

**RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER**

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STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENTED: October 5, 2021
FROM: Solid Waste
SUBJECT: UBCM POVERTY REDUCTION GRANT PROJECT – SEA TO SKY FOOD RECOVERY STRATEGY ACTION PLAN REPORT

REPORT: 21-111
FILE: 655.11

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

That the recommendation of the General Manager of Infrastructure Services be endorsed.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive the UBCM Poverty Reduction Grant Project – Sea to Sky Food Recovery Strategy Action Plan attached as Appendix A to Information Report No. 21-111 and continue to support collaboration between the Resort Municipality of Whistler, the District of Squamish, the Village of Pemberton, Lil'wat Nation, the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District, the hotels, restaurants and institutions; and the food distribution organizations in the Sea to Sky Food Corridor to reduce food waste and improve food recovery and redistribution efforts and initiatives.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present to Council the outcome of the UBCM Poverty Reduction and Action Program grant project, and the resulting report: the Sea to Sky Food Recovery Strategy and Action Plan (Plan).

☒ Information Report ☐ Administrative Report (Decision or Direction)

DISCUSSION

Background

Food waste and access to food are regional issues affecting all communities in the Sea to Sky Corridor. Whistler Community Services Society, Squamish Helping Hands Society, the Squamish Food Bank, Lil'wat Nation, Southern Stl'atl'imx Health Society, and Sea to Sky Community Services all currently run food banks and food service programs in the Sea to Sky Corridor serving those in need. While excess/unused food from grocers, restaurants and hotels is provided to these food banks and programs as much as possible, a significant amount of food is still sent to the landfill each year (estimated at 30 per cent of the waste stream in Whistler).

At the same time, the demand for food bank services often exceeds their ability to collect and distribute food. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated this situation as all of the food banks saw a significant

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increase in the number of clients served. Although the majority of food to be recovered is generated in Whistler (through grocers, restaurants and hotels), significant food waste is also generated by Squamish and Pemberton grocers and restaurants, as well as by Pemberton farmers. Furthermore, the need for food programs in Indigenous communities north and east of Pemberton is greater than the needs further south, but there are no food banks in those communities. The result is that people in communities north and east of Pemberton need to access the food banks in Whistler and Pemberton.¹ Better redistribution and supply to food banks and food program providers throughout the region is necessary.

The Plan project was undertaken to understand how to maximize the recovery and distribution of surplus food, and to minimize food waste in the Sea to Sky region. The goals of this project were to:

- Understand the type, volume, and sources of surplus food in the region
- Understand current needs and food distribution models
- Compile a set of food recovery and distribution best practices
- Identify actions for how to improve food recovery and redistribution in the Sea to Sky, which supports the reduction of poverty
- Identify strategies to build capacity of the existing food distribution organizations
- Reduce food waste and help meet Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) and regional zero waste goals

This project need was identified by the Squamish-Lillooet Regional Food Project Task Force to improve food recovery and distribution efforts in the Sea to Sky, and was endorsed by the Whistler Zero Waste Select Committee of Council.

This project was 100 per cent funded by the UBCM Poverty Reduction Planning and Action Program, excluding approximately \$2000 in in-kind staff time to participate in the Task Force meetings and in review of materials. Whistler Centre for Sustainability (WCS) Engagement + Planning, who were the facilitators and managers of the Squamish-Lillooet Regional Food Project Task Force, were contracted by the RMOW to lead this project.

Outcomes

This research and engagement project resulted in a Food Recovery Strategy and Action Plan that's comprised of:

- A regional population profile and summary of food demand and excess food supply
- A summary of current strengths and gaps regarding food recovery and redistribution in the Sea to Sky Corridor
- Development of five overarching strategies
- Twenty seven specific recommended actions for lead organizations

Conclusions and resulting strategies

Based on the data and stakeholder input gathered through the project, a number of key conclusions and associated strategies emerged and are presented below. For each strategy, there are also specific actions that are presented in the final Sea to Sky Food Recovery Strategy & Actions Plan (Appendix A)

Key Conclusions	Strategies
All food banks need to purchase food to meet client needs.	Secure additional recovered food donations to meet food bank/program needs.
There are likely more people who need access to more affordable food.	Remove barriers to accessing food programs.
Remote communities face unique challenges accessing food programs.	Work with remote communities on food recovery and redistribution as desired/requested.
Some food waste is inevitable, especially from hotels, restaurants and institutions.	Reduce and divert food waste that cannot be donated to food banks/programs.
Supportive measures are needed to reduce waste and improve recovery overall.	Build overall capacity related to food waste and recovery.

