

Edmonton Multicultural Coalition Participatory Action Research

**Exploring Barriers and Opportunities to Food Security in Edmonton through an
Ethnocultural Lens**

RESEARCH REPORT

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*"Food is one of the basic needs that people have... to live, to have a quality of life."
--- Kilkenny Community Garden participant*



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ACRONYMS

WHO	World Health Organization
CRAC	Community Research Advisory Committee
PAR	Participatory action research
ARECCI	A pRoject Ethics Community Consensus Initiative

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each year, the Edmonton Multicultural Coalition (the Coalition) conducts a community-based participatory research project on a topic chosen by community members. In 2015, ongoing conversations in the community, as well as the implementation of the Coalition's Food Security Project, led to the research topic of "food security."

In this participatory action research (PAR) project, we explored people's and communities' experience with food security. Specifically, we examined **barriers and opportunities for food security from the perspectives of Edmonton's ethnocultural communities**.

In semi-structured focus groups with four ethnocultural communities, participants discussed:

- 1) Their understanding of the **meaning of food security**;
- 2) Perceived **benefits** of participating in food security initiatives; and
- 3) **Barriers**, both practical and structural, to achieving food security.

Above all, participants generated ideas and solutions for 4) **opportunities** and actions for change to improve food security in their communities. This last theme of opportunities translates into recommendations for the organization and communities.

The many ideas and suggestions that emerged are summarized as the following eight overarching **recommendations for the Coalition and communities**. (These recommendations can be applied to other organizations working with ethnocultural communities in food security.)

- Tap into community strengths for resource and support
- Incorporate skill-building, information-sharing, and community consultation into program planning
- Develop strategies for recruiting and retaining food security project participants
- Build partnerships within the Coalition and with other organizations
- Strengthen gardening activities based on community needs and preferences
- Support animators in accessing food hamper resources
- Diversify ways for food purchases and food swaps
- Widely share the experience of the Kilkenny Community Garden

An additional recommendation emerged **specifically for our stakeholders** (e.g., other food security organizations, City of Edmonton, Community Leagues):

- Build community capacity to navigate the food security system based on community needs and reality

Knowledge from this project will be shared back with the communities that participated in the research, the wider Coalition community, and our stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

In a food secure society, "all people at all times have physical, economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate food."

- World Health Organization (WHO)¹

Many communities and organizations adopt this WHO definition of food security. However, food security extends beyond access. It is comprehensive and covers the continuum of production, processing, marketing, distribution, and healthy eating. As such, food security achieves multiple outcomes, including increased access to food; it is a collective social enterprise for gainful livelihood and economic security.² Food security is therefore a human right and a social justice issue. Many researchers, organizations and groups, including the Mayor's Task Force for the Elimination of Poverty in Edmonton, share this perspective on food security.

Issues of food security have increasingly become a concern in Edmonton, particularly among ethnocultural communities. Despite being a diverse city, and one of the youngest and fastest growing in Canada, Edmonton's poverty rates rose from 9% in 2001 to 12.3% in 2012.³ Poverty is inextricably linked to many areas, such as housing, employment, education, safety, and food security, that affect people's health and well-being. In fact, the Vital Signs 2013 Report demonstrated that half of households in Edmonton living below the poverty line experience food insecurity. In 2011, 12.3% of Albertan households were food insecure, according to the Canadian Community Health Survey.⁴ This number is on par with the national average. With the rising cost of living, where the price of a nutritious food basket increased from \$133/per week for a family back in 2003 to over \$200 per week in 2013,⁵ poverty and income disparity are indeed a root cause of food insecurity.

A closer look reveals that poverty particularly impacts Aboriginal and immigrant/refugee populations. **This research project, conducted on behalf of the Coalition, focuses on the latter as part of ethnocultural⁶ communities with distinct ethnic and cultural identities.**

The National Household Survey compared the poverty experience of immigrants in Edmonton, defined as those who choose to immigrate AND those fleeing their country

¹ World Health Organization (n.d.). Food Security. Available from:

<http://www.who.int/trade/glossary/story028/en/>

² Schor, J. (2010). *Plenitude: The New Economics of True Wealth*. New York: Penguin Group.

³ Edmonton Social Planning Council (2015). *A Profile of Poverty in Edmonton*. Available from:

http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/PovertyProfileJanuary2015.pdf

⁴ Edmonton Vital Signs 2013 Report.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Ethnocultural communities" is defined as communities with distinct ethnic and cultural identities. It is the preferred term for the Coalition.

due to conflict. On average, the immigrant population faces a lower employment rate compared to the non-immigrant population. Moreover, being employed does not translate into a living wage and a higher salary. The survey demonstrated that recent immigrants (those who entered the country within five years before the study) earn significantly less (\$27,966) compared to all immigrants (\$38,205), which is still less than Canadian-born non-immigrants (\$42,091) in 2011.⁷ In other words, yes, immigrants are working, but they are working for lower wages. The 2015 Client Survey conducted by Edmonton's Food Bank, with over 400 of its clients, also reported that income is a major barrier to achieving food security.⁸

The linkage between poverty and food insecurity raises alarm. Even though there are many programs and activities happening across Edmonton (and Alberta), including 80 community gardens and 13 farmers' markets in Edmonton (as of 2013) that generate over \$724 million in sale,⁹ there remains a need to take a targeted approach focusing on the most vulnerable in our city.

