Summary of Northern Distribution Meetings

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Background

In the fall of 2016, the Greenbelt Fund approached food system stakeholders from Northern Ontario to assess opportunities to collaborate on food distribution in the region. This push to bring people together resulted in two in-person meetings, and over 20 teleconference meetings where stakeholders from across the North shared their understanding and perspectives on the challenges associated with the food value chain. This lead to a core group of people striking a steering committee to move this work forward.

Northern Distribution Network Steering Committee Members:

Peggy Baillie, Local Food and Farm Co-operatives Inc.. Warren ON
Sam Cheuk, Ontario Greenbelt Fund, Toronto ON
Tom Coleman, XXXXXX
Kendal Donahue, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs, Thunder Bay ON
Emmett Ferguson, Ekonomos, Toronto ON
Volker Kromm, Regional Food Distribution Association, Thunder Bay ON
Joseph Leblanc, Social Planning Council of Sudbury, Sudbury ON
Dan Munshaw, City of Thunder Bay, Thunder Bay ON
Franco Naccarato, Ontario Greenbelt Fund, Toronto, ON
Vincent Ng, Thunder Bay Public Health, Thunder Bay ON
John Okonmah, Muskegowuk Tribal Council, Timmins ON
Jason Perrier, Loudon`s Food Service, Thunder Bay ON
Arik Theijsmeijer, FedNor / Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, Sudbury ON
Dan Tukendorf, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association,
Stephanie Vanthof, Northern Ontario Farm Innnovation Alliance (NOFIA), New Liskeard ON

The initial year of meetings allowed the group to bring together more people involved in improving Northern Food distribution and to start looking at what strategies would address the key challenges. The first step was to reach consensus on the key problem, and the goal of the network of collaborators. A process was followed to develop a logic model to identify the key challenges and the opportunities to solve them. The following is the logic model that was developed with the guidance and facilitation of Ekonomos.

Logic Model

Problem Statement:

1. Current distribution/transportation assets or networks are inefficient, redundant or inaccessible
2. High food prices for consumers are a significant factor creating poverty and poor health

Project Goal:

Improve efficiency, resilience and accessibility of Northern Ontario food value chains

Objectives	Strategies
Develop high quality online communication system(s)/ data platform(s) to transfer knowledge and improve food system coordination	● Collect food system data and map the food distribution system at many levels
	● Establish data infrastructure to allow for ongoing sharing and food system coordination
Develop built infrastructure and other physical assets to support more efficient food distribution	● Identify specific opportunities for new infrastructure to fill gaps or key inefficiencies based on data
	● Develop consumer/community and investor/funder understanding of and commitment to sustainable/feasible CED/infrastructure projects
	● Help people learn about their food distribution system and how to change it
Build resilient human capital throughout the north for enterprise development and community food self-determination	● Help people/ communities make self-determined and evidence-based decisions about food distribution systems and actions
	● Develop flexible funding and human resources for communities to access as they develop new/alternative food distribution systems
	● Create and maintain strong, inclusive networks of buyers and sellers along food value chain

Once this work was completed, the committee identified the need to develop an action plan which was relevant to the people doing the work on the ground, but that was also "owned" by the people of the north. This required gathering stakeholders from across the north to develop such a plan.

The result was two in person meetings held in June 2018 that brought together a total of 41 people from across the north to develop an action plan to address the key challenges and problem statement through the objectives and strategies outlined in the logic model.

The purpose of this report is to summarize the findings from these meetings, and to provide recommendations to the steering committee in finalizing an action plan for the purpose of improving food distribution in Northern Ontario.

Methodology/ Process

Invitations
The Steering Committee reviewed the invitation list from the previous two meetings held in 2017. From this list, key stakeholders presently engaged in food distribution and/ or making systematic change to the food system were selected for invitation. It was decided that a maximum of 30 spaces would be available at each location. This was decided to ensure that the workshop was successful in allowing for constructive group discussions and collective contributions. While a larger demographic may have provided a wider perspective, due diligence was done to have broad representation from across the north including remote first nation representation, rural north and urban north. Of the total of 98 people who were invited, 41 registered.

Process
The meetings were planned and facilitated by the planning committee, Kendal Donahue, Arik Theijsmeijer and Peggy Baillie. Kendal and Peggy provided the in-person facilitation in Thunder Bay, while Arik and Peggy facilitated the Timmins meeting. While all facilitators could not attend both meetings, Peggy's participation in both meetings was valuable in providing perspective overall from both meetings for the purposes of this report.

The facilitation was guided to achieve two goals: to ensure that the logic model objectives were relevant and valuable to the work that people are engaged in, and that the resulting action plan was actionable by a broad range of stakeholders. The process started with a review of the objectives, a brainstorming of actions related to the objectives, and a deeper discussion on key actions that were identified as highest priority.

Tours
In addition to the in-person meetings, each meeting was accompanied with tours of key or important food distribution infrastructure. In Thunder Bay, tours were provided of Canadian Freshwater Fish, a new fish processing plant, and the Regional Food Distribution Center. In Timmins, a tour was provided of Air Creebec which distributes food into many remote communities on the James Bay coast.

Key Overarching Findings

The following is a summary of key discussion items from the meetings, including notes gleaned by the facilitators as important points for consideration.

Scope Definitions

Throughout the process of developing the logic model, there was continued debate about the scope of this work. While the facilitators did their best to communicate the scope, attendees felt that a clear definition of the scope of this project would clarify direction and the action plan. Key elements to define were the geographic scope of the work, as well as which elements of the food distribution system were to be addressed.

Communication

Throughout the meetings, a number of participants where challenged by the formatting and language of some of the objectives and strategies of the logic model. In further discussion about this, it was communicated that keeping language in this work accessible to a broad audience is imperative to ensure that the greatest amount of participation is possible, and to be inclusive to a diverse audience.

To maintain a high level of engagement for a strategy as is being proposed, having a well planned and executed communications strategy will be important to keep stakeholders up to date about what is happening, as well as informed of ways to engage in the process. This will require a combination of regular written updates distributed through mailing lists as well as in person presentations to key stakeholder groups throughout the north in collaboration with other events convening these audiences.

