community food centres
CANADA good food is just the beginning

Three-year strategic plan

2024 to 2027

Land acknowledgement

Community Food Centres Canada operates and partners with food organizations from coast to coast to coast. We do this on the lands of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, who have been and continue to be in a reciprocal relationship with the lands, waters, and all beings. This relationship has been embedded in gratitude and respect since time immemorial.

The national office of Community Food Centres Canada is in Toronto and is on the territory of the Wendat, Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas of the Credit. It is now also home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

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A message from the CEO and Board Chair

Food insecurity in Canada is currently at its highest level in recorded history. Every day across the country, almost a quarter of the population can't afford the nourishing food they need.[1]

That's 8.7 million of our neighbours who worry about running out of food, who compromise on the quantity and quality of their groceries, or go entire days without eating.

This crisis is a call to action: The right to food must be realized for everyone in our country.

To get closer to making this right a reality, Community Food Centres Canada will ensure the next three years count.

Because now's the time to redouble our efforts to end food insecurity. To build spaces of connection and mutual support. To strengthen the community food sector. To mobilize our nationwide network of partners to push for systemic change.

Join us and read about these and our other priorities in the following pages.

Let's get to work. Together.

Nick Saul, CM
CEO, Community Food Centres Canada

Dr. Kwame McKenzie
Board Chair

The context

Food insecurity is a growing crisis.

Last year alone, food insecurity in Canada increased by 26%. This translates into 8.7 million people. Worse still, the number of people who are experiencing severe food insecurity—who are missing meals, even for days at a time—rose by a staggering 50%.[1]

Food insecurity is an equity issue.

In Canada, 23% of people now live with food insecurity. But for Black and Indigenous people, rates rise to 40% and 36% respectively.[2] That's because food insecurity disproportionately affects people who already experience systemic barriers.

Food insecurity is a health issue.

Adults in food-insecure households are more likely to experience health problems, including poor mental health and diet-related, chronic issues like heart disease and diabetes.[3]

There are not enough public spaces for connection and belonging.

Loneliness is becoming more common in Canada, and it's higher among Indigenous people, people with disabilities, and Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer people.[4,5] Isolation is also an issue: For example, one in four older adults have low levels of social participation.[6]

The community food sector is under-resourced.

A lack of resources leaves the sector struggling to meet only the most basic needs of the community. But the sector needs to move beyond emergency mode. Without sufficient capacity, the sector is not empowered to prioritize vital yet undervalued programming that will foster health, well-being, and belonging.

A concerted sector-wide advocacy response is still lacking.

As the food insecurity crisis grows, community food organizations are increasingly interested in advocacy. But despite this important shift, there is little capacity and efforts remain largely uncoordinated.

Three things to note about this plan

We've spent the last decade creating dignified food spaces and mobilizing to end food insecurity. We've now taken stock and mapped out the next steps for our maturing movement.

Here are three things to note:

The strategy is fundamentally about **deepening our impact**. In particular, we've given more focus and intention to ***how*** we partner and work together, as part of living our values.

Working holistically to boost our collective impact, we'll **integrate our work across our organization and throughout our partnerships**.

As both foundation and lens, our **Equity, Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Anti-Oppression/ Access** Framework and our Reconciliation Action Plan **will guide and infuse** all aspects of our work.

Our new vision and mission

Our vision

We believe in a country where the right to food is realized for all and where every community has a place for food that nurtures health and well-being, belonging, and social justice.

Our mission

We resource and strengthen the community food sector and mobilize with our partners for progressive policy change.

Our values

Equity

Equity is the heartbeat of our work, guiding all we do.

We speak up for systemic change, knowing that food is a basic human right and equity makes food accessible to all. By practicing reconciliation, anti-racism, and anti-oppression, we foster justice and belonging —in our community of staff and the community at large.

Courage

We commit to brave ideas and actions.

Emboldened to explore new ways of working, we find collective courage in collaborating with partners, communities, and each other. Together, we reimagine food and social systems that are equitable.

Relationship-focused

We work in common cause with others.

