

Northern Food Distribution Network Draft Action Plan

Northern Food Distribution Network Proposed Projects

Governance Development of Northern Food Distribution Network

Parallel project delivery in three communities

Feasibility of Food Terminals/ Hubs in the North

Annual networking

Funders Forum

Branding of Northern Ontario Foods

To all the contributors to this action plan:

Many people across the north have put extensive time, energy and resources into guiding this work. Without your insights and contributions this vision could not come to be.

Thank you, Merci, Meegwetch

Prepared by Peggy Baillie on behalf of the Northern Food Distribution Network

Thank you to our funders for their support to complete this work.

The logo for the Government of Canada, featuring the word "Canada" in a serif font with a small Canadian flag to the right of the letter "a".

The logo for FedNor, featuring the word "FedNor" in a serif font with a stylized brown maple leaf to the right of the word.



Possibility grows here.

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 led to a core group of people striking a steering committee to move this work forward.

Northern Food Distribution Network(NFDN) Steering Committee Members:

Present Members:

Peggy Baillie, Local Food and Farm Co-operatives Inc., Warren ON

Tom Coleman, IFFCO

Kendal Donahue, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs, Thunder Bay ON

Sagal Dualeh, Ontario Greenbelt Fund, Toronto, ON

Emmett Ferguson, Eko Nomos, Kimberley ON

Volker Kromm, Regional Food Distribution Association, Thunder Bay ON

Dan Munshaw, City of Thunder Bay, Thunder Bay ON

Vincent Ng, Thunder Bay Public Health, Thunder Bay ON

John Okonmah, Wakenagun Development CFDC, 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 Innovation Alliance (NOFIA), New Liskeard ON

Past Members:

Sam Cheuk, Ontario Greenbelt Fund, Toronto ON (Past Member)

Joseph Leblanc, Social Planning Council of Sudbury, Sudbury ON (Past Member)

Franco Naccarato, Ontario Greenbelt Fund, Toronto, ON (Past Member)

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.

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 action plan is to plot out the projects and activities that were identified and prioritized through the in-person consultations and follow-up discussions of the steering committee. Following the consultations, feasibility assessment meetings were held to review the top prioritized projects. Of these 8 projects, 6 were selected to execute based on criteria of scope, capacity and alignment of the project with the goals of the NFDN.

To see the full list of projects and their prioritization, see the appendix.

Summary of Projects

<i>Project</i>	<i>Project Lead</i>	<i>Project Partners</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Preliminary Budget</i>
<i>Governance Development of Northern Food Distribution Network</i>	NFDN	N/A	1-2 months	\$7,500.00
<i>Feasibility of Food Terminals/ Hubs in the North</i>	NOFIA	NFDN	16-24 months	\$120,000
<i>Branding of Northern Ontario Foods</i>	Tourism Northern Ontario (TBD)	Northwest Beef, RAIN, O'Clay, Made in Manitoulin, Culinary Tourism Alliance,	Development 12-16 months + Ongoing delivery	\$405,000
<i>Annual networking events to bring together distributors, producers and buyers across the north</i>	LFFC	RAIN, NOFIA, Thunder Bay Food Strategy, Cloverbelt Local Food Co-op	2-8 months	\$71,500
<i>Parallel project delivery in three communities (fly-in, rural, urban)</i>	NFDN	TBD	24 months	\$462,250
<i>Funders Forum</i>	Fair Finance Fund	NFDN	2-4 months	\$10,000
Total Project Costs				\$1,076,250

Timeline

This action plan is ambitious, but thanks to the participation by many project leads and partners, the work will be dispersed between many organizations.

2019	Activities
<i>Jan to April 2019</i>	Governance Terms of Reference Development, Pilot Project Assessment Implementation Strategy Development Scope Development for Feasibility of Food Terminals Networking Meetings Funders Forum needs assessment
<i>May to August 2019</i>	Project review Apply for funding large projects
<i>September to December 2019</i>	Pending funding: begin execution of pilot project and feasibility project
<i>Jan to April 2020</i>	Work with Branding lead on project development Ongoing project management

Alignment of Action Plan within the Logic Model

Though the development process of this action plan, the framework of the logic model created by Eko Nomos has been used as a guide to align the long-term goal with actions and outcomes. This logic model was used during the June consultations to guide the conversation around specific strategies that were identified to help address the problem statement and achieve the goal.

