



Ottawa Food Bank



Ottawa Food Bank Network

Co-Design of Shared Values, Roles & Roadmap
For the Next 5 Years

SEPTEMBER 2021



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Background

The Ottawa Food Bank consists of a network of 26 Community Food Banks and 112 member agencies who work together to address food insecurity. The network has demonstrated, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, that member agencies have significant strengths and an ability to adapt and collaborate to effectively meet the needs of the community.

There are also some identifiable differences in how Community Food Banks are operating and the resources available to them, resulting in inequitable service delivery across Ottawa. The Ottawa Food Bank is committed to improving the capacity of the network to deliver services equitably across the city so that together we can:

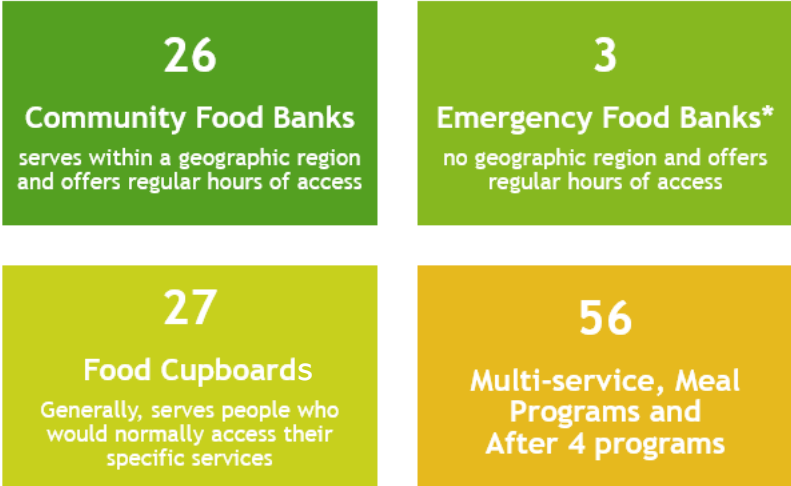
- Improve the overall well-being of people accessing food banks.
- Provide a more equitable and dignified experience at all access points.
- Be more accountable to food bank visitors, participating agencies, and donors/funders.

To do this, the Ottawa Food Bank has created a network development plan that includes three phases:

1. **A Member Asset Inventory** (completed December 2020)
2. **A Community Co-design** process which includes the voices of:
 - People with Lived experience of food insecurity and accessing food banks
 - Ottawa Food Bank member agencies – Community and Emergency Food Banks
 - Community stakeholders (including other Ottawa Food Bank member agencies, the City of Ottawa, members of the Human Needs Task Force, and other food security organizations)
3. **A Capacity-Building Phase** which will look at implementing the results of the Community Co-Design and improving the capacity of the Ottawa Food Bank network to provide equitable services and supports across the City of Ottawa.

This summary report includes the outputs from Phase 2: The Community Co-design.

OTTAWA FOOD BANK NETWORK AGENCY CATEGORIES



**Recently designated by the Ottawa Food Bank for the purpose of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Thank you to all who have participated in this Co-Design process

THE ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS EXPERT STEERING TEAM

This team brings their lived experience, strengths, expertise and skills to the sector in order to prevent reduce and end homelessness.

COMMUNITY AND EMERGENCY FOOD BANKS

Banff Avenue Community House
Blair Court Community House
Caldwell Family Centre
Care Centre Ottawa Emergency Food Bank
Centretown Emergency Food Centre
Community Compassion Centre
Confederation Court Community House
Dalhousie Food Cupboard
Debra Dynes Family House
Foster Farm Community House
Gloucester Emergency Food Cupboard
Heron Emergency Food Cupboard
Life Centre Food Bank
Lowertown Community House
Orleans-Cumberland Food Bank
Ottawa Booth Centre- Emergency Food Bank
Parkdale Food Centre
Partage Vanier
Pavilion Food Bank
Morrison Gardens Community House
Pinecrest Terrace Community House
Rideau Rockcliffe Food Bank
Sadaqa Emergency Food Bank
Salvation Army-Booth Centre
Westboro Regional Food Bank

Special thanks to Benita Arora, Gail Gallagher, Sean LeBlanc, Sophia Kelly-Langer, and Suzanne Gregoire for their contributions

IMPORTANT STAKEHOLDERS

Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa
Basic Income Canada Network Advisory
Bruce House
Carlington Community Health Centre
Causeway Work Centre
City of Ottawa
Community Food Centres Canada
Elizabeth Wynn Wood Alternate Program (Ottawa Carleton District School Board)
Food Banks Canada
Food for Thought Cafe
Just Food
Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security
Nutrition Blocs
Office of City of Ottawa Councillor Keith Egli
Office of City of Ottawa Councillor Mathieu Fleury
Ottawa Cares
Ottawa Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres
Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses
Ottawa Community Foundation
Ottawa Community Housing
Ottawa Food Bank Staff and Board Members
Ottawa Inncity Ministries
Ottawa Neighbourhood Study
Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre
Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre
Salvation Army - Bethany Hope Centre
Sandy Hill Community Health Centre
Social Planning Council of Ottawa
Somerset West Community Health Centre
South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre
United Way East Ontario
Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre

This Co-Design process was hosted by the Ottawa Food Bank and facilitated by the Tamarack Institute. This report was created by the Tamarack Institute based on contributions from the sessions.

Overview of the Community Co-Design

The co-design process was convened from June-July 2021 and included representatives from 24 Community and Emergency Food Banks, 8 members of the Expert Steering Team who bring lived experience of food insecurity, and 59 community stakeholders.