Next steps

WCS Engagement + Planning will support the implementation of the recommended actions within their resources and capacity by:

- Directly leading implementation of actions
- Supporting implementation of actions by other lead organizations
- Convening the Task Force members in 2022 to check-in on action implementation

WCS will also monitor UBCM opportunities for the next intake of funding for Poverty Reduction initiatives and apply for a Stream two Poverty Reduction Action grant. A prerequisite for the Stream two funding was the completion of a poverty reduction plan or assessment, which is now completed.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions

There are a number of recommended actions that are identified for the RMOW to lead. Many of those actions are ones that are already included in the Zero Waste Action Plan. Local government staff will review the recommended actions and consider how they will be incorporated into departmental work planning as appropriate.

[March 3, 2020 – Grant application for UBCM Poverty Reduction Planning and Action Program Report No. 20-027](#)

Corporate Plan

The RMOW Corporate Plan is updated annually and articulates strategic direction for the organization. This section identifies how this report links to the plan.

Council Focus Areas

☒ Community Balance

*Effectively **balance resort and community needs** through deliberate planning, partnerships and investment*

☒ Climate Action

*Provide leadership to **accelerate climate action and environmental performance** across the community*

☐ Housing

*Advance strategic and innovative initiatives to enable and **deliver additional employee housing***

☐ Not Applicable

Community Vision and Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan (OCP) is the RMOW's most important guiding document that sets the community vision and long-term community direction. This section identifies how this report applies to the OCP.

The Plan supports and aligns with the following aspects of the Whistler OCP:

Community Vision

Natural resources and energy are conserved and we have achieved zero waste.

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are being systematically eliminated.

Affordable housing and other essentials allow us to meet our needs and participate in Whistler's lifestyle through all stages of life.

Goals, Objectives and Policies

12.3. Goal Move progressively toward zero waste.

12.3.1. Objective

Limit, minimize impacts of, and eventually eliminate in a cost-effective manner Whistler's municipal waste.

12.3.1.1. Policy

Continue to pursue Whistler's zero waste goal endorsed in 2005 and continue to monitor and update zero waste indicators, objectives and goals.

12.3.1.12. Policy

Collaborate with regional and provincial agencies and stakeholders regarding zero waste issues locally and regionally. Successful actions will be shared to build capacity and foster partnerships. The municipality will continue to advocate to senior levels of government for new Extended Producer Responsibility programs and improvements to existing programs.

Other Relevant Policies

The Plan supports and aligns with the goals, descriptions of success and strategies of the Whistler Zero Waste Action Plan and Solid Waste Bylaw 2139, 2017 that mandates recyclables such as organic food waste be kept out of the landfill.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The Plan was developed using funds received through the UBCM Poverty Reduction Planning and Action program. The RMOW was successful in receiving a total funding amount of \$77,120 to support the development of a strategy to recover more food waste from being sent to the landfill and to distribute more edible food to those in need.

There will be minor budget implications for the implementation of actions from the Plan, the majority of which will be staff time to support educational initiatives, many of which will be undertaken as part of the Zero Waste Action Plan. A few recommended action items will require further investigation including exploration of grants that could support the Plan.

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LIL'WAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the Lil'wat People, known in their language as *L'il'wat7úl* and the Squamish People, known in their language as the *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* to: create an enduring relationship; establish collaborative processes for Crown land planning; achieve mutual objectives; and enable participation in Whistler's resort economy. This section identifies areas where RMOW activities intersect with these relationships.

