to procure for and redistribute to other rural and remote communities; further enable access to the lowest prices; create local jobs through dedicated staffing and systems development.

Prepare food banks to respond during “emergencies”, whereby shared and expanded infrastructure and coordination capacity can include development of emergent response systems and food supplies, through increasingly collaborative partnerships.





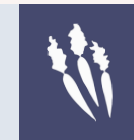
Next Steps Pilot Project

As this study focus pivoted from procurement to reimagining program delivery, what was originally thought of as medium- and longer-term solutions, are now incorporated as recommended next-step opportunities (as above). Trialing a shared Coordinator position (30-35 hours/week) - as a pilot project, to help action the recommendations - is the foremost recommendation from this study.

Over a 15 month pilot period, through funding contributed by private donors, charitable funders, as well as each of the four food banks, it is recommended that the shared Coordinator focus on the following: Organize an event to share findings with stakeholders; Begin joint ordering for non-perishable food items and follow up on fresh food recommendations from data collection/analysis; Oversee all procurement logistics; Explore and develop recommended relationships for procurement, including serving as the point person to develop new food recovery opportunities; Gather examples of food bank members offering different models for food provision; Share resources with regard to cost-recovery program development and food sourcing; Continue to convene the food bank collective regularly; Explore shared food storage and infrastructure development designed to support more sustainable operations.

Through a shared position, and ongoing engagement by food bank leadership, we believe a stronger community culture of “care” through food, will be created.

Conclusion



Emergency food for some, is increasingly becoming a means to feed many in the Columbia-Shuswap-East Kootenay rural food banks. Yet when the “emergency” lasts for decades with no end in sight, it begs the question—is this an emergency food system or a lack of policy that is adding to and further entrenching poverty? As a result of unprecedented community demand and food purchasing, the food banks in Invermere, Golden, Revelstoke, and Sicamous began to collectively ask difficult questions and look for solutions to increasingly untenable circumstances.

Data collection and procurement cost analysis indicate that while cost savings can be achieved through joint procurement - it is understood that for food banks to address rising demand, they will need to pivot operations to both purchase less food and recoup food expenses through creative cost recovery models. While it seems there will always be a need for “emergency food” service (through free food), there is a collective sense that the food banking model as we’ve known it is becoming increasingly unsustainable in these rural towns, with little ability to continue operations as they are, in the face of growing demand, while also achieving financial stability.

While there is more work required to understand the full implications and potential of a cost-recovery program at a local level, sourcing and even preparing cost-recovery options as a collective, creates the opportunity to utilize each food bank’s procurement, storage, food prep, and distribution strengths, along with local and cross-regional

partnerships, for benefit to the region as a whole. There is much that can be accomplished with a dedicated Coordinator to do so, and the ongoing commitment of the four food banks to tackle problems and generate solutions together.

Meanwhile, it is more important than ever that funders (national, regional, local) invest in rural food banks, recognizing their unique challenges and financial constraints, while endeavoring to meet the needs of significant food-insecure populations.

The relationships and collaboration developed through this study represent the greatest opportunity to create systems change in how we develop and deliver programming, advocate with/for each other, and address hunger more broadly in the Columbia-Shuswap and East Kootenay regions communities. Shared coordination, increased collaboration, and greater regional investments are key in making these rural regions more resilient and autonomous, especially when compared to urban centers that have greater populations and access to resources.





“Bringing people through food insecurity might just require a very different way of doing things”

Study Steering Committee, January 17th, 2023

**This group is up
to the challenge.**



Appendix I

Rural Food Bank Profiles

Rural Food Bank Profile



Invermere - Columbia Valley Food Bank

The Columbia Valley Food Bank (CVFB) provides clients one hamper a month with distributions twice a week. Small emergency hampers are also provided to households who require something prior to their next eligible distribution day. CVFB also offers one distribution per month to Edgewater to a centralized location and door deliveries to some clients in Radium. Any resident of the Columbia Valley, from Canal Flats to Spillimacheen, is eligible for a food hamper.

The feasibility of increased services that meet outlying community needs is being explored. Ideally, the CVFB could afford to expand delivery services to their whole region. In the meantime, efforts are underway to develop a Seniors-Only hamper distribution day and provide snack bags to youth in the Summer. The CVFB supports inter-organizational collaboration, facilitating direct service delivery to target populations impacted by food insecurity.

Strengths: Strong volunteer board; endowment fund interest to access for operating costs; supportive community of regular and generous donors (providing unrestricted funds to meet most of the demand); and a newly appointed (full-time) Executive Director.

