

# Design Thinking the North Cariboo Food Puzzle

## Workshop Summary



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## How might we collaborate to ensure locally produced foods can reach the plates of those who need it?

This is the real-world representation question that kicked off the two-day workshop with the North Cariboo Agricultural Association (d.b.a. Farmed), and a range of food security stakeholders.

The participants represented stakeholders from the Service (serving food recipients) and Producer group perspectives. There were 16 participants on Day 1, 13 from ten different organizations and three participants who did not indicate an organization.

After an initial *Introduction to Design Thinking* activity, the workshop participants were grouped into teams to begin the Real-World Organization Challenge (“RWOC”) by designing the empathy research activities to be undertaken over the next six days.

We expected there would be some organizations who would send a different participant on day 2, and a couple of participants who could not attend day 2. Additional process support exercises were developed and suggested to aid in both the ‘passing on’ of research as well as preparation exercises for those who missed day 1. Unfortunately, this preparation and passing-on work was not completed, and the Day 2 only participants were ill-prepared for contributing to the synthesis and insight process; however, they were better able to contribute to the reframing and ideation phases of the process. There were two participants who attended both days but chose not to conduct any empathy research.<sup>1</sup>

The research undertaken and contributed by the committed participants included in-person and phone interviews, e-survey questions, and observation. The Experts responding to the research included food service recipients (seniors, homeless, food bank recipients), counsellors, small producers (and potential producers), regulatory representatives, retailers, and non-profit food service providers.

Those who conducted the research did well, and there was a vast range of user data, stories and observations to synthesize. The participants divided into three groups of users: Plate holders (individuals receiving food), Producers (local suppliers), and Intermediary Organizations (processors, retailers, distributors).

## Synthesis of Empathy Research and Insights Discovery

Participants conducted this phase over approximately two hours, and through lunch. The intention was to share their findings from the research, identifying quotes, key words, discovering themes or commonalities, and identify Insights. While each team was working, I rotated among the teams to assist and coach, directing them away from ‘ideas’ and helping them focus on what they heard or observed.



<sup>1</sup> The unique purpose of empathy research is to acquire the point-of-view of the users (experts) rather than implying our own experiences and assumptions. These two participants chose to share their ‘experience’ with users rather than conduct empathy research, which undermined their ability to apply the user-centric approach.

Groups used mind-mapping, post-it note groupings, and even a Venn diagram to categorize their learnings. Two of the three groups found they had more than one User-type represented, and so divided their findings into two User groupings (one was Plate Holders and Intermediaries; the other was Producers and Plate Holders). Each team then summarized and shared their key findings, noted in the table below:

<p><b>Access to Food</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of info about where to access or donate food</li> <li>• Challenge to access markets (distance, transportation)</li> <li>• Don't know about workshops (food prep, events)</li> <li>• Don't know how to cook/prepare</li> <li>• Have nowhere to cook/prepare</li> <li>• Don't have storage capability</li> <li>• Don't know how to preserve food</li> <li>• Can't afford [non-processed] food; price differential between imported vs. local</li> <li>• Inconsistent availability, quality and quantity of food</li> <li>• No processing facilities (infrastructure)</li> <li>• Sourcing takes time (figuring it out)</li> <li>• Lack of co-operatives</li> <li>• Disconnection with services available</li> <li>• Don't have time to find supports (research, drive)</li> <li>• Don't have internet access to research, find supports</li> <li>• Unavailability of food in winter months due to dietary restrictions</li> <li>• Farmers market sold out early</li> <li>• Not enough fresh produce at farmers market</li> <li>• Need consistency of availability and convenience</li> <li>• I don't know where to buy honey from</li> <li>• Barriers to health &amp; wellbeing include race, age, social class, disability, economics, geography, time (resources)</li> <li>• Community spirit – increase in caring during vs. post pandemic</li> <li>• Lack of access to community garden and green space for food gardens; town/urban planning</li> <li>• Bylaws as barriers (eg. 4 chickens, no bees, no rabbits)</li> <li>• I don't like cooking! I like eating!</li> </ul>	<p><b>Supplying Food</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regulations create barriers vs. enabling (navigating, lack of support, extension services)</li> <li>• lack of subsidies for small producers (competing with big Ag)</li> <li>• lack of northern support (Abattoirs, egg grading/marketing)</li> <li>• Impact of competing land use on Users/producers/community</li> <li>• Hiring policies: training programs, subsidy programs, who is going to train? Who is going to manage? [resource management]</li> <li>• Profit-based decision making to sustain production</li> <li>• Producing food seen as a hobby (not commercial activity)</li> <li>• Not wanting to upscale due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It's my home</li> <li>○ Lack of resources (\$, people, tools/equip, land)</li> <li>○ Economies of scale constraints</li> <li>○ Lack of business knowledge (process, regulation, soil testing)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Produce because (motivators) are lifestyle choice, educating others to “eat with eyes open”, maintaining knowledge and ongoing learning, income support</li> <li>• Lack of access to knowledge, land resource management for small scale agriculture offices (soil/water/disease); each small scale producer on their own</li> <li>• Not my responsibility: somebody else's responsibility to take initiative</li> <li>• Competing land uses (recreation, industry, indigenous, agriculture: collaboration not competition)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Service Providers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of resources to maintain a program</li> <li>• Volunteers turn-over</li> <li>• Community cook share – builds community, incorporate local foods, new recipes – barriers are cost, no car, no time (best if done at neighbourhood level / community halls) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Share a meal, make a meal, take a meal home</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Workshops – mentorship/knowledge sharing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hydroponics</li> </ul> </li> <li>• “give a person a zucchini and they'll have a meal for a few days; teach a person to grow zucchinis and they'll have zucchinis forever”</li> <li>• Community events: powdered potatoes vs. skinless potatoes vs. whole potatoes used in prep</li> <li>• Abundance of hard boiled eggs – resulted in putting eggs into pickle juice</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canadian grown product <i>[preferred?]</i></li> <li>• Methods of cooking are changing depending on demographic or location</li> <li>• Food boxes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Liked how often was delivered;</li> <li>○ Too much packaging</li> <li>○ Pre-made meals expanded what they would otherwise cook (meat focused, vegetarian options, dietary restrictions)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Seniors who don't throw things out – having animals growing in the fridge</li> <li>• Increasing number of people in need</li> <li>• Those who think they are doing okay might not actually be eating healthy</li> <li>• “my wife used to do all of that; I don't know where to start”</li> <li>• “I don't know how to make food”</li> <li>• “what do I do with that food/vegetable?”</li> <li>• Afraid of change/challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to land</li> <li>• Access to storage &amp; processing spaces (affordable)</li> <li>• Need support to meet regulatory requirements</li> <li>• Insufficient regulatory staff so approvals are slow</li> <li>• Need more butchers (training and better pay); have to drive very long distances to have animals butchered/cut/wrapped</li> <li>• Make it easier, not harder, to sell in local stores</li> <li>• What we say vs. what we do (Regulators – eg BC Feeds at Lhatko-Quesnel winter games)</li> <li>• Local eggs sold illegally (not graded) when not selling direct</li> <li>• Veg growers have to register &amp; license for IT of veg</li> <li>• Impacts of climate dysregulation on infrastructures and growing</li> <li>• Food waste: product that cannot be sold; processed</li> <li>• Consumers wanting ‘perfect product’ increases food waste</li> <li>• Lack of access to/knowledge of commercial kitchens (affordability of)</li> <li>• What supply is needed by local consumers?</li> <li>• Climate change, floods, extreme heat, drought, wildfires, changes to infrastructure, transportation networks, atmospheric rivers [= changing environment conditions]</li> <li>• </li> </ul>	
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Common themes began to emerge across the groups, with each team also uncovering some unique insights. The key User-driven insight themes were categorized as follow:

PRODUCERS	PLATE HOLDERS	INTERMEDIARIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Navigating regulations</li> <li>• Mindset / purpose</li> <li>• Upscaling constraints (desire, HR, financial constraints)</li> <li>• Processing realities (seasonal storage, etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food preparation knowledge</li> <li>• Consistency of availability (seasonal storage)</li> <li>• Knowing where/how to access</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: some of the plate-holders could be back-yard growers with issues similar to the Producers group.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of goods</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: some of the intermediaries shared issues similar to the Producers group.</i></p>
<p><u>Common among all groups:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disconnect between willingness to pay/expense and desire to create reasonable profit</li> <li>• mismatch between production and need of buyers</li> </ul>		

Still working as a group, the reframing was approached by addressing common themes. Due to the diversity of identified needs, the reframing was difficult for the groups as the focus was split and prioritization of needs was common discussion.