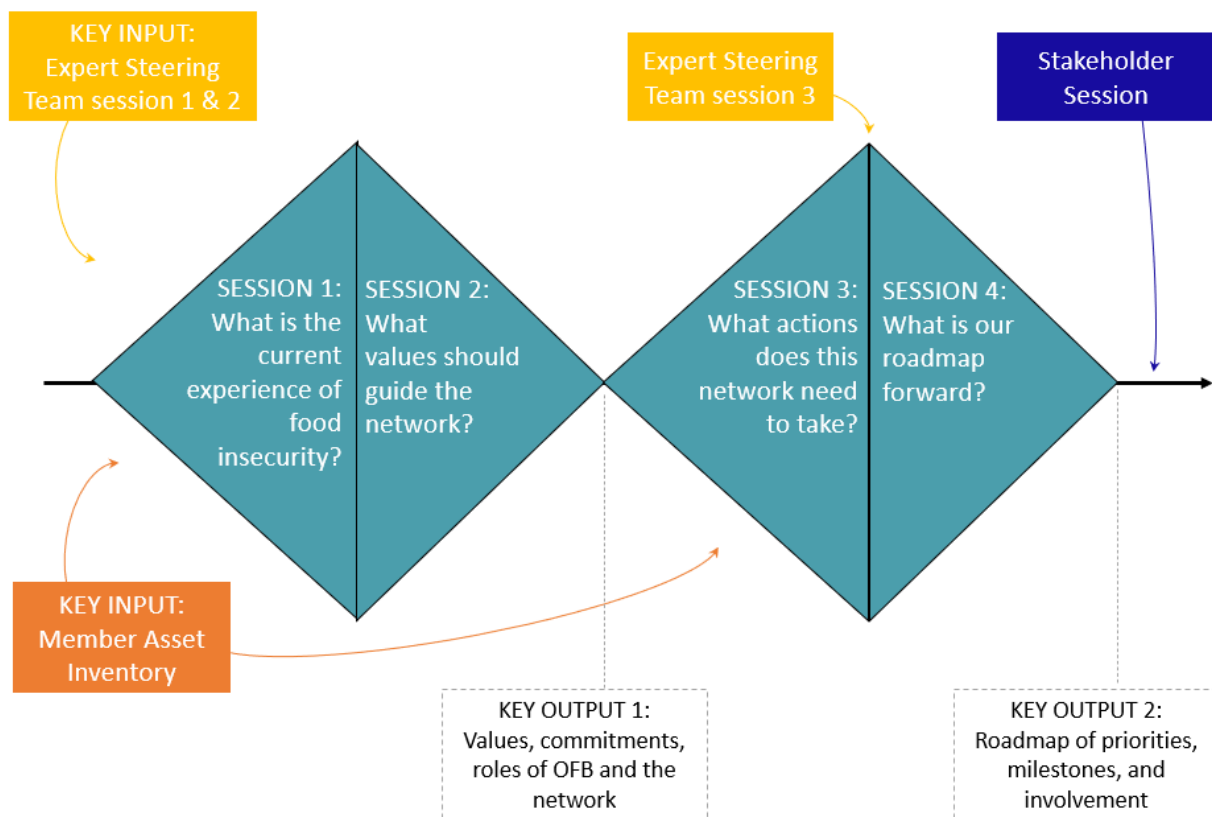
The design question central to all conversations was: **How can the Ottawa Food Bank and the Community and Emergency Food Banks work better together to address food insecurity over the next 5-10 years?**

The goals of the co-design were to:

- Align and build equity between the food banks by developing shared values.
- Develop clear roles for the Ottawa Food Bank and the network.
- Create a roadmap and prioritize action items which need to be built upon over the next 3-5 years.

Sessions were facilitated by the Tamarack Institute and hosted virtually on the Zoom platform together with a virtual whiteboard platform—Mural—for visual collaboration.

Co-Design process overview:



Current Experiences with Community Food Banks

KEY INPUT | EXPERT STEERING TEAM

This co-design process began by learning from the Expert Steering Team—a group convened by the Alliance to End Homelessness and made up of 8 community leaders with lived and living experience of food insecurity, who work together to bring their knowledge, strengths, and skills to inform policy and process development.

Through group discussion, the Expert Steering Team shared about their experiences and hopes for the future: How are Ottawa’s food banks responding to food insecurity? What’s working? What are the gaps? When you think of people who face food insecurity now or in the future, what are your hopes for how things could be improved? How can the network of food banks best support people who are experiencing food insecurity? How might we “better the system”?

These discussions were held in the spirit of a brainstorm to inform the Co-Design. In a follow up session, we discussed how people with lived and living experiences of food insecurity should be meaningfully engaged by the network as this work advances.

The following is a summary of their collective responses:

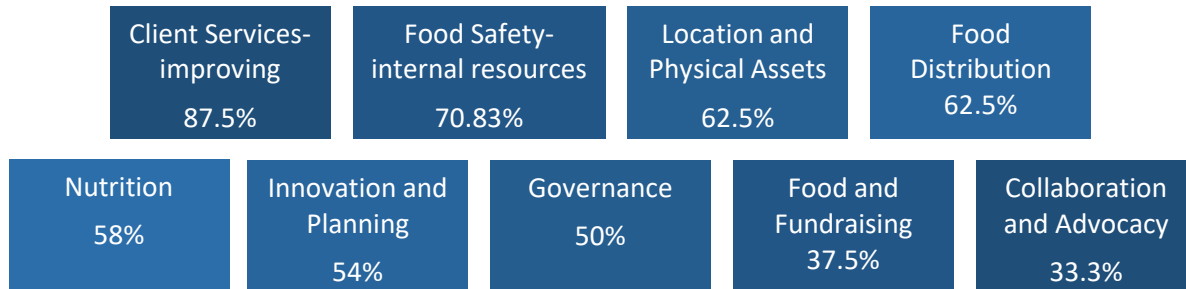
CURRENT STATE	DESIRED STATE
<p>Issues with locations / distribution of food banks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fresher food products, well-resourced food banks with quality options are not located in the most food insecure areas. • In some neighborhoods, food banks cannot meet all the local needs. • Catchment areas restrict people from getting all the food they need. 	<p>Equitable geographic distribution of quality food banks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food quantity and quality adapted to local needs • Better distribution of food banks across neighbourhoods • Minimum standards for all food banks across the network • No catchment areas to meet needs
<p>There is a mismatch between what is offered and the local needs in specific areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some food banks don’t offer choices; need to provide more healthy options. • There are discrepancies between food banks. • There is a need to meet specific dietary needs and to access culturally appropriate foods. • Food sovereignty of Indigenous people and the right to have access to sustainable food are threatened in urban areas. Special attention needs to be paid to women. 	<p>Service provision based on local needs assessment, choice models, and considering specific needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The choice model seen as important and more dignified • Equal opportunities for all city wide • Similar standards of quality and control applied • Fresh food always as an option regardless of district • Individual or family specific needs taken into account (dietary needs and health conditions, culturally appropriate foods) • An Indigenous perspective included into food practices