Weaknesses: Aging volunteer population; lack of staff positions to manage facility and volunteer; lack of formal inventory tracking.

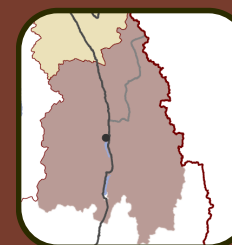
Large Service Area Remote from City Center

Geographic Area Served:

10,752 km²

Distance to nearest city center (Calgary):

277 km (3.25 hrs)



Increased Client Demand and % Pop. Served

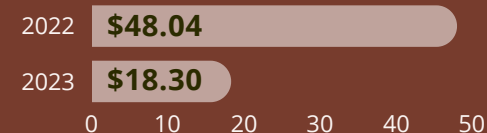
Service Area Population (2021):	Percentage Served (2023):	No. of Clients Served (2023):
11,701	6.1% (+0.9%)*	715 (+17.9%)*

*Percentage increase from 2022 to 2023

Living Wage (2022):
\$21.85



Food purchasing cost per client visit



Food Procurement and Revenue Sources



Food spending
decreased by 29% in 2023



Total revenue
decreased by 17.44% from 2022 to 2023

Rural Food Bank Profile



Golden - Golden Food Bank

In 2022 and 2023, the Golden Food Bank (GFB) offers a client choice shopping experience for their distribution. Clients are self-guided through various refrigerators and shelves and can select a certain number of items based on their household count. GFB also offers a low-cost Recipe of the Week with a recipe card and complete ingredients, composing a meal kit-style offering. There are two distributions per week, and a household is eligible to visit the food bank up to two times per month. There must be 11 full days between a client's last hamper and next visit. GFB offers the largest quantity of food to clients.

Currently, GFB operates with a relatively comprehensive staff, with a nearly full-time Executive Director and Food Security Manager (30 hrs/wk). Grant-specific positions like the Volunteer and Education Coordinator (24 hrs/wk) and Program Coordinator (16 hrs/wk) are timebound (e.g. ends April and September 2024, respectively). GFB offers employees a living wage inclusive of benefits.

Strengths: Developing a Common Agenda for Poverty Reduction in Golden Area (provincial/UBCM funded); fair-wages paid to operations staff; willing to collaborate with other organizations; staff capacity for program and food delivery adaptability toward more sustainable operations.

Weaknesses: Low % of donations as annual revenue; reliance on grants for core operations; limited space for large food deliveries.

Large Service Area Remote from City Center

Geographic Area Served:

13,747 km²

Distance to nearest city center (Calgary):

264 km (3 hrs)



Increased Client Demand and % Pop. Served

Service Area Population (2021):	Percentage Served (2023):	No. of Clients Served (2023):
7,311	11.6% (+4.2%)*	816 (+51.7%)*

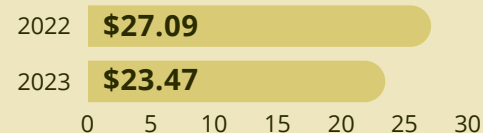
*Percentage increase from 2022 to 2023

Living Wage (2022):

\$25.56



Food purchasing cost per client visit



Food Procurement and Revenue Sources



Food spending increased by **13.63%** in 2023



Purchased **2,478 more lbs of food** in 2023

Rural Food Bank Profile



Revelstoke - Community Connections Revelstoke Society

Community Connections Revelstoke (CCR) offers a free, twice weekly, grocery style model of distribution (reduced from 3 times weekly in November 2023). The food bank is managed by three staff members: Community Food and Outreach Worker (32 hrs/wk), part-time Food Support Worker (15 hrs/wk), and a Neighborhood Kitchen Manager. This work is overseen by the CCR ED, and is connected to social services within and outside of the organization.

The CCR food bank infrastructure includes an onsite community kitchen, ground level double door storage entrance to receive pallets from trucks, a powered pallet lifter, and a pallet elevator to transfer pallets from semi trucks. CCR also has a robust campaigning model for food drives and fundraising.

CCR's greatest challenge is purchasing food to meet increasing demand and declining public donations (food and money). The budget cannot support the cost of purchasing, and staff time and positions have been cut due to decreased funding (lowering capacity).

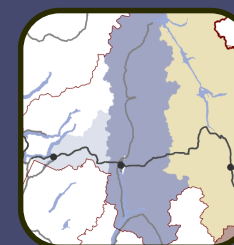
Strengths: Integrated community programming and advanced infrastructure allow for a diversity of models to promote program sustainability and adaptability.

