

LOCAL LEADERS HARVESTING

CHANGE

A TOOLKIT

to help remote
communities
enjoy fruits
and vegetables





HealthyFamiliesBC 



HEART &
STROKE
FOUNDATION

Local Leaders Harvesting Change Toolkit

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Local Governments Lead the Way

Leadership from local government is key to ensuring everyone can enjoy fruits and vegetables.

For the past three years, the Produce Availability in Remote Communities Initiative (PAI) team has been working with over 20 remote BC communities, where fruits and vegetables are often scarce, to empower British Columbians to make healthy choices and enjoy fruits and vegetables all year round.

As we travelled the province, we learned about the challenges people face when it comes to choosing and enjoying fruits and vegetables. Some people would like to eat more fruits and vegetables throughout the year but can only find them during summer months. In many remote communities, the supply of produce is frequently cut off due to road closures, flooding or other disruptions to produce deliveries. Other people told us they find the preparation of fruits and vegetables to be too expensive, difficult and time consuming. While some communities are interested in growing their own fruits and vegetables, they do not know how to get a garden started or how to better support local farmers. We often heard from people that they want to make a healthy choice but are left to choose between fries or hot dogs at community events and gatherings.

To overcome these challenges, we have created a set of tools local government leaders and other community champions can use to help bring fruits and vegetables to their community. The Produce Preservation Workshop and Produce Storage Facility tools can be used to help overcome unexpected or seasonal drops in produce supply. The Gardening Workshop and Community Garden tools offer step-by-step guidance to get your community growing its own produce. The Farm to Community tool provides an example of how locally-farmed foods can be incorporated into the diets of community members. The Healthy Gatherings tool can be used to make healthy choices appealing and available at local events.

Local governments in remote communities play a vital role in building healthier communities. With connections and influence in many areas of the community, local government staff are well-positioned to lead and support community-wide projects that impact the health and well-being of their citizens. Additionally, local governments can work with health authorities to improve the health of their community members and participate in regional health initiatives. This toolkit supports these vital roles and provides the guidance and resources required to successfully increase the availability and enjoyment of fruits and vegetables in remote communities.



Host a Produce Preservation Workshop

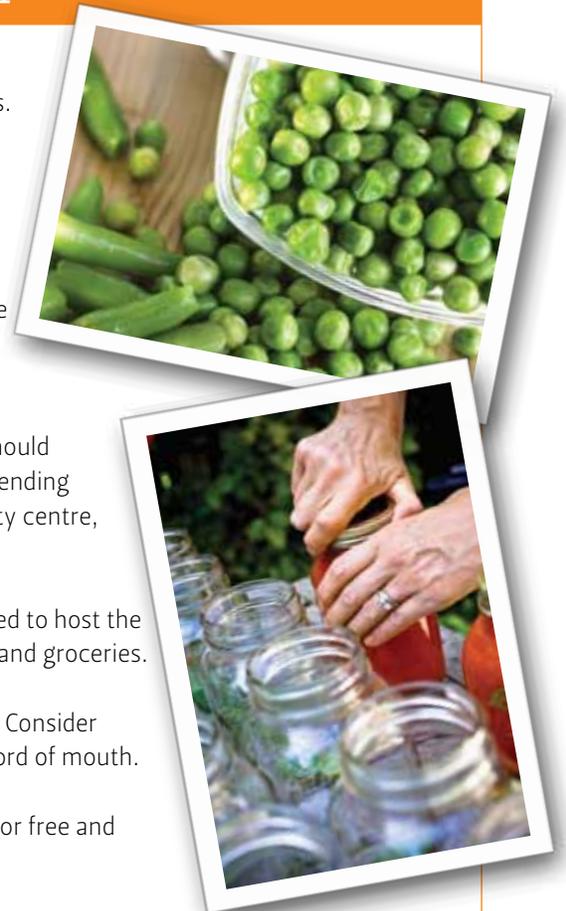
what we heard

“ We would like to learn how to safely preserve fruits and vegetables so we can enjoy them throughout the year. ”

Local government leaders can help bring produce preservation workshops to communities to teach participants how to harvest, can, dry, freeze and store fruits and vegetables.