The Vital Signs 2014 Report followed up on the status of food security in Edmonton. It noted that Edmontonians generally supported broader poverty reduction policy, food programs and education initiatives aimed at the general population. In a 2012 Citizen Panel on Food and Agricultural Strategy, participants discussed a more targeted approach in the city. They highlighted 10 promising practices as recommendations for the municipal government. Recommendation 8 specifically discusses ethnocultural communities: "*Create strategies and policies for education, awareness and involvement of diverse communities and individuals.*"¹⁰ Developing food literacy activities and materials in different languages, and incorporating cultural knowledge and experiences in educational programming, dig deeper and is a starting point from a culturally diverse perspective.

⁷ Edmonton Social Planning Council (2015). A Profile of Poverty in Edmonton. Available from: http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/PovertyProfileJanuary2015.pdf

⁸ Edmonton's Food Bank & Deloitte. Beyond Food: 2015 Client Survey. Available from: https://d10k7k7mywg42z.cloudfront.net/assets/5602ddacedb2f3351106e320/Beyond_Food_2015_for_read.pdf

⁹ Edmonton Vital Signs 2013 Report.

¹⁰ Citizen Panel & Centre for Public Involvement (2012). City-Wide Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy: Report on Citizen Panel Process & Recommendations. Available from: http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/Food_and_Ag_Strategy_Citizen_Panel_Report_Sept_2012.pdf

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE & QUESTIONS

In this PAR project, we **explored barriers and opportunities for food security from the perspectives of Edmonton's ethnocultural communities**. Specifically, we considered:

- What does food security mean to ethnocultural communities in Edmonton?
- What has been done to promote food security among ethnocultural communities in Edmonton and/or other jurisdictions in Canada?
- What are the cultural barriers to food security, if any, among ethnocultural communities in Edmonton?
- What resources and actions can be implemented to provide opportunities and reduce barriers for food security in Edmonton's ethnocultural communities?
- For those who are not participating in any food initiatives, what are the barriers there? What is needed to increase opportunities to participate in food security?

By answering these questions, we intended to elicit specific information to provide practical recommendations from community members to our stakeholders, partners and funders in the area of food security. The results of the research will contribute to the understanding of the food security experience among ethnocultural communities.

Moreover, findings will help the Coalition to identify:

- Activities that can be done through the current Food Security Project;
- Future food security-related initiatives that can address needs and opportunities, which we can propose and recommend to funders, partners, and other service providers; and,
- Future research questions beyond food security advancing ideas that can impact poverty reduction.

HOW DID WE GET TO THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVE & QUESTIONS?

This research objective was developed through ongoing dialogues with community animators and community members, and it is based on the experiences of the Coalition's current Food Security Project, which began in July 2014. This project was born from earlier community consultations in 2013-2014 about accessing affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food in Edmonton.¹¹ These initial consultations led to the Food Security Project, a collaboration between the Coalition and the Multicultural Family Resource Society, and funded by the Edmonton Community Foundation.

Three animators, the project coordinator, and the research facilitator form the current Project Team. Team members are leading activities and building food capacity in communities based on geography (e.g., Kilkenny), ethnicity (e.g., the Filipino community, Ghanaian community), faith (e.g., church community), and organization (e.g., Seeds, Feeds, and Needs community). Activities range from recipe-sharing circles and collective kitchens, to community gardens, volunteering for or touring the Edmonton Food Bank, and food preservation workshops. These activities aim to respond to the challenges and barriers identified in the early stages of consultation.

As team members work with their respective communities in organizing and coordinating activities on the front-line, they face unique challenges within individual activity/project. Based on their experiences and under the guidance of the Community Research Advisory Committee (CRAC) of the Coalition (see Appendix A for a full CRAC membership), the team agreed to focus on **cultural diversity of food, resource navigation, community strengths, and opportunities** in the research project.

We engaged wider Coalition community members and animators through meetings (May-June 2015) and emails (June 2015) to further provide feedback on the research objective. The final research objective is therefore based on many ongoing conversations since earlier last year.

¹¹ Multicultural Family Resource Society. Animating Multicultural Communities towards Food Security Project Proposal. Submitted February 2014.

METHODS

This research project is grounded in participatory action research (PAR), which directly engages the people that the research is meant to affect.¹² Research is done *with* participants, rather than on or to them.¹³ This approach is highly reflexive, centring on collaboration, inclusive and safe spaces, and balanced power dynamics.¹⁴ PAR is profoundly informed by Brazilian adult educator Freire's work on popular education. Freire believed that "reflection – true reflection – leads to action."¹⁵ In other words, as people critically examine their experiences, they themselves develop meaningful solutions or actions to better their social, economic, and political realities.¹⁶ This PAR approach is the central goal advocated by the Coalition's CRAC.

The Community Animation Model, which is a special feature of the Coalition, is also based on Freire's philosophy of reflection and action. While there is a research team made up of the Food Security Project Team (animators, the project coordinator, and the research facilitator), the Animation Model allows team members to connect with respective communities. This connection facilitates constant and iterative feedback and dialogue with community members and ensures that research is participatory, collaborative, and inclusive.