Weaknesses: Budget constraints forced staff and distribution cuts despite rising demand.

Large Service Area Remote from City Center

Geographic Area Served:
10,272 km²

Distance to nearest city center (Kelowna):
198 km (2.5 hrs)



Increased Client Demand and % Pop. Served

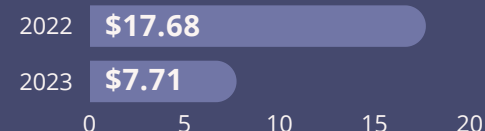
Service Area Population (2021):	Percentage Served (2023):	No. of Clients Served (2023):
8,938	13.8% (+1.2%)*	1,229 (+9.24%)*

*Percentage increase from 2022 to 2023

Living Wage (2022):
\$23.60



Food purchasing cost per client visit



Food Procurement and Revenue Sources



Food spending **decreased by 9%** in 2023



Grant funding **decreased by 17%** in 2023

Rural Food Bank Profile



Sicamous - Eagle Valley Community Support Society

Eagle Valley Community Support Society (EVCSS) has a regular hamper distribution, available as needed. These hampers are put together on a case by case basis, often in connection with other programming by an intake team at their two service locations: Malakwa and Sicamous. They distribute approx. 960 hampers per year. There is also a “free produce and extras” room in Sicamous that invites folks to help themselves. EVCSS hampers and extras are available during building operating hours. As of October 2023, EVCSS also has a commercial kitchen on site to aid food programming.

The EVCSS model is long-standing, integrated into programming, and has high community support. Still, the staff responsible for putting together hampers are paid minimally; 15 - 20 hrs/wk between the two locations. Some administration hours are allotted to staff and for Executive Director time; responsible for operations management, food security program development, and reporting.

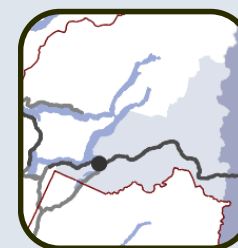
Strengths: Food security environment where change and adaptation to programming is welcomed and value focused (e.g. nutrition, local food systems, environmental sustainability, etc. are prioritized)

Weaknesses: Reliance on volunteers to run operations, as key volunteers and long-term staff seek to retire. This will make adaptation and expansion difficult for this program.

Large Service Area Remote from City Center

Geographic Area Served:
1,543 km²

Distance to nearest city center (Kelowna):
125 km (1.75 hrs)



Increased Client Demand and % Pop. Served

Service Area Population (2021):	Percentage Served (2023):	No. of Clients Served (2023):
4,001	6.8%	270

Living Wage (2022):
\$23.60



Food purchasing cost per client visit



Food Procurement and Revenue Sources



Food spending **increased by 5% in 2023**



Grant funding **decreased by 5% in 2023**



Appendix II

Food Banks' Operations Overview

Food Banks' Operations Overview



	Invermere	Golden	Revelstoke	Sicamous
Have a vehicle (owned by the organization) to transport food	No Rely on volunteers to use their vehicles	Not yet Applications submitted for an electric van. Currently contracted - to help with food recovery.	Yes a 2018 Ford 350 Transit Van (refrigerated)	No Rely on volunteers and local businesses to use their vehicles.
Can receive full pallets into storage space	No	No	Yes	No
Use a formal inventory management system for both intake and output of food	No Need a scale	Sort of Track weights of everything coming in, but less so going out	Sort of Track weights of everything coming in, but less so going out	No Informal estimates monitored by different staff
Have a paid staff member whose dedicated role includes purchasing food?	No The board chair currently oversees procurement	Yes Food Security Manager	Yes Community Food & Outreach Worker & Kitchen Manager	No Volunteer managed (e.g. currently by one volunteer)
Have strong relationships with grocery stores or other suppliers	Yes AG Valley Foods Local farmers, abattoir and butcher	Yes Save-On Foods	Yes Local grocers	Yes Fruit World



For more details of the qualitative data and analysis process, refer to the Technical Report.



Food Bank Strengths

Food Banks' Operations Overview



	Invermere	Golden	Revelstoke	Sicamous
Have access to longer term funding (beyond a year)	Yes	No	No	No
Have a commercial kitchen to process meals	No	No	Yes	Yes
Does your food bank support school food programming	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Have a consistent food recovery program	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Food bank has a self-proclaimed strong donor pool which provides unrestricted funding toward operational costs	Yes	No	No	Yes



For more details of the qualitative data and analysis process, refer to the Technical Report.