Need for Sustained Funding

Much concern was raised in the discussions about the need for sustained funding to ensure that the strategy is successful. This strategy will take many years to execute due to the scope of work required to have measurable and significant impact. Concerns were raised that if some of the actions do not have sustained funding the efforts could quickly become redundant if not maintained and continued to be developed.

White Paper and Advocacy

The need for leaders and government to understand and buy-in the need for food system change was identified as a key priority to actually activate effective change across the north. There is a need to educate and advocate to leaders about the importance of food literacy and equal food access through improved food distribution based on data on the state of the system today. Participants recommended that the NFDN develop a collaborative report to identify key challenges and opportunities to validate problem statement + goals to gain additional buy in from broader range of partners and decision makers

Governance of Northern Food Distribution Network (NFDN)

It became clear through the meetings that the value of this network is seen throughout the north as an opportunity to have a collective voice for food system players. The discussions included how the NFDN representation should be structured, the key purposes of this network and opportunities for engagement through working groups.

It was also communicated that the work of the NFDN needs to balance who can show up and who can do work with capacity. This lead to the recommendation that NFDN needs to financially support participation of leaders to participate to ensure its viability long term.

Summary of Key Recommended Actions

Many action ideas were developed throughout the meetings. A full summary of each meeting, with action ideas and data collection is included in the Appendices. Most actions included there also list possible next steps with deeper discussion notes that can be referenced if theses suggestions are put into action. Through evaluation of the data, some key themes and ideas arose, which are summarized here. The following actions are not prioritized or organized in any specific order. The following sections provides an outline of priority actions.

Projects

Review of remote airport infrastructure and facilitation of change to regulations with Transport Canada

Airlines identified that the lack of appropriate infrastructure at airports in remote communities was a barrier for properly storing or distributing food, while also contributing to significantly higher distribution costs due to operational costs.

Feasibility assessment and business planning of food terminals in the north to aggregate northern food for north and southern markets

The desire to have terminals in both the east and west regions of the north was suggested as an opportunity to reduce costs and improve quality of imported foods while providing an aggregation point for northern produced foods to be sold to northern and southern markets.

Value Chain Facilitation

Develop templates and training for community coordinators to improve capacity for food distribution and to share best practices

Branding of Northern Ontario Foods

The creation of a brand for northern foods that would recognize regional production, would further educate local consumers and visitors about foods produced in the north, providing them with the tools to make educated purchasing choices. Discussion occurred as to whether this action was branding by distributors only or was outside of the scope of a pure distribution focus.

Annual Northern Ontario Food System Networking event to bring together communities, producers, buyers, distributors and freight to improve collaboration and networking.

> Overall increased collaboration, partnerships and awareness of each other was a key desire for participants. All felt that annual opportunities to bring together producers, buyers and communities to learn from each other and to assess opportunities for working together would be beneficial to all.

Social Enterprise development and traditional trainings with businesses to support development of food distribution enterprises and small scale projects

> Support for new entrepreneurs or project developers to develop enterprises and projects that address food system challenges and incorporate traditional trainings or traditions would be beneficial.

Funders Forum

> Through hosting a funders forum, the NFDN could communicate where new priorities could be developed for funds that would better support food system and community change in northern Ontario. Organizers could share key points such as support for northern Ontario micro-grants and advocating for more flexible wage streams to support people power in food system work as well as flexible funding for consultants required to assist with start ups and business plans.

Develop a pilot project to improve food distribution in three communities.

> The purpose would be to take comparable items or goals and compare the results in varied environments (fly in, rural and urban and first nations vs settler)

Continue to support Norther Ontario micro-grants

> Microgrants such as SNAPP (Sustainable New Agricultural Products Project) were identified as accessible, and successful mechanisms to support food system development.

Research

Review of food waste and its impacts of the cost of food in Northern Ontario (with relationship to food distribution)

> Participants felt that food waste contributes to the increased cost of food in many communities, and also is a key challenge in the broader food distribution system.

Mapping of where food distribution is happening and how

> Most participants felt that they did not have enough information about what was happening: where are foods moving and how. Access to this information could allow them to make better informed decisions on how to reduce redundancy and improve efficiency.

Environmental Scan – best practices in distribution models and system coordination

> Food system coordination is a new concept to many. Through looking at what has worked well in other regions of the world, we would be better equipped to execute an action plan based on lessons learned by other pioneers.

Assessment of food distribution from the perspectives of private food distribution enterprises

> While some food distributors were present at the meetings, assessing from their perspective where the opportunities and gaps are to improve food distribution in the north could result in valuable recommendations of actions moving forward.

Food system curriculum

> The need for more food curriculum available within schools as well as to broader community members was identified as a key need. Rather than duplicating work, researching what curriculum is available, what is happening elsewhere that is effective, and how to best get curriculum delivered in the school system would benefit action planning.

Training programs for food distribution coordinators

> Food distribution management is a specific skill set needed to manage food moving through a community effectively. The development of a training program for community food coordinators would be beneficial as most people do have these skills upon entering these positions. A review of existing training and/or the development of a program designed for Northern coordinators would be beneficial.

Gaps Analysis of northern food processors access to larger distribution network

> It is unknown what barriers to entry northern Ontario processors have to accessing the larger food distribution system. An assessment of these barriers could influence actions to support processors in the future.

Meta Data Collection

1. Conduct Need Assessment on Data Collection
   a. Who will use it and why
   b. Best practices
   c. Software and database assessment
   d. How to Share
2. Collect Data
   o Producers: who, what, where, how
   o Buyers: who, what, where, when, how
   o Freight: who, what, where, when
   o Storage and Processing: where, how much, who
   o Case studies: what works, what doesn't

Prioritizing the Actions

As part of each meeting, attendees participated in a dotmocracy exercise to determine which actions were of highest importance and impact. The following is a chart outlining the results of the dotmocracy exercise as well as which strategy each action falls within.