How to Host a Produce Preservation Workshop

- 1 Visit the website:** Go to Preserveproduce.ca to learn about the Produce Preservation Program, get workshop guides and find community facilitators.
- 2 Make a plan:** Find out which preservation methods your community wants to learn. Depending on how much time you have, one or more techniques can be taught. Allocate approximately 3– 4 hours per technique.
- 3 Find a facilitator:** The ideal facilitator should have knowledge and experience teaching canning, drying, dehydrating and freezing fruits and vegetables.
- 4 Identify a location:** Find a kitchen in your community with enough cooking equipment and counter space for participants to cook safely. The kitchen should have a teaching area that can be used for food tasting and discussions. Depending on the number of participants, consider hosting the program at a community centre, school or church.
- 5 Acquire the appropriate equipment:** Identify and obtain the supplies you need to host the workshop such as canning kits, pressure canners, dehydrators, mason jars and groceries.
- 6 Spread the word:** Find and recruit participants to take part in the workshop. Consider using posters, public service announcements, community calendars and word of mouth.
- 7 Host the workshop:** To encourage participation, consider offering the class for free and providing child care.
- 8 Follow-up:** If resources permit, follow up with workshop participants to find out how they are using their new skills. Use the feedback received to change or improve the workshop.



Local Governments Lead the Way

Produce Preservation Workshops are a great way to bring the community together and teach community members new skills. Here is how you and other local government staff can play a role supporting the workshops:



Support Program Development

- Acquire materials and equipment, find a location to host the workshop, and develop the workshop agenda.
- Contact the relevant health authority and meet all food safety regulations.
- Identify a space within the community to host the workshop in a recreation centre, local government building, church or other location that has a kitchen.
- Invite local government staff and other volunteers to participate or assist in the workshop.
- Provide other in-kind or financial support for the workshop.
- Apply for funding to run the produce preservation workshop.



Find Community Partners

- Find a chef or local resident who can demonstrate how to preserve produce and share recipes.
- Contact local farmers or gardeners who can provide fresh local food.
- Partner with a health centre or a health worker who can discuss the importance of healthy eating.
- Contact health authority staff, who may be able to fund, host and help plan the workshop.



Spark Interest

- Plan the preservation workshop in conjunction with another community event such as a health fair.
- Host a community feast after the workshop to celebrate the food that has been preserved.
- Have a contest to find out who has the best salsa, jam, pickle, or relish recipe.
- Offer free taste tests to show community members how delicious preserved produce can be.
- Have a draw. Enter the names of the participants in a contest to win a basket of local preserves or a canning kit.
- Promote the workshop on your local government website, in newsletters and other public forums.
- Work with community groups and non-profits to increase awareness and interest for the workshop.
- Promote future workshops by posting pictures and success stories on your local government website, in newsletters and other public forums.



Community Spotlight

Last year, residents in the Village of Tahsis on Vancouver Island came together at a Produce Preservation Workshop to learn how to pickle beets. They learned valuable skills to take home to their families that will let them enjoy fruits and vegetables all year round.



Build a Produce Storage Facility

what we heard

“ We struggle to get fresh fruits and vegetables into our community when the road washes out or when the ferry stops running. ”

One way to ensure year round supply of fruits and vegetables is to build and manage a produce storage facility. The structure can house a variety of fruits and vegetables in an environment that prevents spoilage, helping remote communities through tough times when distribution channels are cut off. Depending on the needs of your community, a facility could be a root cellar, a modified shed or a converted shipping container.

How to Build a Produce Storage Facility

- 1 Form a planning committee:** Gather interested community members to help plan the facility. It will help to have someone with a background in construction on the committee.
- 2 Fund the facility:** Determine how the facility will be funded in the short and long term. Consider charging users a monthly fee to use the facility.
- 3 Develop a plan:** Decide how you want to build your facility. Some communities have had success using old shipping containers with upgraded insulation.
- 4 Choose a site:** Consider locations close to major roads and utilities. You will need a power hookup for cooling and lighting. Locations should be flat with ample space for parking. Some communities have paired their facility with farmers' markets, using the space surrounding the facility to set up tables and booths on market days. The farmers' produce is stored in the facility between market days.
- 5 Acquire the appropriate skills and resources:** You will need insulation, machinery to clear the land, and a refrigeration solution for the facility.
- 6 Prepare and develop the site:** Clear the land and schedule delivery or construction of the facility. You will also need to consider wiring and hookup to the main power grid.
- 7 Manage the facility:** Organize a group of people to oversee the facility. Create a schedule outlining how and when producers and transporters can access the facility.
- 8 Promote the facility:** Develop a marketing plan to get the word out about the facility and encourage your community to start using it.



