



FOOD ACCESS COALITION

Terms of Reference – Updated February 2025

Background

The Food Access Coalition (FAC), hosted by the Thunder Bay + Area Food Strategy (TBAFS), is a key space for members of the TBAFS's network who contribute to the local food access landscape.

The history of this food access network space began with a group of community members who came together at the Feeding Ourselves Hunger forum in 1996. Following this meeting, the group formalized their structure, inviting representatives from a cross section of local organizations, and became the Food Action Network (FAN). *A Putting Food on the Table: Taking Action for Food Security in Thunder Bay* Strategic Planning Day took place in 1999. This led to 7 priorities being identified including increasing access to emergency food distribution and coordination. For most of its existence, the FAN was hosted at the Thunder Bay & District Health Unit (TBDHU) by a Public Health Nutritionist. The Thunder Bay Food Charter (2008) was drafted and promoted at the FAN table, which integrated food systems into the City Plan and led to the development of the TBAFS. As the TBAFS and more dedicated local food security programs and organizations evolved, food security groups were invited to the Food Access working group under its key pillar of food access.

This working group was not active when the pandemic hit in March 2020, which left a vacancy in collaboration and connection around food access work despite an increase in food insecurity. In order to address the challenges of wider spread food insecurity within Thunder Bay due to the pandemic, the TBAFS pulled together a network of service providing organizations supporting food access that became known as the Emergency Food Response Table by the fall of 2020. This table met regularly for two years during the Covid-19 pandemic.

As the immediate emergency nature of the pandemic subsided, the working group formalized into a permanent food access network as the Food Access Coalition in 2022. Currently, the FAC serves as a collaborative coalition of advocacy and service-providing organizations involved in community food access that aim to eradicate hunger and ensure dignified food access and security for all in the City of Thunder Bay and surrounding communities of Fort William First Nation, Conmee, Gillies, O'Connor, Oliver Paipoonge, Neebing, and Shuniah.

Goals

The central purpose of establishing the Food Access Coalition is to improve food accessibility and security in communities and neighborhoods in the census metropolitan area of the City of Thunder Bay. The FAC's goals are to:

- Ensure that organizations and people involved in the all-the-time work of food access stay connected via regular meetings, updates, and information sharing;
- Provide a space to discuss and action larger level advocacy around issues of food access; and
- Create opportunities for members to stay connected to the work of the Emergency Food Plan, including as crucial support partners to executing the plan during an activation.

Objectives

The FAC will seek to meet its central purpose of improving food accessibility and security in communities and neighborhoods in the census metropolitan area of the City of Thunder Bay through the following objectives:

- Providing strategic leadership in planning, development, implementation, and sustainability of food access / security related initiatives locally.
- Promoting inter-sectoral and cross-cultural collaboration amongst key stakeholders locally to create an interconnected network of food system champions.
- Leading and/or participating in systemic advocacy efforts to lobby government and decision makers with respect to poverty and other broader factors affecting food access / security.
- Supporting a community food system assessment to determine community needs with respect to food access / security; research, plan, design and implement food initiatives that target these needs; and analyze and evaluate them to inform future opportunities.
- Sharing information and resources about opportunities relating to food locally in order to support broader information sharing at a community level (i.e. "Where to Get Food in Thunder Bay" brochure, food rescue initiatives, cooking programs, external funding sources, etc.).
- Continuously monitoring food access / security status in Thunder Bay and sharing any arising concerns with Coalition members.
- Stewarding the Emergency Food Plan to ensure it is ready to activate in any future medium or high impact emergency events.

These objectives will be met through coalition wide meetings 4–6 times annually and through working groups, who will be formed around arising needs, projects, or advocacy initiatives. To ensure follow-through on the desired work of the FAC, members will be asked to participate in working group efforts when relevant and able, to bring this work to fruition.

Membership

Membership to the FAC is currently open to representatives of organizations or groups who support, provide, or advocate on behalf of food access in their mandates and are considered members of the wider TBAFS network. Other members of the community (i.e. businesses, other

institutions, individuals) are welcome to participate, keeping in line with the objectives and advocacy mandate of the FAC.

Governance & Duties

Regarding governance, the FAC will apply the principles of consensus decision-making (see Food Strategy Terms of Reference). Both the TBAFS, as the coordinating body of the FAC, and FAC members have their own roles and responsibilities:

TBAFS Role

- Act as a convener to connect organizations and people in this work.
- Coordinate the administrative pieces and chair meetings.
- Ensure the “Where to Get Food in Thunder Bay” brochure is updated (annually).
- Host Coalition-wide meetings (4 – 6 times annually).
- Maintaining an up-to-date contact list database through regular member (re)engagement.
- Keep the critical food access inventory up to date.
- Send update emails and relevant information to all members (including any relevant information shared from members).

General Coalition Members

- Participate in discussion at FAC meetings on agenda items.
- Share relevant agency updates for the “Where to Get Food in Thunder Bay” brochure.
- Share any changes in member contact information.
- Participate in updating the critical food access inventory.
- Participate in coalition determined advocacy efforts and initiatives.
- Participate in sub-working group projects, duties and tasks when applicable.

Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually and at the discretion of the FAC Membership when changes arise.