

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:

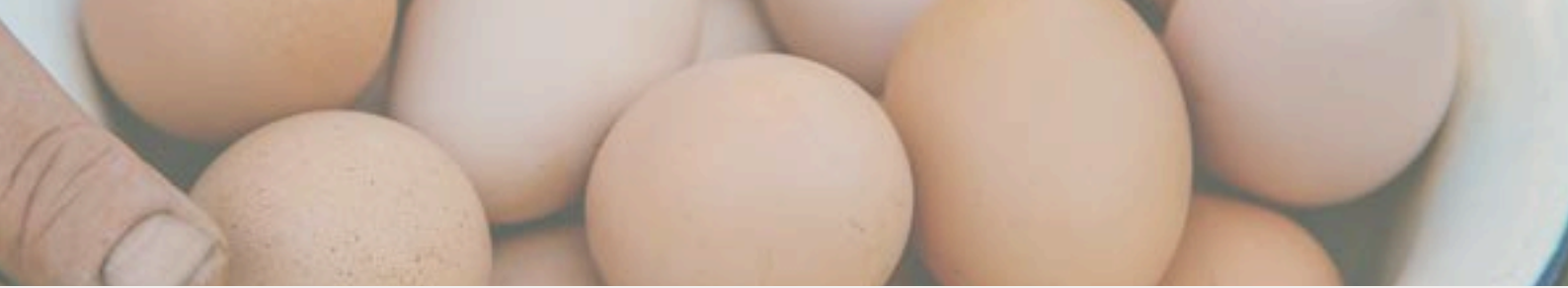
Danny is a food system champion would like to start a 2-acre farm on an under-utilized parcel of reserve land within the community. He has completed a business plan and costed out the expenses. He wants to understand if he's ready to present the project idea to his community's Leadership.

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 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 aunts, 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

This toolkit was developed by Ispahcâw Consulting and Upland Agricultural Consulting. All information is current to 2026.

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

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

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