Thus, following a PAR approach, the research facilitator collaboratively carried out the project with the Food Security Project Team in all stages of the research (i.e., developing an objective, design the research, generate and analyze data, compile and interpret results, and translate knowledge to other audiences). Additionally, the project was informed and supported by a wider network of animators, board members, coalition members, and CRAC. Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between different stakeholders in the Coalition.

¹² Cargo, M., & Mercer, S. L. (2008). The value and challenges of participatory research: strengthening its practice. *Annual Review of Public Health, 29*, 325–50.

doi:10.1146/annurev.publhealth.29.091307.083824

¹³ Frisby, W., Reid, C. J., Millar, S., & Hoerber, L. (2005). Putting " Participatory " Into Participatory Forms of Action Research. *Journal of Sport Management, 19*, 367–386.

¹⁴ Cargo, M., & Mercer, S. L. (2008). The value and challenges of participatory research: strengthening its practice. *Annual Review of Public Health, 29*, 325–50.

doi:10.1146/annurev.publhealth.29.091307.083824

¹⁵ Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (30th Anniv.). New York: Continuum. P.66.

¹⁶ Wallerstein, N., & Duran, B. (2008). The Theoretical, Historical, and Practice Roots of Community-Based Participatory Research. In M. Minkler & N. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health : From Process to Outcomes* (2nd ed., pp. 25–46). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

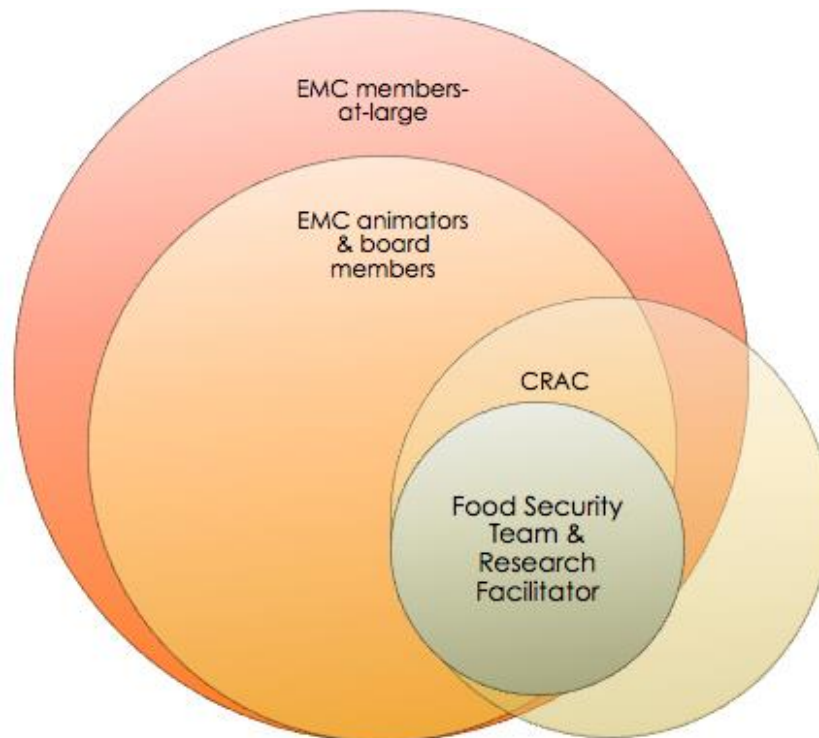


Figure 1. Stakeholder relationships in this PAR project (CRAC members are from both within the Coalition and outside, such as academics).

About halfway through the research project, the Food Security Project Team experienced some major changes with team make-up. While the project coordinator sought new animators for the team, a Coalition volunteer from an ethnocultural community joined the research project to support analysis and peer review, helping to ensure rigour.

Ethical considerations followed Alberta Innovates – Health Solutions' ARECCI (A pRoject Ethics Community Consensus Initiative) guidelines. CRAC approved the final research design and participants provided informed consent (see Appendix B).

DATA GENERATION

We engaged with community members and leaders in four focus group conversations about food security. One of the conversations also led to a one-on-one follow-up interview with one of the participants. These conversations generally lasted from 10-40 minutes and generated a total of four focus group transcripts and one interview transcript.

Community	Date
Filipino seniors	August 30, 2015
Follow-up interview with a Filipino senior	August 30, 2015
Kilkenny Community Garden	September 11, 2015
Eritrean and Oromo women¹⁷	September 21, 2015
Coalition animators	October 22, 2015

A set of questions (Appendix C) roughly guided each conversation. Each group was unique in terms of community context, culture, and experience. Each community's participants therefore emphasized more on responding to certain questions than others. As a result, the conversations were varied and different, with diverse perspectives, knowledge, and comments emerging. Nevertheless, when we analyzed the information and compared transcripts, we recognized that there were similarities and differences between communities and their experiences with food security.