Local Governments Lead the Way

Building a produce storage facility is a significant construction project and its ongoing management needs time and resources. Here are the roles you and other local governments can play to support a produce storage facility in your community.



Support Program Development

- Fund, or apply for funding, to help pay for the facility.
- Provide land for the facility.
- Help clear the land for the facility.
- Identify staff and/or community volunteers to help coordinate the delivery of facility materials.
- Identify staff and/or community volunteers to help coordinate the installation of utilities.



Find Community Partners

- Use advertisers in your community to help spread the word.
- Contact local retailers who may be interested in coordinating purchases from local farmers or who may use the facility to store large bulk purchases.
- Partner with local farmers who may be able to use the facility to prevent post-harvest spoilage and extend the viability of their crop past the end of the growing season.
- Allow farmers' markets to use the space around the facility to sell fruits and vegetables, and store produce in the facility between market days.
- Find local restaurants that may be interested in using the facility to receive bulk produce orders from local farmers or from outside the community.
- See if local schools and hospitals have a need for bulk produce storage.
- Ask for help from local food safety experts to develop proper storage procedures.
- Contact leaders from nearby communities who may be interested in sharing a storage facility.



Spark Interest

- Host a community event when the facility opens to celebrate its construction.
- Host information sessions with the community about the storage facility.
- Consider offering free storage for the first few months to attract business.
- Offer to store the cold goods for large community feasts for free or for a small charge. This will help raise the profile of the storage facility in the community.
- Work with community and non-profit organizations to increase awareness and interest for the storage facility.
- Promote the storage facility on your local government website, in newsletters and other public forums.

Community Spotlight

Haida Gwaii's northernmost island is home to a community produce storage facility, made from an old shipping container and modified with insulation and a refrigeration system. The storage facility offers a large space to keep produce fresh, so residents and businesses are able to access fresh fruits and vegetables even when they can't be shipped or trucked in to the community.



Host a Gardening Workshop

what we heard

“ We would like to learn how to grow our own fruits and vegetables but we don't know where to start. ”

Encourage community members to grow their own fruits and vegetables by hosting a gardening workshop. Help your community members acquire the skills they need to grow, tend and harvest their own fruits and vegetables.

How to Host a Gardening Workshop

- 1 Find a local partner:** Establish relationships with a garden or hardware store, or a local gardener, to gain access to expertise and supplies.
- 2 Set the schedule:** Decide when and how often the workshop should be held.
- 3 Identify a location:** Find a location to host the workshop such as a local nursery, community garden or household garden.
- 4 Hire a workshop trainer:** The ideal trainer should have local gardening experience and have a good understanding of what grows best in your area. The ideal trainer should have knowledge of best practices related to food safety and potential contaminants of produce.
- 5 Get the equipment:** Identify and acquire the supplies for the workshop, including garden tools, seeds, and plants.
- 6 Spread the word:** Find and recruit participants to take part in the workshop. Consider using posters, public service announcements, community calendars and word-of-mouth.
- 7 Follow up:** If resources permit, follow up with workshop participants to find out how they benefited from the workshop. The feedback received can be used to change or improve the gardening workshop.



Local Governments Lead the Way

Hosting a Gardening Workshop requires time, resources and support. Here is how you and other local government staff can get involved.



Support Program Development

- Engage local government staff and/or community volunteers to help plan and prepare for the workshop. For example, local government staff and/or community volunteers might be able to acquire materials and equipment or plan the workshop agenda.
- Identify and contact volunteers to assist with hosting the workshop.
- Provide other in-kind or financial supports if possible.
- Apply for funding for the gardening workshop.
- Contact your health authority to see if they are able to fund, host, plan and/or deliver the workshop.



Find Community Partners

- Identify a local farmer to provide gardening information and expertise.
- Get a local gardener to contribute equipment, seeds and soil.
- Find a health centre or a health worker who can discuss the importance of healthy eating.
- Contact nearby communities interested in cosponsoring a workshop.