Twelve<sup>2</sup> *How might we...* questions were suggested in total:

Plate-holder focused:

1. How might we encourage users to change their perspective on their food behaviours. (*complacency, routines, attitudes about food – knowledge, fear of change*)
2. How might we create safe and simple access to community food resources.
3. How might we make it easier to help source, purchase and transport local food to those in need.
4. How might we create awareness, non-tech, to local food resources.
5. How might we improve/support community health through food (*removing barriers, increase knowledge, maybe change behaviours*)

Local Producer focused:

6. How might we support local producers to navigate regulatory environment.
7. How might we support local food distribution organizations to navigate regulatory environment.
8. How might we support local producers to access/create/increase processing capacity.
9. How might we support local producers to adapt to changing growing environment.
10. How might we support local producers to access/increase distribution opportunities (sustainable)
11. How might we create affordable access to local while encouraging affordability for all (make it workable for all stakeholders)

The participants, as one discussion group, explored and discussed how these questions evolved, arguably to the point of over-thinking away from the empathy research (my observation was this was led by those who did not participate in the empathy research, and interpretation defaults were to apply their own experience rather than defer to the research outcomes).

<sup>2</sup> Fourteen were initially presented, and subsequent discussion merged common concepts into like questions.

Further discussion narrowed down the two user group questions into two prioritized *How might we* questions:

**How might we increase knowledge of the local food producers regulations [sic] (regulatory environment) ?**

**How might we increase knowledge of local food availability and access [sic] (where to source) for Users?**

Participants then worked in two groups to begin the Ideation (brainstorming) phase.

## Ideation Phase and Resulting Projects

A quick review of brainstorming rules and process was shared; however, the resulting ideation lists were short, and the groups tended to quickly narrow into one or two solutions. The selected project idea for each question is as follows:

### **How might we increase knowledge of the local food producers regulations?**

This project will develop a user-friendly, one-stop resource to educate producers on applicable regulations in lay-man's terms. This project may focus on:

- house calls – conducting compliance assessments to guide producers for improvements
- advocacy
- sharing stories and articles
- create a hard-copy resource as well as online resource to educate about category-specific regulations, governing regulator contacts, and how to guides (modify agri-connect)
- provide coaching and mentoring
- offer workshops

This project may seek sponsorship and revenue-generating components such as online sales commissions, affiliate fee revenues and workshop/house-call fees.

#### **Next Steps for this project include:**

1. Determine and prioritize agricultural production categories
2. Develop user-friendly regulation navigating diagrams, resources and contact lists (how to's) for each category (begin with one, add on from there)
3. Design web-based component and determine project scope, costs, timeline
4. Design print resource and determine project scope, costs, timeline
5. May include hiring consultant / project manager
6. Source funding (may include Imagine Grant funds, to be determined)
7. Determine desired delivery methods, such as workshops, digital (YouTube, TikTok, downloadable resources, etc.)
8. Develop resources
9. Promote each regulation support (category) as available

### **How might we increase knowledge of local food availability and access for Users?**

This project ideation landed on the focus of determining the production gap between what is needed/desired (market demand) and what is available through local production (supply), from the perspective of food categories and quantities.



This project will first focus on research, both secondary and primary, to determine:

- a) What is a reasonable reliance on local food production (proportion of food that is sourced locally for consumer consumption)
- b) What foods are produced and made available to consumers locally (includes who produces, what do they produce, how much do they produce, is their supply available for local purchase by consumer, and if yes, where/when/how?)
- c) How much foods is available to fulfill local consumer demand (identify the gaps for surplus or deficiency of supply, and by how much?)
- d) Produce a distributable resource for local consumers to identify what foods are available for purchase, who produces those foods and how/where consumers can access those foods.

This project will likely lead to secondary projects for both producers and consumers/users, with a focus to increase local supply (if determined as a need) and increase access to that local supply for consumers.

**Next Steps for this project include:**

1. Secondary research to determine typical consumer demand for various foods produced locally
2. Primary research to determine local production of identified foods
3. Analyze secondary and primary research outcomes
4. Calculate gaps of supply to demand
5. Develop local supply directory resources
6. Determine potential gap solutions and how to support those suppliers willing to help close gaps

Project management, research leads, appropriate funding to be determined.



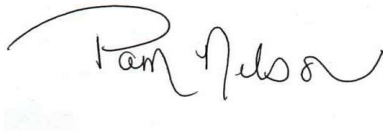
## Where to from here?

