

STEWARDING FOOD SYSTEM PROJECTS

A DECISION-MAKING GUIDE FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES



Funded in part by the governments of Canada and British Columbia under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

HOW THE FIVE TOOLKIT PATHWAYS WORK TOGETHER



This guide is made up of **five (5) toolkit pathways**, and has been developed for Indigenous leaders (decision-makers and senior staff) and community members who want to start, or scale up, a food-related enterprise.

The guide can be followed from start to finish, exploring all five individual pathways, or they can be used independently. They are summarized as follows:

1) Community Alignment for Food Initiatives: this is intended to support Indigenous Leadership in determining if the project is a good fit for their community.

2) Determining Readiness: this is a decision-matrix tool intended to be completed by food entrepreneurs and project champions to ensure that their initiative is implementation-ready.

3) Gathering Support: this is a toolkit intended to support food entrepreneurs and project champions in developing a case for support for their project.

4) Food Project Presentation Checklist: this is a detailed checklist intended for food entrepreneurs and project champions who are preparing to present to potential funders and/or to Indigenous Leadership.

5) Restarting Stalled Food Projects: this toolkit can help community leaders work through questions to determine if an existing stalled project should be revived.

HOW THIS GUIDE WAS CREATED



Stewarding Food System Projects: A Decision-Making Guide for Indigenous Communities is grounded in years of Indigenous leadership, partnership, and collective learning across British Columbia. Indigenous Nations and organizations have consistently affirmed that food systems are inseparable from Indigenous laws, cultures, economies, and responsibilities to land and water. Food is not simply a sector or service, it is a living system that sustains community well-being, governance, and self-determination.

This understanding has been reinforced through extensive engagement and analysis, including the [Discussion Paper on Indigenous Food Sovereignty in British Columbia](#), which documented Indigenous-led food initiatives, shared narratives, and successful case studies across the province. The paper, supported by the B.C. Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food (IACAF), highlighted both the strength and diversity of Indigenous food systems and the need for tools that support community-driven decision-making, long-term stewardship, and locally defined success.

These themes were echoed and deepened through [The Gathering of Indigenous Organizations](#), which brought together Indigenous food, agriculture, and fisheries organizations to share experiences, identify barriers, and articulate collective priorities. The Gathering, which was supported by IACAF, underscored the need for stronger coordination, clearer pathways through funding and policy systems, and practical tools that support Indigenous communities to make informed, values-based decisions as they steward food system projects.

At the same time, Indigenous partners have identified ongoing challenges navigating funding, policy, and program environments that are often misaligned with Indigenous priorities, timelines, and governance structures. The [Gap Analysis of Funding for Indigenous Agriculture and Food](#), guided by IACAF, confirmed these systemic barriers and underscored the need for clearer, more accessible decision-making supports for communities leading food system projects.

This toolkit responds directly to that need. It is designed to support Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs as they steward food system projects, from early visioning through implementation and sustainability, by centering Indigenous values, rights, and responsibilities. Rather than prescribing solutions, the guide is intended to provide practical frameworks and reflective questions to help communities assess opportunities on their own terms, navigate partnerships and funding, and make informed decisions that align with their own laws, priorities, and long-term food sovereignty goals.

The toolkit project team (Ispahcâw Consulting and Upland Agricultural Consulting) would like to express our deepest gratitude to all those who shared their stories and feedback with us during the development of the toolkit.

GLOSSARY

Business and governance language can sometimes feel unfamiliar or overly technical. When presenting projects to leadership, partners, or funders, using clear and simple explanations can help build shared understanding and trust. When in doubt, plain language is often the most effective way to communicate complex ideas. The following terms are occasionally used throughout the this toolkit:

Asset

Physical infrastructure, equipment, or something of value owned by a business or organization. This could include land, buildings, vehicles, livestock, or intellectual property.

Band Council Resolution (BCR)

A formal motion passed by Chief and Council that authorizes a specific action or decision.

Business

An initiative with the goal to earn income or profits.

Co-operative (Co-op)

A member-owned organization where profits and decision-making are shared among members.

Corporation

A legally registered business entity that exists separately from the people who own it. Corporations can own assets, sign contracts, and carry liabilities.

Cost of Goods Sold (COGS)

The direct cost required to produce a product. For food projects, this may include seeds, feed, ingredients, packaging, and labour involved in producing the item.

Demographics

Characteristics of a group of people such as age, income, household size, or lifestyle. These details can help identify potential customers.

Direct-to-Consumer (DTC)

Selling products directly to the customer without intermediaries. Examples include farm stands, farmers' markets, or community food box programs.

Distribution Channel

The pathway a product takes to reach customers. For example, direct-to-consumer (farmers' markets, farm gate sales, online sales), or delivery to grocery stores or food wholesalers.

Enterprise

A project or initiative that requires effort, often in the form of a business to generate profit.

Entrepreneur

Someone who has a business idea, whether or not they have previous experience in business.

Equity

Ownership in a business or project. For example, someone who owns 50% equity owns half of the business.

Equity Investment

Money invested in a business in exchange for ownership shares.

Grant

Funding provided by governments, foundations, or organizations that does not need to be repaid if the project meets the agreed conditions.

GLOSSARY

Infrastructure

The physical systems needed to operate a project, such as buildings, irrigation systems, power supply, roads, or equipment.

Letter of Intent (LOI)

A written statement from a potential buyer indicating interest in purchasing a product. It is not a contract but shows potential demand.

Liability

A responsibility or obligation, often financial. Liabilities can include debts, loans, or legal responsibilities such as insurance coverage.

Loan

Money borrowed that must be repaid over time, usually with interest.

Margin

The difference between the cost of producing a product and the price it sells for. Margin helps determine whether a product is profitable.

Market Validation

Evidence that customers exist for a product. This could include conversations with buyers, letters of intent, or market research.

Net Profit

The money remaining after all business expenses are subtracted from total sales (revenue). It shows whether a business is actually making money.

Net 30 / Net 60

Number of days that it may take to receive payment timeline after an invoice has been submitted.

Operator / Project Lead

The person responsible for the day-to-day management of a project or business.

Partnership

A business arrangement where two or more people or organizations share responsibility, decision-making, profits, and risks.

Revenue

Money earned from a product. Does not account for expenses to make the product.

Scaling

Expanding the size or production level of a business.

Supply Chain

The network of steps involved in producing and delivering a product, from raw materials to the final customer.

Wholesale

Selling products in larger quantities at a lower price to retailers, distributors, or other businesses who will then sell the product to consumers.

Working Capital

Money needed to operate the business before revenue is received. This can include paying staff, buying supplies, and covering operating costs.

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COMMUNITY ALIGNMENT FOR FOOD INITIATIVES

“Is this project a good fit for the community?”

Created for: Indigenous leadership, Economic Development Commissions, senior staff.

Purpose: To determine whether the community should support a proposed food system project.



Scenario: Seeking support from the community to start a new project

An individual (likely a community member but possibly not) is interested in starting a food system project (for example a market garden, a greenhouse, a livestock and/or chicken operation). They have come forward to seek support from community leadership and/or organizations. The permission they are seeking may be a blessing, a land lease, permits, agreements, and/or investments. The initiative may or may not include the goal of providing food for community members or turning a profit (generating revenues).

In this scenario, there may be several questions for leadership to consider.

This tool is for you if you are in a position to decide whether or not a proposed food system project is a good fit for your community.