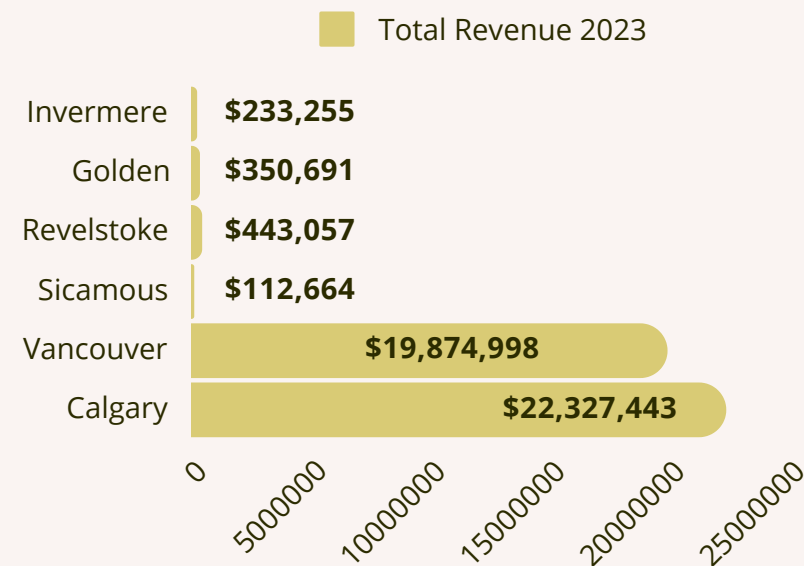
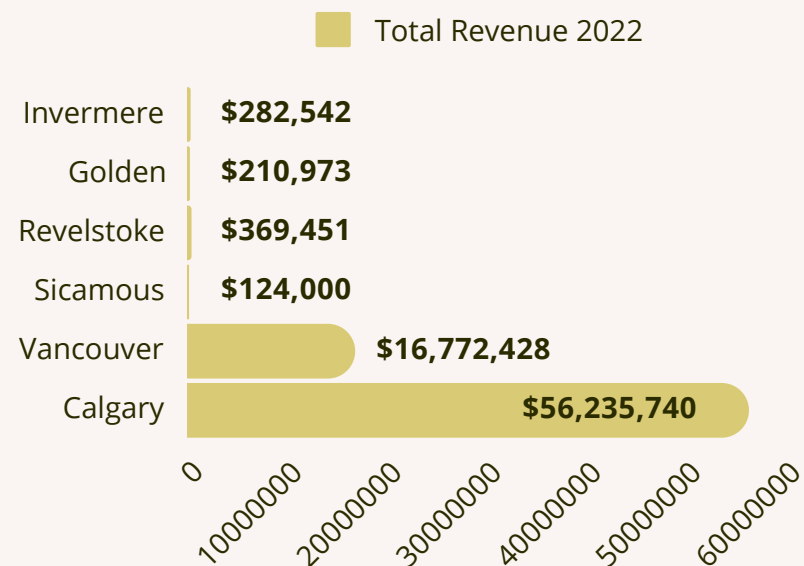
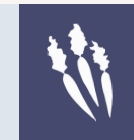
Food Bank Strengths

A photograph of a food bank donation station. In the foreground, a large cardboard box is labeled "DONATIONS" in blue marker. Several hands are visible, sorting through various food items. A person is holding a bunch of yellow bananas. Another person is holding a clear plastic container filled with red cherry tomatoes. A third person is holding a white plastic container filled with sliced cucumbers and other vegetables. In the background, there are stacks of metal cans and a blue plastic crate. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor setting.

