

Recommendations on Northern Sustainable Food Systems



**National Indigenous Economic Development Board
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Executive Summary

Economic development as a process focusses on improving economic, social and political well-being through policies, programming and practices. Economic growth is considered an important component of economic development as new economic opportunities increase the availability and circulation of capital, and through taxation, serves as revenue for social improvements such as health and education. Economic development is also often associated with industrialization or “modernization” given the close relationships with manufacturing. More recently, the service economy (e.g. financial services, retail, and information technology) has also gained increased dominance in economic sectors.

Northern sustainable food systems are a critical component of economic development in the North. Sustainable food systems support food security, leading to healthier communities, and individuals who are better able to participate in the workforce. With a healthier workforce, the economic climate is more favourable to attract and retain businesses. Improvements in employment, educational opportunities and increased incomes in turn allow for greater food security. Northern sustainable food systems both drive economic development and benefit from the economic growth associated with new business opportunities.

In many, if not most jurisdictions, food systems have aligned with recognized economic development models as producers, processors, distributors and retailers all contribute to and benefit from economic growth. Food as a *commodity* is considered an object of production to be bought and sold on free markets. However, for Northern Indigenous Peoples, food has a much more complex meaning. As Walker et al. (2017) state “[f]or Northern Indigenous Peoples... food is linked to identity, culture and way of life. Food is central to the physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental health of Indigenous Peoples. It is an issue tied closely with survival and rights of self-determination.”¹ Within Inuit culture there is a commitment to sharing country food and strong opposition by many Inuit to selling country food. As Gombay writes, quoting Freeman “to turn country food into a commodity essentially means that they are prepared to withhold food from the cycle of sharing which is ‘tantamount to threatening life itself’”.^{2,3} These meanings and associations do not directly align, and in fact often conflict with economic development models of food as a commodity and influence discussions of how best to support sustainable food systems in the North. Northerners are seeking to develop sustainable food systems that support and enable Indigenous self-governance and that are resilient, locally-driven, and community-focused. There is limited attachment to economic development models that can be perceived as colonialist. Instead, there is keen interest in designing and developing culturally-appropriate, innovative, Northern-focused systems which promote the availability and accessibility of affordable, safe, nutritious and culturally-acceptable foods.

These understandings, gleaned from both internal and external research, along with findings from our Roundtable event held in Whitehorse, Yukon in June 2018 to discuss Northern Sustainable food systems with Northerners, have led to a suite of recommendations that address gaps in creating sustainable food systems.

¹ Walker, J.B., Kassi, N., Friendship, K., Pratt, M. (2017). Stories of Yukon food security.

Northern Public Affairs. Retrieved from: <http://www.northernpublicaffairs.ca/index/magazine/volume-5-issue-1/stories-of-yukonfood-security/>

² Gombay, N. (2009). Sharing or commoditizing? A discussion of some of the socio-economic implications of Nunavik’s Hunter Support Program. *Polar Record* 45(233): 119-132.

³ Freeman M.M.R. (2005). ‘Just one more time before I die’: securing the relationship between Inuit and whales in the Arctic regions. In: Kishigami N., and J.M. Savelle (editors). *Indigenous use and management of marine resources*. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology (Senri Ethnological Studies 67): 59–76.