Questions that this tool works through include:

- ✓ Does this project align with our community priorities?
- ✓ What challenges might the project face?
- ✓ Which offices or departments need to be involved?
- ✓ Can we minimize or manage any risks?
- ✓ What approvals might be required?

Desired Outcome: Clear internal direction and a decision pathway that provides clarity when communicating with the food project entrepreneur.

Food system stressors and disasters such as flooding and drought, soaring food costs, and supply-chain disruptions continue to place pressure on our access to food. These impacts are felt in many Indigenous communities, particularly those in rural and remote areas. Actions taken toward achieving food security and food sovereignty are practical and often necessary. It is also a sovereign right as articulated in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)* in B.C.

Restoring communities' capacity for self-determined planning toward sustainable food security and food sovereignty is a legislated component of the journey toward Reconciliation.

Many Indigenous communities have woven the sacredness of food throughout their entire community, providing many opportunities for intergenerational knowledge sharing. That context can help guide community decision-makers, such as Chief and Council, Economic Development Organizations, and staff, when working through the following questions.



Question 1: Does the proposed food project align with our community values and priorities?

You may find that food projects intersect with community values and priorities in several ways, such as:

- **Self-governance**
- **Health and wellness**
- **Land use**
- **Economic development**
- **Employment**
- **Education**
- **Sustainability**

CONSIDER: Comprehensive Community Plan

You may want to refer to existing community plans—such as a Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP), Land Use Plan, or Economic Development Plan—to consider whether the project aligns with community priorities. Where a CCP exists, it can be a helpful starting point, but not all Nations have one, and some plans may be outdated or in development.

Alignment can also be assessed through other sources, including leadership direction, community engagement, and the guidance of Elders and Knowledge Holders, to ensure the project reflects current values and priorities.

Community Strategic Priorities

Community Values

Many food system projects include multiple strategies that take a holistic approach to community food sovereignty and economic independence, including:

- **Revitalizing** traditional foodways – supporting the legacy of fishing, hunting, agriculture, and gathering food and medicines.
- **Strengthening** local food systems – expanding access to fresh food while reducing reliance on supply chains.
- **Building** community food security - providing food to Elders and other members of the community for free or very low cost.

Connecting Elders, Traditional Knowledge holders, and youth to share knowledge about land-based food systems and environmental stewardship can help uncover priorities and values.

EXAMPLE: WESTBANK FIRST NATION

WFN's Comprehensive Community Plan is rooted in the story of Four Food Chiefs:

- Chief Bitterroot (spíł̓əm): the Chief for things underground
- Chief Black Bear (skəm̓xist) : the Chief for all creatures of the land
- Chief Saskatoon Berry (sıya'?): the Chief for things growing on the land
- Chief Spring Salmon (sklwł̓'is): the Chief for all creatures of the water



Question 2: Which offices or departments need to be involved and is there a clear pathway to success, supported by processes and policy?

The following offices may be involved:

- **Band Administration:** to support completing any paperwork involved with creating the new enterprise.
- **Lands Department:** to support any lease arrangements or other land use tenure agreements.
- **Rights and Title Department:** to ensure that land use practices are consistent with protection of air, land, water, wildlife and historical/cultural places.
- **Operations and Maintenance:** for water and utility needs and access.
- **Cultural Department:** to preserve, protect, and restore sites of cultural significance.
- **Economic Development:** to provide support for business planning and explore opportunities for investment.
- **Health and Wellness:** to explore opportunities to weave in active living, preventative, and recovery programming into the food project.
- **Education:** to explore opportunities for land-based learning among members of the community.

If there is no clear pathway:

Set up a meeting between community leadership, the Economic Development Manager (if possible), and/or with the Lands Department to discuss protocols and necessary steps.



Readiness Reflection Exercise

Within imposed governance systems, Indigenous leadership may inherit colonial structures and processes that result in outcomes in opposition to the community's stated priorities and shared values.

Consider the following:



- *Are there any examples of successful entrepreneurial endeavours in the community - if no, what barriers might leadership consider eliminating?*



- *Does the community have priorities and values that support community members to be able to lead thriving businesses?*



- *Has the groundwork been done to ensure that it is administratively possible for a community member to start and run a business?*

Question 3: What approvals may be required?

Depending on the project, the following may be required:

- Land use agreements (e.g. leases);
- Archaeological and environmental assessments, such as a geotechnical assessment;
- Building permits;
- Servicing (water, power, gas);
- Water licenses;
- Infrastructure (fencing); and/or
- Insurance.

Note: Approvals may be complicated for communities where Reserve Lands intersect or overlap with crown or private lands, requiring alignment with policies and regulations from multiple layers of government.

Some Indigenous communities may have partnerships with existing local governments to support some of these administrative tasks, while others will need to ensure that they have the internal resources to move the project through the necessary steps.

It is often the case that community members who are venturing into food initiatives may not have much previous business experience and will require some support to make sure that they have the approvals needed. The community may want to develop a fact sheet or worksheet available for new ventures regarding approvals.



Question 4: What challenges might the food initiative face?

Despite the diversity of project types, geographical contexts, and vulnerabilities, common challenges have emerged in food system projects:

- **Labour:** Attracting and retaining labour (both paid or volunteers) and finding accommodation for those who need to live on-site.
- **Funding:** Availability of grants, and the need for spending and reporting by specific deadlines.
- **Loss of Traditional Knowledge:** There may not be an opportunity to connect with Elders or other leaders regarding local food system knowledge due to a loss of inter-generational learning.
- **Remote & Rural Location:** Challenges with getting food products shipped outside of the community for sales and also challenges with bringing expertise and/or tools and equipment into the community.
- **Climate change and other disasters:** Impacts of extreme heat, drought, and/or floods on food projects can have lasting impacts. Disasters that affect transportation routes and the supply chain (like wildfires, or COVID-19) also affect food businesses.

These examples provide insight into how community leaders best can support food projects.

They *do not mean* that a community should not support the project.

There should simply be awareness of what the barriers to success may look like.



Question 5: Can we minimize or manage any risks?

Some types of risks can be easier to control than others. The list below provides some examples of two key elements of a food initiative plan that can affect risk tolerance: business type and business leader.

Risk 1: Business Type: there are several types of business types - each will have its own set of pros and cons. Examples include:

- **Sole proprietor:** the project manager is the only owner and is responsible for all decisions and operations and all revenues and debts.
- **Society:** these non-profit organizations are established with a Constitution, Bylaws, and a Board of Directors. Staff run business activities and all revenues are re-distributed into the initiative.
- **Corporation:** a Board of Directors is established and the business is legally separated from the owner(s). Community leadership may have a “seat at the table” by requesting that a certain number of board positions be set aside. Revenues/ profits are distributed based on the number of shares that each owner holds. The corporation could be labeled a “benefit corporation” if benefits extend to the community.
- **Partnership:** in this type of business, all responsibilities and profits (or debts) are shared based on a partnership agreement. Decision-making is also shared based on the details held within the agreement.
- **Co-operative:** this membership-based business model allows for all profits (or debts) to be shared amongst members. It could be developed as a non-profit.

Other considerations include:

- Will the community retain a majority ownership? If the food project is established as a society, corporation or a partnership, it could be community - (e.g. Band, Nation) owned for decision-making control, with a minority owner-operator responsible for operations.