ACTIONS	Develop high quality online communication system(s)/ data platform(s) to transfer knowledge and improve food		Develop built infrastructure and other physical assets to support more efficient food distribution			Build resilient human capital throughout the north for enterprise development and community food self-determination			Rating based on Dotmocracy Exercise	Number of Strategies each action falls within
	Collect food system data and map the food distribution system at many levels	Establish data infrastructure to allow for ongoing sharing and food system coordination	Develop consumer/community and investor/funder understanding of and commitment to sustainable/feasible CED/Infrastructure projects	Help people learn about their food distribution system and how to change it	Identify specific opportunities for new infrastructure to fill gaps or key inefficiencies based on data	Help people/communities make self-determined and evidence based decisions about food distribution systems and actions	Create and maintain strong, inclusive networks of buyers and sellers along the food value chain	Develop flexible funding and human resources for communities to acces as they develop new/ alternative food distribution systems		
Develop Food Terminals in the North					x		x		12	2
Gather Data broken down by sectors of the system	x	x			x				9	3
Needs assessment for data infrastructure	x	x							8	2
Online platform/marketplace to bring key players together + facilitate sales + distribution		x					x		8	2
Networking Events							x		8	1
Formalize the Northern Food Distribution Network					x				8	1
Food education programing (including education on food soveriegnty)				x		x			7	2
Advocate to government to prioritize food			x						7	1
Advocate and lobby decision makers on the value of the food system coordination			x						7	1
Small scale pilot projects before commercial scale projects						x			6	1
Funders Forum for Food			x						6	1
Regional branding of northern ontario foods				x		x			5	2
Environmental Scan – best practices in distribution models and system coordination	x	x							5	2
Bring buyers and sellers together including communities -							x		5	1
Create a META of all the smaller food system data	x								5	1
Develop a collaborative report to identify key challenges and opportuntie is to validate problem statement	x	x	x		x				4	4
Continue to support Northern Ontario Micro-grants			x						4	1
Encourage regional collaboration between school board and health unit				x		x			3	2
Develop a "wage" stream so start-ups can hire consultants to develop plans/ studies about their great ideas			x			x			3	2
Norther Fruit and Vegetable PrOgram to incorporate more local rather than shipping from Toronto	x				x				3	2
Public Health- support with evidence and interpretation to move initiatives forward -					x				3	1
Support partners to build infrastructure throught funding opportunities and letters of support		x				x		x	2	3
Advocate and educate decision makers to prioritize the purchase of local food			x	x		x			2	3
Gaps analysis of northern food processors to access larger distribution network	x	x							2	2
Support enterprise development and traditional trainings with businesses						x		x	2	2
Work with schools/education systems across communities to roll out models suchs as get fresh café					x	x			2	2
Need for food incubators/ processing centers					x				2	1
Develop collaborative funding stratgies and applications			x						2	1
Provide templates and planning tools on governance, business planning, logisitics		x				x		x	1	3
Advocate for fair allocation of Nutrition North Program to northern communities			x	x				x	1	3
Training for youth to crease awareness around importance, opportunities, impact on person/family/community				x		x			1	2
Training for teachers and leaders				x		x			1	2
Capacity building to access Nutrition North Program					x			x	1	2
	7	8	9	7	9	12	4	5		

Measuring Success

At the beginning of each meeting, a process was facilitated where participates described three things they would change in the food system if they had a magic wand. This was done to get people thinking about system change, but also to help to define what would success look like if we do this work. While all of the wishes are listed in the Appendices, key themes arose. These themes could be used as a way to measure success of the action plan.

Increased production, supply and consumption of local food by ALL people in Northern Ontario: it was communicated over and over that the real desire was to have more local / northern food produced and consumed by northern Ontario residents.

Purchaser Buy-In: specifically participants identified that having wholesale buyer commitment to local and health foods was integral to changing the food system.

Collaboration across the food value chain: participants recognized that if silos were broken down and more opportunities to collaborate were capitalized on, more effective change could occur more rapidly than people working individually.

Increased awareness around the food system as a whole: a lack of general understanding and knowledge about the food system was identified as a barrier to change. Through increased awareness and education, more effective change could be accomplished.

Improved access to health, fresh foods: barriers to healthy and fresh food as a whole were a main concern for participants. Addressing issues around education, cost and access could increase the overall consumption of healthy and fresh foods.

Recommendations on Next Steps

1. **Share report with attendees**
   All participants that attended the meetings, as well as those that could not attend, expressed an interest in seeing the results of this process. By sharing this report, we can continue to be engaged with the stakeholders across the north and engage them in further work.
2. **Steering Committee prioritizes actions through feasibility matrix and drafts a strategy to pursue them**
   The committee should review the recommended actions to determine need, feasibility, cost and resources required for each action. Through this process an action plan can be developed based on time and resources required for each action.
3. **Formalize the Network structure and/ or Terms of Reference.**
   The committee should have a deeper conversation on the structure and terms of this network, and develop guiding documents or policies that ensure proper demographic and geographic representation as well as structure and governance for the network.
4. **Develop a communication strategy to maintain engagement with stakeholders**
   The success of this work has been identified as being only as great as all those that contribute to it. Though thoughtful and well executed communications, we can maintain engagement of stakeholders while encouraging broader support for the work throughout the North.
5. **Apply for appropriate funding to implement the strategy**
   Resources will be required to execute some of the actions within this plan. Accessing appropriate funding to support the work will be critical in the future.

Appendices

A. Thunder Bay Summary Notes

Wish List Items

- More businesses buy local food
- More people are growing food - 5 responses
- Better growing climate
- Better roads to access areas presently inaccessible – 6 responses
- Grant for food distribution
- More markets for local food
- Standard pricing for products for all people in the North – 6 response
- Education of health food – 2 responses
- Site to connect suppliers and customers
- People are committed to local food
- Better coordination of partners and programs of local food – 2 responses
- Awareness around food distribution
- Trucks that don't break
- Produce that doesn't spoil
- Children and school food literacy – 4 responses
- Efficient food supply system
- Fresh foods in the north
- Remove food waste – 2 response
- Better regulations making it easier for local farmers – remove Canada GAP
- Shorten the distribution chain
- Build capacity in First Nation Communities
- Remove shipping cost of food to First Nation Communities
- Remove Northern Store Monopoly
- Remove red tape around eating wild game
- Ready to go farms with all the infrastructure in place to start farming
- Hubs across the North
- Skilled and trained people at the hubs
- Remove burocratic red tape around delivering food literacy