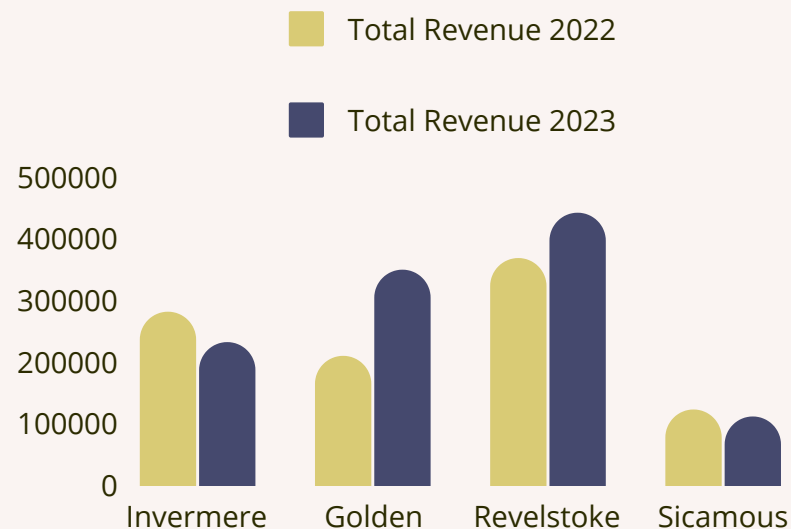
Appendix III

Food Banks Data Comparison

Food Banks Data Comparison



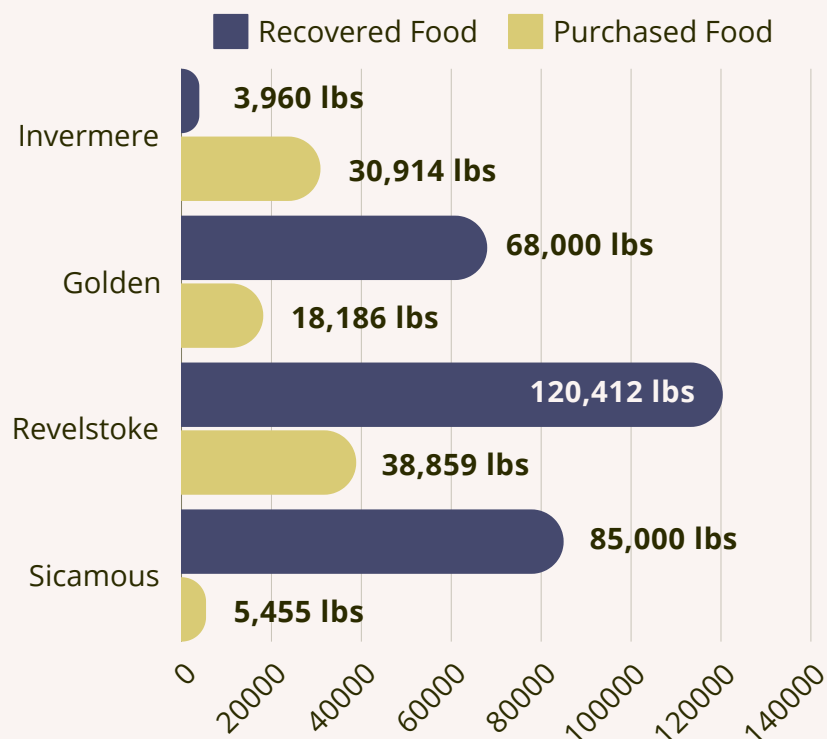
Rural Food Banks Revenue Comparison 2022-2023



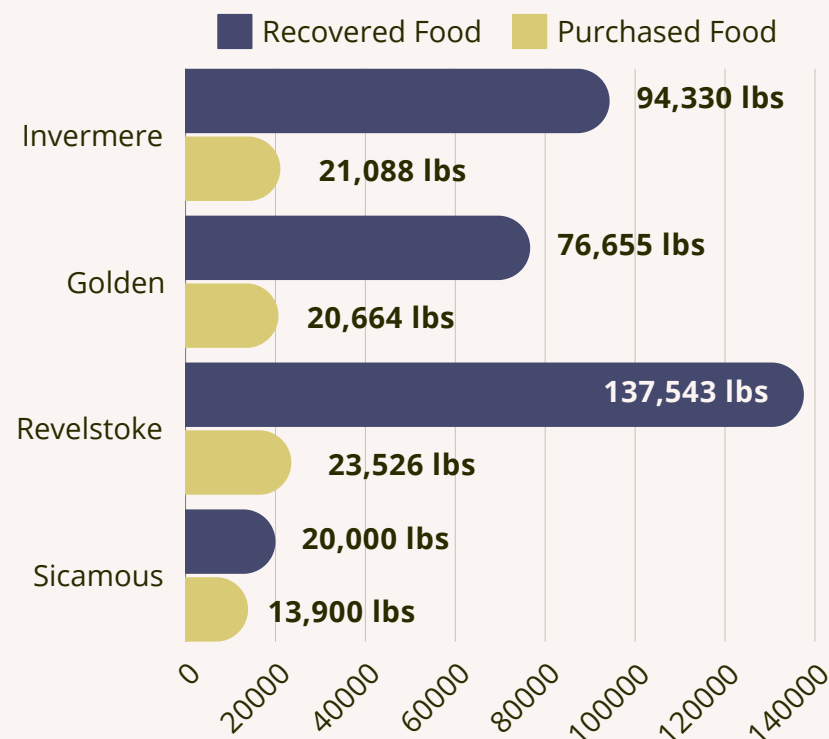
In general, rural food banks still have much smaller budgets compared to their larger counterparts in 2023. For reasons requiring more investigation, Calgary Food Bank's total budget in 2023 is more in line with Vancouver so the order of magnitude difference is somewhat smaller than the 2022 revenue numbers.