Spark Interest

Get your community excited about gardening. Here are some ideas to encourage your community to participate:

- Offer free samples of local produce at community events to inspire people to grow their own fruits and vegetables.
- Host a cooking demonstration to show community members how to add local produce to their favourite meals.
- Get students involved. Partner with a local school to teach students how to plant seeds.
- Offer the workshop in conjunction with another community event such as a health fair.
- Promote the workshop on your local government website, in newsletters and other public forums.
- Work with community groups and non-profit organizations to increase awareness and interest for the workshop.
- Promote future workshops by posting pictures and success stories on your local government website, in newsletters and other public forums.

Community Spotlight

At a Gardening Workshop in Tahsis, community members learned how to build raised garden beds. Now community members enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables from their own backyards.



Start a Community Garden

what we heard

“ A community garden would be a great way to bring the community together and grow our own fruits and vegetables. ”

How to Start a Community Garden

- 1 Build excitement:** Bring people together who are interested in gardening and/or healthy eating. Use the meeting as an opportunity to build excitement about the community garden and see who is interested in helping out.
- 2 Form a planning committee:** Gather interested community members to help with fundraising, construction and promotion of the community garden.
- 3 Develop a plan:** Determine the layout for your garden. Will it be a central community garden? Will it have raised beds or a greenhouse? What kind of fruits and vegetables do members of your community want to grow? What grows best in your region and climate? Develop a plan to make it easier to build and maintain the garden.
- 4 Choose a garden site:** Consider locations that have lots of sunlight, access to water and safe, suitable soil. A location that is safe and easy for your community members to get to will encourage them to get involved.
- 5 Acquire the appropriate resources:** Identify and acquire the resources needed to develop a garden such as soil, tools, equipment, seeds and fencing.
- 6 Prepare and develop the site:** Bring together volunteers to build fences, construct raised beds, weed the soil, plant seeds, water the plants, manage the harvest and prepare the garden for winter.
- 7 Manage the community garden:** Develop a “garden agreement” that outlines how the garden will be managed. The garden agreement should also outline the rights and responsibilities of community gardeners, as well as safety regulations like chemical storage policies.
- 8 Follow up:** If resources permit, follow up with local gardeners to find out how the community garden is making a difference in their lives. The feedback received can be used to receive additional funding and resources for the garden.



Local Governments Lead the Way

Developing a new garden is a process that requires time, resources, community engagement and support. Here are some of the roles you and other local government staff can play to bring the garden to life.



Support Development

- Create policies and bylaws that support community gardens in your area.
- Enlist your parks or maintenance staff to help design and draft a garden plan.
- Work with volunteer services, community groups and non-profit organizations to create and maintain the garden.
- Work with community groups and non-profit organizations to increase awareness and interest for the garden.
- Apply for funding for the planning and construction of a garden.



Find Community Partners

- Find a local farmer or gardener who can provide gardening expertise and equipment.
- Partner with a garden or hardware store that can provide discounts on gardening equipment, seeds, soil and supplies.
- Encourage local schools to teach students where their fruits and vegetables come from.
- Find a health centre or a health worker who can discuss the importance of physical activity and healthy eating.



Spark Interest

- Host a community feast or gathering to celebrate the food grown in the garden.
- Create a Facebook page or group to promote the garden.
- Create a local cookbook to encourage community members to cook with produce grown in the garden.
- Host a produce preservation workshop to preserve produce grown in the garden.
- Promote your community garden on your local government website, in newsletters and other public forums.
- Link with a Food Skills for Families program to help generate interest for local produce.

Community Spotlight

The Village of New Aiyansh is proud of their community garden and the difference it has made in the health of their citizens. They came together and worked hard to build a fenced garden, raised beds, a greenhouse, and a composter. Now produce from the garden is shared throughout the community, in food hampers and in the Meals on Wheels Program.



Start a Farm to Community Program

what we heard

“ We want our children to eat more fruits and vegetables grown by our local farmers. ”

Start a Farm to Community program to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables in your community. These programs in schools, hospitals and other public venues help bring local fruits and vegetables into the places where we learn, heal and play.