Pilot ideas

- NFVP – more local
- Three communities

ACTION PLANNING NOTES

LEGEND

BLUE: MOST IMPORTANT BIG PICTURE
GREEN: WHAT YOU CAN WORK ON
RED: ACTIONS YOU CAN WORK ON

1   Collect food system data and map the food distribution system at many levels (RED 4 GREEN 6 BLUE 16)

1.1   Relevance

- Community perspective from FN gatherings (Sioux lookout, t bay, remote com etc)
- Giving a voice to issues raised at the community level
- Address community monopolies and politics
- Better strategize food distribution i.e. required supply and demand
- Key players prioritize to develop shared vision for policy and actions
- Identify public location to compile data – all food related projects
- Collection of key contacts in communities for shipping i.e. time sensitive foods that could be shipped right away – need a quick contact
- Shipping data and companies that are willing to ship to the north
- Data on food wastage going to communities because it is not being purchased
- Develop partnership to access private data
- Identify gaps in distribution system
- Recognize how rapidly some of the data fluctuates that it may not be reflective of the current picture (production, purchasing and distribution)
- What's the focus? Collect data? Share contacts? What's needed? Each group has different needs
- If we had a food distribution system, it would increase access of healthy foods
- Health Unit: consumer environment and community perspective + food desserts

1.2   Actions

- Create a META of all the smaller food system data (RED 5 GREEN 1)
  - Levels
    - How does food get here
      - What are the best modes of transportation for each community
    - How does it get to people once its there
    - What is the food that people are getting
    - Where are people going for food?
    - What are the best practice for effective food distribution in different communities
  - Develop some data themes
    - Where do different trucking companies go? How often and what are they carrying? Do they have space?
- Set up a method to accurately record donations to breakfast project - use NFLD model
- Norther Fruit and Vegetable PrOgram to incorporate more local rather than shipping from Toronto (RED 3 GREEN 1)
  - Capacity within the communities + schools to deal with the food –

2 Identify Specific Opportunities for new infrastructure to fill gaps or key inefficiencies based on data (RED 1 DOT, GREEN 4 DOTS, BLUE 9 DOTS)

2.1 Relevance:

- Gaps in delivery systems for some remove and road accessible schools that we serve (Armstrong +Collins)
- Increased delivery opportunities - more trucks + more frequent deliveries
- Shortage of refrigeration and freezer capacity for communities, groups and producers
- Building efficient holding facililties at the hubs will help prevent food spoilage in the case of layovers, weather delays etc
- Depending on what the infrastructure is, ie gardesn/ kitchens, this is a place we could enter
- At community level, how food is received and how does this support the larger system?
- Attract new investments/ people moving to thunder bay region i.e. no goats , someone might mover here w goat expertise
- Share food and gather reports
- Knowing where there are overlaps or too much of one, make more targeted decisions i.e. say there are 42 beef farmers struggling, might choose to do something different?
- Increased access to local foods, increased health and food security, reduced cost

2.2 Actions

- Support partners to build infrastructure
    - (terminal, fridges, freezers, processing plants etc)
    - Funding opportunities and letters of support (RED – 2DOTS, GREEN 4 DOTS, BLUE 2 DOTS)
- Build community capacities
- Regulation/change private sector cost
- Gather Data (RED- 9 DOTS)
    - Breakdown infrastructure by sector (both built and human
        - Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program
        - Student Nutrition Program
        - Health
        - Schools
        - Retail
        - Municipal/Township

3 Help people learn about their food distribution system and how to change it (RED 5 GREEN 10 BLUE 8)

3.1 Relevance

- Marketing opportunities to promote local
- Improve local economy and increase health in communities
- In addition to schools, education, a community level for parents, elders and all community members
- Program curriculum develop for school aged children
- To do education for public
- Educate people to know their options and show them how to do it

- Learn about local food production to reduce long distance truck travel
- This is entry level to building relationships with communities
- Meet champions engage champions, build organizational and sector champions
- Assist community leaders in making food decisions that most benefit communtuy members
- Leadership @ municipal level, procurement policies, institutional players, private secor employees schools
- A defined document outlineing where we are combined with a collective strategy/charter for where we want to go
- Build a communication and action plan then educate communities to implement
- All participant can collect relevant data based on current work
- Improve health of the people

3.2   Actions

1. Split people into groups, target clients to achieve this goal (RED 2 GREEN 1)
    a. Ie. Schools, retail, restaurants, communities, industrial
2. Presentations to decision makers re local food to try to influence default purchasing. (RED 2)
3. Using rewards system/ technology to encourage participation and to change habits
4. Encourage regional collaboration (i.e. schools and health unit work together) (RED 3)

4   Help people/communities make self- determined and evidence based decisions about food distribution systems and actions (GREEN 4, BLUE 12)

4.1   Relevance

- Public Health – mandates related to social determinines of health (equitable access to food and food systems)
- Public Health – building capacity within communities + engagement with FN communiites
- Determining the need of certain foods in communities will decrease cost and aim to promote health
- Identify volume of foods needed (prevent overbuying)
- Education of food, local and healthy
- If people realize the value to local economy of buying local then they will buy more local
- Food literacy tool – can provide data and evidence to support why we need funds and why food literacy is so important
- Health unit to assist with public education
- Need to establish a shared common vision (regional charters/strategies) adopted by communities
- Prioritize education + knowledge transfer around priorities
- Identify key drivers of effective food distribution & develop action plan

4.2   Actions

- RHU – work with schools/education systems across communities to roll out models suchs as get fresh café which promotes local food buying (RED 2 GREEN 1)
- Public Health- support with evidence and interpretation to move initiatives forward (RED 3 GREEN 2)
    o Advocacy – knowledge hubbing
    o With funding – encourage and allow self determination for how it is used
- Build collaborative partnerships (RED 1)
    o Sharing best practices
- Build Relationships
    o Change business model architecture and crease opportunities for intersection
        ▪ Bring buyers and sellers together including communities (RED 5)

5 Create and maintain strong, inclusive networks of buyers and sellers along the food value chain (GREEN 4 BLUE 3)

5.1 Relevance

- Creating partnership that are strong, who do you talk to? Who can make a decision?
- Knowledge - i.e. Sioux lookout, tbay food gathering
- Networking
- Community education ie opportunieis for communities
- Online system that allow buyers to list current asks + availability to make linkages (retail and wholesale)
- Support for producers to scale up
- Piggybacking off each other to reduce costs
- Include first nations communities in the network of buyers
- Possibly reduce the cost of healthy food
- Marketing of healthy foods
- Show the value of regional food, showcase of process for local food procurement to local buyers and sellers (lessons, best practices)

5.2 Actions

- Online platform/marketplace to bring key players together + facilitate sales + distribution combined with networking opportunities to support collaboration and education (RED 8 GREEN 2 BLUE 2)
  - Who is the leader of the platform?
  - Who will maintain
  - Brainstorm who needs to be involved
  - How can this be sustainable long term?