DATA ANALYSIS

We (the research facilitator and a Coalition volunteer) transcribed all conversations and analyzed the communities' words, stories, and comments through a collaborative process. The research facilitator led and trained the Food Security Project Team in a content analysis workshop about how to abstract themes and sub-themes from the transcripts using a coding scheme.¹⁸ Using the knowledge learned, the Coalition volunteer analyzed three of the five transcripts and peer-reviewed the results with the research facilitator to confirm and verify the themes. We did not have the capacity for member checking with community participants to verify the results. However, the involvement of the project coordinator and animators in all conversations improved the rigour of the research, since having been physically present at the focus groups, they provided additional verifications for the analysis.

¹⁷ This group of women participated in activities organized by a sister multicultural organization. The workers from this organization provided translation support in Tigrinya (for the Eritrean women) and Oromo (for the Oromo women, an ethnic group from Ethiopia).

¹⁸ Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–88.

FINDINGS

The PAR project demonstrated four major themes: **1) Meaning of food security; 2) Perceived benefits of participating in food security initiatives; 3) Barriers (practical and structural); and 4) Opportunities and actions for change.** The fourth theme makes up the "Recommendation" section of this report, with ideas and suggestions for the Coalition and its partners to remove or mitigate barriers for food security in ethnocultural communities. Sub-themes are nested within the major themes as follows:

Major theme	Number of sub-themes
Meaning of food security	14
Benefits of involvement	9
Barriers	
Practical	12
Structural	9
Opportunities	10

MEANING OF FOOD SECURITY

In our conversations, participants talked about the various aspects of food: growing, harvesting, accessing, using, preserving, and sharing food. This cycle reflects the "seed-to-plate chain and beyond" initially envisioned by the Food Security Project Team in 2014. Participants' comments demonstrate that food is ever-present in their daily lives.

- **Growing and harvesting food:**
 - "Yeah, because we plant our garden, we plant only organic stuff, so we value a lot that. [...] Why is this [community garden] important for us? It's also that, because we value that, organic stuff. And now we're growing ourselves. So that's good yeah? Because we buy stuff outside it's not as natural" (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).
- **Accessing food:**
 - "For my community, a group of people they come and they take. [... The food from the Food Bank is delivered] to the centre, to our community centre. [Community members] come, and it grows from there. Make an appointment some days" (Coalition Animators Focus Group).
- **Using food:**
 - "I use my parsley almost everyday. Every single day."
 - "Many days a week, we have some meals with food that we grow from here" (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).
- **Preserving food:**
 - "You know the cherry, cherry tomatoes? You know you can put it... wash it really good, dried, and put it in the freezer" (Filipino Seniors Focus Group).
- **Sharing food:**

- Participant: “[Food is] a way to share time with people that we love too.”
Animator: “Your closest loved ones but also larger groups. Right? [...] Groups that aren’t always together. You can bring them together”
(Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

Beyond what we can do with food, participants interpreted numerous elements that define what it means to be secure with our food. Table 1 (Appendix D) shows these elements or themes, what they mean, representative quote that are related to them, and how frequently the theme came up (i.e., number of quotes).

Each focus group began with the simple question: “Have you heard about food security before?” While the majority of the participants said they did not understand it, the conversations and the comments clearly indicated some basic understanding of this concept (**understanding food security**). Even though purchasing goods in Canada is far pricier compared to back home (more discussion under “Barriers to food security”), many participants agreed that the safety standard and consequently the **quality of food** are better. Part of the quality depends on **food safety**, which some participants readily associated with food security.

The most frequently discussed sub-theme is **traditional or cultural food**. For many participants, to be food secure means to have access and be able to enjoy food from their home country, whether it's about finding familiar ingredients or cooking meals that connect to people's cultural roots. Being part of a country where people are meeting others from around the world, participants are exposed to a **diversity of food** from different sources, cultures, and backgrounds.

Food from back home often reminded folks about the ease of access to fresh produce back home. **Fresh, organic food** is also frequently linked to **nutritious, healthy, and complete foods** that comprise a balanced diet. In Canada, fresh produce is associated with **local goods**, which are seen by some folks as more environmentally friendly when compared to food imported from elsewhere. Certain participants held this **environmentally conscious** mentality in particular, which others in the group validated. Being food secure does indeed relate to being environmentally responsible in terms of eating local, pesticide and chemical-free, safe food.

In addition to considering foods themselves, participants reflected on the way food impacted their lives, another aspect of food security. Food is recognized as a basic human need; it is critical to our **quality of life** and **survival**:

“Food is one of the basic needs that people have... [...] It's the first step, you know, in order to... to live, to have a quality of life. You know, you don't put food in your mouth, you can't be healthy” (Participant, Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

The element of **choice or control** is an important part of food security, though sometimes there are factors that are outside of one's control. Participants talked about the ability to determine the quality of food or what one eats, making food a choice, or in the words of one participant, “as we decide” (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus

Group). Gardening, for example, is an activity where people do have control over the food they eat, the quality or the freshness of the food:

“Because we plant our garden, we plant only organic stuff, so [...] we value that, organic stuff. And now we’re growing ourselves. So that’s good yeah? Because we buy stuff outside it’s not as natural” (Participant, Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

Self-sufficiency is a related part of food security. This can be interpreted as fulfillment, or feeling content and satisfied with one’s ability to acquire food independently. Some discuss this fulfillment as happiness and attachment to the food they grow. Others, like the participant quoted below, see food security as a means of validating their strengths and capabilities:

“Because we all live in apartment, none of us have gardens, we always go buy and buy, you know like, it feels so good to have your own gardening, [...] and to come and pick it, I guess and take it home, fresh, you know. [...] And you don’t have to ask for other people, oh can I like... for example, for me, you know I would always call my mom, ‘can I have some of this, some of this?’ And this year, she comes to get my stuff. [...] It feels good to grow your own stuff, you know!” (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

In summary, food security is: **accessing and eating safe, traditional, diverse, fresh, nutritious, local, and quality food that is essential to survival, quality of life, self-determination, and self-sufficiency.**

BENEFITS OF FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVES

All participants have participated in a food security initiative in some way or another. Some have taken a tour and volunteered at the food bank, learning about the services and programs offered. Some have directly built and developed a community garden. Others have participated in workshops about the role of food during pregnancy and maternity period. Regardless of the initiative, participants discussed the benefits they are reaping from the activities (Table 2, Appendix D).

- 1) On a personal level, many participants discussed the **emotional benefits** of being involved in a food-related project. Many references linked one’s participation to feelings of **fulfillment**, pride, and happiness. Filipino senior participants said:

Participant 8: Not only that, but the experience of you, harvesting what you plant...

Participant 3: Makes you happy.

These emotions are particularly true when participants realize their self-sufficiency (see previous section) at acquiring and accessing food. For one participant, his involvement in the community garden was in fact a way of grieving:

Participant 13: [...] it's been really painful this summer for me. [...] But when I do [gardening], I always remember my grandma.

Animator 2: [The community garden is] a good way of grieving.

For some folks, being involved in a food initiative was a way of asserting oneself and making a statement to **resist the pressures of urban life**. While this sub-theme had limited references, the following words still ring true:

"You know, I grew up on a farm, and you were close to the land all the time [...] And to me... it's like ok, I can live in the city but I can still be close to the land, I can still grow my own... [...] It's like we don't have to give in to the pressure of... [...] It's like... yes we can do this, it's like fighting the negative ways that urban life can wreck our soul, that we're inside too much, and... you know, to me it's kind of a resistance or protest in some way, against... You know, your parents grew up with working outside, and your urban life forced you out of that. It's like, no! We can do both, right? [...] It's kind of a resistance" (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

- 2) Beyond the individual, participants found **social benefits** that are inherent in these food initiatives, which provide opportunities "to socialize, [...] to interact with people, different people, to talk about different things, not only what we are planting or harvesting" (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group). Interacting with people with diverse ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds was one particular social benefit that folks highlighted:

"Most important thing is the neighbours can see you know, there's community gathering, and sitting down. I've seen people watching us what we do, and gardening... [...] seeing us all different nationalities sitting down and doing stuff. I have seen a lot of that, I've seen people are like, 'oh my god, I've been watching you guys, what you guys do here.' You know, that's the most important like... [...] We can do something and people never have the you know, never knew about us, and we can do something you know, like, yeah, we're from somewhere else, but we do have a lot of experience too, we can do, you know" (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

This participant's poignant statement drives home the importance of activities that consistently bring people of diverse origins together. These activities model the power of the collective, and emphasize the strengths of **diverse life experiences** and knowledge.

In some cases, for those participants newly arrived in the city, the social interactions from the projects offer a comfortable environment to **practice English**.

- 3) Being involved in food security initiatives also has **health-promoting benefits**. These benefits are manifested as nutrition (gaining knowledge about nutritious food) and physical activity (encouraging individuals to be active outside). One family felt that *“the city doesn't have a promotion of going outside and do sports. [...] The park is empty and the kids here, they don't go outside.”* They noticed that through the community garden, their children are *“outside, half an hour at least and watering and chasing the rabbits [... They] are enjoying summer and that's something they are not able to do if we don't have this garden”* (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

Beyond providing opportunities for the children to be active, the adults recognize activities, such as the community garden, are ways to **be outside** and take in fresh air:

“When we live in apartments, who knows when the summer begins and when it ends. We DON'T know, because we're always in that apartment. [...] We're not out. When do we always get out, you know? Yeah we go to the park a lot, but you know, you don't know when [summer] started. [...] If you live in an apartment, you don't have your own garden, you don't know what's going on out there. But if you have your garden and stuff, you just come out and you just enjoy the stuff” (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

- 4) Finally, being involved in food initiative has **economic benefits**. Many participants recognized that prices of food are higher in their new city as compared to back home. Growing food on their own is a way to ensure that they are *“not going to spend too much money”* (Filipino Seniors Focus Group).

BARRIERS TO FOOD SECURITY

Two types of barriers emerged from the conversations: practical and structural barriers. **Practical barriers** are those brought up about the different projects that can be realistically overcome by the community or an organization (Table 3, Appendix D). **Structural barriers** are those that are fundamentally rooted in social inequality. Many of them are far upstream and require comprehensive legislative and policy changes (Table 4, Appendix D).

