



LOCAL FOOD INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

STREAM 2 – Projects to Strengthen Local Food Systems

WHAT WE HEARD



Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

Agriculture et
Agroalimentaire Canada

Canada

In recognition of the integral role food plays in the social, health, environmental and economic well-being of Canadians, the Government of Canada released its Food Policy for Canada in June 2019. The Food Policy is a roadmap for a healthier and more sustainable food system in Canada and will set a foundation for increased integration and coordination of food-related policies and programs. The Food Policy will help guide public, private, and non-profit sectors on food-related decisions and actions that can improve people's lives, their health, and the health of the environment and the economy.

The Food Policy for Canada includes funding to support programs and initiatives in four near-term action areas: **Help Canadian communities** access healthy food; **Make Canadian food** the top choice at home and abroad; **Support food security** in Northern and Indigenous communities; and, **Reduce food waste**.

To support increased access to healthy food, the Government launched the **\$50 million Local Food Infrastructure Fund**. Through investments in infrastructure, this non-repayable program aims to support community-driven food projects, such as those at food banks, farmers' markets, and community gardens, to facilitate access to safe and nutritious food for at-risk populations.

The Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food consulted online with stakeholders between **June and September 2019** on the parameters of the Local Food Infrastructure Fund. A key parameter of the program was the proposed types of infrastructure activities and projects that would be eligible for funding under the program. Stakeholders were asked to demonstrate interest in the program through the submission of food-related infrastructure project ideas and potential project costs. The purpose of this paper is to provide the results of the online consultation.



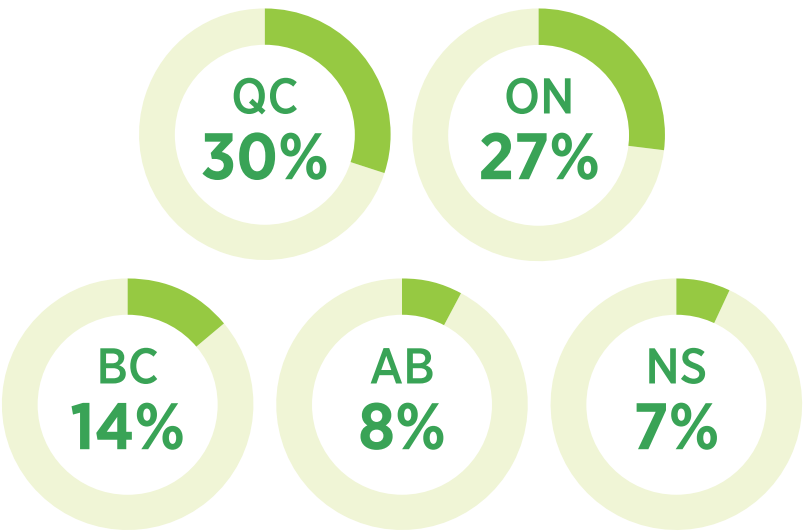
Participants

Two hundred and four organizations representing not-for-profit, Indigenous groups, regional/municipal governments, for-profits, and universities participated in the online consultation. Over **sixty percent** of the participants were from not-for-profit organizations such as food banks, community gardens, and community hubs. The mandates of almost all participating organizations included accessibility of healthy foods by the most at-risk Canadians. The organizations outreach ranged from serving newcomers to Canada, Indigenous peoples, homeless, children, and persons with disabilities.

Some organizational mandates were very specific, e.g., provision of food or food education, while others were very broad, e.g., healthy communities. Additionally, **the majority of participants delivered specific food-related services, however, few organizations focused on food policy development at the community or national level.**

The services offered by many organizations had a large educational element. For example, in addition to such food-related educational elements as food preparation, nutrition or food production/processing, organizations also offered education on environmental sustainability, general health, or re-entering the work force.

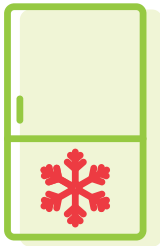
Organizations from all provinces participated, however, those from **Quebec (30%)** and **Ontario (27%)** predominated the consultations followed by **British Columbia (14%)**, **Alberta (8%)**, and **Nova Scotia (7%)**. Organizations equally represented communities within cities/towns and remote communities. There were no responses received from organizations in the territories.



Infrastructure projects of interest to stakeholders

Six food-related infrastructure project categories were proposed under the Local Food Infrastructure Fund in which activities would be eligible for funding: Food-related Equipment; Vehicles and Transport Equipment; Technology Systems; Energy Systems; Water Infrastructure; and Capital Assets and Equipment. There was interest in all of the proposed project categories, however, the Food-related Equipment and Capital Assets and Equipment categories were of most interest. Many of the project ideas included elements from multiple categories. The following provides a summary of the project ideas submitted during the online consultations.