- First, we recommend a set of four policy tools designed to address traditional foods and the opportunity to contribute more reliably and sustainably to food systems in the North. These policies and programs would support hunters and facilitate the procurement of traditional foods for use in hospitals, schools and government institutions, develop appropriate marketing and management practices, and facilitate food inspections to ensure food safety regulations are met. Importantly, all of these policies would be co-developed with Indigenous governing bodies and recognize Indigenous governmental authority to make regulations respecting the harvesting and use of country/traditional foods.
- Second, we recommend the development and enhanced involvement in a set of two programs designed to promote climate change and adaptation programs and small-scale Indigenous commercial fisheries. These programs include the support for local processing facilities to offer the greatest benefit within and for communities. Country and traditional foods offer an irreplaceable contribution to Indigenous food systems far beyond their excellent nutritional value and supporting these endeavours now and for the future has widespread economic and community benefits.
- Third, we recommend significant enhancements and alterations to federal subsidy programs. We recommend that The Nutrition North program focus on support for local food production and harvesting through transportation subsidies for traditional foods, and for tools and supplies used for local food production and harvesting. Further, we recommend the introduction of a Northern Basic Income Allowance and Northern indexed federal income tax rates. Additionally, we recommend economic development supports to enable locally-owned supply and distribution chains for market foods, consideration of price capping for staples and ongoing monitoring of existing food programs and food insecurity rates.
- Fourth, we recommend an ongoing infrastructure investment strategy that honours previous fiscal commitments and continues to focus on transportation infrastructure (marine, air and ground) maintenance and enhancements. Deep water port construction, airport improvements, and road enhancements are all required to ensure remote and isolated communities maintain distribution networks and are best positioned to take advantage of economic development opportunities in the future.
- Fifth, we recommend a simplification and coordination of funding opportunities for Northern individuals, communities and businesses looking to develop local solutions, combined with a sharing network for projects and developers to communicate with case-study champions. A single-window platform to identify funding opportunities and a single-user application will encourage innovation and localization of food systems contributions and reduce the need to navigate multiple departmental and jurisdictional levels. A sharing network will allow for the communication of ideas, successes and challenges across the North to facilitate expansion of successes and minimize barriers.

Ultimately, our recommendations to enhance and support sustainable food systems in the North focus on increased participation and autonomy at the local level in the development and support of local solutions and local food production. All recommendations look to further Indigenous self-determination and self-governance through a distinctions-based approach. In combination with enhanced and simplified funding for local initiatives and sharing networks of Northern solutions, the North will be better positioned to support sustainable food systems and future economic development.

Introduction

Food insecurity levels in Northern Canada have hit critical levels, with 2015/16 household food insecurity levels in Nunavut at 50.8%, and 72% of Nunavummiut children under 18 living in food insecure households.⁴ Food insecurity has devastating effects on health, childhood development and education, and interferes with the human capital required to support and attract economic development to Northern communities. While many studies consider the important socio-economic perspectives of food insecurity, these recommendations are framed by an economic development perspective to provide guidance for support initiatives designed to foster locally-driven solutions.

Food insecurity in the North is the result of a complex suite of factors including: remote, small communities with weather-related access challenges; poverty and employment inequity; a dietary transition away from locally-sourced traditional foods towards southern-sourced market foods; the high costs of transporting southern foods to the North; and climate change.

The links between food security and economic development are multi-directional. Sustainable and secure food systems support healthier communities, which are better able to participate in the workforce. With the social costs of poor health reduced, the economic climate is more favorable to attract and retain businesses. As economic growth leads to investments in local infrastructure, the community further benefits through shared and improved services such as health, employment and educational opportunities, while increased incomes allows for greater food security (Figure 1). Sustainable food systems in the North are an integrated driver of healthier and more productive Northern communities.



Figure 1: The relationship between food security and economic development is symbiotic, with improvements in one supporting improvement in the other.

⁴ Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2015-16

A severe infrastructure deficit in the North, in combination with remote communities often impacted by weather-restricted access, limits transportation options and demands that most food imports are received by air, an expensive and often unpredictable option. Marine and ground transportation methods are only available seasonally and are predicted to be increasingly affected by climate change. Infrastructure supports more than merely the import of southern goods. High quality infrastructure is required for the export of local goods resulting from economic development such as resource extraction and can serve to attract and retain new business to Northern communities.

Current community initiatives to produce food locally include greenhouses, aquaponics, and farms as well as commercial enterprises in traditional foods such as caribou and fish. These initiatives are as diverse as the communities that have developed them and the environments they have developed in. From greenhouses that take advantage of the arctic summer's 24-hour sunlight, to year-round aquaponics systems producing plants and fish symbiotically, Northern communities are developing promising solutions to Northern food insecurity and are a rich source of experience towards the development of economically-viable opportunities in the North. Federal support for the transfer of these models into scalable and transferable economic opportunities could serve to reduce Northern reliance on imported food and lead to greater food security.