Practical barriers

- 1) The cost of food, an **economic barrier**, was a consistent concern for all focus groups. In fact, it has the most number of quotations in this category of practical barriers. This sub-theme includes any comment related to money, pricing, and

cost, as well as ideas to mitigate this barrier (see section on Opportunities). It is certainly linked to the deeper structural issues of economic security (see next section). One animator observed:

"In my community, yes [people struggle to get food], because other food [from the food bank lasts] one week, [...], one, that's... eating one particular food for a long time, because they don't have money, so they only buy cheap, cheap, cheap tins to eat" (Coalitions Animators Focus Group).

Economic barriers often lead to stigma. Many Coalition Animators recognized that community members hesitate to access the food bank because of the stigma. Later, they discussed some ways to overcome this challenge (see section on Opportunities).

- 2) Many newcomers saw Canada's climate and weather as an **environmental barrier** to growing and harvesting food. Particularly in Edmonton, the long winter months mean a very short growing season in the warmer months. One animator succinctly summarized the environmental challenge: *"I'm always confused when they say... this food thing [...]. To make vegetables here, or to grow your own garden, Canada's weather doesn't allow you, you know?" (Coalition Animators Focus Group).*

Factors such as temperature and humidity consequently affect growing conditions for gardening and planting. Many Filipino seniors lamented that their gardens did not yield as much food as they would have liked this year *"because the soil is so dry," "the sun outside" (too much heat), and the rain ("It's all out in the open. There was this big rain. When you have rain for two days, it wets")*.

- 3) Comments about challenges related to cultural differences or diversity of food make up **cultural barrier**. Some of the challenges are unique to certain ethnocultural communities. For members of the Muslim community, Halal meat is not always available in some food security initiatives, such as food baskets:

"But whenever I said, if they include Halal meat, then everybody would do it. [...] I go to get [the food]. But most people just only eat Halal food. This [food basket] chicken included, pork included" (Coalition Animators Focus Group).

The cultural aspect also manifested in discussions about **intergenerational experiences of food** between the participants and their children. Generational differences in terms of attitudes, perceptions, behaviours, experience, and understanding of food varied widely. At times, it was about the benefits of food security initiatives as a way to share knowledge with the next generation:

"You give this culture to your kids, so now they are [...] more interested in having something more natural, having their own garden" (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

Other times, the conversation was about whether their children, in a new environment, preferred the same kinds of food from back home as the participants. For some of the women recently arrived from Eritrea, their children eat everything. They observed that perhaps it is because *“they are young now but maybe when they're older, they may choose what they like”* (Eritrean and Oromo Women Focus Group). One animator expressed slight frustration with her own experience:

“My kids don't eat what I cook ... so I have to make macaroni and cheese, or some... other pizza, I have to make it. [...] They just refuse... how much I try to change that, they just don't like traditional food. Don't know why” (Coalition Animators Focus Group).

- 4) Community members frequently faced **limited capacity** to achieve food security. For example, some animators (not directly involved with the Kilkenny Community Garden) questioned the Coalition's capacity to accommodate community needs in the food security project if it expands to more families.

People's ability or inability to participate or jump-start food security initiatives is often due to a variety of factors. **Space availability** was a major issue because many people living in the city do not have room for a sizable garden. One participant said, *“Because we all live in apartment, none of us have gardens, we always go buy and buy.”* Not only is there limited space, some participants said they have to travel a long way to garden:

“We as a family, we have a problem because we don't live near here. So in that case we have to drive [...] sometimes I tell [my husband] we have some [crop] production there but it takes time and it takes some gas to go” (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

Time constraint, including the lack of time or poor timing for opportunities, was another key practical barrier. Some animators saw gardening as a major time commitment, a luxury many of them do not have: *“Now when you say gardening... we take it simple, we save a lot... [But] lot of time, lot of work! It's not simple!”* (Coalition Animators Focus Group). In other cases, because of the persistence of the Kilkenny Community Garden group, serendipitous timing enabled the members to realize their project:

“The permission came in one day. It was several things came together, and all of a sudden, oh we had permission, we got to get to work” (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

Prior to their good timing, the Kilkenny Community Garden group (made up entirely of community members and volunteers) faced numerous **bureaucratic obstacles**. Seeking the permission for **land and water** was a *“red tape”* nightmare that resulted in many people feeling discouraged. The group recounted:

"[There] was this lady that comes from there, asking us... ok, if we give you the land, where are you going to get the water, how are you going to get water, you know, do we have permission for the garden. [...] She was coming to us and asking us. We had to have all these answers before she would give us permission" (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

The group was in a unique situation with land. Many members lived in the neighbourhood's Capital Region Housing project, which was undergoing demolition and relocation. As a result, there was no space they could directly save for a community garden. Available land around that area was public City land. One animator from the area said, *"By the end of this process [of building a community garden], one of the hardest things we learned was that... it's very hard to reallocated City of Edmonton parkland for something else"* even if there was a solid group behind the initiative.

Even with land, community members had to secure water themselves. Despite their research, they found *"there was no real good solution"* for it. Other animators from the coalition validated these challenges. One participant summarized it all by saying:

"You should know those people they have the land from the university [farm], they have a name, they have the water, you know? They just cultivate. [...] Everything's there. To do something like that, we need an organization to give you land, water, and... shelter. We can only do this in summer only!" (Coalition Animators Focus Group).