Now FARMED will need to determine the project outlines, including:

- Timeline
- Tasks to be undertaken.
- Budget
- Staff/volunteer resources (and/or contract employment)
- Resources to be developed and/or acquired (video development, waivers and/or legal releases, contracts, digital accounts, etc.)
- Project metrics and measurement timelines
- Progress reports

Additionally, it was discussed during the workshop that many of the participating organizations (identified as food security stakeholders) desire to keep the conversation and collaborations going. A method to do that, such as a Facebook group and/or email list, was requested. It would be beneficial for FARMED to undertake the launch of a collaborative communication method.

It has been my pleasure to work with the North Cariboo Agricultural Association, d.b.a Farmed, on this project. Thank you for the opportunity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pam Nelson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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## APPENDIX: WORKSHOP WORKING NOTES

Food security is a huge issue

- Lack of info about where to access or donate - Communication -
- Challenge to access markets <sup>distance + transportation</sup>
- Don't know where workshops are / show-case events
- Don't know how to cook - Have nowhere to cook -
- Don't have storage for food.
- Don't know to preserve food.
- Can't afford food / affordability / Wholesellers
- Consistent availability of food <sup>Quality</sup> <sup>Quantity</sup>
- No processing facilities / Infrastructure <sup>Abattoirs are there but these facilities are not there</sup>
- Resources to maintain a program <sup>Volunteers - turn over</sup> <sup>Storage</sup>

Time Time management  
→ Something takes time

- Regulation - Permits; Land usage
- Online site / Platform for exchange of information
- Co-operatives (lack of)
- Community Connection <sup>Disconnected with service available</sup>
- Imported vs local - Price differential
- Mis-match between Producers and what's needed
- Impact of competing land use on Users / Producers / Community
- \* Producers seen as
- Hiring Policies
  - Training Programs
  - Subsidy Programs
  - Who is going to train?
  - Who is going to manage?
- Profit-based decision making

Farmers market sold out early

"Need consistency / availability / convenience"

"I don't know where to buy honey from"

"Producers Somebody else's responsibility to take initiative"

### INSIGHTS (STEP #3)

\* There is lack of information

How might we support sustainable production?

- Platform for sharing information; regulation; hiring
- Storage
- Sharing of logistics services
- Cooperatives
- Infrastructure

→ Producing Food seen as a hobby (not commercial activity)

→ Not wanting to upscale

- Home
- Resources <sup>Money \$</sup> <sup>People</sup> <sup>Tools, Equipment</sup>
- Economies of scale <sup>Land</sup>
- Lack of Business Knowledge / Process / regulation / Soil testing

don't have time to find supports (drive) (research)