Country and traditional foods have an excellent nutritional value, play a crucial role in Indigenous culture, and contribute to strong, sustainable, self-reliant communities. However, these foods are becoming less prominent in the contemporary diets of Indigenous peoples due to a complex combination of colonial influences that have marginalized the role of country and traditional foods, and influenced a dietary transition towards imported market foods. This problem is only exacerbated by the high costs associated with food hunting, trapping and harvesting that restricts access to these foods by low income communities in particular. No Northern food system can be developed without recognition and support for the essential cultural, nutritional and spiritual role that traditional foods hold in Northern communities.

The complexity of factors that contribute to food insecurity in the North require solutions that address the issues from multiple perspectives, including the contribution and benefits of economic development in sustainable food systems. However, only through the advancement and investment in locally developed and driven solutions can sustainable food systems and food security be achieved.

Defining the North

For the purpose of this report, the term “North” is used to reference the three Northern territories, as well as the four negotiated land claims of Inuit Nunangat (Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut), and the provincial Norths.

Policy Recommendations Summary

Theme	Policy/ Program Tool	Sector and/or Jurisdiction and status
1: Traditional Foods*	1A: Country/Traditional Foods Policy Framework and Act	NEW Federal/Territorial/Provincial (FTP) Legislation/Policy
	1B: Country/Traditional Food Management and Marketing Board	NEW Federal Policy/Program
	1C: Wild Foods Inspection Act	NEW Federal Legislation
	1D: Hunter Support Programs	Existing regional programs extended
2: Local Food Production	2A: Climate Change and Adaptation Program (formerly Health Canada now Indigenous Services Canada)	Enhance existing federal program
	2B: Northern Integrated Commercial Fisheries	Implement proposed federal program – co-developed with National Indigenous Fisheries Institute conducting review
3: Federal Subsidy and Support Programs	3A: Nutrition North	Revise existing federal program (under review – consultation completed 2016)
	3B: Poverty reduction measures	NEW Federal Policy/Program
	3C: Community-Owned Market Food Supports	NEW Federal Policy/Program
4: Infrastructure Investment	4A: Northern Infrastructure Fund	Existing federal program with delays/deferrals on total funding commitment
5: Project Funding Coordination and Promotion	5A: Single Window Facilitated Funding Finder (F3)	NEW FTP Program
	5B: Innovative Food Solutions Sharing Network	NEW Federal Program

* In accordance with The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Article 32.2.1 regarding Inuit participation in the development of policies, and Article 5 regarding Wildlife and work with the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board.

Theme One: Traditional Foods

1A Country/Traditional Foods Policy Framework and Act

- Regulatory Framework and Guide for the harvesting, selling and marketing of country and traditional foods co-developed and administered by Indigenous institutions.

While the commercialization of country and traditional foods remain a complicated issue, there appears to be support for establishing a regulatory framework to guide and regulate the selling and marketing of country and traditional food. In particular, this would enable the public procurement of country and traditional foods for use in hospitals, schools and other government institutions. Echoing the Gordon Foundation's 2017 Country/Traditional Food Policy Hackathon, Food Secure Canada, a pan-Canadian alliance working to advance food security and food sovereignty, proposes a new Federal/Territorial/Provincial (FTP) Policy Framework, co-developed with Indigenous governing bodies to "provide a statutory foundation for all matters affecting the gathering, sharing and selling of country/traditional food in the North. This Act would recognize Indigenous government's' authority to make regulations respecting the harvesting and selling of country/traditional foods. It would enable the creation of Indigenous-led institution(s) to administer the legislation and set standards for the regulation of the harvesting and sharing of country/traditional food. The legislation would be opt-in and would apply to Indigenous governments that choose to exercise jurisdiction over the harvesting and sharing of country/traditional food" (Gordon Foundation 2018).⁵

1B Country/Traditional Foods Management and/or Marketing Board(s)

- National Boards to regulate, certify, brand and market country and traditional foods focusing on sustainability and increasing domestic and international trade opportunities.