- Will there be member participation pathways built into the business structure (e.g. allowing members to contribute toward ownership or joint venture participation)?
- Does the business model include expectations related to cultural safety, land stewardship practices, and respectful working relationships with community members?

Risk 2: Business Leadership: The business owner/ CEO, and/or team at the helm of the food project will have significant influence as to whether or not it will succeed. Consider the following:

- ✓ Does the leader have previous business experience?
- ✓ Has the leader experienced previous business success (or if not, have they taken away key lessons from past experiences)?
- ✓ Does the leader have the resources and tools needed to make the initiative work? If not, have they clearly outlined what type, and amount, of support will be required?
- ✓ Is there a solid business plan (or project plan) that has been presented? Does the plan outline key risks and solutions to help minimize those risks?

RISK REFLECTION EXERCISE

- Will this business leader or entrepreneur have the necessary support and decision-making authority to ensure the project progresses?
- In a community-led enterprise or co-ownership model, will decisions be made by an individual or by a committee?
- If a committee is leading the decision-making, do any of the committee members have relevant business leadership experience?
- How will project continuity be ensured through elections and leadership changes?
- Are there policies or processes that can be put in place to set the business up for success in advance?



OUTCOMES OF SUCCESSFUL FOOD INITIATIVES

Surveys from communities undertaking food system projects found that:

- The projects positively impact the health and wellbeing of participating community members.
- There is better access to nutritious, affordable foods and more awareness of how chronic diseases can be avoided and treated by eating healthy food.
- There is a better ability to widely distribute fresh and preserved foods to community members through luncheons, feasts and food baskets.
- There are social and therapeutic benefits with access to safe spaces to gather, including the cultivation and reclamation of Traditional foods.

Examples include:

- [Ntamtqen Community Garden & Food Hub – Lower Similkameen Indian Band](#)
- [Hupacasath Community Farm – Hupacasath First Nation](#)
- [Swiya Farm – Sechelt Nation](#)



References:

- Northern Health- [Indigenous Food System Benefits - Stories.](#)
- BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food: [videos of success stories.](#)
- First Nations Health Authority - [Food System Program Highlights.](#)
- I-SPARC [Report on Food System Projects.](#)

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DETERMINING READINESS: A DECISION MATRIX TOOL

“How can I determine if I am ready to implement my food enterprise?”

Created for: Entrepreneurs, project champions, economic development staff, and Nation development teams.

Purpose: To decide if the food project is ready to move from idea to action.

Scenario: Seeking to simplify layered decision-making



A community member wants to set up a market garden business, but realizes that it must move through layered decision-making in order to get approval from community leadership. Even strong business concepts can stall if internal alignment is unclear, timing is off, or risks or obstacles have not been identified early. Before seeking funding or devoting time and energy into building a formal business pitch deck, the entrepreneur (or project champion or economic development team) wants to get a sense as to whether or not the project is aligned, realistic, and ready for approval.

Overview

This tool is intended to help you assess the readiness of your business idea.

Questions that this tool works through include:

- ✓ 1) Is my project aligned with our community values and priorities?
- ✓ 2) What approval(s) will I need to move ahead and who needs to enable the approval(s)?
- ✓ 3) What support exists and what still needs strengthening - are we ready to launch the project?
- ✓ 4) Is the timing right to start this project?

Desired Outcome: This is a preparation tool that can help protect relationships, reduce political friction, and ensure that when you do move forward, your project narrative is grounded, realistic, and aligned with community priorities.

Context: Many strong ideas fail not because the product or concept is weak — but because governance roles are unclear, timing is off, or expectations haven't been aligned. This tool seeks at best to prevent this or at least save time and energy.

How To Use This Guide: There are four (4) exercise questions presented.

Additional guidance questions are then provided. These can be answered using a colour-coded scoring system.

While some examples are provided, be sure to run your own project through the same questions. Further direction is provided if you answer Yellow or Red.



GO



PAUSE



HOLD/STOP

If your project scores yellow or red:

Uncertainty doesn't mean the project is wrong. It usually means alignment hasn't happened yet and more information or work is needed.

Consider:

- **Booking a short meeting** with your Economic Development Manager, Band Manager, or governance lead to clarify who formally approves what. Ideally get this in writing in an email follow up.
 - Ask early: "What has caused projects like this to stall in the past?" Learning from others experiences is valuable.
- **Mapping out the approval pathway** step-by-step (e.g., staff → committee → Council → Band Council Resolution).
- **Speaking with someone who has successfully moved a business proposal through your community** Leadership's governance process and ask what they learned.
- If external consultants are involved, **ensuring they understand and respect internal protocols, timelines, and dynamics** before drafting materials.

Question 1: Is the project aligned with community values and priorities?

What are the community's values or strategic priorities?

- Understanding your community's stated values and priorities will be helpful in all stages of the project.
- Look into your community's Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP) or other land use plans and strategic planning documents.
- See if there are parts of those plans that you can connect your proposed project to.

Consider - does your project align with community values around:


- Food security and/or food sovereignty?
- Revenue diversification?
- Employment or training of community members?
- Youth engagement?
- Cultural practices?
- Long-term land stewardship?
- Other _____

The project champion will need to be able to anticipate these concerns and have established answers backed by a clear understanding of community priorities. Consider your own food project and apply these colours to similar questions regarding community value alignment. If red or yellow, pause and clarify before seeking funding or approvals.

Scoring:

Strong alignment: GREEN 

Partial alignment: YELLOW 

Weak or unclear alignment: RED 

If unclear, strengthen your narrative before pitching.

Why this matters:

Projects that feel like individual ambition — rather than collective strategy — can often face resistance in communities.

If Your Answers to Community Alignment are Yellow or Red – consider:

- ✓ Reframing the description of your project using language that reflects community priorities (food sovereignty, youth employment, land stewardship).
- ✓ Meeting with one or two Elders or respected community members and asking: “What would strengthen this proposal or project description?”
- ✓ Reviewing your Comprehensive Community Plan, economic development or land use plan and explicitly connect your project to those goals.
- ✓ Asking yourself: Who benefits first? Who benefits long-term? Is that visible in the narrative?

Reflection Exercise

If your business plan emphasizes profits for you, or export revenue, also articulate how it will support community members, food security, or stewardship. Leadership often looks for layered benefits.

**Complete the sentence:
“My food project idea will benefit the community the following ways...”**

List a few likely questions that leadership may raise about your project:

- Question 1 _____
- Question 2 _____
- Question 3 _____

Key consideration:

Is Indian Reserve (IR) land the right location for your project?

For some projects, operating on federal IR land can strengthen sovereignty, employment, and community control.

For others, IR land can represent regulatory constraints, infrastructure gaps, or zoning that may create barriers.

This is not necessarily a political consideration, but it may be a strategic one.

Consider:

- Does operating on IR land align with long-term food sovereignty goals?
- Are the food enterprise activities compatible with neighbours (e.g., noises, smells, traffic, etc.)?
- Are there regulatory advantages or disadvantages to operating on IR land (e.g., taxation, inspection, zoning)?
- Is infrastructure (water, power, roads, internet) sufficient?
- Would operating nearby — within a municipality or regional district — reduce cost, administrative steps, or regulatory burdens - or increase it?
- Would operating on IR land better align with community values?
- Is a hybrid model possible (e.g., production on Nation land but processing off-site)?