Overall the proposed action plan aligns well with the logic model objectives and strategies. See Table 3. for tallied results

Full Logic Model is included in Appendix

	Objectives	Strategies
Aligned in Action Plan	3	5
Total in Logic Model	3	8
Total Alignments	7	7

Table 3: Alignment of action plan to logic model

Logic Model

Activity	Objectives Alignment	Strategies Alignment	Outcomes
Governance Development of Northern Food Distribution Network	Develop high quality online communication system(s)/ data platform(s) to transfer knowledge and improve food system coordination	Establish infrastructure to allow for ongoing sharing and food system coordination	Through strategic engagement of diverse representation of community leaders and stakeholders across the north, the ability to collect and transfer knowledge will be improved
Feasibility of Food Terminals/ Hubs in the North	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	Community food system stakeholders have a better understanding of the feasibility of northern food hubs
			Community food system organizations in two communities have sufficient information to either develop new food aggregation/processing facilities, or to focus on improving other assets needed for enterprise sustainability
Branding of Northern Ontario Foods	Build resilient human capital throughout the north for enterprise development and community food self-determination	Help people learn about their food distribution system and how to change it	Communities are more aware of the foods that are produced regionally and therefore can make different choices about how to participate in the food distribution system

Activity	Objectives Alignment	Strategies Alignment	Outcomes
-----------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------

Annual networking events to bring together distributors, producers and buyers across the north	Build resilient human capital throughout the north for enterprise development and community food self-determination	Create and maintain strong, inclusive networks of buyers and sellers along food value chain	Northern Ontario food sector actors are better connected to each other, and to their communities
Parallel project delivery in three communities (fly-in, rural, urban)	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 to create new food distribution systems or enterprises	Northern food consumers benefit from new enterprises or initiatives that prioritize access to local food
			Food sector initiatives or enterprises are supported to improve local value chains
			Policy makers and funders have improved understanding of effective levers for change
	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	Through pilots, specific infrastructure or assets needed for specific communities are identified
Funders Forum	Build resilient human capital throughout the north for enterprise development and community food self-determination	Develop flexible funding and human resources for communities to access as they develop new/alternative food distribution systems	Communities with a desire to improve their food distribution system have access to low-risk resources so they can explore the community needs and opportunities in their local food system
			Communities who access exploratory funding develop feasible ideas for local food system development
			Funders and Policy Makers have an improved understanding of early-stage levers for place-based innovations in food distribution
			Funders work effectively together, and work more effectively with communities

ACTION PLAN

Notes on Action Plan

Project Partners and Leads

Identified project leads have been contacted for each associated project and preliminary budget reviewed. Project Partners have not been confirmed or contacted in all circumstances. This will need to be confirmed when the projects are initiated. It is recommended that Governance of the Network be completed prior to any project initiation to ensure that project partner relationships are well defined from the outset.

Budget

The budgets for each project are rough estimates for each. These budgets have been reviewed by Project Leads when applicable. It is assumed that these budgets will change once the project is further defined and project partner contributions confirmed.

Projects Not Outlined

In the feasibility review of the prioritized projects, 6 out of the 8 projects were selected for further development and execution. The first of the two deferred projects was the Meta Data Collection and White Paper which identified the need to collect pertinent food system data to outline the state of the food distribution system in the North for the purpose of building support for further policy and action from all levels of government, industry and public. Due to the vastness of scope, lack of understanding of existing data and long term value of the data, the project was deferred. The second project was to Advocate to Government for the need for further support of food distribution solutions, policies and programming. Due to the conflict with mandates of organizations involved in the NFDN, it was decided that while there is great value in this work, another advocacy organization would be better positioned to take on this project.

Projects

Governance of Northern Food Distribution Network (NFDN)

To date, the NFDN has been operating on an ad-hoc basis. To continue this work, clarity of purpose, expectations and terms of engagement needs to be developed. The lack of this governance has cause challenges over the last two years as the group struggled with process and decision making. While goals were accomplished, this governance will be critical going forward as the network engages in broader and more complex projects. Throughout discussion at the committee level on the governance development, it was agreed that there is no interest in incorporating the NFDN at this time. Working closely with sector partners, and leveraging existing organizational capacity was valued higher than starting a new organization.

Project Lead: NFDN with support from LFFC

Milestones

Phase 1

- 1) Define goal and scope with network
- 2) Define geographic and demographic goals for representation
- 3) Outline decision making process, rules of engagement and member policy
- 4) Finalize Terms of Reference to NFDN

Phase 2

- 1) Work with project leads on project execution
- 2) Source funding for core activities such as ongoing maintenance of the NFDN and support for participation by steering committee members
- 3) meet one to two times per year in person as needed.

Budget: Phase 1

ACTIVITY	COST
DEFINE GOAL AND SCOPE WITH NETWORK (1 MEET TO DEFINE PLUS REVIEW MEETING)	\$2,200
DEFINE GEOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC GOALS FOR REPRESENTATION	\$1,500
OUTLINE DECISION MAKING PROCESS, RULES OF ENGAGEMENT AND MEMBER POLICY	\$2,500
FINALIZE TERMS OF REFERENCE TO NFDN	\$1,300
TOTAL	\$7,500

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

As identified by stakeholders at both consultations of the NFDN this June, there is significant interest in conducting a project which will look to address food distribution in three communities over a one-year period. The objective is to provide direct funding and support to communities that have identified a key distribution challenges for their community so that they can develop solutions based on their own needs.