For the four rural food banks, budgets overall are marginally higher with the exception of Sicamous and Invermere, who have decreased slightly. Further analysis is required to determine the reasons for this decrease.

Food Banks Data Comparison



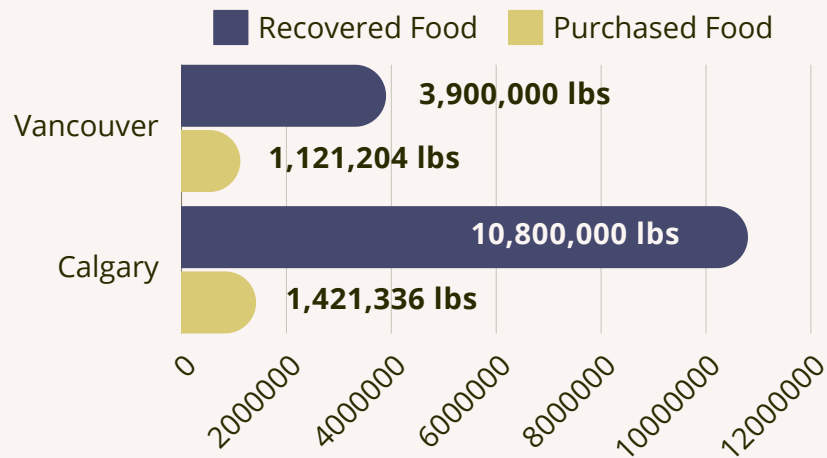
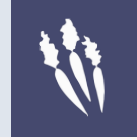
2022 Food Recovery: Rural Food Banks



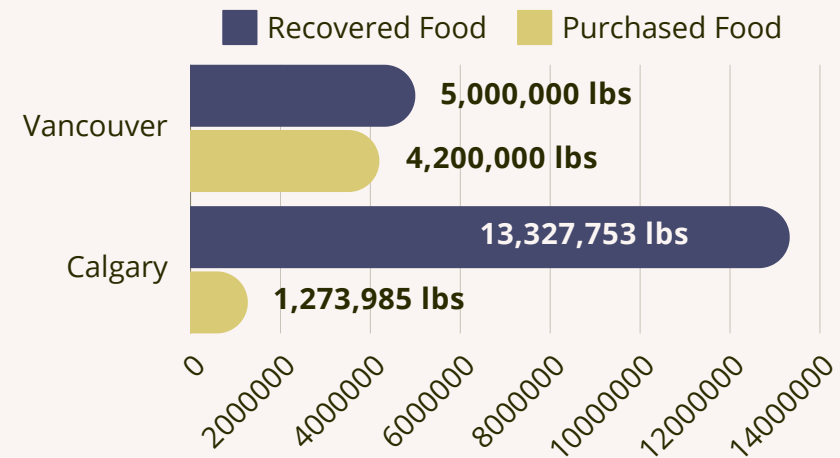
2023 Food Recovery: Rural Food Banks

Notable changes between 2022 and 2023 include Sicamous's loss of AG Valley Foods recovery, significantly dropping their recovered food and requiring increased food purchases. Revelstoke recovered more food than in 2022, and purchased less. Golden has a similar ratio though both recovered and purchased food increased in quantity. Invermere's 2022 data only included a few months of food recovery due to their program just starting. 2023 reflects a robust food recovery program, though methods for accurate weighing are still under development so there may be some inaccuracy in the estimated total amount of food recovered.

