

Report for March 11th, 2021 meeting of the Food Policy Council

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2020 Core Goals

1. Increase visibility and understanding of the local food economy
2. Support those facing food / ag-related policy challenges
3. Manage and contribute to Evidence-based Policy Project
4. Secure increased core and project funding
5. Increase profile and capacity of Council

This report is organized around the responsibilities categories in the Executive Director job description. Where they pertain to the 2020 Goals, this is noted. Activities listed are those that have occurred since our last Council meeting on December 14th, 2020.

Leadership & Management (Core Goals 1, 2, 3 and 5)

I oversaw the successful delivery of three different projects and the publication of our Annual Directory:

Community Futures Cannabis Business Transition Initiative. I have continued to work one day / week, for which we are paid an additional \$15 / hour for each hour that I work, contributing to our ability to fund core activities and communications. Among the activities undertaken since mid December:

- Task Force was renamed as a Council to better align with sector culture. Monthly meetings established for both the Council and its Executive.
- I am providing support for those experiencing issues with having their cannabis certified organic.
- I collaborated with Council Executive to create communications + safety protocols for the Council
- I facilitated the discussion, collation of comments and a submission in response to a Health Canada consultation with the cannabis sector.
- We have created five Working Groups that will be where most of the collective work will move forward: Federal Policy, Provincial Policy, Economic Development, Appellation (like VQA for BC wines), and Communications, as well as the Executive of the Council.
- The CBTI current funding ends in July but is likely to be continued, though possibly as a province-wide program. I have been assured that they will seek funds to continue to pay for my time.

RDCK Food Security Action Plan: this short term project wraps up at the end of March. To inform the creation of the Plan:

- I continue to convene COVID Roundtables monthly and to monitor credible sources of data related to the impacts of the pandemic on supply chains, the economy, sectors and other relevant data sets.
- A Farmer Survey was developed in collaboration with Basin Business Advisor's Ag Specialist, Elizabeth at Fields Forward, the Rural Innovation Chair, and Kootenay Boundary Farm Advisors. It was distributed in the KBFA's February newsletter and promoted on our website and social media channels, as well as through our partners. The survey ran throughout the month of February and elicited 32 responses with some really great information for both the Action Plan and for the Council's work overall.

Evidence Project Wrap Up: this project, launched in January 2019, received an extension in 2020 from our two main funders, the CBT and REFBC, to wrap up at the end of December, rather than the end of June. This gave us time to adapt the public engagement pieces to a delivery suitable during the pandemic. Among the key deliverables that were created in the latter part of the project:

- Static and [dynamic maps](#) that allow RDCK Directors and staff to juxtapose key data sets (layers) that allow them to understand how, for example, land prices relate to secure access to water, risk related to floods or wildfires, ALR status, and location in the region. This will help them to access the evidence that can guide their land use decision-making.
- Educational materials aimed at a mid-teen but also suitable for an adult audience. We are particularly proud of our [Tomato](#) and [Food Policy 101](#) Infographics that have also been translated into french. These materials are being shared with educators across our region but also more broadly.

- A [Case Study](#) of the project so that the methodology may be adopted and used by other local governments.
- A [Policy Brief](#) was submitted to the RDCK senior planning staff and Board Chair that is derived from the findings of our data analysis. A presentation has been requested by the Rural Affairs Committee of the RDCK.
- Despite the fact that our expenses were lower than originally projected in the budgets accepted by the main funders, they both provided the full funding commitment made at the beginning of the project, which is a welcome addition to our 2021 financial planning.

Farm & Food Directory: our fourth annual Directory will be published this year, in collaboration with KS Perry Publishing (publisher of the Pennywise, based in Kaslo). We have another beautiful cover, thanks to the ever-creative Shauna Fidler. We will continue the scaled back version that was produced last year, with less of the farm stories but more to-the-point information about what is available, when and where. For the first time, the 2021 Farm & Food Directory will allow marginalized food entrepreneurs to self-identify in the Directory if they so choose. We will have three categories available for people to choose from: BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour), Queer, and Youth-owned businesses. We posted a [related blog](#), acknowledging the importance of but also the risk of becoming more visible but wanting to provide the opportunity for people to seek out and support the businesses of marginalized people who own food businesses in our area.

Staffing: Amy and I have both scaled our hours back to approximately half time beginning in January. I have a draft Budget for 2021. I anticipate that we will be successful in generating a reasonable level of funding this year which will enable the two of us to expand our hours as needed. However, I am building a budget with the hope that we will be able to hire a third staff. This role would be to help with the day-to-day management of the organization related to fundraising, communications and networking, as well as project deliverables. With funding secured, I am hoping to have this person in place later this year.

Communications (Core Goals 1 & 5)

Our communications has improved exponentially with the hiring of Amy Allcock, our Engagement Coordinator.