Project Leads: Local Food and Farm Co-ops

Project Partners: RAIN, City of Thunder Bay, NOFIA

Milestones

Phase 1: Secure Funding (see Implementation Plan)

Phase 2: Project Development

- 1) Develop and distribute a Request for Expressions of Interest to communities throughout the north
- 2) Review Expressions of Interest and short list
- 3) Develop Criteria for
- 4) Interview applicants
- 5) Confirm selected communities with review committee
- 6) Meet with applicants to define project goals and scope
- 7) Apply and secure funding

Phase 3: Project Delivery

- 1) Milestones TBD

Budget

ACTION	COST
FLY IN	
VALUE CHAIN COORDINATION TRAINING	\$5,000
CONTRACTOR(S)	\$40,000.00
TRAVEL	\$50,000
LOGISTICS SUBSIDY	\$50,000
SUBTOTAL	\$145,000
RURAL	
VALUE TRAIN COORDINATION TRAINING	\$5,000
CONTRACTOR(S)	\$40,000.00
TRAVEL	\$5,000
LOGISTICS SUBSIDY	\$50,000
SUBTOTAL	\$100,000
URBAN	
VALUE TRAIN COORDINATION TRAINING	\$5,000
CONTRACTOR(S)	\$40,000.00
TRAVEL	\$5,000
LOGISTICS SUBSIDY	\$50,000
SUBTOTAL	\$100,000
OVERALL PROJECT COSTS	
ADVISORS - GUIDANCE, MENTORSHIP OR PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE AVAILABLE TO CONTRACTORS IN EACH COMMUNITY	\$15,000
PROJECT MEETINGS OF FULL TEAM - 2 IN PERSON	\$10,000
PROJECT MANAGEMENT	\$25,000
ADMINISTRATION	\$67,250.00
SUBTOTAL	\$117,250
TOTAL BUDGET	\$462,250

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.

Project Lead: Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance (NOFIA)

Project Partners: Northern Food Distribution Network

Objectives:

To determine

- A. How can micro-terminals in the north be a viable and beneficial operating option for food distributors to access more customers while increasing freshness of food?
- B. How and where can micro-terminals or food hubs improve the distribution of local foods to local markets, wholesale and consumer sales?
- C. How would micro-terminals or foods hubs improve quality while reducing cost associated with perishable foods distributed to other northern communities?

Milestones

- (i) Apply for funding (see budget)
- (ii) Feasibility Approach: Conduct feasibility to determine best locations to locate terminals/hubs
- (iii) Develop Request for Proposals
- (iv) Hire Consultants
- (v) Completion of feasibility study complete 9 months after the point of contract completion with consults

Budget

ACTIVITY	COST
YEAR 1	
PROJECT MANAGEMENT -SCOPE AND PROJECT DEVELOPMENT WITH NFDN, RFP DEVELOPMENT, LIAISE WITH NFDN, WORK DIRECTLY WITH CONSULTANTS	\$25,000
CONSULTANT FEES	\$95,000
TOTAL	\$120,000

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.

Project Lead: Northern Food Distribution Network or Local Food and Farm Co-ops

Project Partners:

Thunder Bay District: Cloverbelt Local Food Co-op, City of Thunder Bay, Thunder Bay Food Strategy, Thunder Bay Country Market, Economic Development

Sioux Lookout/Dryden: Sioux Lookout Economic Development, Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority, Cloverbelt Local Food Co-op, Loudon's

Algoma/Manitoulin: RAIN, Huron North Community Economic Alliance (HNCEA), Produce Auction board, Harvest Algoma, and other advisors from MTO/OMAFRA

Sudbury District: Sudbury Food Policy Council, Greater Sudbury Market,

Hwy 11 North: NOFIA, NE Community Network, Moose Cree First Nation

Milestones:

1. Define rough outline/ objectives for these events
2. Confirm partner support and identify any partner funding contributions and identify if there are events planned that would be beneficial partner with to leverage participants, costs and momentum
3. Source additional funding where required
4. Secure speakers
5. Deliver networking events
6. Summarize outcomes

BUDGET PER NETWORKING EVENT	
ACTION	Cost
COMMUNITY LEAD PARTNER COMPENSATION	\$2,000
LOCATIONS	\$500
CATERING	\$800
SPEAKER FEES	\$1,000
TRAVEL SUBSIDIES	\$10,000
TOTAL	\$14,300
NUMBER OF EVENTS	5
TOTAL BUDGET	\$71,500

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.