✓ Internet to -

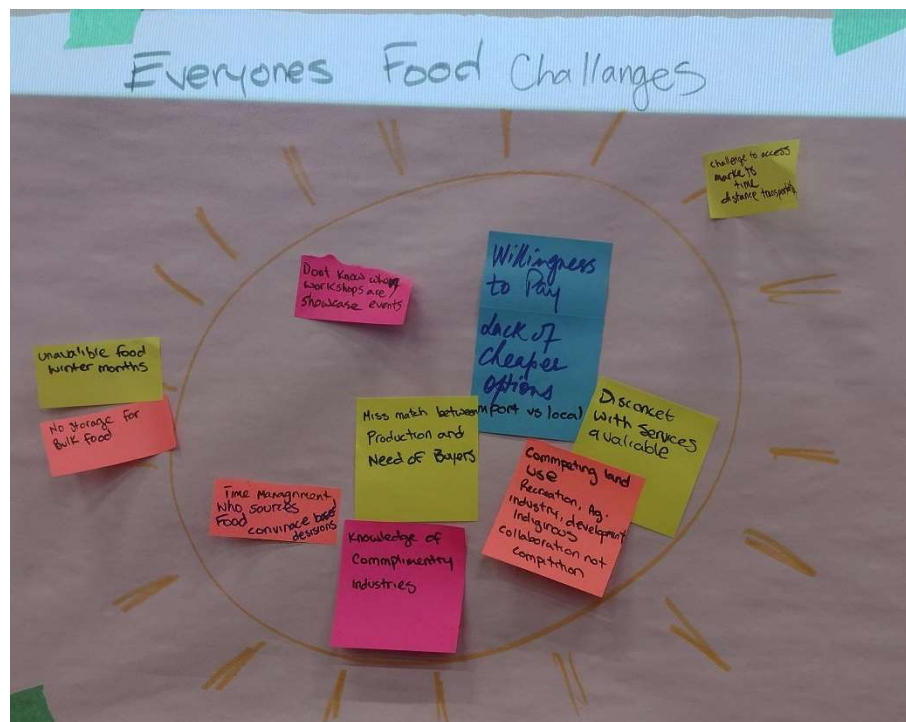
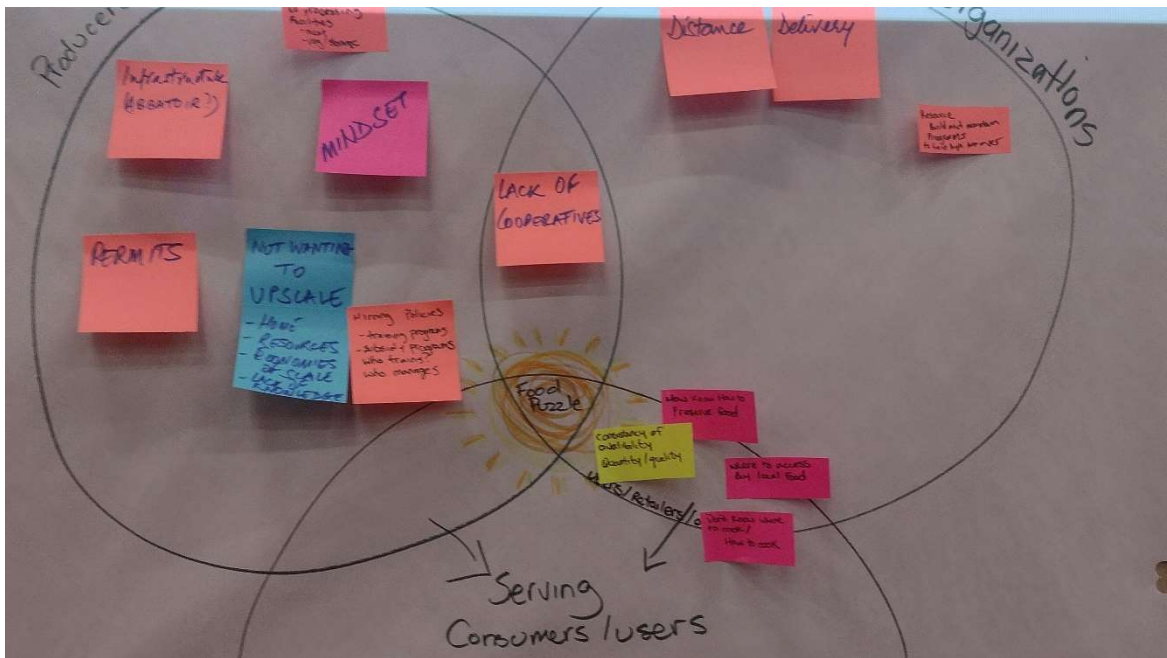
Produce because :- lifestyle

- educating to eyes open
- maintaining knowledge ongoing learning
- Income support

→ Unavailability of food in winter months due to dietary restrictions

Knowledge, land resource management <sup>Soil</sup> <sup>water</sup> <sup>disease</sup>

- Small scale agriculture offices
- Each small scale producer on their own





## Small Producers ↔ Processors

- frustrations re: regulations  
creating barriers  
navigating regulations
- lack of support (extension services)
- subsidies to big ag
- no/few services up north to support agriculture
- abattoirs
- egg marketing (no egg grading)

Regulations?  
Barriers  
vs.  
Enabling

What we say vs. What we do!

BC Feeds at Lhato. Quinsnet X  
Winter Grange

Farmer selling eggs to ANMI - no longer can  
veg growers have to register & license for IT of veg

- eggs board local eggs sold illegally  
cause should be graded, even if  
wanted to grade, no grading centre in the North

- Access to land
- affordable access to cold storage & processing ~~res~~ spaces
- need support to meet regulatory requirements
- insufficient regulatory staff so approvals are slow (i.e. getting farmgate abattoir)
- need to train more butchers
- need to pay butchers better
- make it easier, not harder to sell in local stores
- have to drive very long distances to have animals butchered/wrapped

human  
resources  
shortages

Social  
Justice

- small producer regulatory environment within large industrial ag
- hard to compete w big ag
- impacts of climate dysregulation on infrastructures & growing

### Food Waste

- product that cannot be sold → Processed

Why surplus? consumers only want perfect product too costly to harvest imperfect

Commercial Kitchens → access to these; lack of knowledge of where they are.  
affordability of commercial kitchens

A producer was asking Capacity → What's needed? → labour, skills, equipment  
To meet Market Research? → time

How might we:

~~improve affordable access to land~~

improve access to cold storage

" support

access to regional butchering

Hmw support local producers to navigate reg enviro

Hmw support local producers to access processing capacity.  
(create)

Hmw support local producers to adapt to Δing enviro

Hmw support local producers to access/increase distribution opps (in sustainable way).



