

LFS 350 Project Proposal:  
Our Collaboration with Pacific Community Resources Society

## **Introduction**

In order to further regional food security and food literacy in the population, effective community development plays an indispensable role. We are interested in understanding the food programs offered by Pacific Community Resources Society (PCRS) in order to improve purchasing efficiency and positively contribute to food security. The goal of PCRS is to be environmentally friendly and collaborate with local, healthy food suppliers and living wage employers. Our aim is to recommend food purchasing methods to PCRS that are aligned with their organization's values.

We will be working with the PCRS youth centres located at West Broadway, Guildford and Newton. Our objective is to gain an understanding of the food purchasing practices in each facility and identify specific practices that are unaligned with PCRS values. Our team poses the following questions: How are purchasing decisions made in each facility? How can we find food suppliers that are living wage employers, local growers, and/or suppliers of healthy food? How can we use our results to provide practical recommendations that will have positive effects on food purchasing habits? We will explore our inquiry questions by interviewing staff from all three centres with survey questions, such as what type of food is purchased and why certain foods are chosen over others. Based on the results of our data, we will make recommendations for the Guildford youth centre.

## **Background & Significance**

PCRS is a non-profit organization that builds healthy and inclusive communities by providing programs to support youth, adults, and families across the Lower Mainland (About Us, 2016). PCRS purchases and prepares food for many of their programs because they hold a belief that no individual can optimally engage and thrive in their community on an empty stomach. However, there is currently a disconnect between food purchasing practices at PCRS and the organization's goal of promoting food security.

Our project is designed to build on PCRS' efforts to promote food security in the Lower Mainland by investigating the accessibility facet of food security in their current food purchasing practices. Accessibility, in terms of food security, is defined as individuals having access to sufficient resources that allow them to obtain foods that support a nutritious diet (Food Security, 2006). Our team will take a closer look at how issues of accessibility may be restricting food purchasing decisions at PCRS.

Problems with accessibility are found globally. Dachner et al. (2010) found that fifty percent of individuals in their study of low-income households in Toronto had reported hunger

and twenty-five percent reported going without food for a whole day. These individuals reported feeling forced to purchase the least expensive foods, which stripped them of accessibility to foods of their choice. Kang and Rajagopal (2014) found that food purchasers in hotels found it challenging to buy local foods due to reasons, such as perceiving the commute to farmers markets to be time consuming and impractical. Their findings indicated an underlying problem of not knowing where or how to purchase locally grown foods. There appears to be a knowledge gap regarding how the benefits of purchasing healthy and local foods can outweigh the costs. Our project is designed to find how we can unite a practical food purchasing plan with food security to give all individuals access to healthy, locally-grown food. Our research can help PCRS become a model to demonstrate that regardless of socioeconomic status, accessibility to healthy, local food can be feasible.

## Methodology

We will conduct interviews with members of PCRS (see Table 1) involved in food purchases at the three PCRS youth centres and give recommendations to the Guildford centre. Identical survey questions will be asked in person or through email. Responses to these survey questions will be referenced against PCRS's core values (to be determined), indicating where improvements can be made. External retailers may also be contacted in order to determine whether their operations align with PCRS's values. After identifying internal purchase practices and/or suppliers that differ from these values, recommendations will be made to PCRS administration.

Table 1. Food Systems Mapping of PCRS Youth Centres

### Within Youth Centre

*Stakeholders:* Full/part-time roles, budget handling and projection, food service, youth outreach staff

*Administrators:* Allison Parker (WBYC), Andrea Mears (Manager of Support Services)

*Youth:* Number/age of participants

*Programming:* Role of food in program, programming times

*Infrastructure:* Kitchen, fridges, storage space, vehicles

### Local community

*Vicinity to:* schools, food outlets including fast food and restaurants, major supermarkets, smaller grocery stores, alternative grocers, home produce gardens, other community organizations, governmental support in a one/two block radius)

*Retailers:* Tailor questions around PCRS' core values to determine if these retailers fulfill the requirements

## **Ethical Considerations**

Actions will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of responses from respondents who wish to remain anonymous. We will state our goal of identifying ways in which PCRS staff can improve on food purchasing decisions in a clear, but non-confrontational manner, to prevent feelings of intimidation among survey participants.

Our research questions will identify the individuals purchasing food with program money and the reasons behind their purchasing decisions. PCRS participants will be given the opportunity to have their comments kept anonymous in order to protect their relationships with other staff or administrators as per the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research on Humans (Panel on Research Ethics, 2016).

## **Success Factors**

Success will be measured from student and partner perspectives. We hope to gain insight on local food security, the demands associated with providing food in a non-profit facility, the challenges associated with food purchasing, and the elements necessary for managing an institution in a community based setting. Our insights will be crafted into our recommendations, which will reflect our level of understanding about the needs of PCRS youth centres. Feedback from our partners on our recommendations will indicate the accuracy of our understanding.

We will consider our project a success if we can compile useful suggestions for food purchasing. We will assess this quantitatively by asking PCRS for the number of suggestions they are considering to implement. The satisfaction levels of our PCRS partners of our efforts to incorporate their values into food purchasing decisions will be an indicator of success.

To achieve success, we must keep in mind our primary objective of aligning the goals of PCRS with their food purchasing methods. Asset based development should be carried out and suggestions will be tailored towards both staff and the administration team. We will achieve this by meeting with PCRS staff once a week and conducting at least one interview at each location with an individual responsible for food purchasing.

## References

Dachner, N., Ricciuto, L., Kirkpatrick, S., & Tarasuk, V. (2010). Food Purchasing and Food Insecurity Among Low-income Families in Toronto. *Canadian Journal Of Dietetic Practice And Research*, 71(3), e50-e56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3148/71.3.2010.e50>

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Kang, S., & Rajagopal, L. (2014). Perceptions of Benefits and Challenges of Purchasing Local Foods Among Hotel Industry Decision Makers. *Journal Of Foodservice Business Research*, 17(4), 301-322. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15378020.2014.945889>

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