Food Banks Data Comparison



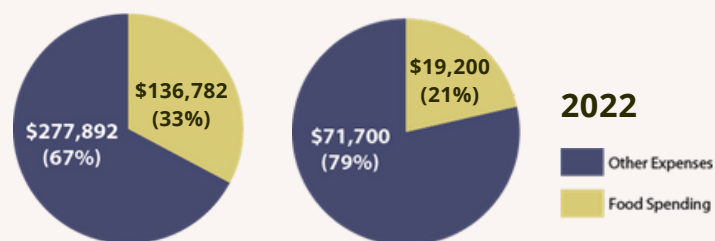
2022 Food Recovery: Urban Food Banks



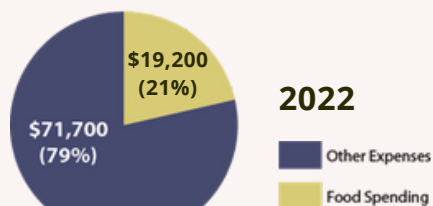
2023 Food Recovery: Urban Food Banks

For the urban food banks, Vancouver increased both purchased and recovered food, but the amount was much closer to equivalent in 2023 compared to 2022 (conflicting data sources for this one - I took the higher value). Calgary marginally increased food recovery and saw a decrease in purchased food.

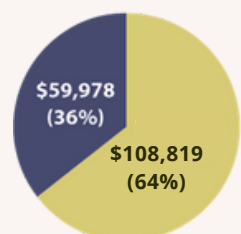
Food Banks Data Comparison



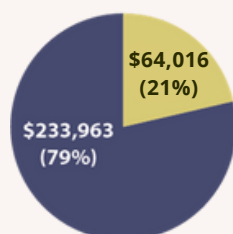
Revelstoke Food Spending



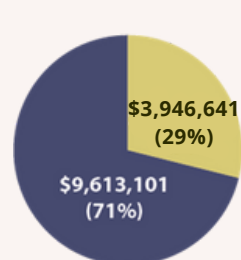
Sicamous Food Spending



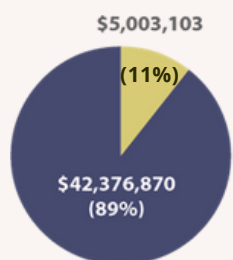
Invermere Food Spending



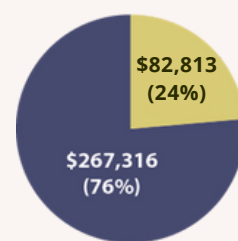
Golden Food Spending



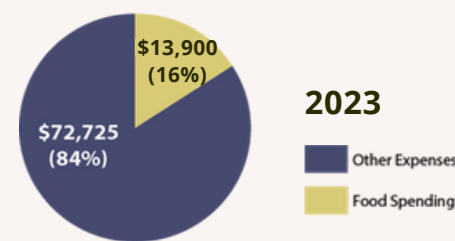
Vancouver Food Spending



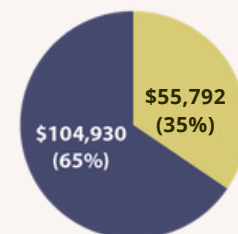
Calgary Food Spending



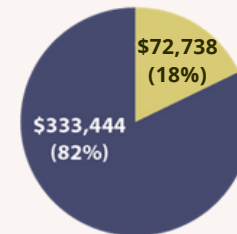
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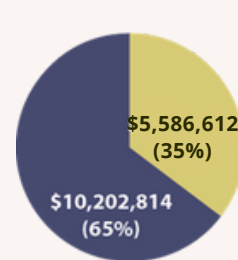
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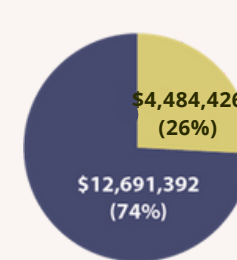
Invermere Food Spending



