



FOOD FOR THOUGHT



Food Justice and Security Toolkit

2024



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Land Acknowledgement	1
Introduction	2
Community Context	3
South Vancouver Neighbourhood House ..	4
SVNH Food Hub	5
Definitions	6
Frameworks	7
Recipe for Identifying Barriers to Food	
Access	8
Best Practices	10
Conclusion	13
References	14



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that our research is conducted on the traditional, ancestral, unceded and stolen territories of the Coast Salish peoples—the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh), and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations. These lands were never relinquished through treaties or agreements, and remain sovereign territories.

As settlers residing on these lands, we recognize the enduring impacts of colonialism, particularly its disruption to food sovereignty for Indigenous peoples. We acknowledge that the language we use, including urban planning terms, are rooted in colonial frameworks and thus, carries limitations and creates violence. We are deeply grateful to the Indigenous scholars and community members whose work informs and challenges our own.

We are committed to contributing to the decolonization of food systems and supporting efforts toward food justice for all. This can only be achieved through constant and continued decolonial action.

We invite everyone to take time to learn about the territories they reside and work on, including the histories, languages, and ongoing stewardship of these lands. A helpful starting point is visiting native-land.ca to explore the Indigenous territories you occupy. Learning is only the first step—consider how you can take meaningful actions to support Indigenous sovereignty and justice in your daily lives and work.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Toolkit

This toolkit was developed in response to the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House's (SVNH) call for deeper understanding and increased funding to advance food justice in South Vancouver. It offers practical guidance and best practices for equitable food justice work, focusing on understanding local needs, fostering meaningful community engagement, and addressing the root causes of food insecurity in so-called "Vancouver." Designed for non-profits, academic institutions, and individuals passionate about community food initiatives, this resource aims to empower you to drive community-led solutions to food justice challenges. We would like to thank Joey Liu and Prabhi Deol from SVNH for their immense guidance and support throughout this project, as well as Vanessa Pat for graphic visual design.

About ACAM

The Asian Canadian and Migration Studies (ACAM) Program is a multidisciplinary initiative that examines the history, culture, and contemporary experiences of Asian communities in Canada, as well as global patterns of Asian migration. This project was produced for ACAM 320J (Asian Canadian Research and Engagement Studio) and received support from the UBC Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund. We are grateful for the support of our professors Dr. JP Catungal and christina lee 李嘉明 for their time and expertise during the creation of this toolkit.

About the Authors

Sabrina Qistina is a first-generation mixed-race Malaysian settler studying Geography at the University of British Columbia. Noah Tsang is a second-generation Cantonese Canadian settler studying Food, Nutrition, and Health at the University of British Columbia.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

South Vancouver

Residents:

80% ...are racialized

56% ...are newcomers

11% ...do not speak
English

Source: SVNH Food Hub Infographics (2024)

South Vancouver

South Vancouver is among the most diverse and multicultural areas of Vancouver, yet it has **long struggled with challenges related to food access**. A notable issue is the limited availability of grocery stores. For instance, a 2020 study by Aaron Li identified Victoria-Fraserview as the neighborhood in “top concern and need of a grocery store.” Compounding this issue is the **historical underinvestment in social services and infrastructure** in South Vancouver compared to other neighbourhoods in Vancouver. Together, these challenges highlight the pressing need for increased funding and research to enhance community food access in the region.

FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGES

South Vancouver is a “food desert, with limited access to walkable grocery stores, markets, and community food programs.” The following factors make accessing food even more challenging to residents:

KEY FACTORS



Limited
transportation



Low
walkability



High social
isolation



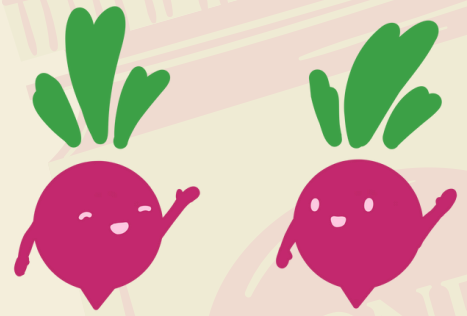
Few social
services



Language &
cultural barriers

Source: SVNH Food Hub Infographics (2024)

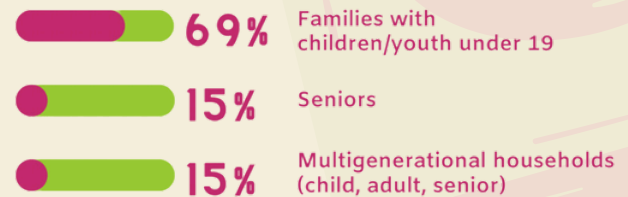
SOUTH VANCOUVER NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE



THE COMMUNITY WE SERVE



Our participants:



Source: SVNH Food Hub Infographics (2024)

Historically, community organizations such as South Vancouver Neighbourhood House were born in response to increased isolation and fragmentation caused by the rise in urbanization and globalization. More than just providing community members with programming and social services, they play an integral role in community development and capacity building.