Management and Marketing Boards would administer the Country/Traditional Foods Act, set regulations, certification for Country/Traditional Foods, and engage in training and capacity building. This certification would establish a national approach to certifying, branding, and marketing sustainable Inuit, First Nations, and Métis wildlife products for domestic and international trade. There may also be the opportunity to expand these management and marketing boards to include other Northern foods. The Certification and Market Access Program for Seals (CMAPS) may be a potential model to consider.

⁵ Recommendations on Country/Traditional Food from the Northern Policy Hackathon. The Gordon Foundation. 2018. <http://gordonfoundation.ca/app/uploads/2018/01/Northern-Policy-Hackathon-Digital.pdf>

1C Wild Foods Inspection Act

The current existing legislative and regulatory framework is an impediment to harvesting, selling and sharing country/traditional food. Food safety regulations (which do not take into account an appropriate balance between food safety and country/traditional food access) and practices (e.g. the unavailability of food inspection services in most northern communities) were considered to have a negative effect on access to country/traditional foods in communities.
(Gordon Foundation 2018)⁵

- Regulatory framework for the processing and sale of country and traditional food within the North and to support the expansion of domestic and international trade.

Specific food safety regulations are required to guide and enable the processing and sale of country/traditional foods both within the North and as export commodities to the rest of Canada and internationally. A Wild Foods Inspection Act would be under the jurisdiction of the Canada Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), existing alongside the Meat and Fish Inspection Acts, with an Indigenous Advisory Board to oversee the Act's implementation. At the territorial level, Nunavut recently developed food safety guidelines for serving country/traditional food in government-funded facilities and community programs, which could serve as a starting point for food safety regulations across the North (Government of Nunavut 2017).⁶

1D Hunter Support Programs

- Expanded funding to ensure sustained national support for hunting and harvesting activities.

In many parts of the North, Hunter Support Programs (HSPs) offer an innovative blending of market and subsistence or sharing economies by purchasing meat harvested by hunters to give to community members. Hunter Support Programs in Nunavik have been characterized as an “interesting mechanism through which Inuit have tried to accommodate their need for cash with their desire to preserve a variety of socio-economic institutions associated with their subsistence way of life” (Gombay, 2009, 119).⁷ Established in 1975 as part of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, but only formally implemented in 1983, each community under the program receives a set amount of core funding which they can choose to disperse as they see fit to support hunting and harvesting activities in their community.

Hunter Support Programs have a stronger economic impact than other publically funded programs aimed at consumption (social assistance for example). A 2003 study of the HSP in Kuujuarapik found that the \$198,000 spent by the HSP produced \$482,555 worth of country/traditional foods (Martin

⁶ Serving Country Food in Government-Funded Facilities and Community Programs. Government of Nunavut and the Nunavut Food Security Coalition. <http://www.nunavutfoodsecurity.ca/sites/default/files/news/Serving%20country%20food.pdf>

⁷ Gombay, N. (2009). Sharing or commoditizing? A discussion of some of the socio-economic implications of Nunavik's Hunter Support Program. *Polar Record* 45(233): 119-132.

2003)⁸ – increasing its economic impact by 2.5 times (every dollar spent on HSPs resulted in \$2.5 worth of country/traditional food). HSPs are also slightly different than country/traditional food markets in that hunters are paid for their labour and costs, as opposed to the meat they harvest – and that the food is shared with the community collectively, rather than purchased by an individual. However, others note that while maintaining cultural traditions of sharing country/traditional foods, HSPs have also altered those relations, creating a more institutional framework, and less of a reciprocal set of relations within a community (Martin 2003; Chabot 2001; Gombay 2014).^{7,9,10} Within Inuit culture there is a commitment to sharing country/traditional food and strong opposition by many to selling country/traditional food. With more working in the wage economy, the tension has become how to find the time and money to continue to harvest food, while still doing so in a way as to enable people to continue to share it.