# USERS

## WHAT WE HEARD

- CANADIAN GROWING - EVERYTHING INCLUDED TO PREPARE THE MEAL.
- FROM FRESH PRODUCE - RIGHT TO HOUSE - DRIVER
- PRO-HAVING MEAL - NO DELIVERY TO HOME
- CON - LEARNED ONLY DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT GETTING INFO EXTRA - FACE BOOK
- SOCIAL NETWORK - CONCRETE USED EVEN PAST BEST BEFORE DATES
- DONATIONS OF FOOD - ARE CHANGING
- VARIETY & VERSATILITY - DEPENDING ON COMMUNITY OR LOCATION / WHERE THEY ARE LIVING.
- METHODS OF COOKING - DON'T KNOW WHERE TO FIND IT.
- NOT ENOUGH FRESH PRODUCE AT FARMER'S MKT. INSIGHT - MAYBE NOT VISIBLE.
- CONSERVATION / POWDERED VS SKINLESS POTATOES. INSIGHT - EXTREME APPROACH OF CONVENIENCE.
- ABUNDANCE OF HARD BOILED EGGS TOPICKLED
- COST - HOW MUCH.
- LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO

Time

PREPARE

NOT OPTIONAL

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

CHALLENGE

Freeze it

Chopping

TIME - DON'T HAVE TIME TO PREPARE & COOK & PICK UP.

- LIKED HOW OFTEN FOOD WAS DELIVERED - 1 EVERY 2 WEEKS.
- TOO MUCH PACKAGING. - BUT LIKED THE BOX.
- PRE MADE MEALS - COMMUNITY MADE - HEAT FOCUSED
- THINGS THAT THEY WOULDN'T OTHERWISE COOK. - VEGETARIAN OPTIONS
- DIETARY RESTRICTIONS
- SENIORS WHO DON'T THROW THINGS OUT HAVING ANIMALS GROWING IN THE FRIDGE.
- INSIGHT - FOOD POISONING.
- THE PEOPLE WHO ARE IN NEED HAS GROWN
- EVEN THOSE WHO THINK THEY ARE DOING OK MIGHT NOT ACTUALLY BE EATING HEALTHY
- My wife used to do all of that - I don't know where to start.
- I don't " how to make food.
- What do I do with that food? / veg etc?
- CREATING INCLUSIVITY - FOOD CULTURE - GROUPS, CLUBS.
- AFRAID OF A CHALLENGE - CHANGING PATTERNS

## Individuals

- "Community Cook Share" →
- ↑ builds community, incorporate local food, new recipes.
- Barriers: cost, no car, no time
- × best if done at Neighbourhood Level (community halls)
- Share a Meal, Make a Meal, Take a Meal Home