Golden Food Spending



Vancouver Food Spending

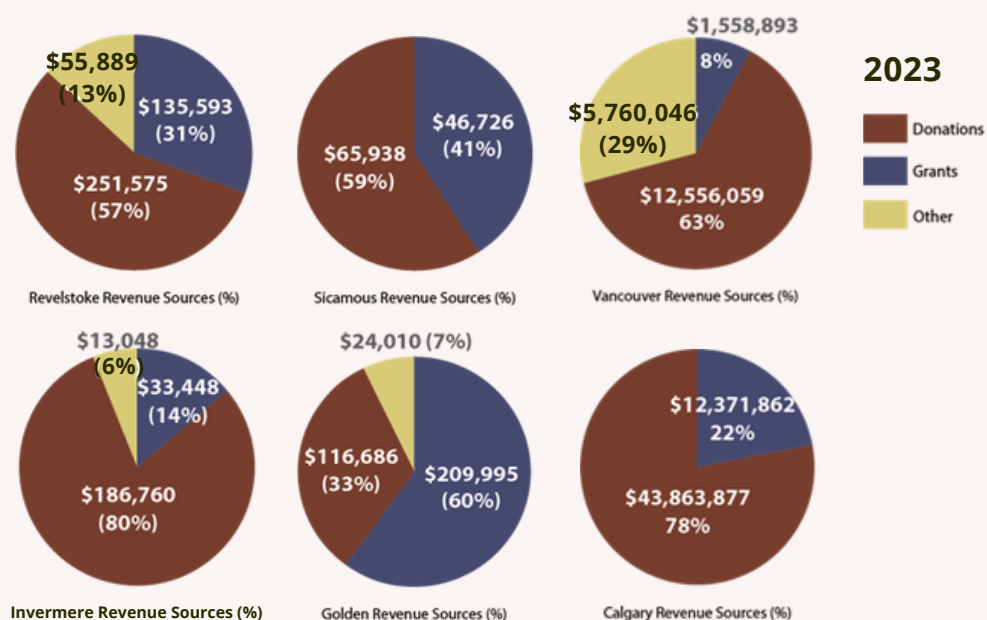
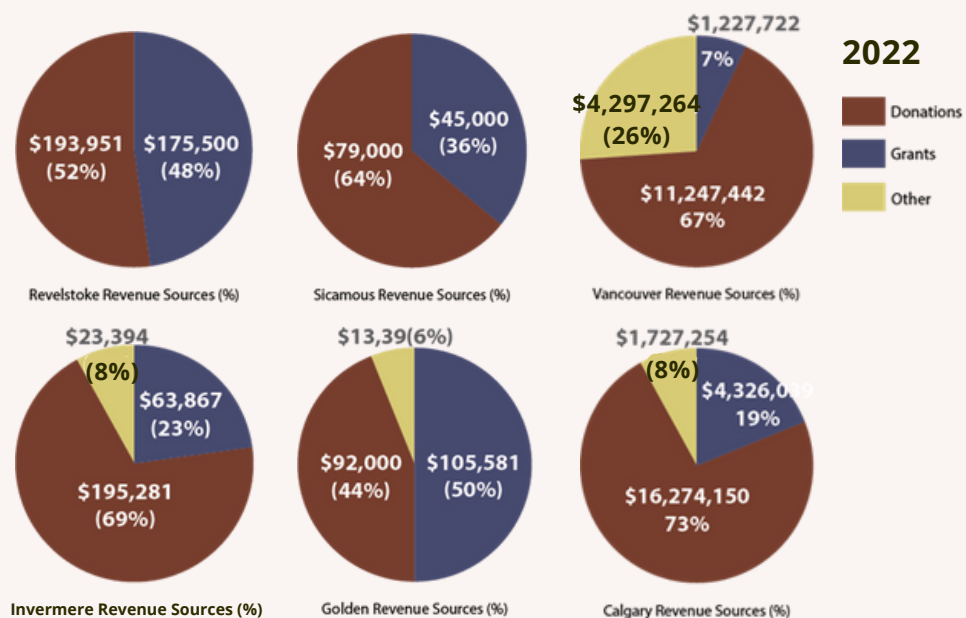


Calgary Food Spending

In general, the rural food banks slightly decreased the % of their overall expenses that went to food in 2023. The urban food banks noted the reverse trend, increasing the % of their expenses that went to food spending. Invermere, with its newly established food recovery program, reduced its food spending to 35% of its annual expenses (though this is still more than other food banks).

Note: Purchased food data does not include donated food (or donated gift cards to stores), or food spending on other social programs, as this data is tracked differently between food banks. As a result, total spending may be smaller here than what individual food banks experience.

Food Banks Data Comparison



Revelstoke and Calgary have added diversification of revenue in 2023. Revelstoke has reduced its dependence on grants (from 48 to 31%) and has a much higher proportion of donations. Golden has seen the opposite trend, now 60% reliant on grant funding (up from 50% in 2022). This will have implications in terms of the amount of discretionary funding available to them. Invermere has increased its percentage of donations, even as the total budget has lessened. Sicamous has seen a slight drop in donations but has generally stayed consistent.

On the urban side, the Vancouver picture is much the same as 2022, but Calgary has added other revenue and seen a slight reduction in both grants and donation percentages as a result. The urban-rural comparison remains in terms of greater percentages of donation revenue as compared to our four rural food banks, and particularly compared to Golden.

For Further Information, Connect With Us.



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