<p>Barriers to access food banks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing food banks via public transportation can be challenging. • Delivery options are only available in certain neighborhoods. • Barriers exist that limit food bank use (hours of operation, accessibility, queuing, confidentiality) 	<p>Equitable access to food banks and delivery options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity and location are important • Equal opportunities for delivery options • Universal accessibility / flexible hours of operations • Appointment system and privacy are appreciated
<p>Charitable mindset & lack of inclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and volunteers mostly plan and structure the services; people with living or lived experience could contribute. • There is a disconnect between the people who give and those who receive (e.g., charitable). • Food banks' staff and volunteers are not representative of all diversities (e.g., faith-based food banks). • Recording mechanisms do not always feel safe. • Special attention needs to be paid to women. 	<p>Increased social inclusion and representation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve diverse people in meaningful ways • Staff and volunteers should be representative of the community they serve • Feeling safe and included • Having clear reporting mechanisms if a situation arises
<p>Gaps in information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People mostly hear of food banks by word of mouth; some people don't know where to go for help (e.g., youth). • Food banks seem to work in silos; need for support at the point of access. • The onus is felt to be on the person accessing services to know what's available. 	<p>Raising awareness and communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maps with locations, postings, social media, etc. to raise awareness (including youth) • Clarity of information on what services are offered • Regular communication between food banks • Local coordinator knowledgeable of alternatives
<p>Supports seem disconnected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems are related (e.g., food insecurity and homelessness) but services are not connected and streamlined. There is a need for a more holistic approach. • When food banks are embedded in a Community Resource Centre or when support services are available, support goes beyond just food. • Indigenous population's needs are not being met across the city in culturally appropriate ways. • In faith-based food banks, there is the perception of judgment on behaviors that might not fit the beliefs (e.g., sex workers) • The root causes of food insecurity are not addressed by food banks. 	<p>Become a referral network and develop more diversified partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food banks play a role in social inclusion: providing help to navigate other local support resources is important. • Someone dedicated to support and referrals • "No need to be an expert, just making the right connections" • Partnerships with a network of resources, including Indigenous centers • Identical list for referral across all food banks • Get involved in poverty advocacy work: food bank use is a consequence of poverty.
<p>Limited options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not everyone has access to facilities to cook and store food (e.g., fridges, freezers, stoves). • Not enough access to meal programs. • Little access to fresh food. • Not everyone has the ability to cook healthy food. 	<p>Secure alternatives to food bank products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meal programs / prepared food options • Grocery gift cards as a supplement • Partnering with local gardens, farmers and fresh fruit and veggie trucks • Partnering with community kitchens





KEY INPUT | MEMBER ASSET INVENTORY

The Co-Design was also grounded in a Member Asset Inventory, which sought to understand the current state of each Community and Emergency Food Banks' capacity, where the strengths and challenges lie in the network, hear agency priorities and needs, and what role the network wants the Ottawa Food Bank to play in developing capacity. For context, the Member Asset Inventory was completed between March-September 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.





AREAS OF IMPORTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL AGENCIES IN FUTURE PLANNING



STRENGTHS OF COMMUNITY FOOD BANKS

-  Common mission to serve the community
-  Openness to change and increasing capacity if required
-  Creativity and resiliency with limited resources
-  Capacity to leverage a city-wide approach and recognizable network to meet needs

CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY FOOD BANKS






-  Concerns about the effectiveness of food banks (chronic use)
-  Concerns about the existing catchment system
-  Need for clarity in roles
-  Variability of agency resources and equity in service delivery models

Based on these current experiences of being food insecure and responding to food insecurity, Community and Emergency Food Bank members co-designed the following:

1. Values, Actions, and Principles (page 9)
2. Roles and Responsibilities (pages 10-14)
3. Areas of Collaboration (pages 15-23)

Network Values

OTTAWA FOOD BANK NETWORK | OUR SHARED VALUES

 <p>Equitable</p> <p>We seek to provide healthy and nutritious food in a way that is dignified, culturally appropriate, and empowers those who access food banks.</p>	 <p>Accessible</p> <p>We are committed and want to be as accommodating as possible. This means providing ease of service and reducing barriers.</p>	 <p>Collaborative</p> <p>We want experiences at food banks to be unified, united, and aligned. To do this we need to communicate well and we need to work together.</p>	 <p>Responsive</p> <p>We want to understand the needs of food bank users and adapt our supports in response. We want to be known as flexible, innovative, and action oriented.</p>	 <p>Holistic</p> <p>We want to use a system-lens, look to the social determinants of health, and be a resource for transformation.</p>
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To live out these values we strive to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide nutritious & healthy food respectful of cultural & religious diets • Offer choice as much as possible • Provide sufficient amounts of food • Consider alternatives to meet needs (e.g. gift cards) • Define a set of standards for client service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore solutions to make sites geographically and physically accessible • Offer privacy & ease to clients (e.g., appointments - reduce waiting lines, hours of operation) • Ensure safety for staff and clients • Upgrade physical assets and facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work together to understand and support clients' needs • Increase communication and collaboration between food banks • Redesign the catchment system • Balance consistency and alignment with autonomy of agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the needs of people accessing food banks through needs assessments • Provide orientation and training to staff and volunteers • Increase representation of the community served in staff and volunteers • Secure funding to respond to challenges and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a front door to access other supports and services • Collaborate with organizations, government, and businesses • Engage in advocacy work (e.g. poverty, root-causes of food insecurity)
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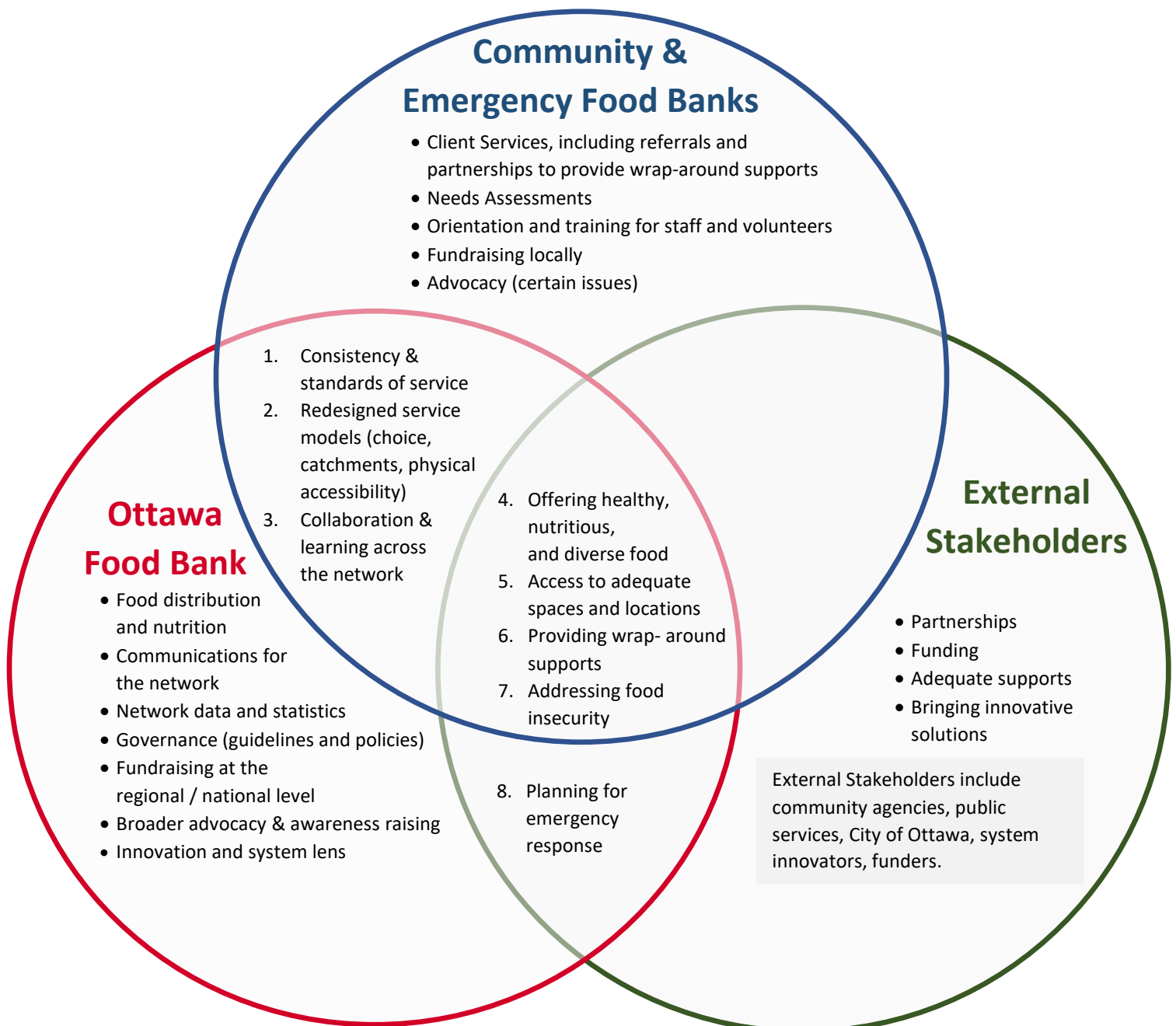
To be successful we know we need to:

- Work collaboratively – for agencies and Ottawa Food Bank to provide each other with input, insights, ideas, and share resources
- Ensure our work is centered on lived experience from people and agencies
- Seek the balance between shared standards and autonomy of agencies
- Leverage the strengths of being a network
- Involve relevant external stakeholders to share the responsibilities
- Encourage innovative problem-solving and to “think out of the box”

Roles & Responsibilities

To develop clear roles for Ottawa Food Bank and Community and Emergency Food Banks, the Co-Design Team was asked: How do we live out these shared values? Who is responsible for each action? What should our respective roles and responsibilities be? An Asset Based Community Development process was used by asking – what can we do for ourselves, what do we need support with, and what do we need someone else to lead?

The following is an overview of the suggested areas of responsibility with detail on the following pages:



COMMUNITY & EMERGENCY FOOD BANKS: SUGGESTED AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Through group discussion, the Co-Design Team suggested the following key areas of responsibility for Community and Emergency Food Banks. These roles, expectations, and supports will be finalized through the process of updating the Mutual Support.

1) Client Services

- Offer front-line services to support clients
- Improve services on an ongoing basis (e.g. flexible hours of operation)
- Problem-solve around specific issues (e.g. wheelchair accessibility = delivery)
- Build trust and relationships with clients and community, creating meaningful opportunities for engagement
- Be front-door access for services and referrals (to partner agencies or other resources)

2) Needs assessments

- Use assessment tools and templates provided by Ottawa Food Bank to assess needs
- Share findings and insights from needs assessment with Ottawa Food Bank
- Voice challenges and opportunities to Ottawa Food Bank

3) Orientation and training for staff and volunteers

- Ensure consistency of services and approaches
- Increase representation of the community served in staff and volunteers

4) Fundraising locally

- Reach out to local community to build relationships and fundraise

5) Contribute to advocacy towards:

- Basic income
- Physical accessibility
- External partnerships and relationship-building with officials

Supports members would like from Ottawa Food Bank to be successful:

- Sharing knowledge, lessons learned, tools, templates.
- Help reduce competition for funding and resources
- Funding for needs assessments; grants; support with grant writing.
- Commitment to staffing to increase our capacity to meet these needs.
- Free training
- Sharing unused food / supplies
- Utilize our community resources for wrap around approach
- Assessment tools templates.

OTTAWA FOOD BANK: SUGGESTED AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Through group discussion, the Co-Design Team suggested the following key areas of responsibility for the Ottawa Food Bank. These roles, expectations, and supports will be finalized through the process of updating the Mutual Support Agreement.

1) Food distribution and nutrition

- Provide healthy and nutritious food for all agencies (including culturally appropriate food, food for special dietary needs and actions uncovered through the Member Asset Inventory)
- Develop partnerships to ensure fresh, healthy, and varied foods are available
- Ensure consistency of food provided across the network
- Ensure quality control before delivery (e.g., expiry)
- Establish clear communication channels with Food Banks Canada (e.g., member agencies interact directly via Workplace)

2) Fundraising and resources

- Increase funds donated (e.g., support “outside of food” hub models in the community, expanding services, etc.)
- Provide grants to agencies (e.g., to improve infrastructure like cold storage; implement changes required on accessibility, etc.)
- Ensure equitable distribution of resources across the network according to needs
- Help centralize solutions and access to professional services (e.g., software for ordering and appointments; support with Link2Feed; accounting; legal services; human resources, legislation from CRA, etc.)

3) Advocacy and awareness-raising

- Lead broader scope non-partisan advocacy, with the lived experience knowledge at the center and representing the collective experience of the network.
- Advocate for support from external stakeholders on accessibility.
- Advocate with the City of Ottawa for recognition of food banks as essential services and support them accordingly.
- Build relationships at the higher level outside the network and with elected officials to ensure food banks have a seat in key strategic conversations.
- Educate the community on food insecurity and help tell the story (e.g., needs, root causes, interrelated issues, etc.)
- Revisit branding for the network (e.g., food bank terminology)

4) Governance

Provide guidelines, policies, set of standards or procedures on:

- Consistency of services; alignment and equity in service model (e.g. paid staff)
- Accessibility (e.g., conduct accessibility reviews and recommendations to leverage change and obtain support)
- Update the Member Service Agreement
- Crisis response: emergency response plan, safety procedures, communication standards, link with Ontario Public Health during COVID, etc.)
- Templates and surveys; client complaints process

5) Collaboration and learning across the network

- Create opportunities for connection among agencies; agencies willing to share learnings, skills and even resources
- Facilitate knowledge sharing, peer support or mentorship
- Offer certain “central” training for staff and /or volunteers (e.g., the integrity of data and privacy, wrap-around services, choice model, AODA, diversity, etc.)

6) Innovation and System lens

- Link with broader and global issues
- Provide a system lens and deal with system issues
- “Think outside the box”

AREAS OF SHARED RESPONSIBILITY & COLLABORATION

The following are suggested areas of shared responsibility, whereby Community and Emergency Food Banks, Ottawa Food Bank, and External Stakeholders would collaborate to define goals, share resources, and work together to implement solutions and improvements. For each area, leadership and involvement will be determined by members and stakeholders based on their capacity and interest. It is suggested that these areas of shared responsibility and collaboration are finalized and an approach for working together is defined at the annual convening in October 2021.

1) Ensuring consistency & standards of service

- Collaboration between Food Banks and Ottawa Food Bank. Ottawa Food Bank to share best practices; Define minimum standards of service together; Ottawa Food Bank to support capacity building; Food Banks to ensure consistency and standards of service.