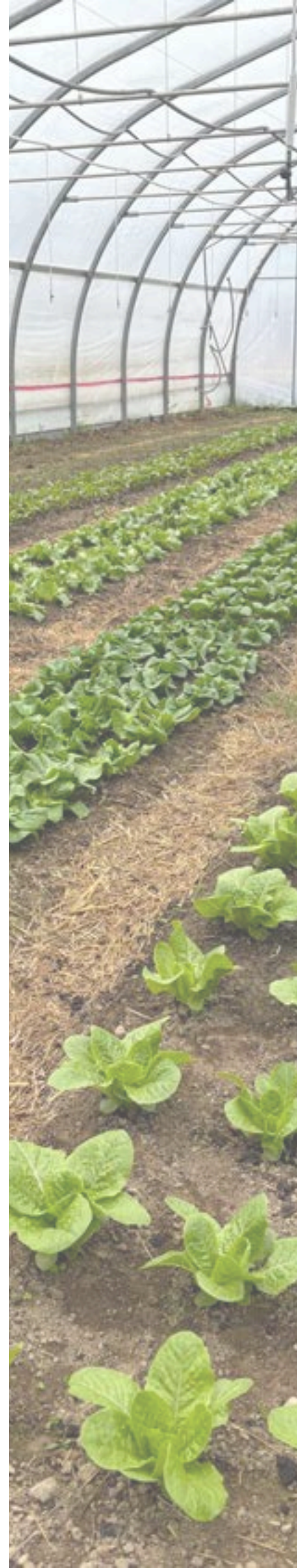
Reflection Exercise - weigh the barriers and benefits to operating your project on IR lands. Can barriers be addressed — or should the location be reconsidered?


Write one sentence:

“Operating on IR land strengthens this project because...”

or

“We should reconsider location because...”





Question 2. Project approvals: who is responsible for which steps?

Before you present (or “pitch”) the project to community leadership or to an external funder, ask: **Who must approve this internally?**

In some First Nations communities that may include:

- Chief & Council
- Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Board
- Lands Department
- Cultural Department
- Finance team
- Community members
- Elders advisory
- A Band Council Resolution (BCR)

Why this matters: If you approach potential supporters before you have reached alignment with community leadership, the project may risk:


- Political pushback
- Delays in signing agreements
- Community resistance
- Reputational harm

Scenario: Greenhouse Secures Expansion Grant

A greenhouse expansion is planned on IR lands and an external grant is secured by the project leader who is employed by the First Nations Economic Development Organization and has been tasked with developing a food project.

However, Council raises concerns about water-use priorities and land designation - things that were not discussed in early planning.

Studies, reports and decisions must be made with multiple departments. Without early alignment, the project can stall while key grant dates approach and pass.



Question 3. Is the project fully supported and ready to be launched?

This may seem like an obvious consideration at any stage of planning, but this is where realism matters. Support relates to both project champions as well as funding.

Ask yourself and your team:

- Who will manage daily operations?
- Is there previous experience with food projects?
- Is there skilled labour available?
- Is housing available for staff (in rural areas)?
- Have revenues and expenses (cash flow) been clearly calculated?
- Are costs around delivery/distribution and retailer margins factored in?

No matter how keen you are to get a project off the ground, if support gaps are ignored, profitability disappears.

Consider your own food project and apply these colours to consider what constraints exist, and therefore what support is needed.

Scoring:





Operationally realistic: GREEN ●

Gaps identified and manageable: YELLOW ●

Significant unaddressed gaps: RED ●

If yellow, proceed with caution and seek out support early on. If red, solve operations before pitching.

If Your Answers Regarding Project Support are Yellow or Red – consider:

-  Asking a trusted financial professional or experienced food entrepreneur to walk through your numbers with you.
-  Talking to staff at the education department about training and skills development opportunities.
-  Examining risk: what happens to our bottom line if sales are lower than expected? What if input costs are higher than expected?
-  Confirming working capital is available for payment cycles that could be 60-90 days.


Scenario: First Nations Rancher Expanding into Meat Processing

An Indigenous rancher has previously sold her livestock at an auction but wants to expand into meat processing to create branded packaged beef products in order to increase revenue margins.

However, she has identified the following constraints:

- The nearest inspected meat processing facility is 4 hours away.
- Cold chain logistics are expensive and she didn't account for them in her business plan.
- Skilled meat cutters are scarce and she can't locate anyone to fill that role.

Each of these constraints can be considered as a need for support that could cost money. In this example it is transportation, cold storage, and skilled labour.

She scores RED  and decides to pause her plans until she can secure support.

Question 4. Is the timing right to start this project?

Timing can influence how smoothly a project moves forward. Strong ideas are more likely to gain support when conditions are aligned.


Consider:

- Is an election cycle approaching that may affect decision-making timelines?
- Is leadership transitioning, and how might that shape priorities?
- Is there a high rate of staff turnover that may influence the approvals process?
- Are major infrastructure or community projects planned or already underway?
- Are grant deadlines impacting the pace of this proposal?

Why this matters: Urgency driven by grants can often lead to rushed proposals and governance strain.

Consider your own food project and apply these same sorts of questions.

Scoring:

Conditions aligned: GREEN 

Some instability: YELLOW 

Poor timing: RED 

Sometimes the most strategic move is to wait for business conditions to improve.

Scenario: An Exciting Grant Opportunity for a Community Farm

A Nation's farm manager identifies a grant with a three-week application deadline that could support the expansion of food production for the community. However, Council is in the middle of an election and a strategic planning cycle. Bringing forward a proposal during an already full governance season may limit the depth of discussion or clarity of roles and motivate Leadership to push decision-making until after the funding deadline passes. Rather than rushing, request a brief check-in with Band staff to understand Council's timeline, explore whether the project can be framed within the strategic planning conversation, and determine whether a phased approach would strengthen support.

If Your Answers Regarding Timing are Yellow or Red – consider:


- ✓ Asking leadership: “Is this the right time for this conversation (project)?”
- ✓ Identifying whether the urgency is grant-driven or strategy-driven.
- ✓ Breaking the project into phases instead of launching full scale.
- ✓ Piloting at a smaller level to build proof before requesting major capital.


Final Readiness Assessment Summary


Consider the colours you assigned as you moved through the four question sections:

- Were they mostly green?
- Were several red?

Consider the following in your decision to move ahead or not:

Mostly GREEN: Proceed to build pitch 

A few YELLOW: Refine before pitching 

Several RED: Considering pausing and reassessing 

Complete one of these sentences:

“Our project is ready because...”

or

“We need to strengthen the following aspects of our project in order to be ready...”

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GATHERING SUPPORT FOR YOUR FOOD PROJECT

“How can I prepare for a successful pitch?”

Created for: Food project champions and entrepreneurs.

Purpose: To present a clear, realistic, and aligned opportunity for consideration by Community Leadership or external funders. This may include:

- Approval from Chief & Council or an Economic Development Commission Board
- Support from a CEO or internal leadership staff
- Capital from funders, lenders, or partners

Scenario: Looking for confirmation of Council support before seeking funding



You have a great idea for a food project and you have created a solid business plan for it. However, you need to confirm that you have the support of Council and that you can pitch the project to potential supporters. The pitch is not about impressing people. It is about reducing uncertainty for various decision-makers.

Overview

This tool takes the results of Decision Pathways 1 and 2 to weave them into a strong pitch deck.

Questions that this tool works through include:

- ✓ Does the project fit the community's or funder's priorities?
- ✓ What are the projected revenues and expenses?
- ✓ Have we explored market realities?
- ✓ Is the governance structure clear?
- ✓ What is the big ask (approval, support, funding)?