How to Start a Farm to Community Program

- 1 Visit the website:** Visit www.phabc.org/farmtoschool to download the latest “how to” guide and to find programs near you.
- 2 Identify a location:** Find out which sites in your community are interested in running a Farm to Community program. Work with them to create a plan to make the program a reality.
- 3 Form a Farm to Community Team:** Teams should include a lead from the host organization or site, a community nutritionist, volunteers/parents, a community member with knowledge of food safety practices, and at least one farmer/grower.
- 4 Acquire the appropriate resources:** Typically programs require an initial one-time grant for equipment, space modification, coordination and promotional activities. Many programs are self-financing within one year.
- 5 Source local food:** Most communities have farmers, community gardeners or backyard gardeners who are willing to sell their fruits and vegetables to the school or hospital. The key is to celebrate in-season local food and to increase local food production capacity in future years.
- 6 Ready the sites:** Have the sites order and install equipment. Help them promote the program, create menus and recipes, and train staff in food preparation, service and safety.
- 7 Implement the program:** Invite the media and the general public on opening day. Try to coordinate the program launch with a food-related local event.
- 8 Follow-up:** Host regular team meetings to review progress and to make changes to strengthen and improve the program.



Local Governments Lead the Way

Farm to Community programs are a great way to support local farmers while encouraging community members, especially children, to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables. Here are some of the ways you and other local government staff can help close the distance between farm and fork.



Support Program Development

- Include support for community gardens and urban agriculture in community plans.
- Develop and adopt a local food procurement policy for municipal facilities.
- Adopt a Food Charter or a commitment to support programs like Farm to Community that help support healthy food systems.
- Designate a council member or staff person to participate on Farm to Community teams.
- Keep the local environmental health officer in the loop with program plans. They may request a drawing of the kitchen, a food safety plan, food safe training, and in some cases a food permit.
- Apply for seed grants to support Farm to Community activities or programs.



Find Community Partners

- Identify local farmers who can grow fruits and vegetables for the program. Farmers can also provide educational opportunities on their farm for students and community members.
- Find local grocers who may be willing to bring in local food.
- Partner with a local chef who can demonstrate healthy cooking techniques using local produce.
- Get a nutritionist to provide recipes for the program.



Spark Interest

- Introduce the Farm to Community concept in your community by hosting “local foods” luncheon or a “farm fresh” feast. Invite a Farm to Community lead from a neighboring community to speak.
- Facilitate initial community meetings to develop a Farm to Community Team
- Support local food festivals and other celebrations of local foods.

Community Spotlight

All 34 students at Port Clements Elementary School on Haida Gwaii have been participating in a Farm to Community program for two years. Students enjoy eating more locally grown fruits and vegetables, and have gone from eating one fruit or vegetable per lunch to four at the Farm to Community lunches. They also visit the farm where produce for the program is harvested to learn about the importance of locally grown food.



Host Healthy Gatherings

what we heard

Despite our best efforts, people still want hot dogs, chips and pop at community events. How do we make fruits and vegetables more appealing?

Ensuring more fresh fruits and vegetables are available at community gatherings is a great way to show community members that you care about their health.

How to Host Healthy Gatherings

- 1 Identify an event:** Think about the local events, celebrations and gatherings that take place in your community, such as a village council meeting or a long-weekend special event. To start, choose one event where more fresh fruits and vegetables could be provided.
- 2 Build relationships:** Contact the group or individual who organizes the event. Ask if you can partner with them and provide healthy food. Try to find some volunteers in the community who are interested in helping to promote healthy eating. Include volunteers in the event planning, and identify specific jobs that they can do for event preparation and on the day(s) of the event.
- 3 Make a plan:** Think about how to promote fruits and vegetables. Have a booth or tent to draw a crowd. Try offering healthy snacks (e.g. fruit smoothies or fruit kebabs), having a chef demonstrate cooking using local vegetables, giving away healthy recipes that use produce, leading children's activities (e.g. bobbing for apples or a fruit and vegetable treasure hunt) or having a contest (e.g. to give away healthy cookbooks or fruit baskets).
- 4 Get the right equipment:** Identify and acquire the supplies you need such as tables, canopies, chairs, blenders, hot plates, table cloths, aprons, cups, plates, utensils, coolers and hand washing facilities.
- 5 Obtain resources:** Contact a local store or retailer to order the fruits and vegetables. If possible, purchase produce that is locally grown. If you can promote the availability of produce at their store with signage at your event booth, you may find the retailer will volunteer or donate some produce for the event. Use the links provided in the resources section of this toolkit to order recipe cards, posters and other great fruit and vegetable promotion items.
- 6 Spread the word:** When you are promoting the community gathering make sure to mention that delicious snacks will be offered for FREE.
- 7 Participate and follow up:** Encourage local residents to incorporate fruits and vegetables into their diet and ask them what they think about the healthy snacks. Use the feedback to make a case for future healthy gatherings.