6 Develop consumer/community and investor/funder understanding of and commitment to sustainable/feasible CED/Infrastructure projects (RED 2 GREEN 5 BLUE 6)

6.1 Relevance

- Funders could prioritize something they understand and help them with long term planning
- Fair Finance Fund
- Infrastructure needs are community drive
- No capacity at community level
- If people understand that money flows (local economy) then they will be more supportive of new infrastructure
- Increased communication
- The topic presents relevance to have those conversation sin communities – ie consult leads to action
- Working more with council and chiefs of communities to get a good understanding of their community and specific needs
- Northern fruit and vegetable program – solid based funding for health units – expand program
- Need universal commitment to shared regional strategies
- Need a collective voice for lobbying asks

6.2   Actions

- Collective report
    - Vision statement
    - Mission
    - What is happening across the industry
    - Outline real challenges to prove need and buy in + funding priorities
    - Develop a collaborative report to identify key challenges and opportuntieis to validate problem statement + goals to gain additional buy in from broader range of partners and decision makers (RED 4)
    - Build food terminal in T Bay
    - Educate producers to be better businesses
    -

7   Develop flexible funding and human resources for communities to acces as they develop new/ alternative food distribution systems (GREEN 7 BLUE 5)

7.1   Relevance

- Particpane with specialized knowledge/skills may be able to devote some time to further objectives
- Northern Regional Food Coordinator/ value chain coordinator
- School community - - every school board + education authority dedicated staff for food programming including NFVP coordination
- Much funding is hiring people, takes months to get the up to spped then funding expires, they leave and nothing gets done
- Something like Tides – opem, responsive, community response driven
- Informa funders – what does "good funding" look like
- Manitoba Food Collaborative
- Purchasing respirces that help to explain to general publis institutional purchasing
- Keep funders engaged in planning so funding plans are responsive to ongoing food system challenges
- Some orgs have $$ to contribute to leverage or fund pilots
- So many levels of bureaucracy, spin tires needlessly rather then being responsive
- This group could act as a pool of support letters from various sectors
- This lets us dream up pilot projecs to try then build
- Bridge community grouls and private sector distributors

7.2   Actions

1. Define "flexible" funding because means difference to funders and project organizers
2. Who are our funding agencies?
    - Develop a comprehensive list of funders with key contacts
3. Develop a table of shared resources
4. Funders Forum for Food (RED 4 GREEN 2)
    - Engage funders early on in projects
    - Go to funders with what we need and develop relationships. Systematic/long term change takes years
    - Outline projects that need funding
    - Educate funders (RED 2 GREEN 2)
5. Grant Writers – mentorship for new grant writers

8 Establish data infrastructure to allow for ongoing sharing and food system coordination (GREEN 6 BLUE 11)

8.1 Relevance

- Make distribution more efficient
- Increase healthy food distribution
- Helps me make connections – who to contact, who are the players
- Would allow for better funding, decisions & cost control and reduced duplication
- Investigate options for regional food distribution for northern fruit and vegetable program
- More accessible data (open platforms)
- Ensure data is timely + able to be maintained and current
- Partnerships with specialist in their area - don't reinvent the wheel
- Partner with someone who has the infrastructure
- Who updates it? Who maintains?
- Easy to build, hard to maintain
- More partnerships
- Remove red tape on data

8.2 Actions

1. Environmental Scan – best practices in distribution models and system coordination (RED 5)
2. Define the Food system
3. Develop a data framework
4. Lobby – buy in (RED 1 GREEN 2)
   a. Get decision makers at the table.

ACTION BRAINSTORMING

o FUNDERS FORUM

- *WHAT:*
  - This is relevant to long term chance
  - Need to figure ouot whate we want funding for
  - What do successful applications look like?
  - Share limitations/ needs on both sides. Also funding best practices
  - An opportunity for feedback and discussion
  - Make sure the right funders are int eh room (i.e thing they can actually eventually fund)
  - Requires background work
    - o Fundind best practices
    - o Policy makers make the programs, program officers manage them

- *WHO*
  - Northern Food Distribution Network

- *WHEN*
  - When province announces its funding programs to be in line

ESTABLISH DATA INFRASTRUCTURE

- *WHAT*
  - Environmental scans
    - Broad needs need to be narrowed and scoped down
  - Hwo are other areas coordinating their distribution? Is it applicable to our area
  - What are the resources needed to maintain this? What is the shelf life?
  - What is the best system?
  - Where are we at with food distribution? What are others doing? What are the gaps? What do people have to contribute?
  - Need meta data to summarize work doen to date
  - Build into a white paper or work being done by NOFIA

MAP THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

- *WHAT*
  - Transportation Routes
    - What is on the truck
    - Backhauling rates
    - Are there reefer trucks?
    - Are they empty
    - Food safety
  - Infrastructure
    - By sector
    - Identify players in food distribution
    - Identify priority products and geography
    - What is possible to produce locally?
      - What is being produced locally?
    - How much is being spent?
  - Incorporate more local into the NFVP
    - Build a more stable marketplace for local food
    - The fruit and veg from southern Ontario already comes chopped and bagged but its 6 days old
  - Trade Routes Project
    - Identifies some of the data
    - Some would scale up if market was there
    - Can it br further built out?
    - Production data could inform market opportuntieis + infrastructure like hubs

- NEW INFRASTRUCTURE
  - *WHAT*
    - What is there
    - What is needed
    - Pilot
      - Pick three towns and use school food as a pilot to target and improve
    - 1 data collection
    - 2 pilot

- ENCOURAGE REGIONAL COLLABORATION
  - *WHAT*
    - Host more meetings to bring people together
    - Improve transparency
    - Clarify group goals and objectives
    - Hold more space to connect/ collaborate
      - Community networking
      - Reoccurring
      - Institutional focus + other focuses

