

BY 2050, NO ONE IN OTTAWA IS FOOD INSECURE

Strategic Plan 2025-2028



Ottawa Food Bank
La Banque d'alimentation d'Ottawa

Our Strategic Foundation

This plan builds on the Ottawa Food Bank's commitment to ending food insecurity in our city. Guided by our North Star, we are focused on reducing the need for food banks while strengthening community-based solutions.

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.



North Star Goal

By 2050, no one in Ottawa is food insecure. We have reduced the need for food banks and when food insecurity does happen, there is a community-based, holistic response.



Mission

We work in partnership to create a healthier city by empowering people, increasing access to healthy food, and advocating for systemic changes that reduce food insecurity.



Vision

Healthy, accessible, sustainable food for all.

FOUNDATIONS FOR THE STRATEGY

Our strategy is anchored in five principles.



- 1 With the North Star guiding our decisions
- 2 In consultation, service, and centered around the network
- 3 In consultation with people with lived and living experience
- 4 Data informed and driven decision making
- 5 In partnership with other organizations

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

Re-Imagining Food Banking in The Network

For more than 40 years, food banks in Ottawa, and across Canada, have been a critical response for people facing hunger. What started as a temporary solution has grown into the largest response to food insecurity in our city.

The Ottawa Food Bank is the central charitable organization that receives, purchases, grows, and distributes food to 67 organizations across the city. Those organizations provide food, often paired with additional supports, to residents in need of emergency support. We call this the network of agencies.

Today, the network of agencies reaches thousands of Ottawa residents every month. We've responded to evolving needs during the past four decades. But, the food bank system we operate within hasn't kept pace with the changing needs of our community.

The local needs are as diverse as our residents. People who visit food banks need more than just food. They need wrap-around support, community, and opportunities to thrive. Agencies across our network have different strengths, resources, and community realities. But, the structure treats them similarly.

That's why the Ottawa Food Bank is leading a new initiative with the network to reimagine what food banking can look like. We're exploring how to build a system that is more equitable, sustainable, and responsive to the people it serves. We need a system where every agency has what it needs and every person who turns to a food bank feels supported beyond the next meal.

OUTCOME

The Ottawa Food Bank network has created a new system plan and is testing it. We aim to better support local agencies and help end food insecurity in our community.

STRATEGY 1

Develop a new system-wide approach to service and food distribution. Insights from the data acquired through Link2Feed, an intake software used by our network of agencies, and other sources will help drive the change.

STRATEGY 2

Create a people-centered approach that re-imagines food banking and service models in Ottawa. We will do this through consultation with the member agency network, people with lived experience, and partners.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

Support the Member Agency Network to Build Its Capacity and Resources

Our vision is bold. By 2050, no one in Ottawa is food insecure. We want to see a reduced need for food banks and a system that addresses food insecurity where it starts: the community level.

The Ottawa Food Bank brings strong capacity, solid governance, and operational expertise. The network of agencies brings deep knowledge of their communities and unique ways to serve them. But, they may lack the resources to fully reach their potential.

By combining our strengths, we can build a stronger, more sustainable system — one that ensures every community has the tools, resources, and support it needs to fight hunger and create lasting change.

OUTCOME

Agencies have access to more food and resources (including people, time, and funds) to be sustainable.

STRATEGY 1

Refine the Ottawa Food Bank's Food Distribution Model to be responsive to individual agency resources and populations served. The Food Distribution Model is our framework, including amount and frequency, for distributing food to the network of agencies.

STRATEGY 2

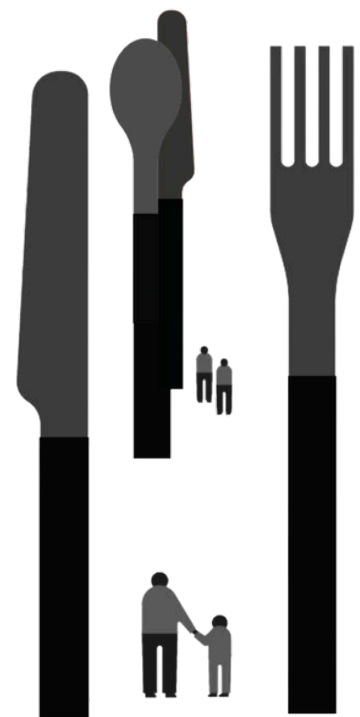
Increase the food available to the community by leveraging and improving the Ottawa Food Bank's strengths in warehousing, bulk buying, and food industry partnerships.

STRATEGY 3

Through consultation with the network of agencies, identify and implement a fair and consistent amount of food per person that is achievable across the network.

STRATEGY 4

Leverage technology and data to increase capacity, efficiency, and resources for the Ottawa Food Bank and member agencies.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

Reduce Food Insecurity for Those Accessing Member Agencies

At the Ottawa Food Bank, food security means more than just having enough to eat. It means having food that is healthy, nutritious, and culturally appropriate for every household.

Real food security takes more than just filling cupboards; it means tackling both the immediate needs and the root causes of hunger. That's why we work hand-in-hand with local agencies, who know their neighbours best. By combining their on-the-ground expertise with our resources, we can build stronger, more resilient communities where everyone has access to the food they need.

OUTCOME

Member agencies are better equipped to improve food security for all individuals accessing their food program.

STRATEGY 1

Expand **wrap-around supports** across community and emergency food banks by increasing community and social service partnerships, and supporting agency participation and readiness.

STRATEGY 2

Prioritize access to nutritious and **culturally appropriate food** to improve the health and well-being of those accessing the network.

STRATEGY 3

Partner with member agencies to advocate for sustainable funding for food banks and income-based solutions that reduce food insecurity, with the Ottawa Food Bank supporting and amplifying the network's collective voice.

Culturally Appropriate Food: Food that respects a person's or group's unique cultural beliefs, traditions, and values, going beyond basic nutrition to include familiar, comforting, and relevant food choices.



“Wrap-around supports” means helping people move beyond crisis by providing personalized, holistic support that addresses both immediate needs and long-term wellbeing.

This might include food and also assistance in accessing eligible subsidies and benefits, employment resources, and mental health supports. It's a coordinated approach that looks at the whole person, not just one issue.