Thus, established in 1977, SVNH has been a central point of connection for community members across South Vancouver neighbourhoods for decades, offering programs such as Food Programs, Seniors' Wellness, Youth Leadership, Licensed Preschool and Out-of-School Care, Newcomer Settlement Services, Employment supports, Adult Day Programs, Community Events and more.

For over a decade, they have led community-based food security initiatives, including intercultural meals, community kitchens, garden programs, the South Van Neighbourhood Food Network, and a Food Distribution Hub (2018-2020) with the Greater Vancouver Food Bank. These free or low-cost programs are tailored to the needs, interests, and languages of South Vancouver residents.



SVNH FOOD HUB

OUR MODEL

South Vancouver Neighbourhood House (SVNH) leads the Food Hub in collaboration with 10+ community partners called Spokes:



Source: SVNH Food Hub Infographics (2024)

The South Vancouver Community Food Hub is a network of over 10 community partners working to address the high level of food insecurity and inequitable access to services for South Vancouver residents, which was highlighted and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As one of the only community food support programs in the South Vancouver region, SVNH and partners are working hard to make sure South Vancouver residents have equitable access to food, connection and services closer to home.

DEFINITIONS

Food Security

- Access to “sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (BCCDC)
- Fulfillment of immediate food needs



Food Justice

- Includes aspects of food security, and adds elements of community building and fulfilment of cultural needs
- A decolonial concept that strives for long-term systems change

Thus, the SVNH Food Hub promotes both food security through its hamper program, and food justice through longer-term endeavours including community-engaged research to gain insights from residents about food access needs and their lived experiences, alongside community building.

How do you think colonial histories have shaped current food systems and access to food in our communities?

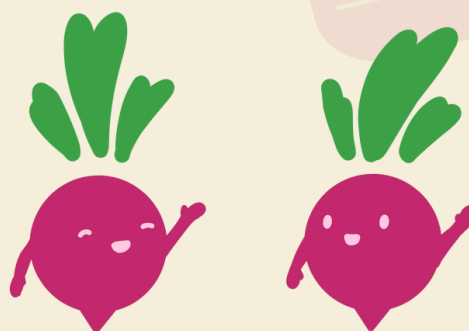
Decolonial Framework

Decolonial framework critiques the colonial legacies embedded in the current food systems and aims to reclaim ancestral foodways and practices. It seeks to dismantle the capitalist and colonial structures that marginalize traditional food systems.

Who are the key stakeholders (e.g., policymakers, community organizations) in transforming food systems? How can they work together effectively?

FRAMEWORKS

Understanding your practices—whether as a community builder, food justice activist, or equity advocate—is key in recognizing your role within **larger systems of power and change.**



Systems Change Framework

This framework emphasizes transforming the entire food system, rather than making incremental improvements. It advocates for overhauling the existing industrial food system, which is often characterized by corporate control, inequity, and unsustainability.

RECIPE FOR IDENTIFYING BARRIERS AND GAPS TO FOOD ACCESS

Servings: 1 community assessment, with ongoing servings of action!

Ingredients:

- 1 team of engaged community members
- A dash of curiosity
- 1 map of your community or neighborhood
- Pen and paper (or digital note-taking tools)



Instructions:

Step 1: Prepare the Pantry – Assessing Food Accessibility & Affordability

Gather your ingredients: Start by looking at the food sources in your community.

- How do people get to the places (grocery stores, etc.) where they access food?
- Key gaps to look out for:
 - Limited access to grocery stores or fresh produce in certain areas (food deserts).
 - High cost of healthy food in lower-income neighborhoods.
 - Lack of culturally relevant food options.

Step 2: Stir in Accessibility – Assessing Food Access

Season in context: Think about external factors like transportation that may disrupt food access.