- DEVELOP REPORT
  - *WHAT*
    - Something that explains the situation
    - Can be used for funding asks
    - Lots of previous work can be drawn on
      - Trade routes
      - NAN
        Northern Policy Institute
      - NOFIA
      - Market Study

B.   Timmins Summary Notes

Wish List

- Get warehousing and equipment into rural communities – 3 response
- Review of Nurtition North – 2 responses
- Pan Northern Co-operation
- Funding for transport of foods- 6 responses
- Access to multiple modes of transportation
- People power to do it all
- Food Systems education in the schools – 5 responses
- More local food in smaller communities
- Basic Income – 3 responses
- Ending the Northern Store monoplies
- Removing policy barriers for food waste – 3 responses
- Low cost storage solutions
- How fast and time to grow food
- Speed to get stuff to maker
- All food possible is grown in the North – 3 responses
- More producers- 5 responses
- Lower input costs – 3 reponses
- Quality food for all
- Free Transportation – 2 response
- Infrastructure for farmers
- HACCP certification for all farmers and funding to certify
- Municipal by-laws to support farmers
- Indigenous communities can access local food
- Reduce food waste
- Local farmers selling to institutions
- Get people more interested in local food
- Northern Ontario Food Terminal
- Reconcillation
- Hubs for road and rail to distribute food
- Fuel Subsidy to distribute food
- All land can grown food of some kind
- Access for local producers to southern markets
- Reduce environmental impact

ACTION PLANNING NOTES
LEGEND

BLUE: MOST IMPORTANT BIG PICTURE
 GREEN : WHAT YOU CAN WORK ON
RED: ACTIONS YOU CAN WORK ON

1 Help people/ communities make self determined and evidence based decisions about food distribution systems and actions

1.1 Relevance

- Student Nutrition Program providing info to teachers
- High level systems change eg. Including distribution in local food literacy education
- Doing kiosks and going into placed to educate people on the facts and evidence on these systems
- Mentorship – such as continuation of Crop up North with increased funding
- Mass education system
  - Tours of local producers + mapping of long distance food

1.2 Actions

1. Food Education: (RED 1 GREEN 5 BLUE 7)
   a. introduce new foods / demonstration cooking
   b. how things grow in your area
   c. data specific to northern Ontario(GREEN 1)
2. Food sovereignty education programs (RED 6 GREEN 4)
3. Engage all groups in communities to learn together
4. Partner with colleges for study and research
5. Funders support start up ideas regarding food systems groups/ change makers
6. Mentorship such as Crop up North (GREEN 1)
7. Provide templates and planning tools for (RED 1 GREEN 1)
   a. Governance
   b. Business planning
   c. Logistics
   d. Ordering/inventory

2 Develop Flexible Funding and human resources for communities to access as they develop new/alternative food distribution systems (BLUE 14)

2.1 Relevance

- Funding for infrastructure
- Flexible funding for farmers
- Micro-grants and micro-loans
- Encouraging communities to think BIG but start small and build into creating viable business models
- Support for governance + strategic planning that supports orgs and good management
- Funding criteria shoulr vary based on how fundamental the need (eg. Food/ housing) that is being supported by government
- Reduce barriers to access funding eg. Accept in kind donations, eg grant writing skills
- Reduce matching contribution requirements
- Examples?: invest in small scale that has large impact
- Funding for what infrastructure? Be specific eg. Upgrades, retrofits, repairs, vehicles
- For further distribution to other agencies in need to food the poor
- Buy hub for forest and freshwater foods

2.2 Actions

1. Funders and Program Database
2. Hire resources to manage database
3. Collaborative funding strategies and applications (RED 2 GREEN 4)
4. Unified voice for social assistance policies
5. Continue to support Norther Ontario micro-grants (eg SNAPP) (RED 4 GREEN 5)
   a. Changes to SNAPP to include cost of transportation, distribution of food, social ventures, NFPs
6. Capacity buildings to access Nutrition North Program (RED 1)
7. Advocate for fair allocation of NNP to northern communities' (RED 1 GREEN 1)
8. Hire regional logistics advisory services/ expertise
9. Develop a "wage" stream so start-ups can hire consultants to develop plans/ studies about their great ideas (RED 3 GREEN 1)

3 Establish data infrastructure to allow for on-going sharing and food system coordination (BLUE 11)

3.1 Relevance

- Commitment from people to use the network.
- Info only as valuable as whats in it
- Virtual network must be accessible and updated
- Existing infrastructure
- SSM innovation center + ACORNGIS
- Could be piggybacked on existing system?
- Include distribution and producers to co-create the infrastructure
- Needs to be linked to real transportation/ distribution
- Would be a good system but the work and time that needs to be put into is is unrealistic for some agencies programs

3.2 ACTIONS

1. Formalize the NFDN (RED 7 GREEN 4)
2. Allocation human resources to mange infrastructure and projects for the NFDN (RED 5)
3. Needs assessment for data infrastructure (RED 8 GREEN 5)
   a. Identify existing databases or organizations to lead
   b. Include food rescue programs
   c. Identify different levels of information and who would want each/ help manage
   d. Research platforms that fit the needs

4 Identify specific opportunities for new infrastructure to fill gaps or key inefficiencies based on data (BLUE 16)

4.1 Relevance

- Drone Tech?
- Existing buildings for hubs?
  o Feasibility and cost/ benefit analysis
- Local food storage, business storage and shared spaces
- Centralized food terminal for northeast
- More greenhouses to produce in the community
- Teaching value of produce farm to table
- Involve community to understand needs not met
- Assett based community development

4.2 ACTIONS

- Build business case to start process to access funding
- Food terminals in the North (RED 12 GREEN 6)
- Small scale pilot projects before commercial scale projects (RED 6)
- Innovation project on new shipping packaging for food
- Gaps analysis of northern food processors to access larger distribution network (RED 2 GREEN 1)
- Encourage the development of small-med scale food processing facilitieis to value added production
- Promote collaborations, cost sharing and co-operative models for affordable distribution for northern producers
- Need for food incubators/ processing centers (RED 2 GREEN 1)