2) Redesigned service models (increasing choice, re-imagining catchments, reducing accessibility barriers)

- Collaboration between Food Banks and Ottawa Food Bank

3) Collaboration & learning across the network

- Ottawa Food Bank to take on more leadership in convening and setting up collaboration and communication structures and processes in consultation with the network.

4) Healthy, nutritious, and diverse food distribution

- Ottawa Food Bank to lead; Food Banks to provide key inputs on purchasing plans for food, determining amount of food provided, and communicating the needs of clients, agencies, and communities; Partner with external stakeholders to ensure fresh, healthy, and varied foods and alternatives are available.

5) Access to adequate spaces and locations

- Collaboration between Food Banks, Ottawa Food Bank, and External Stakeholders

Continued...

6) Providing wrap-around supports

- Collaboration between Food Banks, Ottawa Food Bank, and External Stakeholders

7) Addressing food insecurity

- Collaboration between Food Banks, Ottawa Food Bank, and External Stakeholders. Ottawa Food Bank to take on more leadership.

8) Planning for emergency response

- Collaboration between Ottawa Food Bank and External Stakeholders

Through this collaborative work, it will be the responsibility of working groups to engage or involve the necessary voices of lived and living experience, agencies, and other relevant stakeholders. An initial brainstorm about the preferred approaches to these areas of shared responsibility and collaboration follows on pages 15-23.

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO SUPPORT IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

The Co-Design Team suggested that support is needed from other stakeholders as follows:

Community agencies and public services:

- Offer direct support to increase wrap around services (e.g., Ottawa Community Housing on housing issues; community health workers)
- Provide referrals and on-site system navigation
- Offer training to staff and volunteers on other resources
- Support from 211 - directory of resources for referrals
- Partner with other food and delivery charities to complement services
- Make alliances with other collectives to help advocate with the network

City of Ottawa:

- Play a role in referral to other community resources and City resources
- Support to improve geographical and physical accessibility (involve Ottawa Community Housing and other non -profit housing providers)
- Set and meet the standards for City-run facilities and City-funded organizations
- Intentionally plan for food access (e.g., food deserts and location of food banks, support for “15 minutes walkable access to food in community plans”, etc.).
- Recognize food banks as essential services and provide support and resources accordingly
- Leverage food banks infrastructure during emergency response

System innovators and businesses:

- Help the network “think outside the box”
- Apply system innovation for citywide community resources, design, creating synergy, etc.
- Facilitate tech solutions (e.g., delivery)

Funders:

- Understand and support the needs of more than just food

Areas of Shared Responsibility & Collaboration

The Co-Design Team explored key areas of shared responsibility and collaboration to share ideas, dream of what could be possible, and begin to articulate what might be needed to address challenges and work together to make it happen.

During the Stakeholder Session, those who attended built upon the ideas of the member food banks by responding to the questions: What are you working on that the network should be aware of? How can we join up resources, align programming, seek policy change? What are the opportunities to innovate?

Creating the structures to enable Food Banks, Ottawa Food Bank, and Stakeholders to work together will be an important first step to advance the network's priorities. The Team noted that all areas are highly interconnected with a lot of interdependencies. It is suggested that Ottawa Food Bank convenes working groups for each of the key areas of collaboration with member agencies and stakeholders based on their desired level of involvement:

- Core team – responsible for leadership and planning
- Partner – stakeholders who would like to collaborate/partner on a component of the work
- Involved – contribute to ideas, provide feedback
- Informed – not able to contribute deeply but want to be kept informed

Working groups should use consensus-based decision-making and involve meaningful contribution from people with lived experience of food insecurity.

The following is a short summary of each area of shared responsibility and collaboration. Detailed notes from the Co-Design sessions will be brought forward to those who are collaborating to build from as they develop their workplans.





1) APPLYING CONSISTENCY & STANDARDS OF SERVICE

Why this is important

Equity and minimum standards across food banks are important to people accessing food banks. Agencies voiced concerns about the variability of agency resources across the network and equity in service delivery models. Our discussions highlighted the importance of having a balance between shared standards across the networks and the autonomy of agencies to respond to local differences.

The outcomes we seek:

- A set of standards for client service is defined (e.g. paid staffing). The service approach among staff and volunteers is consistent. Staff and volunteers are offered orientation and training.
- Guidelines are provided for development of policies and processes that are client / community centered.
- Service delivery models are consistent and equitable.
- Inequity between agencies is being addressed.
- Consistency and alignment are well-balanced with autonomy of agencies.

Considerations for how we approach this work:

- Standards need to be high bar – We need to work with member agencies to figure out how to get everyone to that level.
- We can do this by having a better understanding of existing assets and gaps across the network (i.e. from the member asset inventory). We can then build the capacity of individual agencies based on existing resources, capacity, and demand to meet most basic equitable standards.
- Our work should include ensuring adequately staffed food banks, having a dedicated coordinator at each food bank, and having standards for onboarding, training, and volunteer management. A Mutual Support Agreement with Ottawa Food Bank can be a tool to uphold standards and ensure expectations
- Partnerships could help with consistency in areas that may be an ongoing challenge (e.g. unloading the truck, offering varied hours of service [community fridges, etc.]

Recommendations for how we collaborate:

- This work should be done in close collaboration between Ottawa Food Bank and member agencies. A working group should explore best practices and standards in depth and work with the network to prioritize. Ottawa Food Bank should support agencies to ensure constant evolution and improvement.

2) RE-DESIGNED SERVICE MODELS (CHOICE, CATCHMENTS, REDUCING BARRIERS)

Why this is important

The choice model is seen by people accessing food banks as more suited to different needs, healthier and more dignified. The Member Asset Inventory shows that 100% of agencies offer at least limited choice and 40% are operating a grocery style or shopping model (pre-covid). Our discussions raised the need to consider different agencies' circumstances.

People accessing food banks shared that catchments limit their ability to meet all their food needs. Among the network's challenges, concerns were raised about the existing catchment system. 88% of agencies are providing flexibility to those who live outside their catchment. Our discussions raised issues about accessibility, feasibility, planning, etc. when revisiting the catchment system.

Our discussions brought about the multiple dimensions of accessibility including geographical, physical, mental health, service hours, language,

The outcomes we seek:

- Choice is expanded.
- Consistency/equity in service delivery model is offered and inequity between agencies is being addressed.
- The catchment system is redesigned.
- Staff and people accessing food banks feel safe.
- Privacy & ease to clients is offered (e.g. appointments, reduce waiting lines, hours of operation).
- Availability of services is expanded (eg. delivery options).
- Support is offered to meet immediate needs.
- Language barriers are overcome.