Desired Outcome: By using this toolkit you will walk through these key questions to create a credible, grounded project pitch that reflects both business viability and Indigenous governance realities.

Before You Begin: A Note

Pitching a project or idea that you are passionate about can feel vulnerable — especially in rooms shaped by power imbalances, funding scarcity, or past experiences of dismissal.

Remember:

- You are not required to oversell.
- You are not required to perform with confidence.
- You are not required to hide risk.

Clarity can build trust.

Honesty can build credibility.

Preparation can reduce stress.

You are offering an opportunity — not seeking approval for your worth.

Question 1: Does the project fit the community's or funder's priorities?

This will help you to be prepared to speak about why this project or idea exists and why it belongs in the community.

You should be able to clearly explain:

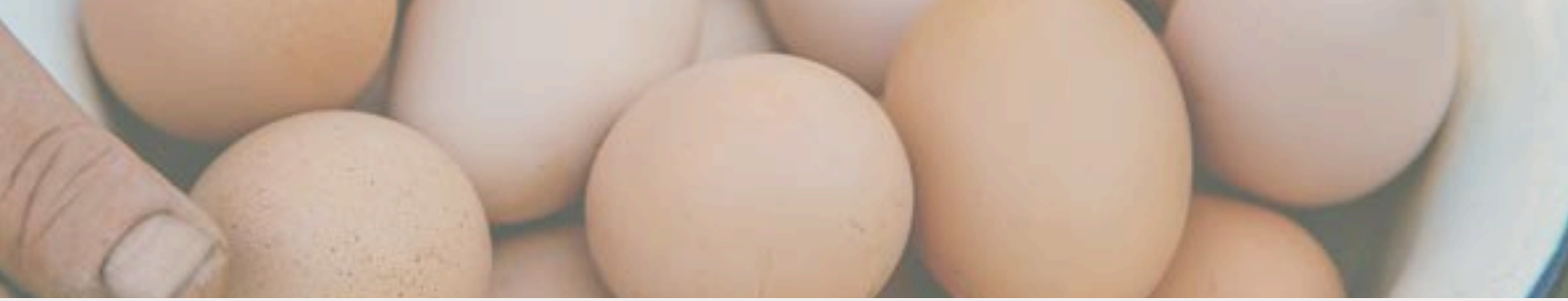
- How you came up with the project idea - what is the story behind the project?
- Which problem you are solving.
- Whether or not you are creating jobs for community members.
- If you will be providing space for those in recovery to work in a safe space.
- Why the time is right to bring it to fruition now.
- What types of food you plan to produce.
- Who it will feed (e.g., Elders, community, external customers).

For an audience of Leadership, staff, or other key community members, explain how the project aligns with:

- The community's economic strategy
- Land use or other plans
- Community priorities and values

For an external audience of decision-makers (e.g., grant application, business loan) be sure to explain:

- The market need for the product
- The existing demand (including volume and pricing) for the product
- Why the timing is strong



Example of Completed Question 1

Scenario:

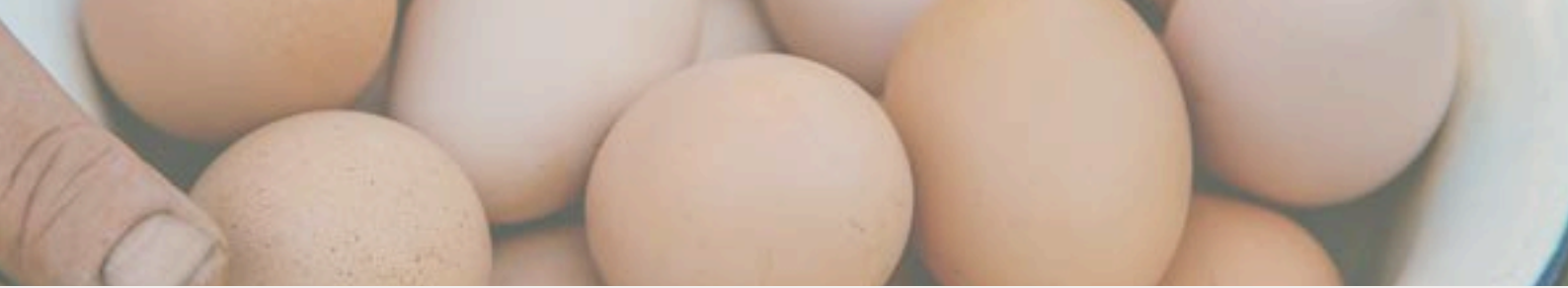
Danny is a food system champion would like to start a 2-acre farm on an under-utilized parcel of reserve land within the community. He has completed a business plan and costed out the expenses. He wants to understand if he's ready to present the project idea to his community's Leadership.

These are his answers to the above questions:

How did you come up with the idea?

Answer: My partner and I have young children and we are always trying to find good fresh vegetables – but the quality of food is low because of how far it has traveled. I noticed that there are a couple of acres of land behind the rec centre that are not being used. There is a possibility of water access from the rec centre for irrigation, and some fencing already up around the site - it could be a good location to start a farm. My goal would be to make food available to the community first for low costs, and sell extra vegetables to communities nearby, possibly at the farmers' market in town or to the grocery store. Last summer I visited the market and the local grocery store and wrote down all the prices for different vegetables and berries so I could get a sense of what we could sell the products for. I also spoke with the market manager and the grocery store produce manager and they agreed we would easily be able to sell any excess food that our community doesn't use. I think the timing is right to start the farm in the next 6 months as there is quite a lot of funding available for Indigenous food initiatives.





Example Continued:

Are you solving a food security problem?

Answer: When I was a boy my Auntie taught me how to grow strawberries, and they were so sweet. I would like my kids to have this experience too. We also had carrots and seemed to have potatoes and onions year-round. This meant we could make stew with moose meat and preserve it for over the winter. It would benefit the whole community if we could have this food security through a dedicated farm. I noticed in our community's Land Use Plan that there is a priority for us to become more food secure, and I think this farm could be part of the solution. Although I'm starting with vegetables and berries I would eventually like to add chickens (for eggs) and honeybees.

Are you interested in creating jobs for community members?

Answer: Yes, I would welcome working with anyone who has an interest in farming. I took a couple of online courses on how to design the farm and I have done some research on fencing and irrigation using YouTube and reading through some guides. I'm handy and able to fix things, but it would be great to have someone available with tools and skills to mend fences, move soil and compost, and help with general labour like weeding. This could also be a way to bring youth and Elders into building the farm.

Are you hoping to provide space for those in recovery to work in a safe space?

Answer: This is a possibility, but I would need support from the Health and Wellness Department as it is not something that I am an expert in.



Question 2 – Is the governance structure clear?

For food projects and enterprises, governance clarity matters as much as the business model. Unclear understanding about governance can cause:

- Delays
- Political Tension
- Funding Hesitation

Community Leadership and funders will want to know: Who is responsible for day-to-day decisions?

As a food business leader, you should be able to provide clear answers to the following questions:

- Who owns (or who will own) the assets – for example the buildings, greenhouses, irrigation equipment, fencing, livestock, processing equipment, etc.?
- Who will be operating the farm (or food project) on a daily basis?
- Who will be responsible or signing contracts?
- Who will carry the financial risk and purchase insurance?
- Who will be receiving profits and who will pay off debts?