5   Help people learn about their food distribution system and how to change it (BLUE 11)

5.1   Relevance

- More education/ learning opportunities for people working in the food system
- Creating partnerships and working together to educate
- Mass education systems
- Creating passion and inspiration in youth to make the necessary changes
- Education on organizing systems
- Develop food storage infrastructure and processing facilities
- Maximizing seasonality by teaching / knowledge transfer on food preparation techniques
- Coordinate buying to reduce shipping costs
- What is out there? What is available?
- Foodshare Northern Ontario Edition
- Branding of Northern Ontario Products
- Linking communities w food suppliers and teaching the system to do so
- Producers collection and communication to foster distribution growth
- Recreating our old distribution system that died in the 60s

5.2   ACTIONS

1. Training for youth to crease awareness around importance, opportunities, impact on person/family/community (RED 1 GREEN 6)
   a. Create champions
2. Training for teachers and leaders (RED 1 GREEN 4)
3. Advocate to government to prioritize food (RED 7)
   a. Collective voice to leverage government action and prioritize food system efficiency and effectiveness
4. Support enterprise development and traditional trainings with businesses (RED 2 GREEN 3)

6   Create and maintain strong inclusive networks of buyers and sellers along the value chain (BLUE 11)

6.1   Relevance

- Create a NorthernOntarioFresh.ca or website to connect buyers and sellers
- Develop a database of growers or plants
- Create regular roundtable meetings and vendor to vendor match making
- Include freight when connecting buyers and sellers
- Connecting with Fedex / purlator with shipments in the future
- Northern Food Fair/expo/conference : educational session, producers, distributors, buyers, sellers, - How do we get people to a central place annually?
- Connecting independent wholesalers to stretch what they can do
- Food Hub and aggregator
- Sharing space at food terminal for buying and selling
- Encourage co-operative development and create tangible spaced and places to access good northern food.
- Create a wide angle view of northern production to identify gaps
- Opportunities for co-shipping with others

- Develop unified body/ organization that is focusing on marketing Northern Ontario products

6.2   ACTIONS

1. Regional branding of northern ontario foods (RED 5 GREEN 1)
2. Networking events (RED 8 GREEN 4)
3. Market research (GREEN 2)
4. Share case studies
5. Sharing of best practices (GREEN 2)
6. Identify priority products

7   Collect Food system data and map the food distribution system at many levels (BLUE 27)

7.1   Relevance

- Cross regional mapping with SNP coordinators
- Funding regional players to leverage capacity with mapping vs funding one offs
- Use food asset mapping to identify the strengths and weaknesses in regional food systems
- Knowledge when food is being distributed and where would enable us to intervene and obstain or contribute food to the shipment
- Use existing data to identify inequalities in distribution systems
- Collect producer and grower info and where their trucks are
- Greater golden horseshoe food and farming alliance
- Asset mapping for the north
- Once map exists how do you promote its existence?
- Mass education
- U-Ship App
- Already moving asthere is a small amount of trucks already moving
- Analyst/Premisis ID – status and use of data

7.2   ACTIONS

1. Data Collection/ Mapping (RED 22 GREEN 18)
   a. Producers – who, what , where
   b. SNP coordinators
   c. Food Agengies
   d. Transportation – who, what, where, when
2. Business case/ feasibility of database
3. Replication of Golden Horseshoe study

8 Develop consumer/ community and investor/ funder understanding of and commitment to sustainable/ feasible CED/ Infrastructure projects

8.1 Relevance

- Ag. Ec Deve
- Fund Forum symposium for communities
- Collective Impact: maximize through collaborative funding – breaking down the silos
- Mass education projects around food
- Creating online forums where we can all connect with information on what we do/ need
- Simplifying grant applications
- Fair Finance Fund, Community Bonds (LFFC/ RAIN)
- Funders & investors who want to support ppl on the ground need to meet communities where they are e.g. they done have capacity maybe for $100,000 projects, micro grants and other strategies

8.2 ACTIONS

- Encouraging conversation with funders to contribute to conversation, encouraging commitments
- Map of all funding opportunities in specific regions
- Skills to write grants – database of skilled mentors
- Training for community development officers on grant writing, workshops, webinars and opportunities
- Municipal Food strategy/ charter accountability
- Complete Fair Finance Fund online survey so funders can develop alternative/ feasible funding models
- Recognize, seek out and support non-market based interventions where "economic development" is inappropriate
  - Social enterprise
  - Traditional food ways
  - Public markets and not for profit food
  -

ACTIONS BRAINSTORM

ADVOCATE TO GOV. LEADERS

WHO: Align with nation food policy, FSC, food policy councils, Sustain Ontario, Poverty Reduction, Income advocates

- need to know who to connect with in each community

WHAT: the needs for research dollars, funding, change to Nurtition North, school food in First Nations, school food policy

WHY: demonstrate relevance to other priorities

HOW: NFDN as member of FSC, White Paper, meeting with politicians, meet with chiefs, and invite chiefs

DATA COLLECTION

WHO: NOFIA, NECN, RAIN, GSFPC, T.BAY FS, CLFC, NAN, MUSKEG COUNCIL, producer groups, universities, colleges, chefs, enterpeneurs

WHAT:

- Producers: who, what, where, how
- Freight: who, what, where, when
- Storage and Processing: where, how much, who
- Case studies: what works, what doesn't

WHY: Utilize existing transport or infrastructure to more efficient. What are the gaps?

FORMALIZE NORTHERN FOOD DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

WHO:

- board of sector reps: producers, processors, retailers, transportation, distributors, food strategies and agencies
- need regional representations
- first nations, treaty orgs and ec dev

HOW:

- Pursue funding
- Balance who can show up and do work
- Acknowledge users
- Communicate well with all stakeholders
- Accessible
- Use tech to encourage involvement
- Review existing groups and avoid duplications
- Working groups based on regional priorities
    - Advocacy
    - Education
    - Policy
    - Value Chain Coordination

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

WHAT:

- Software
- Who would use the data and why?
- What existing databases exist
- How to share
- Online other other ways to share

WHEN

- Formalize N.F.D.N
- 1. What is happening now
- 2. How can we use the data efficiently?

FOOD TERMINALS

WHO:

- Sellers: producers and importers
- Users: restaurants, institutions, grocery, community food agencies, wholesalers

HOW

- Feasibility Study
  - Assess distributors needs, wholesalers needs

WHEN

- After data collection

WHY

- Market for N.O. producers to aggregate all foods, better buying for agencies

WHAT:

- B2B with seller at Toronto terminal selling NO foods

WHERE?