- The outcomes of the Evidence Project continue to bear fruit: a presentation has been requested by both the Rural Affairs Committee and by the Senior Planner at the RDCK for the entire department. The educational materials will continue to be shared with educators, students and peers.
- Our Engagement Coordinator, Amy, continues to update and refine [our website](#). Some recent updates include a revamped Who We Are page with Council Member bios and photos, an updated Council Meeting page with the 2021 schedule and previous meeting minutes and a redesigned Knowledge Centre page that highlights many of the great educational materials developed by the Council.
- Amy continues to develop graphics and other visuals that can be multi-purposed for our website and social media feeds.
- We continue to post on our Facebook and Instagram feeds and are seeing a slow but steady increase in followers and engagements. As we further develop our social media strategy and scale up our social media activity we will see an increase in engagement on our social media channels and see an increase in traffic to our wonderfully updated website.
- Amy created a great mailchimp newsletter template that we are using for [quarterly newsletters](#). The new template is organized into five key sections that reflect the goals of the Council's work - Educate, Collaborate, Connect, Advocate and Amplify.
- We continue to post regular [News postings](#) and [Blogs](#) that address a range of topics relevant to our work and sometimes linked to specific events or issues that we share on our social media channels. We always welcome content from our Council members to share so that we can amplify the work you are doing.
- Amy and I created our first full 14 page [Annual Report](#) (previous versions were 2 page summaries) and are circulating it to our funders, partners, members and through our communications platforms.

- I shall be participating as session organizer in [Bridging Silos: Advancing climate adaptation and low carbon resilience in small communities and rural regions](#) on March 4th with a fee for service of \$750. The session explores how resilient our region's food systems are and will feature presentations by Rachael Roussin of KBFA, Melissa Hemphill, of Community Connections Food Security in Revelstoke, Emma Sowiak from Bent Plow Farm, and Tyler McNaughton of Cutter Ranch.
- I have been asked to be the opening Keynote address at the [Food & Buyers Expo](#) in April.

Fundraising (Core Goal #4)

I am regularly in meetings with various colleagues and funders to explore options for collaboration, funding and awareness raising.

- The Annual Report formed part of a submission to the February CSLAC Committee with a request that they increase our annual RDCK grant above \$10,000. The submission resulted in a commitment from the RDCK to \$15,000 for their 2021 contribution. We shall also be invited to participate in a Service Case Review, which could enable the Council to receive ongoing funding, as part of the environmental service delivery model of the RDCK. This will be an 8 month process and if successful, will provide the Council with reliable core funding that we can leverage for other funds.
- Kootenay Conservation Program approached the Council about funding us to do a conservation-related program. After exploring options during a meeting on February 9th, we came to the conclusion that there is not a good alignment to the Council's work, but that we share a lot of values and goals for the environment, with the possibility of future shared initiatives, likely related to education.
- I have begun mapping out a pitch to members of the Canadian Association of Food Law & Policy to consider an annual contribution to the Council. It is a bit of a long shot, but some of my colleagues in the organization work in large law firms, and others are on law faculties so it is worth the effort.
- I am monitoring all funding opportunities that may be relevant to our work and that of our members.

Planning & New Programs / Projects (Core Goals 1, 2, 4 & 5)

As a Council, we are committed to not undertaking the delivery of services that would put us in competition with our members and other non-profits in the region. This limits our projects to those linked to food systems education, analysis or policy. Within those constraints, the following programs are underway or in development.

Systemic Racism and Food Systems: this programming was introduced in January 2020 but was muted by the impacts of the pandemic. Nevertheless, the work continues and, with funding, we hope to expand it.

- I participate regularly in Intercultural Kootenays meetings as one avenue to inform our program addressing systemic racism in food systems.
- I have been reaching out to BIPOC residents of the region to discuss collaboration on communications and programming.
- If I am able to secure funding, Shayna Jones, of [We Are StoryFolk](#), is willing to do a performance art piece for our AGM this year.
- I am integrating a budget line item into any of our grant applications that will provide funds that we can use to compensate or hire BIPOC for related programming.

Balancing Forest Values Project: this is an ambitious 3 year law reform project that recognizes the key connection between water and food systems and that our watersheds are not adequately protected. We submitted a funding proposal to the Real Estate Foundation for their spring intake and, if successful, will launch in October 2021. In the interim, we have secured funding commitments from five RDCK Directors to help pull together the necessary partners, skills and funds to launch the project successfully. Our current list of project partners includes Living Lakes Canada, Ymir Community Watershed Society, the Applied Research & Innovation Centre at Selkirk College, and the Environmental Law Centre at the University of Victoria.



Kootenay Bioregional Food System Project: the Council has been in conversation over several years with the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems (ISFS) at Kwantlen Polytechnic University on various common interests. They are wrapping up their bioregional study in the Okanagan and are anticipating getting launched in the Kootenay region in the near future, with funding support from the Ministry of Agriculture. We will be meeting with the leadership at ISFS later in March.

Citizen Engagement in Land Use Planning: the Council was approached by a masters student at Royal Roads, Matthew McLelland, who will volunteer 500 - 700 hours in the next year as part of his academic requirements. Matthew will work with the Council to develop processes and materials to foster greater public engagement in local government planning processes. This has been on our to do list for some time, and Matthew will allow us to provide a better quality product and support the RDCK with scheduled land use planning events in the coming year.