Local Governments Lead the Way

Offering healthy snacks at community gatherings is an easy way to promote healthy choices. Here are some ideas for how you and other local government staff can get involved.



Support Program Development

- Adopt a healthy food policy to set a good example within your community.
- Involve local government staff and/or community volunteers to help plan activities and acquire resources.
- Promote the community event on your local government website, in newsletters and other public forums.
- Invite local government staff and community volunteers to manage the booth and prepare and distribute healthy snacks.
- See if your local government can help pay for groceries, supplies and equipment.
- Apply for funding to pay for the community event.
- Contact your health authority to see if they are able to fund, plan or manage the booth.



Find Community Partners

- Partner with a chef or local resident who can demonstrate how to cook a meal that includes fresh fruits or vegetables.
- Find local farmers, gardeners, or retailers who can provide fresh local food.
- Identify a health worker who can discuss the importance of healthy eating.



Spark Interest

- Have a contest or draw. At an event, enter the names of individuals in a contest to win a fruit basket or healthy cookbook.
- Offer free taste tests to show community members how delicious fresh fruits and vegetables can be.
- Promote healthy eating by taking photos of people enjoying the fresh fruits and vegetables you provide at the event.

Community Spotlight

Sampling free fruit smoothies, juicy fruit kebabs and other tasty snacks during cooking demonstrations at Bella Coola's Fall Fair helped the community learn first-hand how delicious fruits and vegetables can be.



Additional Resources

The Produce Availability in Remote Communities Initiative is a Healthy Families BC initiative. For more information please visit www.health.gov.bc.ca/healthyeating/foodsecurity.html

Produce Preservation

For more information on the Produce Preservation Program, please visit preserveproduce.ca

Healthy Eating and Promotion

For any questions about healthy eating, food or nutrition call 8-1-1 toll free. You can speak to a HealthLinkBC representative who can connect you with a registered dietitian healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating

The Dietitians of Canada Plan Shop Cook website is filled with valuable information to help plan a healthy diet, shop wisely and cook up nutritious and delicious recipes. dietitians.ca/Your-Health/Plan-Shop-Cook.aspx

Eat Smart Meet Smart resources can help you plan healthy meetings, events and conferences. www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2008/eat-smart-meet-smart-suite.pdf

For recipe cards, posters and other great fruit and vegetable promotion resources, try looking here:

- 5to10aday.com/en/order-materials
- tryfoods.com
- bcblueberry.com/site/recipes.html
- hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/pubs/promotion/index-eng.php
(order through: publications@hc-sc.gc.ca)
- fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org
- freggietales.ca
- aitc.ca/bc/index.php?page=resources

Food Policy

The Public Health Association's BC Food Security Gateway has resources to help local governments develop healthy food policies. bcfoodsecuritygateway.ca

The Provincial Health Services developed *A Seat at The Table: Resource guide for local governments to promote food secure communities*. [healbc.ca/files/PHSA_report_-_a_seat_at_the_table_\(4\).pdf](http://healbc.ca/files/PHSA_report_-_a_seat_at_the_table_(4).pdf)

Gardening

You can find raised bed gardening tips here: raisedbedgardeningtips.com

You can find container gardening tips here: containergardeningtips.com

Garden Wise is a gardening magazine focused on the diverse regions of British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest. gardenwiseonline.ca

West Coast Seeds has a useful planting chart for Coastal BC. westcoastseeds.com/admin/files/2011PlantingChart.pdf

Grants and Funding Opportunities

The Rural BC website keeps a list of grant opportunities relevant to rural communities. www.ruralbc.gov.bc.ca/granttool.html

The funding opportunities within the Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI) are different in each Health Authority. An overview of the CFAI is available on the PHSA website. www.phsa.ca/HealthProfessionals/Population-Public-Health/Food-Security/default.htm

Walmart-Evergreen seed grants are available to groups working collaboratively with municipalities on community gardens and other green initiatives. evergreen.ca/en/funding/grants/walmart.sn

Canadians can apply for American Community Gardening Association grants. communitygarden.org

Acknowledgements/Credits

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