- Close to rail

REGIONAL BRANDING

WHO: Tourism agencies, foodland ontario, producers, processors, who wants a brand? NFDN, O'Clay

WHAT:

- Culture of food, taste of place by region, education about Northern Ontario Food
- Need Long term funding for management and promotion

WHY:

- Increase demand, develop markets, increase supply, increase effiency
- Reduce food cost, reduce food waste, more nutrition, economic development

NETWORKING EVENTS

WHO:

- Food system stakeholders, NFDN, annual event on food distribution, local orgs and ec dev in different regions

WHAT:

- Showcase events, trade shows, networking, bring food home north, procurement best practices

WHERE:

- Piggy back on other events

WHEN:

- Annual rotating to regions, strategic alignment with fly in events.

C. List of Attendees

Thunder Bay

- John Kemp – Ministry of Transportation
- Dan Hobbs – Red Cross
- Annett Maurer – Thunder Bay Country Market
- Dan Munshaw – City of Thunder Bay
- Erin Beagle – Roots to Harvest
- Jason Perrier – Loudon's
- Jen Springett – Cloverbelt Local Food Co-op and Local Food and Farm Co-ops
- Jennifer McFarlane – Thunder Bay Health Unit
- Jessica McGaughlin – Independent
- Julie Slack – Northwest Health Unit
- Karen Kerk – Thunder Bay Food Strategy
- Rachel Globernsky – Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program – Thunder Bay Coordinator
- Vicki Blanchard – Municipality of Sioux Lookout
- Brendan Carlin – Regional Food Distribution Center
- Luis Alves – Superior Foods
- Mike Dunlop – Northern Ontario Heritage Fund
- Janel Genge – Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority

Timmins

- Alex Boulet – Sudbury Social Planning Council
- Albalina Metatawabin - Mushkegowuk Development Corp.
- Antoine Vezina – Timmins Economic Development and the North East Community Network
- Brianna Humpfrey – Radical Gardens
- Brody Emery – Thunder Air
- Carole Boucher – Ministry of Northern Development and Mines
- Dan Tukendorf – Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
- David Thompson – Rural Agri-Innovation Network
- Cathy_____ - Rural Agri-Innovation Network
- Jay Monture – Moosecree First Nation
- Justin Booney – Red Cross Timmins
- Amber – Anti-hunger Coalition
- Kim Lefebvre – Fed Nor
- Mike Delfre – United Way Sault Ste Marie/ Algoma
- Sagal Dualeh – Greenbelt Fund
- Stephen Hayne – Ontario Northland
- Daniel Hobbs – Red Cross
- Victoria Hall – Porcupine Health Unit
- Kelli Ebbs – Muskoka North Good Food Co-op
- Kerry-Lynn - Muskoka North Good Food Co-op
- Joanne Bealieau – Gathering Place North Bay

BLUE: MOST IMPORTANT BIG PICTURE STRATEGIES   GREEN : WHAT STRATEGIES YOU CAN WORK (RED: ACTIONS YOU CAN WORK ON

Strategies	Thunder Bay			Timmins			Key Action Recommendations
	Red	Green	Blue	Red	Green	Blue	
Identify Specific Opportunities for new infrastructure to fill gaps or key inefficiencies based on data	1	4	9			16	Support partners to build infrastructure throught funding opportunities and letters of support - 2 Red dots Gather Data broken down by sectors of the system on what is happening, what infrastructure is available and what is needed - 9 red dots Develop Food Terminals in the North (12) Small scale pilot projects before commercial scale projects (6) Gaps analysis of northern food processors to access larger distribution network (2) Need for food incubators/ processing centers (2)
Help people learn about their food distribution system and how to change it	5	10	8			11	Encourage regional collaboration between school board and health unit Advocate and educate decision makers to prioritize the purchase of local food - 2 red dots Food education programing (including education on food sovriegnty) (7) Provide templates and planning tools on governance, business planning, logisitics (1) Training for youth to crease awareness around importance, opportunities, impact on person/family/community (1) Training for teachers and leaders (1) Advocate to government to prioritize food (7) Support enterprise development and traditional trainings with businesses (2)
Help people/communities make self- determined and evidence based decisions about food distribution systems and actions		4	12	No Dots on Strategy			work with schools/education systems across communities to roll out models suchs as get fresh café which promotes local food buying - (2) Public Health- support with evidence and interpretation to move initiatives forward - (3) Bring buyers and sellers together including communities - (5)
Create and maintain strong, inclusive networks of buyers and sellers along the food value chain		4	3			11	Online platform/marketplace to bring key players together + facilitate sales + distribution combined with networking opportunities to support collaboration and education Regional branding of northern ontario foods (5) Networking Events (8)
consumer/community and investor/funder understanding of and commitment to	2	5	6	No Dots on Strategy			Develop a collaborative report to identify key challenges and opportuntieis to validate problem statement + goals to gain additional buy in from broader range of partners and decision makers (4)

BLUE: MOST IMPORTANT BIG PICTURE STRATEGIES   GREEN : WHAT STRATEGIES YOU CAN WORK (RED: ACTIONS YOU CAN WORK ON

Strategies	Thunder Bay			Timmins			Key Action Recommendations
	Red	Green	Blue	Red	Green	Blue	
Develop flexible funding and human resources for communities to acces as they develop new/ alternative food distribution systems		7	5			14	Funders Forum for Food (6) Develop collaborative funding stratgies and applications (2) Continue to support Northern Ontario Micro-grants (4) Capacity building to access Nutrition North Program (1) Advocate for fair allocation of Nutrition North Program to northern communities (1) Develop a "wage" stream so start-ups can hire consultants to develop plans/ studies about their great ideas (3)
Establish data infrastructure to allow for ongoing sharing and food system coordination		6	11			11	Environmental Scan – best practices in distribution models and system coordination (5) Advocate and lobby decision makers on the value of the food system coordination and the need to change food distribution Formalize the Northern Food Distribution Network Needs assessment for data infrastructure (8)
Collect food system data and map the food distribution system at many levels	4	6	16				Create a META of all the smaller food system data (5) (22) Norther Fruit and Vegetable PrOgram to incorporate more local rather than shipping from Toronto (3)