FOOD-RELATED EQUIPMENT:



Over **eighty percent** of the organizations that participated in the online consultation **were interested in pursuing projects in this category**. Kitchen upgrades to improve their client-service delivery were overwhelmingly the predominant project idea that often included the need for new or additional fridges, coolers, freezers, and storage. Some organizations were interested in expanding their current food preparation activities to include food processing in order to extend the shelf life of fresh products (e.g., canning, preserving, juicing). A few organizations that represented community gardens or farms were interested in purchasing additional harvesting equipment to increase community participation and increase yields.

VEHICLES AND TRANSPORT EQUIPMENT:



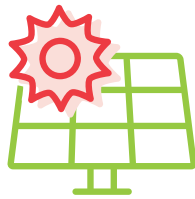
Fifty percent of the online participants **were interested in pursuing projects within this infrastructure category**. Purchasing new or additional vehicles, such as trucks, refrigerated trucks, snowmobiles, boats and ATVs, to deliver food to Canadians at-risk or pick up food from suppliers was the number one funding interest. To a lesser extent, organizations were interested in purchasing trailers or repurposing existing vehicles for new uses.

TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS:



Twenty-five percent of the online consultation participants **expressed interest in the Technology Systems category**. The most popular project idea was the development or purchase of software that would assist with distribution services and inventory control. Funding to modernize or create new web sites for various organizations was also of interest. Some technology system project ideas were very specific to the organization ranging from the ability to track re-useable containers, schedule slaughter times, develop customized patient nutrition systems, and enable online ordering. A few participants of the online consultation were also interested in the creation of training videos for staff to help ensure consistent service delivery.

ENERGY SYSTEMS:

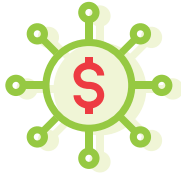


Approximately **fifty percent** of the organizations **expressed interest in pursuing projects in the Energy Systems category**. Building new or expanding on existing greenhouses both within the city and in rural areas were of most interest. Some organizations, particularly those in northern remote areas, expressed interest in hydroponics or vertical farming. Other energy infrastructure needs included generators, solar panels, and power upgrades.

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE:



Thirty-two percent of the online consultation participants **expressed interest in the Water Infrastructure category**. Project ideas were limited to plant growing operations and ranged from water re-use systems, rainwater collection, and irrigation.



Over **eighty percent** of the organizations **submitted a wide variety of project ideas within the Capital Assets and Equipment category**. The most interest among organizations was the expansion or modification of existing commercial kitchens or purchasing or building new facilities. The second most popular Capital Assets and Equipment project idea was the establishment, expansion or upgrade of community gardens. Food or community hubs were also proposed as places for the general public and students to learn about food production and to purchase locally sourced food. Other projects of interest included building or expanding farmers' markets, creation of learning farms, and establishing roof top gardens.

Estimated project cost

The majority of online consultation participants were able to provide an estimated project cost. Costs for the project ideas ranged from **\$25,000 to more than \$250,000**. Over one third of the organizations wanted to undertake large-scale infrastructure projects. Many of the project ideas with cost estimates of less than **\$25,000** were to initiate the first phase of a larger, multi-year infrastructure project.

Cost estimate range	Percentage of projects within the range
<\$25,000	13.24%
\$25,000 to \$50,000	8.33%
\$50,000 to \$125,000	18.14%
\$125,000 to \$250,000	23.04%
>\$250,000	37.25%

Additional comments

7

Online consultation participants were given the opportunity to provide additional comments or feedback regarding the Local Food Infrastructure Fund. **Most organizations found the Local Food Infrastructure Fund to be a timely and meaningful way to address food security and help Canadian populations at risk.** However, the most predominant comment of organizations was that for the projects to succeed in the long-term, the program should permit the funding of salaries and staff training as well as financial support for other existing operational costs.

Other comments provided by online consultation participants included:

- expand the list of eligible applicants (e.g., include schools);
- online program accessibility issues in remote areas;
- support needed with the program application process;
- program eligibility criteria issues (e.g., difficult for some to meet 50% matching funds and need for multi-year program funding);
- other activities should be eligible for funding such as feasibility studies, policy focused studies, cooking classes, health promotion workshops, advertising to promote food programs, and training;
- applicants should be permitted to either work collaboratively with other organizations or engage consultants from other countries; and,
- need to prioritize applications (e.g., Fund disadvantaged communities first).

Next steps

The Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food is grateful for the extensive online consultation participation regarding the Local Food Infrastructure Fund. The project ideas as well as the additional comments provided by those organizations involved in ensuring the accessibility of healthy foods by Canadians at-risk will help to inform the Department in the finalization of the program parameters and eligibility criteria for the next phase of the program.