- Are there barriers like long distances to travel, lack of transportation, or limited operating hours at food outlets?
- Key gaps to look out for:
 - Long distances to travel for fresh food, especially in rural or underserved areas.
 - Limited operating hours of food outlets that do not align with community needs (e.g., after-hours or weekend access).

RECIPE FOR IDENTIFYING BARRIERS AND GAPS TO FOOD ACCESS

Step 3: Add a Pinch of Agency – Empowering Communities

- **Mix in some empowerment:** Reflect on whether the community is at the centre of discussions around food security and food justice.
- Do people have a say in their local food system? Are there opportunities for community members to have a hand in shaping food policies, creating local solutions, or growing their own food?
- Key gaps to look out for:
 - Lack of community involvement in food system decision-making.
 - Insufficient resources for community-driven food initiatives.
 - Marginalized voices not being heard or prioritized in food policy.

Step 4: Fold in Structural Barriers – Tackling Systemic Challenges

Stir in some big-picture thinking: Look at the broader structural or systemic issues affecting food access.

- What government policies, corporate practices, or historical inequities are influencing food access in your community?
- Key gaps to look out for:
 - Discriminatory policies affecting marginalized communities.
 - Industrial agriculture policies pushing out local food systems.
 - Barriers in food assistance programs or lack of coordination.



Step 5: Taste Test – Mapping the Gaps and Barriers

Time for a final review: Now that you've assessed all the ingredients, map out the gaps and barriers in your food access system.

- What are the biggest obstacles you've identified?
- Where are the opportunities for improvement?
- **Adjust the recipe if needed:** Consider which barriers are most urgent to address and which ones might need longer-term change.

BEST PRACTICES

Researchers

Engage in Community-Engaged Research (CER)

Prioritize participatory research that involves residents directly, ensuring that their lived experiences shape the study.

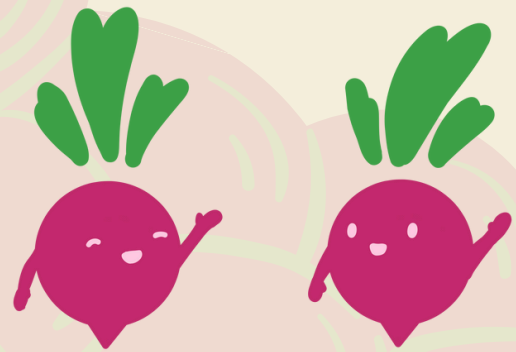
Intersectional Analysis

Consider intersecting factors such as gender, race, immigration status, housing insecurity, and access to healthcare when analyzing food insecurity.

Ethical Data Use

Ensure transparency about how data will be used and its impact on the communities involved. Secure informed consent and offer opportunities for community feedback.

Prompt: How have I incorporated the *lived experiences* and *knowledge* of South Vancouver residents into my research?



Build Long-Term Partnerships

Collaborate with community organizations like South Vancouver Neighbourhood House for sustained impact rather than short-term interventions.

Prompt: How will my research contribute to tangible outcomes for food justice in the community?

Policy Recommendations

Provide clear, actionable insights that align with local needs, based on the research findings. Focus on practical solutions that institutions can advocate for.

BEST PRACTICES

Community Organizations

Community-Led Initiatives

Prioritize initiatives co-led by residents, fostering a sense of ownership and trust in the programs.

Focus on Accessibility and Inclusion

Ensure programs are accessible to all, including those with language barriers, mobility challenges, or mental health needs.

Prompt: Are there cultural, linguistic, or systemic barriers that I might be overlooking?

Prompt: What methods am I using to build trust with residents and encourage sustained participation?

Culturally Relevant Food Programs

Offer culturally appropriate food options that reflect the diverse backgrounds of the community, including staples important to immigrant and refugee populations.

Holistic Support Services

Integrate food programs with other services (e.g., mental health, employment, housing) to address broader systemic issues linked to food insecurity.

Community Check-Ins

In the face of shifting contexts, it is imperative to regularly check in with community members to ensure that programs and initiatives continue to address community needs and make adjustments as necessary.

BEST PRACTICES

City Planners & Policy Makers

Collaboration with Local Organizations

Work closely with community organizations and residents to identify the issues and develop food security solutions together that are sustainable and responsive to community needs.

Affordable Food Hubs

Designate spaces and provide incentives for affordable grocery stores, farmers' markets, and community kitchens within low-income areas.