“Just the word catchment is unfit because it implies that there are inequities”

– Expert Steering Team

Considerations for how we approach this work:

- Work more as a unified network – Remove the stigma and barrier attached to catchment.
- Should offer different choice models for different agencies based on space and resources. Choice models could include – Online ordering; Shopping cart model; Appointment model to allow for more choice and privacy; Gift cards; Token system/checkout. Choice model is possible even in a small space.
- Reduce accessibility barriers – Ensure appropriate signage is visible and inclusive; Increase weekend and evening hours, Have a coordinator within all agencies.
- Communicate shared values and principles to change public perception – movement from service mindset to dignity mindset. Consider a name change – does Food Bank really promote what we are and what we provide?
- Use a data-driven approach to understand current situation (data from Link2Feed), what level of support is required, and what adjustments are needed.

Recommendations for how we collaborate:

- Ottawa Food Bank to provide leadership and work in close collaboration with all members. Start by engaging early on (focus group) to understand needs.



3) NETWORK COLLABORATION & LEARNING

Why this is important

Our discussions showed the need to create more opportunities for connection among agencies (knowledge sharing, peer support or mentorship) and the willingness of agencies to share learnings, skills, and even resources.

Agencies identified as a strength their capacity to leverage a city-wide approach and recognizable network to meet needs.

The outcomes we seek:

- Communication is increased between food banks.
- Knowledge is shared across the network.
- The needs of people accessing food banks are understood by working together (e.g. through use of Link2feed).
- More opportunities are created to network together/build relationships.

“Supports feel stuck at the point of access”

– Expert Steering Team

Considerations for how we approach this work:

- Sharing best practices and things that are working well (service models, distribution, health and safety, volunteer management/recruitment, etc.)
- Experiential learning – More experienced coordinators mentoring new coordinators. Opportunities for coordinators to volunteer at other organizations (food bank or other types of programs) to learn hands-on different ways of doing things. Open house opportunities to visit other food banks.
- Needs assessment (eg Member Asset Inventory) should be done regularly as circumstances evolve in food banks. Training, grants, etc. should be included in the needs assessment (covering operations and information).

Recommendations for how we collaborate:

- Ottawa Food Bank should lead as the backbone – gathering the network and facilitating learning and sharing. Agencies don't have the capacity.
- Setting up a network table which reflects a collaborative approach (possibly rotating roles etc).
- Developing subcommittees which will take on pieces of work related to the co-design workplan
- Shift role of the regional meetings to focus on these areas of collaboration and do some of the work outlined in this Co-Design.



4) HEALTHY & NUTRITIOUS FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Why this is important

People who access food banks expressed the need for fresh and nutritious food, and access to diverse foods, regardless of geography.

The majority of agencies identified challenges providing and meeting specific health, cultural and religious food needs on a consistent basis and 72% run out of “staple” fresh items on a regular basis.

Our discussions raised the importance of collaboration between agencies and Ottawa Food Bank to provide healthy and nutritious food, determining the amount of food provided and prioritizing the needs of people and communities.

The outcomes we seek:

- All people accessing food banks have nutritious and healthy food.
- Agencies can provide a sufficient amount of food (e.g. per day, per member of household).
- Food is available for health, cultural, and religious diets.
- People who don't have access to kitchens are supported.

“Teaching how to cook won't always solve it”

– Expert Steering Team

Considerations for how we approach this work:

- Find ways to ensure that people have access to the kinds of food that they want and can use across the network.
- Expand access to culturally relevant foods – leverage shared purchasing power, longer-term grants.
- Consider alternatives to meet needs (e.g. gift cards). Consider models such as coop, non-profit grocery stores, and social enterprise to make food accessible, sustainable, and dignified.
- Increase partnerships to grow healthy food in neighbourhoods – community gardens, greenhouses, front yards, urban farming partnerships, edible forests, etc.
- Participate in efforts to divert food waste at different levels.
- Intentionally plan for food access at the City level – Where are there food deserts? What is available in grocery stores – availability of healthy foods; staple foods; costs etc.? Align with Ottawa Public Health's “City Wide Healthy Goals” (once established).
- Explore ways to bring healthy food to people – mobile food trucks and markets, pop-ups at seniors buildings, on-site chefs to support prepared and shared meals, meal kits with recipes, etc.
- Increase food literacy – provide resources in multiple languages.
- Continue to work on Ottawa Food Strategy towards policy change. Need a shared philosophy recognizing that food is a human right and that this is not just an emergency response. Establish a healthy food policy which can help guide donors in terms of what is needed.

Recommendations for how we collaborate:

- Ottawa Food Bank should lead efforts to ensure healthy and nutritious food distribution (see page 12). Work to improve processes should be done in close collaboration between Ottawa Food Bank, agencies, stakeholders, and people with lived and living experience of food insecurity.



5) ACCESS TO ADEQUATE SPACES & LOCATIONS

Why this is important

Proximity and location are important to people accessing food banks.

Agencies raised numerous challenges related to their current space, 64% of food banks are not located in spaces that are fully physically accessible.

This is a significant challenge and will require capital funding, longer-term vision and leadership from Ottawa Food Bank, and for external stakeholders need to be involved in this issue.

The outcomes we seek:

- Strategies are implemented to make sites geographically and physically accessible (e.g. involving other stakeholders).
- Physical assets and facilities are upgraded.
- Additional funding is secured.

Considerations for how we approach this work:

- Use a combination of centralized, decentralized, and hybrid models (Hub and spoke model). Needs are different in each neighbourhood. The processes to access food need to be accessible.
- For centralized – Ensure proximal locations for clients, parking and bus access. We need purposely designed spaces located in the area the clients live.
- For decentralized – Expand food cupboards, leverage other network distribution collaborations.
- Development of accessibility plans for each agency which would include what they have, what they envision doing, and how they might get there or adapt. City of Ottawa, non-profit housing providers, and Province could support improving physical accessibility.
- Advocate to key stakeholders to get the appropriate buildings for the appropriate programming. Need the City of Ottawa to set and meet standards for city run facilities as well as City funded organizations. Explore different points of access for locations that do not meet accessibility standards – online, delivery, mobile food bank, etc. Leverage private sector support and solutions.
- Leverage existing resources, partners, and networks before investing in space/infrastructure.
- Connect with ethnocultural groups or faith groups to partner and gain space, language interpretation, share information, and be part of accessibility planning.
- Language is important – use "universal access" to focus on equity instead of targeting others as needing different allowances.

Recommendations for how we collaborate:

- Form a working group with Ottawa Food Bank, interested members, and key stakeholders.
- Ottawa Food Bank to help on grant writing and identifying grants for smaller organizations (eg. Accessibility, and covid-response grants). Coordinate funding efforts and explore one application for all food banks instead of multiple grant applications.



6) WRAP-AROUND SUPPORTS & REFERRALS

Why this is important

Food banks play a role in social inclusion, providing help to navigate other local support resources. Individual agencies struggle with the lack of other services available (wrap around).