Theme Two: Local Food Production

2A Climate Change and Health Adaptation Program

- Ongoing and expanded support for community projects addressing climate change adaptation.

The Climate Change and Health Adaptation Program (CCHAP) at Indigenous Services Canada is designed to build capacity for climate change adaptation by funding community-designed and driven projects. The program funds First Nations and Inuit communities' efforts to build capacity to adapt to the health impacts of climate change. Past areas of adaptation and research have examined food security and access to country/traditional food. An expansion to the CCHAP, and an increase in the length of project grants would enhance communities' ability to address and respond to climate change impacts on their food system.

2B Northern Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative

- Supporting small-scale Indigenous commercial fisheries through increasing regional processing capacity and investment to ports and transportation infrastructure.

In 2017 the federal government announced the development of a Northern Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative, to be co-developed with the National Indigenous Fisheries Institute. The intent of this program is to build off of the existing regional Indigenous fisheries programs to include regions that were previously ineligible for support (because of existing land claim settlements) - notably Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, northern Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador. This program is a

⁸ Martin, T. (2003). *De la banquise au congélateur: mondialisation et culture au Nunavik*. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval.

⁹ Chabot M. 2001. *De la production domestique au marché: l'économie contemporaine des familles Inuit du Nunavik*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Sociology, Université Laval.

¹⁰ Gombay, N. (2014). 'Poaching'—What's in a name? Debates about law, property, and protection in the context of settler colonialism. *Geoforum*, 55, 1-12.

timely opportunity to prioritize small-scale Indigenous commercial fisheries and increase regional processing capacity to strengthen domestic markets.

As part of this initiative, it is imperative that support and investment are directed to ports, processing and transportation infrastructure, so that Northern and Indigenous fishers can retain maximum value for their catch. A study commissioned by the Nunavut Department of Environment to examine the feasibility of establishing an offloading facility for offshore vessels in Nunavut suggests such a facility would not only reduce costs for Nunavut fishing vessels, but also bring in \$1.1 million dollars in wages to the regional economy (Burke Consulting et al. 2013 as quoted in the Nunavut Fisheries Strategy 2016)¹¹.

Theme Three: Federal Subsidy and Support Programs

3A Nutrition North

- Enhanced support for local food production, non-profit food markets and hunting and harvesting of country and traditional foods

Nutrition North Canada (NNC) offers a weight-based subsidy for food suppliers. It is intended to provide Northerners and isolated communities with better access to perishable nutritious foods. The NNC program plays a significant role in supporting market food access. The shortcomings of the "market-based subsidy model" of Nutrition North have been well-documented by academia, the media, as well as Indigenous representative organizations, and have already been shared with the government as part of its ongoing consultation process to revise the program. Some notable concerns are price inequities, community eligibility, rates of subsidization, food item eligibility, and Northern retailer accountability.

Nutrition North does not focus on support for local food production or community infrastructure like community freezers, meat saws and grinders that could enable a greater reliance on local, traditional, food sources. Only in very specific cases is intercommunity transport of traditional food subsidized under NNC. There are other programs at the territorial level with an objective to reduce food costs. For instance, the two main governing bodies in Nunavik—Makivik Corporation and the Kativik Regional Government—support a subsidy program (through a specific agreement with Transport Quebec) that helps to reduce the cost of essential household items in the North. Under this program, the cost of certain staple food items is reduced by 20%.

Our recommendations here focus on how Nutrition North could better support local food production and harvest:

- Reallocate the Nutrition North subsidy to include non-profit food markets & the transportation of traditional foods. One local fish restaurant owner in Northwest Territories lamented that since the

¹¹ Nunavut Fisheries Strategy: 2016-2020. (2016). Department of Environment, Fisheries and Sealing Division; Government of Nunavut. http://oceantrackingnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/FisheriesStrategy_Text_EN_Web.pdf

changes to the transportation subsidies for country/traditional food, they could no longer afford to continue to buy 4,000 lbs. of Arctic char from Broughton Island (Qikiqtarjuaq). The cost of shipping increased from \$1.65/lb. to \$4.00 lb. (Ecology North 2015).¹²