We collaborate with respect and reciprocity. Working relationally moves us to reflect, learn from, and support each other. Reaching across power divides, we lead with care and act in solidarity.

Integrity

Integrity is a practice we live by.

We honour our commitments, with openness and generosity. We learn from our mistakes—and unlearn our biases. And in all we do, we commit to staying humble and accountable.

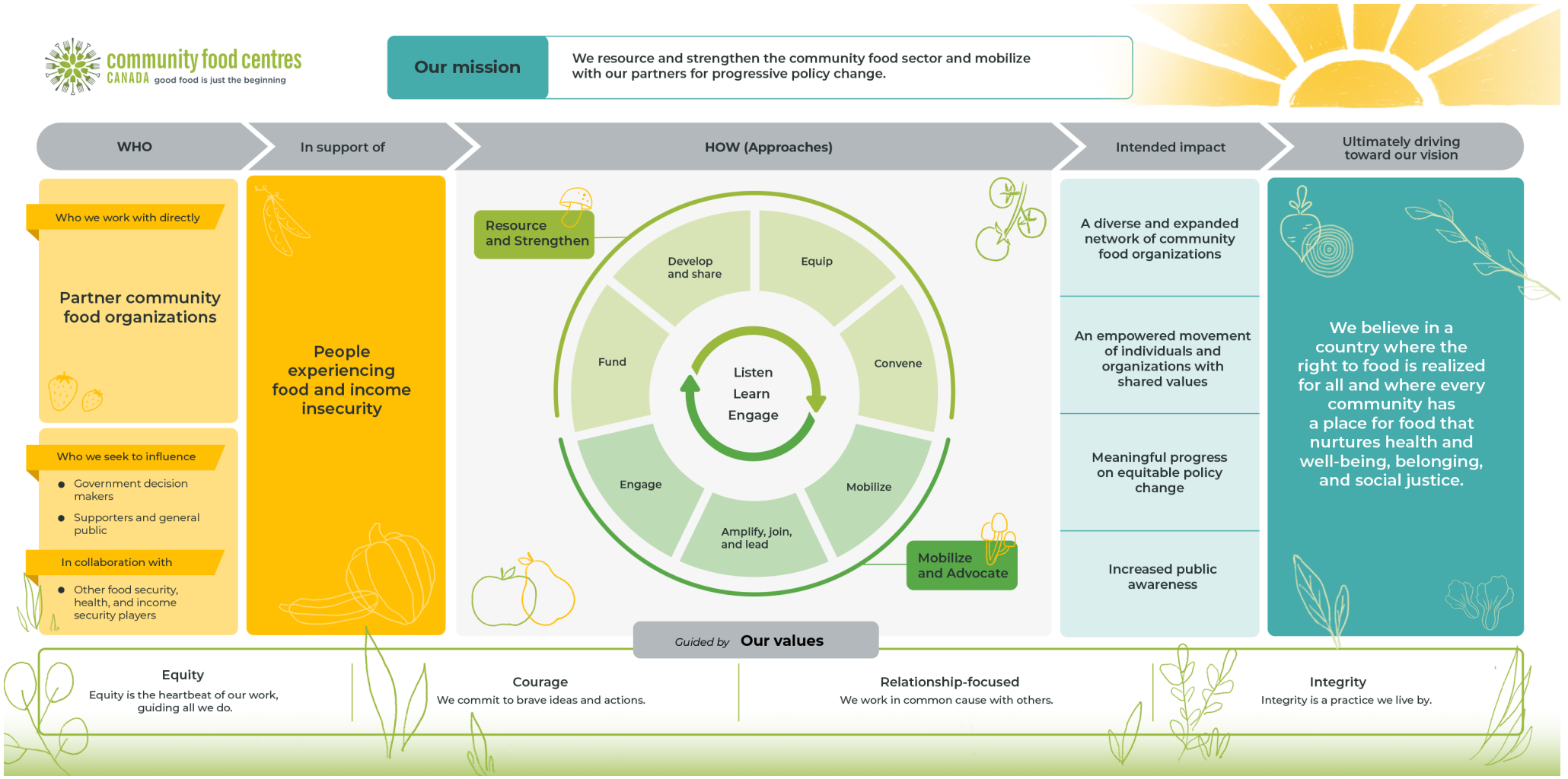
Our theory of change

Food connects us. It links us to the land, our cultures, and our loved ones.