Our discussions pointed to the opportunity for food banks to be a front door to access other supports and services and the need for a more holistic approach.

“Who’s making sure that this homeless family that come to the food bank will not be homeless the next time they come?”

– Expert Steering Team

The outcomes we seek:

- People accessing food banks are meaningfully engaged.
- Food banks are a front door to access other supports and services.
- People are connected with resources and supports including follow up.
- Staff are trained to be able to offer holistic services or to provide a bridge to those services.
- Collaborations are formed with other organizations and businesses.
- Information and resources are shared across the network.

Considerations for how we approach this work:

- Shift the thinking to wrap-around service which also offers food rather than foodbanks which offer wrap around services (eg. harm reduction sites offering quality food).
- Expand the health and resource centre model – current agencies become places for other supports.
- For agencies without resources to be referral channels.
- Service navigation – Better integrate service supports, move between programs, remove roadblocks. Embed intake processes in other agencies, where people are already comfortable. Meet people where they are at. Holistic approach – name and faces!
- Peer-led advocacy – Set up a group on peer advocacy.
- Transformation – Redesign of city service to be available/accessible; move to full social service system to reboot alignment; Most organizations are going through a review – a partnership model is an opportunity to realign or newly align information and service delivery; Create eco-system of data by integrating databases.
- Learn from research and other geographies; pilot promising wrap-around supports.

Recommendations for how we collaborate:

- Requires strong collaboration and shared leadership between food banks, Ottawa Food Bank, and stakeholders. Partner to pilot initiatives. Collaborate on key components such as peer advocacy and service navigation.



7) ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY

Why this is important

Research shows that food bank use is a consequence of poverty. Food bank use is chronic and food banks are not used for emergencies only. In the Ottawa region, people too often need to choose between paying the rising cost of rent or eating.

There is an opportunity for food banks to be involved in work to address food insecurity.

The outcomes we seek:

- Poverty is reduced through systems changes.
- Community-wide awareness is built around food insecurity and its root causes.
- Strong advocacy for Universal Basic Income (UBI); Responding to food deserts; Living Wage; Housing.

Considerations for how we approach this work:

- Lead broader scope non-partisan advocacy, with the lived experience knowledge at the center and representing the collective experience of the network.
- Create a distinct position around food as a human right. Charity is not the way forward. Charity is not a substitute for income stabilization. Shift away from emergency food services to long-term, more holistic, community-wide strategies to address the root causes of food insecurity.
- Set a community agenda for poverty reduction. Need context and data to focus on root causes.
- Addressing some of the root causes of poverty including the lack of affordable housing, affordable public transit, and public services. Promoting decent work by adopting a living wage policy and not offering tax breaks to employers who pay less than a living wage. And advocating for provincial and federal governments to implement a basic income.
- Build the case for municipal buy in and benefit. Municipality to call on provincial and federal governments for change. Political pressure for housing and food security policies.
- Educate the community on food insecurity and help tell the story (e.g., needs, root causes, interrelated issues, etc.)

Recommendations for how we collaborate:

- The Ottawa Food Bank should play a leadership role, build up the backbone capacity – Collaborate with existing partners and anchor organizations, stakeholders, lived/living experience, and food banks; convene; make connections. Form working groups. Gather information on areas of advocacy that is of importance to the network and a plan or approach to how they will be addressed
- Link strategies – Work with all levels of government; Housing strategy and income stability; Community Development.
- Build relationships at the higher level outside the network and with elected officials to ensure food banks have a seat in key strategic conversations. Make alliances with other collectives to help advocate with the network.

8) PLANNING FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Why this is important

Community members rely on food banks in emergency situations and food banks are a trusted source for information (e.g. vaccine info).

There is a missed opportunity for the City to leverage food banks' infrastructure and position in community for things like emergency response.

The outcomes we seek:

- Food is included in the City's emergency response plan.
- Food banks' infrastructure is leveraged during emergency response.
- Food banks are recognized as an essential service and supported accordingly.

Considerations for how we approach this work:

- Deepen understanding of impact of pulling food banks into emergency response.
- There is an opportunity to re-examine food distribution in next phase of pandemic – further collaboration/communication between food cupboards and other food security programs.
- Share policies and procedures developed during pandemic to be applied to future emergency planning. Learn from other communities to support emergency food planning locally.
- Need a system of communication to ensure flow of information between clients and food security service providers. Ensure information and resources gets down the chain to food banks and other food security networks.
- New actors entering food system in an emergency situation need to be coordinated to ensure they are participating in existing system.
- Work on having flexibility from funders and support from provincial and federal employment programs to support staffing increases in emergencies. Ottawa Food Bank could offer HR/admin support to smaller agencies to be able to hire/retain staff more easily.
- Food Banks can be community hub that will stay open during an emergency.

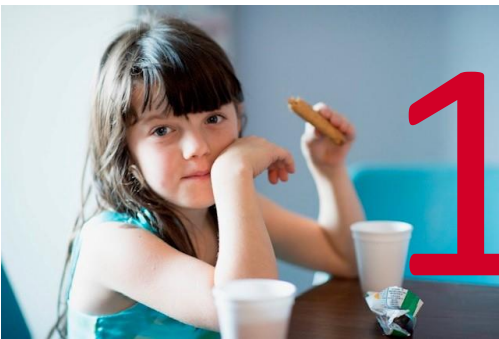
Recommendations for how we collaborate:

- Ottawa Food Bank to lead – Ottawa Food Bank becomes a connector/coordinator of various food-related actors in emergency response, ensuring that responses are coordinated and quick. Partner with key stakeholders.

Proposed Next Steps

The Community Co-Design is the start of a commitment to align the work of the Ottawa Food Bank Network to create a more equitable ecosystem to support people who are facing food insecurity. It is our hope that by creating shared values, clarifying roles, and defining areas of collaboration and a roadmap, that we will be able leverage the strengths of this network to create tangible change.

The following proposed next steps will help to make the conversations that happened throughout this co-design a reality:



Communication and sharing

Ottawa Food Bank will play a role in sharing out this Community Co-design summary, getting feedback, and ensuring that member agencies feel represented and aligned with the shared direction of the network.