- Enable subsidies for necessary non-food items such as gardening, farming, hunting, gathering and harvesting supplies, and equipment.
- Increase support for programs enhancing access to traditional and community grown foods. Under the Country Foods Initiative of NNC, hunters are only eligible for the subsidy if their meats are inspected at a federally-regulated meat processing facility - of which there are very few. "Restricting the flow of country food - by requiring it to be approved through federally-licensed processing facilities - greatly reduces the ability of these communities to govern their own food systems" (Burnett et al. 2015, 151).¹³
- Provide an incentive for retailers to purchase locally-produced and harvested foods. Currently food producers in remote communities must compete with subsidized imported food, creating a market disincentive to grow food.

3B Poverty reduction measures

- [Guaranteed Basic Northern Income allowance and tax rates indexed to Northern cost of living](#)

Inuit and other Northern communities are disproportionately affected by income disparity as high paying jobs are more often filled with southern-sourced labour. The greatest demonstration of this is in Nunavut, where the average income for the non-Indigenous population is greater than four times that of the Inuit population.¹⁴ Income inequality in Northern communities can create local food deserts, where healthy food is available but unaffordable to low-income people. Low incomes affect Indigenous peoples participating in country-food harvesting as well, where the increasing costs of hunting equipment (e.g. motor boats, snowmobiles, ammunition, gasoline) are barriers to access which can further increase inequality within communities.¹⁵

To address the issue of pervasive poverty, and the impact on health, and the health of future generations, a Northern Basic Income Allowance should be provided to eligible Northerners which takes into consideration the cost of living in Northern communities. Further, federal income tax rates should be indexed to accommodate the high cost of living in the North.

¹² Building Localized Economies: A Gathering to serve people and the environment. (2015). Ecology North.

<http://ecologynorth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Final-Report-Building-Localized-Economies-Ecology-North.pdf>

¹³ Burnett, K., Skinner, K., & LeBlanc, J. (2015). From Food Mail to Nutrition North Canada: reconsidering federal food subsidy programs for northern Ontario. *Canadian Food Studies/La Revue canadienne des études sur l'alimentation*, 2(1), 141-156.

¹⁴ 2016 Canadian Census. Catalogue # [98-400-X2016357](#)

¹⁵ Ford, J. D., Smit, B., & Wandel, J. (2006). Vulnerability to climate change in the Arctic: a case study from Arctic Bay, Canada. *Global Environmental Change*, 16(2), 145-160.

3C Community-Owned Market Food Supports

- Supports for locally-owned supply and distribution chains for market foods, consideration of price capping for staples and ongoing monitoring of existing programs and food insecurity rates

In some remote communities, there is only one retail establishment to purchase market foods and other goods. Often these retail establishments are southern-owned, with no local pricing competition and decision-making occurring without local input or representation. In communities where local Co-Operatives or locally owned retail outlets have been established, residents benefit from pricing competition, employment opportunities and economic development that stays within the community to contribute to local improvements.

Federal programming should provide economic development supports (financing and business services) to enable local communities to develop their own supply and distribution chains for market foods. These services should seek to provide alternatives and pricing competition to monopolistic markets and work towards increasing local economic opportunities and self-governance.

In the interim, until local markets can provide pricing competition or local revenue return, federal programming should consider monitoring and potentially price capping essential staples in remote communities. These considerations should be combined with ongoing evaluation of existing food programs (such as Nutrition North Canada) and ongoing monitoring of food insecurity rates in the North.

Theme Four: Infrastructure Investment

4A Northern Infrastructure Fund

- Dedicated and protected funding for energy, transportation and internet infrastructure in the North.

To address the pressing infrastructure needs in the North related to energy, transportation, storage and processing facilities, and internet capabilities, dedicated funding for Northern infrastructure projects should be created through a Northern Infrastructure Fund. The Federal government had announced \$2 billion over 11 years earmarked for infrastructure in Northern and rural communities, however it is now saying it will only spend \$200 million over next 5 years, and delay the rest. The establishment of a dedicated fund could speed up the dispersal of these funds.