Project Lead: Fair Finance Fund

Project Partners: NFDN, NAN(TBD), Northern Manitoba Food, Culture and Community Collaborative (Tides Canada) (TBD)

Milestones

- 1) Conduct research and needs assessment through the NFDN to identify key opportunities and challenges
- 2) Summarize findings
- 3) Host forum

Budget

ACTION	COST
CONDUCT NEEDS ASSESSMENT THROUGH NFDN AND PARTNER STAKEHOLDERS	\$5,000
LOCATION AND CATERING	\$1,000
PARTNER TRAVEL	\$4,000
TOTAL	\$10,000

Promotion of Northern Ontario Foods and Regional Brand Development

Increase awareness of northern foods and culinary tourism opportunities for local residents and tourists would educate local consumers and visitors about foods produced in the north, providing them with the tools to make educated purchasing choices.

This project would require two streams of activity. One based on promoting regionally produced foods throughout the north to locals and tourists alike. The second stream being around building regional brands which would support supply chains in accessing more regionally produced foods. These two streams could be conducted in parallel with each other.

Project Leads: Tourism Northern Ontario, NFDN

Project Partners: Northwest Beef, Made in Manitoulin, Economic Development Agencies, Foodland Ontario, RAIN, NOFIA, Thunder Bay Food Strategy, Cloverbelt Local Food Co-op

Milestones

Stream A

- 1) Consult with existing or past brands to assess interests and needs
- 2) Consultations with regional tourism and economic development offices on promotion of regional foods
- 3) Consult with industry and consumers to assess impact of regional food promotions
- 4) Request for Proposals for strategy development and execution
- 5) Marketing strategy delivery

Stream B

- 1) Consult with existing brands on best practices in brand development, and opportunities to improve supply chains through brands
- 2) Host regional training on developing common brands, including co-packing, branding and marketing.
- 3) Provide value chain facilitation with interested groups prepared to develop business plans on common brands

Budget

ACTIVITY	COST
STREAM A	
CONSULTATION WITH EXISTING BRANDS	\$40,000
CONSULTATIONS WITH REGIONS ON BRAND DEVELOPMENT AND/OR REGIONAL PROMOTION OF REGIONAL FOODS	\$20,000
DEVELOPMENT OF PROMOTIONS STRATEGY	\$45,000
PROMOTIONS DELIVERY - MEDIA COMPANY SERVICES, PRINTED MATERIALS, BILLBOARDS AND ADVERTISING	\$300,000
TOTAL	\$405,000
STREAM B	
PRODUCER CONSULTATIONS (COMBINED COST WITH STREAM A)	
REGION TRAININGS ON DEVELOPING COMMON BRANDS (5)	\$50,000
VALUE CHAIN CO-ORDINATION	\$50,000
TOTAL	\$100,000

Next Steps

The action plan as outlined in this document provides many opportunities to work towards improving the conditions for food distribution in Northern Ontario. After 2 years of developing this plan, what is outlined balances the work that can start immediately with some of the longer-term work that will need to be developed over time. The projects that can begin immediately would be the Governance Development, Annual Networking Events and Funders Forum. The remaining three projects will require some more research and collaboration before proceeding.

Shovel Ready Actions

Governance Development - Thanks to funding from the Greenbelt Fund, the LFFC will work with the NFDN to develop a governance framework that will allow for a variety of stakeholders to be engaged in the work, while respecting their contributions time, and insight they bring as value chain and community leaders.

Once the governance of the NFDN is complete, a summary report of this action plan, in combination of the governance plan will be developed as a public document to be circulated throughout the north as a promotion of the work, as well as a recruitment document as we search for more or new members of the NFDN steering committee.

Expected Completion Date: January 31st

Annual Networking Events – Based on feedback from the community leaders identified for these events, this work can begin immediately through collaborations with existing upcoming events. Available funding for these events will be determined and sourced on a case by case basis. In the beginning of 2019, community leads will be contacted to inform them of the interest in hosting these events throughout the north.

Expected Completion Date: 3 events completed by May 1st

Funders Forum: The Fair Finance Fund has agreed to be the lead on completing this project. Presently funding is being sourced to complete this work.

Expected Completion Date: June 30th

Longer-term Projects

Due to the size and scope of the remaining three projects (Promotion of Northern Foods, Feasibility of Northern Food Terminal, Parallel Projects) it is recommended that the project leads for these three projects be convened to develop a co-ordinated approach to source funding for these projects. Once a plan is developed, a recommendation for implementation will be made to the NFDN for approval. Through a co-ordinated approach, there will be opportunities to source funding to support continued oversight of all the projects of the action plan while supporting regional and pan-northern organizations to complete community level work require to accomplish this ambition plan.

Appendix:

1. Logic Model
2. Actions and Prioritization Chart
3. List of Organizations engaged in food systems development work