While this project focused on the local governments, food distribution organizations and hotel, restaurants and institutions in the Sea to Sky Corridor, local Indigenous community member needs were considered as much as possible. A significant percentage of clients at the Whistler and Pemberton food banks are Indigenous, and through discussions with the food bank staff and direct surveys with clients, specific needs were identified and included in the research. The project Task Force also included a staff member from Lil'wat Nation, and although not Indigenous, the staff person was able to represent the needs of the Lil'wat Nation members. A staff person from the Southern Stl'atl'imx Health Society was also on the Task Force for a period of time. In addition, Lil'wat Nation members and other members of the Lower Stl'atl'imx communities were consulted on specific draft actions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

☒ Inform ☐ Consult ☐ Involve ☐ Collaborate ☐ Empower

A Task Force was created to guide and provide input to the Plan. The Task Force was comprised of individuals representing organizations in the Sea to Sky Corridor:

Andrew Tucker, RMOW
Anita Auer, Crystal Lodge
Bruce Stewart, Nesters Grocery Store
Carol Coffey, Squamish Helping Hands Society
Fran Hopkins, Southern Stl'atl'imx Health Society
Gizem Kaya, Whistler Community Services Society
Jeff Wint, District of Squamish
Kerren Bottay, Restaurant Association of Whistler
Krystel ten Brink, Squamish Food Policy Council
Leif Fossum, Save on Foods Squamish
Lisa Pedrini, Village of Pemberton
Loralee Seitz, Pemberton Food Bank
Marie-Lou Leblanc, Squamish Lillooet Regional District
Maureen Mackell, Squamish Helping Hands Society
Phillip Clarke, School District 48
Shannon Didier, Lil'wat Nation
Simone McIsaac, Pemberton Farmers' Institute

The Task Force met four times, and also provided feedback via emails.

Interviews were conducted with all of the food distribution organizations in the Sea to Sky Corridor to better understand their needs and practices. A survey was conducted with hotels/grocers/restaurants as part of the research on current supply and demand, to which thirty seven responses were received. This was followed up with eleven interviews with hotels/grocers/restaurants.

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Clients of the Squamish, Whistler and Pemberton food banks were surveyed between June and August 2021 to gather information related to food bank needs, the types of food missing, and comfort levels and transportation challenges of clients accessing the locations. Several survey tools were used to gather the input based on the method preferred by each location. In Whistler's case, multiple shorter surveys were used to gather the information. In total, close to four hundred survey responses were received from food bank clients.

Following the development of the draft Plan, interviews were conducted with specific members of the Task Force and a meeting was held with representatives from the food banks to seek their feedback on the recommended actions.

A final meeting of the Task Force was held to review the final draft Plan.

REFERENCES

Appendix A – Sea to Sky Food Recovery Strategy and Action Plan

Appendix B – Sea to Sky Food Recovery Best Practices, Strengths and Gaps

SUMMARY

The Plan compiled a detailed current situation analysis to better understand the nature of the excess food/food being wasted, and the existing and potential needs of people accessing the food bank. The Plan also identifies a number of specific actions to address the main gaps identified in the food recovery and redistribution system, including the need for greater collaboration and capacity building. While the recommended actions will help with reducing food waste and increased food distribution to food banks, there is still some research required to better understand other important needs of our communities in the Sea to Sky, in particular, our First Nations communities.

WCS Engagement + Planning will support the implementation of the recommended actions within their resources and capacity by:

- Directly leading implementation of actions
- Supporting implementation of actions by other lead organizations
- Convening the Task Force members in 2022 to check-in on action implementation

WCS will also monitor UBCM opportunities for the next intake of funding for Poverty Reduction initiatives and apply for a Stream two Poverty Reduction Action grant. A prerequisite for the Stream two funding was the completion of a poverty reduction plan or assessment, which is now completed.

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SIGN-OFFS

Written by:

Andrew Tucker,
Manager Of Transportation and Waste
Management

Reviewed by:

James Hallisey,
General Manager Infrastructure Services

Virginia Cullen,
Chief Administrative Officer

ⁱ In 2020, somewhat in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Pemberton Food Bank increased their programs, and Lil'wat Nation set up a temporary food bank.