Theme Five: Project Funding Coordination and Promotion

5A Single-Window Facilitated Funding Finder (F3)

- Universal applications to apply for multi-jurisdictional funding opportunities to minimize administration requirements for communities and facilitate maximum funding uptake.

Disjointed and uncoordinated funding opportunities across federal, provincial and territorial governments and departments currently results in the need to navigate multiple application processes to access funding. This situation requires capacity-limited communities to expend significant resources identifying and navigating application procedures, often missing opportunities or deadlines and leaving funding underutilized. Unnecessarily complicated and cumbersome application procedures create a dependency upon government to assist and guide applicants to find, assess and apply for funding, impeding the intended purpose of funding – to connect it with need.

A new single-window Facilitated Funding Finder (F3) would only require applicants (communities, individuals, businesses, etc.) to fill out a single, universal application to apply for all federal, provincial and territorial funding opportunities across all governmental departments. The universal application would be developed in collaboration with federal, provincial and territorial funding partners to ensure that all required information was collected during the application process so as to ensure eligibility assessment can be fully conducted at the funding source. This is intended to reduce the onus on applicants to assess and determine their own eligibility. Newly introduced funding opportunities would be actively promoted (i.e. electronically pushed) to applicants identified to be potentially eligible through the universal application.

An essential component of the program would be locally-delivered, in-person training to roll-out the program, facilitate registration and encourage universal application completion. This could potentially be done en masse at other gatherings (e.g. conferences or National meetings), but may also require in-community training to ensure sustainability through the training of multiple administrators. By ensuring multiple administrators are familiar with the application system at the local-level, gaps or loss of capacity caused by a discontinuous work force can be reduced and mitigated. Critical information would also be gathered by trainers from applicants on required modifications and potential improvements to the program and application interface to ensure consistent program enhancement focused on streamlined, facilitated processes.

5B Innovative Food Solutions Sharing Network

- Active promotion of social enterprise projects and social entrepreneurship through an annual competition and showcase of diverse projects addressing Northern food systems.

Many smaller-scale food projects have been developed in the North to address issues of: over-reliance on imported foods, distribution challenges, and access to healthy foods impeded by high prices and low

incomes. These social innovation projects have successfully navigated through the many unique (e.g. economic, climate, geographical) challenges of the North and have much to teach others about the development of transferable models to other communities. However, there is no existing method to disseminate information about the diverse, innovative and adaptive models across the North. As such, those looking to open a greenhouse or explore micro granting are often not aware of other successful projects that could offer valuable information to avoid pitfalls and increase chances of success in new business development.

An Innovative Food Solutions Sharing Network would look to create a living network of case-study champions to showcase Northern food social enterprise projects and social entrepreneurship (successes AND challenges). An annual competition would seek out new projects of significance across the North in a variety of sectors (e.g. fishing, aquaponics, distribution, farming) to highlight potential for growth and innovation in these sectors. Project spokespersons, or Food Solutions Network Champions (FSNCs), would then be identified to create a network for those looking to develop similar projects. Indigenous perspectives place high value on relationships, and networks of knowledge and people are best connected in person. For this reason, FSNCs should seek to present annually at events with high attendance by Northern partners (conferences, general meetings, National events). The federal government should support these conferences/events to ensure adequate coverage is afforded to presenting about the various projects to new potential investors or community partners. Funds paid to FSNCs may be distributed such that part or all of the funding would be directed back to the original project and part to the individual FSNC.

Next Steps

The proposed policy recommendations have been developed from insights through internal and external research as well as through engagement at a Roundtable event in Whitehorse, Yukon which was well-attended by diverse, local stakeholders. Overwhelmingly what was heard was a desire for greater participation and autonomy in Northern food systems by those most directly impacted.

Our recommendations to enhance and support sustainable food systems in the North focus on the development and support of local solutions and local food production. In combination with enhanced and simplified funding for local initiatives and sharing networks of Northern solutions, the North would be better positioned to support sustainable food systems and future economic development.