Less frequently mentioned was **lack of knowledge**, which can significantly impact people's capacity for food security. Eritrean and Oromo women recognized that while they slowly adapted and learned about ways to access food, for those newly immigrated, *"most of the people do not know where to buy the organic food."*

Structural barriers

- 1) Affordability of food, and related **economic security**, is a common thread that ran throughout the conversations and themes. Three sub-themes make up economic security: employment and income; housing and rent; and childcare.

Employment and income: For ethnocultural community members, lack of employment or underemployment results in low-income circumstances, creating financial barriers to food security and quality of life in general. The majority of the limited income is often spent on food, with little left to manage other parts of their lives. One animator observed this trend for many families in her community:

"What I see that... a big part of income goes towards food... I think it's too much. I don't know. It shouldn't be like that. People have to learn how to... shop better, something to save, they will be secure for future years, to

have something in savings... In our family, we spend almost everything on food. I don't know how to stop it" (Coalition Animators Focus Group).

Particularly challenging for newcomer immigrant households, the primary breadwinner is often the husband, with the wife staying home to care for the children. Limited opportunities for jobs with a living wage for the whole family likely lead to tension in the home.

Seniors are another population that face particular financial challenges. The Filipino seniors discussed how *"most of the seniors, not all have big pensions" or "fixed income;"* as a result, *"they can't afford... nutritious food."*

Housing and rent: Without adequate employment and income, people face difficulty paying rent and accessing proper housing. Some of the Filipino seniors noted that with high rental prices come high food prices. When asked about challenge, the Eritrean and Oromo women responded with "rent" as a major concern. One woman elaborated in Tigrinya:

"So for example, so you live in a building...there may be bedbugs, it's dirty, or smells like cigarettes so you hate it and you want to move to another building...so you're currently paying \$1500 for rent and then another place is \$1300 but then you have to pay the deposit...it's very expensive" (Eritrean and Oromo Women Focus Group).

Even with government support, housing remains a challenge, with little income remaining to meet other needs, such as food. A staff member translated:

"It's very challenging... let's say, she used to live in a residence, every month pay \$1000. [...] So with government housing support, they drop \$120, to \$880. What's the difference? Government housing, affordable housing... What do we do with \$120?" (Eritrean and Oromo Women Focus Group).

Childcare: As one participant mentioned, *"if you're married, only the husband can go to work and the wife has to watch the children, it's extremely difficult"* (Eritrean and Oromo Women Focus Group). To make ends meet in terms of paying rent and buying quality food, both adults need to work. But without proper childcare, the mother cannot find suitable work. Staff translated again:

"What she's saying... I know about the secure food. But most of the issues in... our community is rental house and daycare. Let's say, I have a kid, if I want go to work, what do I do? Who's going to take care of my kid? Because of money, I cannot work. Because of my kid, I cannot work. [...] Most of the marriage fight, for what? For money. It doesn't work" (Eritrean and Oromo Women Focus Group).

- 2) Compared to the other focus groups, most of the participants in the Eritrean and Oromo Women Focus Group are recent arrivals in Alberta (less than 1 year),

according to the staff members. Their discussion focused on challenges with immigration. While economic security is part of the **transition** in the new country, other barriers emerge.

Participants and staff members commented that, increasingly, people are **immigrating via private sponsorship**. Being sponsored by an individual living in Canada has its own challenges that are again related to economic security. One woman explained in Tigrinya:

"So I came as a group 5 sponsorship [private sponsorship] and I lived with my uncle for about 1 year and half. My husband doesn't know English and he doesn't find work even if he wants to work...so I stayed with my uncle for 1 year or so...and when he [woman's husband] works he finds one job for 3 months and then another job he might work for 2 months; it's extremely hard [to live here]. Since my uncle does not have a family of his own, we were able to stay with him for a long time, but if he had a family, we would have had to move out much earlier. The longest I would have stayed is a month or so but since he didn't have a family I stayed longer without feeling bad" (Eritrean and Oromo Women Focus Group).

During the early period of settling in, the family needs to resolve many financial issues, all the while trying to not overburden their host or sponsor. Accessing affordable, nutritious, fresh, and culturally appropriate food may not make it to the top of mind. Another woman said in Tigrinya:

"Until you leave their house, you need to live under their rules and expectations. But later, [...] once you move out...once you started work and you start your own life it's also not easy. Buying food, paying your own rent, you'll need a bed, you'll need a couch, just like any other home, you'll need things. So it's very difficult" (Eritrean and Oromo Women Focus Group).

Some of the participants talked about the impression of being left alone to fend in a new city and unfamiliar environment:

"Especially in Edmonton, since everyone is so busy, and you only know your family members, it's hard. So if you wanted to move and you don't drive and you don't have a way of going places, you need to find out where is the Superstore, you have to wait in the cold for the bus. Then there's looking for work, you have to write a resume and not knowing the language, everything is hard" (Eritrean and Oromo Women Focus Group).

Everything is new, including food: "when you compare from back home to here, it's very different." For most participants, while **food back home** was fresh produce sold straight from the farm, the food here is "not real organic." One woman commented, "The taste is different. Especially, when I arrived the first month, the first time here? We can't eat most of the... we can't accept the food. [...] The first one year, it's very difficult, for newcomers." Even "the meat is

very different. [...] It doesn't have good taste. [...] It doesn't keep the taste" (Eritrean and Oromo Women Focus Group).