Prompt: To what extent have I centered food security and food justice as part of planning neighbourhood(s)?

Prompt: What barriers exist in current transit systems that limit food access, and how can I address these gaps through infrastructure improvements or policy changes?

Public Transportation to Food Access Points

Improve transit routes to connect low-income neighbourhoods with food access points such as markets, grocery stores, and food banks.

Streamlining Urban Planning Processes for Food Justice Solutions

Leverage urban planning tools and mechanisms (e.g., zoning, permitting) to support food justice initiatives. Simplify these processes, in order to encourage the participation of neighbourhood and its residents, in the development and sustainability of equitable food systems.

CONCLUSION

This toolkit has outlined best practices to identify gaps, promote food justice, and foster community engagement. By prioritizing community leadership, accessibility, and equity, we can collectively address systemic barriers, respond to shifting needs, and build stronger, more equitable food systems for the communities that need it most.

A LIVING, BREATHING TOOLKIT

This is not a static document but a foundation for **ongoing collaboration** with community. As communities grow and change, we encourage you to revisit and refine these practices to ensure they remain impactful and responsive.



SCAN TO
DONATE

If you have the
means to do
so, please
consider
donating to
the Food Hub!



REFERENCES

About us. (2017). South Vancouver Neighbourhood House.
<https://www.southvan.org/about-us/>

BC Centre for Disease Control. (2022). Defining food security and food insecurity in British Columbia: Process background. BC Centre for Disease Control, Population Public Health.
http://www.bccdc.ca/Documents/Defining%20Food%20Security%20and%20Food%20Insecurity%20in%20BC_Process%20Background_FINAL.docx.pdf

City of Vancouver. (2023). Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities– June 28, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/live/u9wOv7fyaBg?si=vA6wmXaZ2uNguoIN>

Community Research Food Justice Project Proposal. (n.d.). South Vancouver Neighbourhood House in partnership with Langara College.

Holden, M., Firth, C., & Fassihi, F. (2021). South Vancouver & Marpole Neighbourhood Equity Report. Simon Fraser University in Partnership with South Vancouver Neighbourhood House and Marpole Neighbourhood House.
<https://www.southvan.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2023/05/South-Vancouver-Neighbourhood-Equity-Report-2021-new-cover-image.pdf>

Lee, C. (2018). Vancouver Chinatown Social Cohesion Report. hua foundation.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EBWH1xF-fenctdMm55Ay8R7SHGZ5TFOa/view?usp=embed_facebook

Li, A. (2020). Exploring Food Deserts in Vancouver, BC. ArcGIS StoryMaps.
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/258O2fec824b4264a46cc712d1a9baf5>

Reframing South Vancouver Initiative. (2023). SVNH Reframing South Vancouver.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EsMs44UsbA4Tp2GYtgOUa3lhFEqujy-z/view?usp=embed_facebook

REFERENCES

Shaw, P. (2022). Review: Neighbourhood Houses: Building Community in Vancouver. BC Studies. https://bcstudies.com/book_film_review/neighbourhood-houses-building-community-in-vancouver/

South Vancouver Food Hub. (2024). Food Hub participant program guide.

South Vancouver Neighbourhood House. (n.d.). South Vancouver Food Hub Infographic [Poster].

South Vancouver Neighbourhood House. (2023). Presentation to the City of Vancouver. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XrSSExFoGFRQOkz1lr91pzHCDgSmqnyL/view?usp=embed_facebook

South Vancouver Neighbourhood House and LevelUp Planning Collaborative Inc. (2023). South Vancouver Neighbourhood House-Reframing South Vancouver Initiative Evaluation Report. <https://www.southvan.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2023/05/SVNH-RSVI-Evaluation-Report.pdf>

South Vancouver Neighbourhood House and Reframing South Vancouver Initiative. (2023). Reframing South Van Journey Mural. Mural.Co. <https://app.mural.co/t/tcfw6163/m/tcfw6163/1677612392513/cb68aecb3213cded5a38afe29aa7c04778b548a2>

Thurber, S. (2021). Exploring the creation of a local and equitable Food Hub in South Vancouver. South Vancouver Neighbourhood House in collaboration with UBC Sustainability Scholars Program. https://sustain.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/2020-075_Exploring%20the%20creation%20of%20a%20food%20hub_Thurber.pdf

Yan, M. C., & Lauer, S. (2021). Neighbourhood Houses: Building Community in Vancouver. University of British Columbia Press.