- Final Co-Design Report shared by September 1, 2021.
- Member agencies will provide feedback until September 17, 2021.
- This process and updates to the network will be shared at the annual Ottawa Food Security Conference October 20, 2021.
- The Ottawa Food Bank will share the process experience and results with other tables or community groups upon request

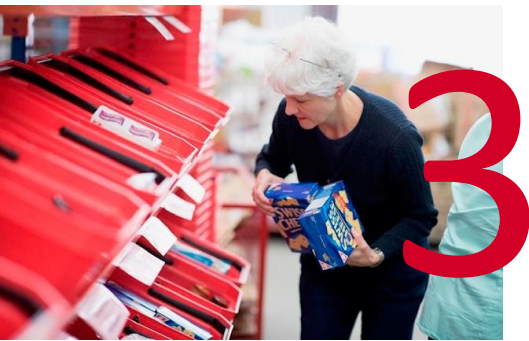


Finalizing the recommendations from the co-design process

Over the coming months, the recommendations that emerged from this co-design process will be finalized by confirming which key documents will guide their shared work and how and when these documents will be created and/or updated. Key documents will likely include:

- **Proposed network structure** – The Ottawa Food Bank team will be convening the network in October 2021 during which they will discuss a structure for how the Ottawa Food Bank and the network work together. The new collaborative structure will be presented to the network by November 2021 and in place for January 2022.
- **New Member Service Agreement** – for the 2022 year will be reviewed and if required updated annually to include emerging recommendations.
- **Needs Assessments** – A network-wide needs assessment will be conducted in 2022 and annually throughout this process.

All of these documents and processes will be developed in collaboration with members.



Capacity-Building Phase for Member Agencies

Ottawa Food Bank will use the findings from the Member Asset Inventory and the Community Co-Design to develop a capacity-building strategy with opportunities for individual agencies and the network over the next 5 years. This strategy will inform key activities for 2022-2027 and it is suggested that it be reviewed annually and in collaboration with members and other stakeholders.

The Ottawa Food Bank has developed a network training plan for the next year which launches in October 2021. The focus will be on health and safety, volunteer management, mental health, privacy and confidentiality, poverty reduction and inclusion and diversity training. Opportunities will be available to member agencies throughout the year and will be communicated through the OFB Facebook Workplace site and email. Planning for 2022-2023 will be heavily influenced by the recommendation of the Co-Design process and the working groups.



Advancing collaborative work

Through this co-design process, the network shared that they would like Ottawa Food Bank to lead Collaboration & Learning – helping member agencies to communicate, connect, share learnings, and work together.

A new collaborative working structure will be proposed to the network by November 2021 and in place for January 2022. Following the October 2021 convening, working groups will be established to guide collaborative work forward. All agencies and stakeholders will be invited to define/re-define their desired role and involvement in the network steering team and working groups.

Engagement of people with lived experience

The Expert Steering Team expressed a need for people with lived and living experience of food insecurity to be meaningfully engaged in all network priorities. At the beginning of their work together, each working group should determine how they will be engaging people with lived experience. For some groups, it may be inviting people with lived experience of food insecurity to be part of the core team. For other working groups, it may mean involving people with lived experience at certain points in their collaborative work.

The Expert Steering Team shared recommendations for what meaningful engagement would look like:

- Non-tokenistic and not achieved through a “checkbox”
- Ability to truly influence or change the system
- Being included in the process before the decisions are made – from the beginning to the very end of the process.

- Inclusive: *"If the power brokers are solely determining who attends then meaningful engagement is dead out of the blocks".*
- Supportive: *"Vulnerable people would be more open to engaging in more private {confidential} or at least supported circumstances."*
- Building a sense of community
- Feeling your contribution is valued
- Relationship building and accountability to the community
- Leadership and inclusion in the community

By January 2022, the Ottawa Food Bank will develop an engagement strategy which will include people with lived experience. Agency level community needs assessments will be supported in this planning.

Appendix A: Letter of Response from the Ottawa Food Bank

Rachael Wilson, CEO, Ottawa Food Bank

The Ottawa Food Bank is pleased to share that the Community Co-Design process, developed and implemented by Tamarack Institute, completes the 2nd phase of the Ottawa Food Bank Network Development Plan. This process spanned three months and involved sessions with people with lived experience of food banks, community food bank leadership, and a wide variety of stakeholders.

Engaging stakeholders with lived experience is not something the Ottawa Food Bank has done regularly to inform our work. The insight and expertise (pg. 6) provided were an important reminder for us all. Equity and dignity require us to embrace “nothing about us without us”. Building spaces and processes to ensure the community voice is consistently heard will be how the Ottawa Food Bank works going forward.

The key design question, as outlined in the report was How can the Ottawa Food Bank and Community and Emergency Food Banks work better together to address food insecurity over the next 5-10 years? This question became even more relevant when we saw the outcomes which were achieved through the collective work of both the network and the Ottawa community during the Covid-19 pandemic. The synergies, partnership, collaboration, and subsequent impact showed the immense value that can be had when we are all working together. We will continue to create opportunities and spaces where this type of work and collaboration is encouraged and intentional.

The most important thing I heard from this process and reflected in the report is a willingness to work together for collective and shared focus. For the first time, the network aligned on a set of values that can guide our work (pg.9). In addition, there was so much benefit for the Ottawa Food Bank to hear what role the network wants us to take on as we plan for the future (pg. 12-13). This gives us room to focus on what we bring to the system, where we need to do better, and where we need to step back and allow others to work.

All the areas of shared responsibility and collaboration (pg 13-23), highlight the big thinking and future focus we can have as a network. The report highlights that we all play a crucial role in the solution to food insecurity. When we share our strengths, bolster areas of fragility, and commit to a collective future, we will create a community where everyone thrives. The outcomes we seek are also well aligned with the Ottawa Food Bank’s long-term vision of “No one in Ottawa is food insecure”. The identified priorities, such as a shared standard of service, prioritizing healthy nutritious food, investing in a holistic approach, will help us achieve this 30-year transformational goal.

The Co-design process provided clarity for the Ottawa Food Bank about what kind of community we want to create and what we dream is possible for everyone in Ottawa. The Ottawa Food Bank commits to adopting the next steps outlined in the plan and working with the stakeholders in the areas of shared responsibility and collaboration. There are clear roles for everyone to play and space for all voices to participate.

Most importantly, we acknowledge that this is just the beginning. All of the real work lies ahead, and we must continue to evaluate and adapt this process as the needs of our member agencies, and the community change.

We commit to you that this important Network Development plan and proposed next steps (pg 24) will create the framework, if not drive, most of the Ottawa Food Bank's 2022-2025 strategic plan. We will adopt the next steps as our road map to continue this learning process. Our next step is to share a brief update on the process and review commitments to the next work at the Ottawa Food Security Conference on October 21, 2021

It was an honour and a privilege to participate in this process of setting a collective agenda to address food security in Ottawa. Thank you to Lisa Attygalle and Myriam Berube of the Tamarack Institute for their leadership through this process. We are so grateful to the lengthy list of participants (pg.4) who took the time to engage in this process and share their expertise.

****all pages numbers refer to the full report version***



Ottawa Food Bank
La Banque d'Alimentation d'Ottawa

The Ottawa Food Bank would like to sincerely thank all who have been involved in co-designing the future of the network. Incredible work has been done by this network over the past 36 years to support people and families in need. We know that we can help make our neighbours and city stronger and healthier by collaborating—working in partnership with the community and the network—to learn and share and solve together.

Please reach out to Naomi Praamsma, Community Development Coordinator at the Ottawa Food Bank with questions or to get involved in this work.

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