Tip: Business-related language is full of jargon and overly-complicated terms. Try to avoid jargon, or define it if you choose to use it.

For example:

- **Asset** = physical infrastructure or equipment
- **Liability** = a responsibility, often a risk or a debt
- **Equity** = ownership stake or shares (for example, 50% equity means half of the company's ownership)

See the Toolkit Glossary for more terms



Question 3 – What are the projected revenues and expenses?

This question may also be posed as: *How does this project make money? or Does the math work?*

When describing your food project, be sure to use plain language and don't hide from the facts. **This will provide clarity and build trust.** Decision-makers who hear project pitches are used to seeing business plans with weak profit margins or with a lot of assumptions built in. It's ok if it takes a few years to break even or turn a profit, just be clear about it.

Don't gloss over these questions. By addressing them head-on you will be seen as honest and trustworthy. This is where credibility is built. Be prepared to answer the following clearly and concisely:

- What are the products that will be selling?
- How much will it cost to produce them (Cost of Goods or COGS)?
- How much labour will it take and who will work for the business?
- Who will be buying the products?
- How will they buy the products and what are the distribution costs?
- What regulations or permits do we need and how much will they cost?
- What price will they be paying for the products?

Note: You are not expected to know how to create revenue projections and expenses from day one - asking a financial advisor, business leader or experienced farmer / food producer to review your assumptions can be a great way to avoid overlooking important numbers.



Question 4 – Have we explored market realities?

Completing background research into the demand for what you plan to produce will reduce uncertainty around the ability to sell your products.

This explores the question: *Who is actually going to buy this?*

If you will be including sales outside of your community, complete a thought exercise whereby you imagine your ideal customer. Consider the following:

- How old are they?
- Are there children in their household?
- What does their income level look like?
- What is their lifestyle like?

Answering these questions can give you clarity about your market. Maybe you are going to be selling bison jerky to young, single, outdoor enthusiasts. Or maybe you are going to be selling nutritious fruit snacks or frozen stews to busy parents. Finding out the number of people who fit this profile (the demographic) can be found online through reports from Statistics Canada, BC Stats, or your Comprehensive Community Plan.

You can further reduce nervousness and uncertainty about future sales by speaking directly with potential buyers (such as grocery stores or distributors). You can ask for the following information:

- Comparable pricing: can the store share current purchase pricing (or provide a typical range)?
- Distribution pathway: what is the preferred method of getting products to the consumer?
- Letters of intent (if available): will the store write a letter confirming interest in the product(s)?





Tip: Some local and regional trade and economic organizations publish information about market data. Even your local grocery store manager can perhaps give some valuable insights into what products are selling well and if they need more variety or sources.

Why It Matters

Many food projects fail because demand was assumed, not confirmed. The truth is, it may be easy to find your first 100 customers - your aunties, your neighbour, friends and family members that love your product and give it rave reviews. These are often called “early adopters” in the entrepreneurship and startup world and they are important.

And the next step is finding evidence that strongly suggests that there are many other buyers, customers or market demand which will increase confidence in your product or business offering.

Remember

Decision-makers need to see:

- Predictable income pathways;
- Realistic distribution channels; and
- A clear customer profile.

Ambition without structure and details can feel risky. Not anticipating hidden costs often reduces margins. Naming all of the costs strengthens trust in the business model.

Question 5 – What is the big ask?

Providing your request with clarity prevents confusion. People can most easily support what is clear.

Be sure to **be as specific as possible** about the support you might need in your pitch.

Examples include:

- Permit approvals / approval to proceed
- Labour or equipment
- Funding
- A BCR (Band Council Resolution)
- Land allocation or a lease
- Equity investment

Most successful funding requests include the following, stated clearly:

- Total project cost
- Amount requested
- Type of funding (grant, loan, equity)
- What the money funds / how it will be spent
- What needed money or resources is already secured

Tip: Be precise

For example: *“We are seeking \$450,000 in capital to pay for equipment and working capital, including two salaries, supplies, and facility upgrades, in order to launch by Spring 2027.”* Avoid vague phrasing.

Why It Matters

Specificity reduces negative outcomes and enables other people to think about ways to support you, or say no right away and not waste your time.



Example of a Presentation Slide for a Food Project – The “Ask”



Community Greenhouse Project

- ✓ We have surveyed the community and 85% of members are in support of our greenhouse project.
- ✓ We have spoken to produce managers at three stores who are interested in buying our cucumbers and tomatoes at a healthy profit margin.
- ✓ We have secured funding for our new greenhouse and irrigation system from the Sunbeam Foundation.
- ✓ The business plan that we have provided you with has been vetted by a third-party financial advisor.

What we need to proceed

We need a signed Band Council Resolution indicating support for the project.

We need to show that we have at least \$40,000 of cash or in-kind support from the Nation to access the funds.

This could be provided through a letter of support.

Next Steps for the Community Greenhouse Project



Once we have these last 3 items the funds from the Sunbeam Foundation will be transferred to our company account and we can place the order for the greenhouse and make the first downpayment.

Acknowledgments

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FOOD PROJECT PRESENTATION CHECKLIST

“Am I ready to present my proposed food project to Leadership and/or funders?”

Created for: Food project champions and entrepreneurs.

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your planning and overall progress on getting your food project ready for approvals and support. It is not intended to be shared, rather it will provide you with a reflection of where your project stands in terms of readiness based on your own assessment.

Before entering a meeting or sending in your project proposal — whether it is Chief & Council, an Economic Development Board, or a funder — pause and review the following checklist.

There are 6 sections to the checklist:

1. Alignment
2. Revenues & Market Clarity
3. Operational Readiness
4. Capital Ask Clarity
5. Timing & Conditions
6. Emotional Readiness



Remember: This checklist is not about perfection. It is about readiness.

Section 1: Alignment

- ✓ I am clear on what I am asking for, and who needs to say yes.
- ✓ Governance roles (business ownership, liability, reporting) are defined.
- ✓ This project aligns with stated Nation, community or enterprise priorities and/or values.
- ✓ I can clearly explain how this project benefits the community and/or how it meets external market demands.

Tip: If unsure on any of the above: pause and clarify before presenting.

Notes:

Section 2: Revenues & Market Clarity

- ✓ I have spoken to at least one potential buyer.
- ✓ Pricing assumptions are based on real comparisons with existing products.
- ✓ Profit margins include considerations for labour, processing, and distribution.
- ✓ I understand how long it may take to get paid (i.e., 30-90 days after an invoice has been submitted).

Tip: If profits margins feel overly-optimistic, go back to your business plan and run a more conservative scenario.

Notes:

Section 3: Operational Readiness

- ✓ A project manager or operator is clearly identified.
- ✓ Labour availability has been considered realistically.
- ✓ Infrastructure constraints (e.g., transportation / distribution, storage) are acknowledged.
- ✓ Risks are named — not hidden.

Tip: If gaps exist, explain how they will be addressed.

Notes:

Section 4: Capital Ask Clarity

- ✓ I can state the total project costs clearly.
- ✓ I know what has already been secured.
- ✓ I can state the exact amount I am requesting clearly and explain how it will be used.
- ✓ I know what type of capital I am looking for (e.g., financing/loan, grant, or investment).

Tip: Avoid vague language, avoid rounding up.