But food also connects us to pressing societal challenges. It calls us to work together on interrelated issues like poverty and health.

It calls for change.

Welcome to Community Food Centres Canada's theory of change. It's a high-level look at how we can realize our social change efforts.



Our strategic priorities

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:

Deepen and diversify partnerships

Over the past decade, Community Food Centres Canada fostered a nationwide network of community food organization partners. With this coalition now numbering over 350, we'll move from growing this group to deepening its impact and partnerships. We'll listen, learn from, and engage with our partners to strengthen the community food sector.

Some key initiatives

- We'll **launch the Knowledge-Sharing Institute** to increase the capacity of the community food sector. Among its expanded offerings, the institute will provide more intensive and bespoke support, like coaching, to enrich our partners' impact.
- We'll **further invest in our partners' work** by offering new granting programs for capital and infrastructure upgrades, mentorship, community gardens, and fresh food.
- We'll **deepen our use of equitable and culturally responsive practices** to support Indigenous-led and Black-led organizations. This will include formalizing our equity-informed granting framework.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:

Mobilize for change

In our first ten years, Community Food Centres Canada built a national movement to address food insecurity.

With a nationwide affordability crisis now in full force, our movement is maturing at a crucial moment.

We'll meet that moment by mobilizing our partner network to take collective, community-based action.

Some key initiatives

- We'll **support our regional networks** to mobilize locally and fight food insecurity nationally.
- We'll **sharpen our community-centric mobilization model** to advocate for policy change that centres people with lived experience.
- By **enhancing our Community Action Training program**, we'll equip local communities with the tools and skills to push for progressive policy change.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:

Launch 340 Gerrard—

our national site and a Community Food Centre for Downtown East Toronto

A maturing movement needs a properly resourced home. And equity-deserving communities in Downtown East Toronto need a Community Food Centre.

In 2025, we'll open the doors to a building that meets both of these needs—at 340 Gerrard Street, Toronto.

Some key initiatives

At 340 Gerrard:

- We'll **launch a flagship Community Food Centre** to support the communities of Downtown East Toronto with community food programs and advocacy.
- We'll **establish a new national headquarters that will further galvanize our growing movement**.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4:

Maximize organizational strength

There's never been a more pressing time to build national capacity for food security. And to make the deepest impact, we'll strengthen our organization. Across every system and functional area, we'll boost our proficiency and potential to foster food security across the country.

Some key initiatives

- Fully **integrate and implement our Equity, Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Anti-Oppression/ Access Framework and our Reconciliation Action Plan** into all aspects of our mission and work.
- **Enhance our cross-functional collaboration** to further cultivate an integrated national staff team.
- **Embed a decent work framework** that infuses all human resources considerations, from recruitment to retention to work culture.
- **Refine our internal systems**, from digital platforms to finance, to support organizational accountability and success and to sustain our work.
- **Refresh and roll out our new brand** to support a recognizable, trusted, and cohesive national movement.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5:

Inspire new and sustainable resources

Underpinning all our initiatives are our dedicated funders. To see our movement flourish over the next three years and beyond, we'll bring them along on our shared journey. With their commitment, we'll gather the resources to help realize the right to food for all.

Some key initiatives

- **Grow and diversify all fundraising revenue streams** in a manner that is scalable and aligned with our Equity, Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Anti-Oppression/Access Framework.
- Increase our sustainability by **securing new sources of multi-year giving**.
- **Optimize the internal fundraising systems and processes** to sustain and advance our movement.

Thank you

This strategic plan will be our organization's guiding star for the next three years.

And to get to this point, we embarked on a collective journey.

Our biggest thanks to all who contributed across each and every engagement opportunity: our 350+ sectoral partners, our many supporters, and every single board and staff member.

We're grateful for your every insight—and for your foresight, as you envisioned what our shared movement will be.

Notes

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