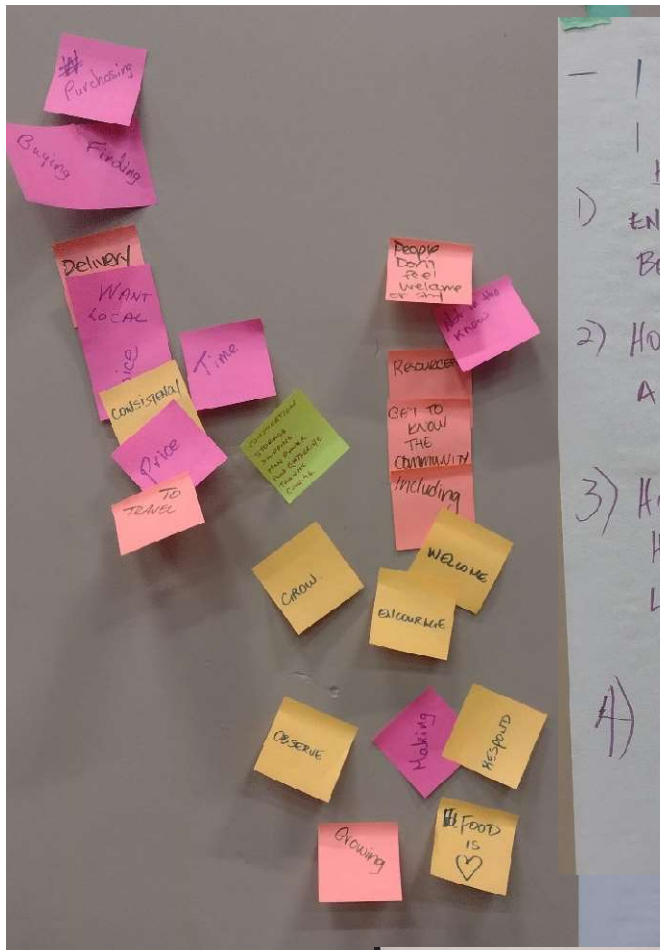
Workshops - Mentorship / Knowledge Sharing

↳ hydroponics

- Give a person a Zucchini and they'll have a meal for a few days, teach a person to grow Zucchini & they'll have Zucchini for a week
- How to improve community health thru know, sharing & mentoring / food
- How

## Individuals / Producers

- cross sectional barrier to health + wellbeing
- race, age, social class, disability, economics, geography
- includes resources eg. time).
- community spirit - during + post pandemic - increase in caring.
- Climate Change - Flooding, Extreme Heat, Drought, Wildfire
- ↳ challenge to infrastructure
- transportation networks, atmospheric rivers.
- Lack of Access to Community Garden + Green space for Food Gardens. → Town / Urban Planning
- Bylaws → Barriers eg. 4 chickens, no bees, no rabbits



- I DON'T LIKE COOKING!

I LIKE EATING!

HOW MIGHT WE

- 1) ENCOURAGE USERS TO CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIORS ON THEIR FOOD PERSPECTIVE?
- 2) HOW MIGHT WE CREATE SAFE AND SIMPLE ACCESS TO COMMUNITY FOOD RESOURCES?
- 3) HOW MIGHT WE MAKE IT EASIER TO HELP SOURCE, PURCHASE AND TRANSPORT LOCAL FOOD TO THOSE IN NEED.
- 4) CREATE AWARENESS (NON-TECH) TO LOCAL FOOD RESOURCES

DATA LINKING - PRODUCTION LEVEL OF FOOD PRODUCTS;

- POTATO PRODUCTION PROJECT - HISTORY.

H.W

- 10% EQUATION

LOCAL SUPPLY - QTY.  
LIMITED CAPACITY

IMPROVE COMMUNITY HEALTH <sup>BY</sup> SUPPORTING  
PRODUCERS IN THEIR <sup>PRODUCTION CAPACITIES</sup> (FINANCIAL/ENVIRONMENT/REGULATORY)

USERS

<sup>OUTREACH</sup>

- SENIOR COMPOSES - SHARE. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON
- CSA'S - GOOD FOOD BOX. FOR 4 WEEKS
- WEBSITE -
- A RECIPE WITH CSA BOX.
- COMMUNITY KITCHEN - BETTER ACCESS
- SAMPLES OF FOOD - TASTE,
- CUSTOMIZED WITH NAME ON BOX. (REUSABLE)
- K-12. EDUCATION OUTREACH. & BEYOND
- NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION
- PROVIDING SIGMA
- COMMUNITY CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE.
- INCLUSIVE.
- INCENTIVE TO PURCHASE - BEING A FRIEND
- POLITICAL WILL & BUY IN
- EASY, - SENSITIVE TO PEOPLE WITH LESS ABILITY OR DISABILITY

PRODUCERS

- GROUPS MAKE PKG MEALS FOR USER GROUPS
- COMMUNITY FROZEN MEAL PROGRAM.
- [SUSTAINED FUNDING FOR] SUBSIDIZED PROGRAMS.
- [MORE] - CONTINUITY OF INFORMATION SHARING
- POSTERS IN CHURCH
- YOUTUBE CHANNEL
- SHOW CABLE
- PHONE CALLS
- FACE TO FACE.
- NEWSPAPER
- YOUTH-TECH RECRUITMENT.
- KNOWLEDGE DEMOCRACY
- DECOLONIAL WAY OF THINKING.