Notes:

Section 5: Timing & Conditions

- ✓ This proposal is not being rushed due to a grant deadline.
- ✓ Leadership bandwidth and political timing (like Council elections) have been considered.
- ✓ I understand potential timing concerns that may be raised.
- ✓ I know that other funding opportunities may arise later on in the project timeline.

Tip: If timing feels pressured, consider sequencing or phasing.

Notes:

Section 6: Emotional Readiness

- ✓ I feel prepared, not defensive and I am clear that questions are about project risk, not about my personal worth.
- ✓ I can answer questions without overselling.
- ✓ I am ready to say “I don’t know — I will follow up.”
- ✓ I know that if I do not receive a “yes” today, that I can keep trying and learning along the way.

Tip: Breathing before entering the room is strategic.

Notes:



Example of a Completed Checklist


Scenario:

An Indigenous community would like to start a farm that will provide food for the community and will sell any excess food to a nearby town.

A community member, Shelley, has come forward who would like to lead the project (the 'farm manager').

These are the steps that have been taken in planning:

- Shelley has **met with Leadership and staff** to determine their interest and has received a Band Council Resolution (BCR) and 10-year lease for a 4-acre parcel of land.
- The **lease rate** is discounted (\$2,000 a year) and includes access to water from a nearby well.
- Shelley used **online business plan templates and videos** to pull a solid business plan together.
- In **Phase 1**, the farm will grow **vegetables** and include a small greenhouse.
- In **Phase 2**, chickens will be added as a source of **eggs and meat**.



Example of a Completed Checklist - continued

These are the steps that have been taken regarding sales and distribution:

- Shelley has **gone to the nearest town's grocery store** to speak with the produce manager about selling produce there. There seems to be an opportunity if her vegetables are good quality.
- Shelley has **met with the Farmers' Market Association** in town and was told she could have a booth to sell vegetables.
- The business plan indicates a **small profit margin**, although not much once labour is factored in.
- The **Nation has indicated they would be willing to pay for some of the vegetables**, albeit at a reduced cost, for Elders' food boxes on a weekly basis.
- The **main costs for Phase 1 that still need to be covered in order to make the business plan work are**: fencing around the farm area to keep wildlife out (\$30,000), a greenhouse (\$40,000), and an irrigation system with wash station (\$15,000). Insurance is also needed and a quote for \$2,000 a year has been provided.
- Shelley is focused on ensuring that Phase 1 (vegetable production) is a success before moving into **Phase 2** (eggs and meat production), which would have additional costs.

Based on the work done so far, **Shelley would like to apply for a \$100,000 grant** to get the farm started. This would cover the main Phase 1 needs and allow for a bit of a stipend for seeds and labour.

Shelley knows that at some point a delivery truck might be necessary, but for now is willing to use their own vehicle or borrow one.



Example of a Completed Checklist - continued

Shelley fills out the checklist as follows:

Section 1. Alignment


- **YES** I am clear on what I am asking for, and who needs to say yes.
- **YES** Governance roles (business ownership, liability, reporting) are defined.
- **YES** This project aligns with stated Nation, Community or enterprise priorities and/or values.
- **YES** I can clearly explain how this food project benefits the Indigenous community and/or how it meets external market demands.

Section 2. Revenues & Market Clarity

- **YES** I have spoken to at least one potential buyer.
- **YES** Pricing assumptions are based on real comparisons with existing products.
- **PARTLY** Profit margins include considerations for labour, processing, and distribution. (No processing required, some distribution costs are being provided in-kind).
- **YES** I understand how long it may take to get paid (i.e., 30-90 days after an invoice has been submitted).

Section 3. Operational Readiness

- **YES** A project manager or operator is clearly identified.
- **PARTLY** Labour availability has been considered realistically. (Labour needs will attempted to be filled by community members for the first year, after which a job for farm hand may need to be posted).
- **YES** Infrastructure constraints (e.g., transportation/distribution, storage) are acknowledged.
- **YES** Risks are named — not hidden.



Example of a Completed Checklist - continued

Section 4. Capital Ask Clarity

- **YES** I can state the total project costs clearly.
- **YES** I can state the exact amount I am requesting clearly.
- **YES** I can explain what the funds will be used for.
- **PARTLY** I know what has already been secured. (The Nation has not yet agreed to a specific purchase price for the vegetables but has indicated it would be willing to negotiate once the rest of the funding has been secured.)
- **YES** I know what type of capital I am looking for (e.g., a \$100,000 grant).

Section 5. Timing & Conditions

- **PARTLY** This proposal is not being rushed due to a grant deadline. (There is a certain amount of motivation on getting this proposal ready for a grant deadline, but it's not 100% contingent on it.)
- **YES** Leadership bandwidth and political timing have been considered.
- **PARTLY** I understand potential timing concerns that may be raised. (Due diligence has been done but there is the possibility that something may come up.)
- **YES** I know other funding opportunities may arise later in the project timeline.

Section 6. Emotional Readiness

- **YES** I feel prepared, not defensive.
- **YES** I can answer questions without overselling.
- **YES** I am ready to say "I don't know — I will follow up."
- **YES** I know that if I do not receive a "yes" today, that I can keep trying.

Based on the checklist, **Shelley feels the project is ready to move forward** because she has taken all the steps possible to create a good business plan and has been able to communicate clearly with Nation leadership.

The project has a good foundation of support and the final piece is acquiring the funding to build it out and get started.

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RESTARTING STALLED FOOD PROJECTS

“Should we revive or restart a stalled food project?””

Created for: Indigenous leader or entrepreneur who would like to take a stalled food project and breathe new life into it.

Purpose: This tool helps communities thoughtfully assess food or agriculture initiatives that never reached their full potential, or projects that have stalled and may now be ready to move forward again.

In your community, there may be equipment that is not currently operating as intended. This may include:

- Greenhouses or container-based growing systems;
- Community gardens / farms; or
- Equipment for cooking / processing food.

Projects may stall because of factors such as:

- Leadership or staffing transitions;
- Unattainable funding timelines;
- Operational challenges;
- Unclear governance roles;
- Unexpected events or disasters; or
- Project vision not matching existing interests or skills in the community.

With time, conditions may change, and the project may be viable again.

This tool helps decision-makers ask:

- Should we restart this project?
- Should we redesign it?
- Should we partner with others?
- Or should we respectfully close it?

The goal is to move forward with clarity rather than repeating past barriers.



A Trauma-Informed Perspective

Projects that stall can sometimes carry emotional weight for communities, leaders, or project champions.

People may feel:

- Disappointment
- Frustration
- Embarrassment
- Caution about trying again

It is important to recognize that stalled initiatives are not failures, they are sources of information. Many successful food initiatives have required multiple attempts, pivots, and redesigns before becoming sustainable.

Reflection

Learning from what happened in the past is a form of leadership.

Re-examining a project is not about blame; it is about gaining wisdom.

Guidance Questions

This guide will help to answer:

1. What do we need to know about the project's history?
2. Does the project still align with community priorities?
3. What assets or equipment already exist?
4. Who is interested in leading the project?
5. Is there a solid business plan in place?
6. Should the project be restarted or not?

A colour coding system can help us gain clarity at a glance:



Clear



Some unknowns



Unclear



Question 1: What do we need to know about the project's history?

What happened before?


Before restarting any initiative, it is helpful to understand its original purpose and what caused it to stall. Projects rarely stop because of a single issue. Often several conditions overlap.


Reflection Questions:

- What was the original goal of the project?
- What investments were made (buildings, equipment, land improvements)?
- What stage did the project reach?
- Why did it stop progressing?
- Were the barriers operational, financial, governance-related, or logistical?

Scoring:

History is clearly understood: GREEN 

Some information missing: YELLOW 

The reasons for the stall are unclear: RED 

If yellow or red:

Consider speaking with previous project leads, reviewing past grant documents, and consulting community members who were involved. Understanding the past helps prevent repeating it.

Question 2: Does the project still align with community priorities?

Community priorities evolve over time. A project that aligned strongly five years ago may need to be reconsidered or reframed today.

Reflection Questions:

Does this project support:

- Food security or food sovereignty?
- Community health and wellness?
- Employment or training opportunities?
- Youth engagement or cultural knowledge sharing?
- Environmental stewardship?
- Economic development opportunities?

Scoring:

Strong alignment with current priorities: GREEN 

Partial alignment with current priorities: YELLOW 

Weak alignment with current priorities: RED 

If yellow or red:

If alignment is weak, the project may need reframing or redesign.



Question 3: What assets or equipment already exist?


What does the community already have in place?

One advantage of reviving stalled initiatives is that infrastructure may already be in place.


Reflection questions:

- What assets exist (greenhouses, irrigation, fencing, processing equipment, etc.)?
- What condition are they in?
- Are repairs required?
- Are utilities available (water, power, internet)?
- Are there ongoing maintenance costs?

Scoring:

Infrastructure is ready or can be easily repaired: GREEN 

Moderate upgrades are required: YELLOW 

Significant infrastructure barriers exist: RED 

If red:

The community may wish to explore alternative uses, phased reactivation, or decommissioning / removing the equipment.

Question 4: Who is interested in leading this project?

Who will actually run this project?

Many initiatives stall because roles and responsibilities were unclear.


Reflection Questions:

- Who will manage day-to-day operations?
- Is there a project champion or operator?
- Are staff or volunteers available?
- Are training opportunities needed?

Scoring:

Clear operational leadership: GREEN 

Leadership is possible but not yet confirmed: YELLOW 

No clear operator has been identified: RED 

If red:

Identifying a project lead should be the next step before further investment.



Question 5: Is there a solid business plan in place?

Financial assumptions may change over time.


Reflection Questions:


- Was there an original business plan?
- Are the assumptions in that plan still realistic?
- What are the operating costs?
- Is funding available to restart operations?
- Could the project restart at a smaller scale?

Clear business planning strengthens projects. Realistic numbers build trust with leadership and funders.

Scoring:

Financial model is realistic: GREEN 

Financial projections should be revisited before restarting the project: YELLOW 

Financial viability is unclear: RED 

If red:

Financial projections should be revisited before restarting the project.

Question 6: Should the project be restarted or not?

After reviewing each section, communities may want to use the following matrix to guide decision-making.

Project Conditions	Recommended Pathway	Next Steps
<p>Mostly GREEN Strong values alignment, equipment is usable, project leader is available</p>	<p>Restart the Project</p>	<p>Proceed with the project largely as originally envisioned.</p>
<p>Several YELLOW Alignment strong but operations or finances need adjustment</p>	<p>Pivot or Redesign the Project</p>	<p>Modify the scale, purpose, or operations.</p>
<p>Several YELLOW and RED Infrastructure or expertise gaps exist but interest remains</p>	<p>Explore Partnerships to Move Forward with Support</p>	<p>Collaborate with a nonprofit, entrepreneur, or another community.</p>
<p>Mostly RED Major barriers remain and alignment is weak</p>	<p>Close the Project</p>	<p>Acknowledge that conditions are not right and respectfully close the project.</p>



REFLECTION EXERCISE

Complete one of the following sentences:

- “We should restart this project because...”
- “This project would be stronger if we redesigned it by...”
- “This initiative may be better suited for partnership because...”
- “At this time, it may be best to respectfully release this project because...”

Reviving a stalled project can sometimes be easier than starting over from the beginning: infrastructure already exists and lessons have already been learned.

When communities revisit past initiatives with openness and curiosity, opportunities may be discovered that were simply waiting for the right conditions to emerge.



Example Scenario: Reviving an Abandoned Community Greenhouse

A community received grant funding several years ago to **construct a community greenhouse** with the goal of increasing local food production and creating employment opportunities.

The greenhouse structure was successfully built and basic infrastructure such as irrigation lines and raised beds were installed.

However, the project stalled before operations fully began.

Several factors contributed to the stall:

- The original **project champion or other key staff moved on** to another position.
- There was **uncertainty about which department would manage** the greenhouse.
- **No dedicated staff** were assigned to oversee planting, harvesting, or distribution.
- Leadership **priorities shifted** during an election cycle.

As a result, the greenhouse remained unused for several seasons. Now, new leadership has begun exploring whether the greenhouse could be revived and integrated into the community's broader food security goals.

Using the check list, the community worked through the following five steps. These were their outcomes.



Example Scenario: Reviving an Abandoned Community Greenhouse

Question 1: What Do We Need to Know About the Project's History?

Leadership and staff reviewed past documents, including:

- Original grant proposal;
- Construction invoices; and
- Past Council discussions.

They also spoke with the original project coordinator.

Through this process, Leadership learned that the project had not failed due to lack of interest, but rather due to unclear roles and responsibilities.

This insight helped shift the conversation from “Why didn’t this work?” to “What conditions need to change for this to succeed?”

Question 2: Does the Project Still Align with Community Priorities?

The Nation’s Comprehensive Community Plan identified several priorities that aligned with the greenhouse, including:

- Improving food security;
- Providing employment and training opportunities; and
- Supporting youth land-based learning.

Leadership recognized that the greenhouse could support these goals if the project were redesigned slightly.

Question 3: What Assets or Equipment Already Exists?

A technical review of the greenhouse revealed:

- The structure remains sound;
- Irrigation equipment needs minor repairs; and
- A vegetable wash station was never built but is needed.

These repairs were manageable and far less costly than constructing a new greenhouse.



Example Scenario: Reviving an Abandoned Community Greenhouse

Question 4: Who is Interested in Leading this Project?

Rather than placing responsibility across multiple departments, the Nation decided to assign one project manager within the Economic Development team.

The manager will coordinate:

- Crop planning;
- Volunteer and youth programming; and
- Partnerships with local food organizations.

This clarity helped reduce uncertainty about day-to-day operations.

Question 5: Is There a Solid Business Plan in Place?

The original project assumed that most vegetables would be sold outside of the community. After reviewing community needs, Leadership chose to adjust the model:

- About 20% of vegetables would be donated to support food baskets for Elders;
- About 50% of vegetables would be sold within the community to daycares, schools and health centres; and
- The remaining 30% could be sold at the local farmers' market during weekly market days in two of the neighbouring towns.

In addition, youth programs would use the greenhouse as a training space and receive annual funding from the Nation to ensure basic operational needs are met. This mixed approach reduces financial pressure while still generating modest revenue.

Question 6: Should the Project be Restarted or Not?

By revisiting the project through a structured reflection process, the community determined that the greenhouse should restart with a new purpose and operational plan.

Key changes included:

- Assigning a clear project manager;
- Scaling production gradually; and
- Combining community food programs and different sales channels with modest annual funding.

What had once been viewed as a stalled project became an asset that could support food security, training, and community engagement.

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Examples used through this toolkit have been gathered with permission or from public-facing documents and websites.

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