When staff suggested gardening as a way to access fresher vegetables, the women once again reminded us that, despite some having gardening experience from back home, **urban living** does not accommodate.

"It's just a lack of space. [In Tigrinya] So they'd like to [garden], but they only live in apartments, so they can't find land" (Eritrean and Oromo Women Focus Group).

- 3) Underpinning the discussions about structural barriers are **societal factors**. Even though they did not surface frequently, the mere mention of these sub-themes are worth considering for future initiatives.

In a follow-up conversation, one participant pointed out the **inherent inequality and discrimination** within community groups. This dynamic makes it difficult for community members to share and act on ideas:

"In every [...] organization or every nationality... sometimes there is discrimination. Sometimes even though your idea is good, if you are not being listened to, it will not materialize. [...] If you don't have the status you're not listened to, that is, if you can recognize it. [...] So not in my situation right now, I could probably in the middle but I could be listened to. But if I could... break the barrier maybe everybody will listen to me" (Follow-up Interview with a Filipino Senior).

She recognized that an inclusive, non-discriminatory environment is critical to foster collective solutions, and that she can potentially be a change-maker facilitating dialogues.

At times, participants brought up **gender roles**, frequently in the context of traditional male and female roles. At the end of the Filipino Seniors Focus Group, one man told us, *"You should get more men to talk, because they are the gardeners, not the women."* Others felt differently. When it comes to developing solutions, one animator believed that it was more important to *"communicate with women"* because they *"are the ones who know around the house."* He emphasized:

"Women they know about the kitchen. That's what we did [in our initiative]. Yeah! We asked the women. I didn't care about the husbands, they might be proud, I don't know. Women and their children, they have to feed themselves. That's what you have to do. You should talk with the women" (Coalition Animators Focus Group).

Conventional gender roles in the household can create conflicts, especially for those newly arrived families with very young children. As part of the Eritrean and Oromo Women Focus Group, one staff explained:

"Most marriages, lots of fighting. Family violence. Let's say you're working, husband is working, most in the culture, the woman takes care of the home. For rent, utility bills, poverty, a lot pile on... Tension. There's a lot of that. All they fight about is work" (Eritrean and Oromo Women Focus Group).

Gender roles stem from cultural values and norms. While neither good nor bad, they can suggest the importance of men and women working together and sharing responsibilities. When this balance tips over, tension arises.

OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTIONS FOR CHANGE: IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Consistently, participants **brainstormed** ideas for action, solutions, or resources to improve existing projects and promote food security in the community (Table 5, Appendix D). These ideas can be done at various levels (i.e., individual, organizational, municipal) to remove some of the practical barriers discussed in the previous section. They demonstrate the wisdom and strength that lie within the community for improving food security and people's general well-being. In fact, this category of ideas and opportunities had the greatest number of quotes, suggesting that the discussions were often action-oriented.

- 1) Food security initiatives had tremendous social values because of the **community support**. Participants shared insights about tapping into their **social capital** (existing friends and family networks) and **previous experiences** (for example, from back home) as opportunities for mobilizing food security. This sub-theme is related to other social themes, such as the social benefit of participating in food security initiatives. Some of the participants from the Kilkenny Community Garden began as volunteers to help out their friends. For many, *"there is no such a thing as volunteering"* in their home country where *"you volunteer, but you don't call it volunteering, just because it's your friend."* Over time, they became increasingly involved with the project:

"Well, I actually to be honest with you, I never talk about... being part of this community here, and grow plants and harvest them. [...] Because I initially started doing the job, I mean as a volunteer. Right? And I have done volunteering before, and I have felt that I complete, I mean, when I'm doing this. I mean, I feel happy, so happy that I mean, it's paid off, what I'm doing, I'm probably receiving more back than I volunteered, I mean, with no pay, no interest, no economical interest. So I did that, I mean, many people had helped [our family] here, since we started living in Canada" (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

This participant's comment also highlighted the sense of reciprocity and even social inclusion in the community that came with the volunteering experience.

A great deal of the conversations centred on support, guidance, teamwork, and social connections. These factors, synonymous with **helping one another**, were community strengths and resources. At times, it was also about recognizing and encouraging others in food security initiatives. The Kilkenny Community Garden group was especially forthcoming about the importance of helping each other. When asked about advice for communities wanting to pursue similar food security projects, participants emphasized that teamwork was the most important ingredient for success. One participant said:

"Most important thing is, they need a team... [...] They need to work as a group you know? Not say, oh I can't do it, this person wasn't here, this was here. First for the beds, I was not involved with that [...]. When I came, it was even some dirt in it already [filled by someone else]" (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

Another participant encouraged other communities to *"stay together... and help each other."* She suggested that social gatherings involving meals, like the potluck we were at, were good opportunities for group discussion and interaction. Others reflected on how sticking together was important for facing the difficult times: *"Well, it's like any project that we start. At the beginning, we face a lot of difficulties, and after that they [City staff] saw that we can achieve our goals, I believe."*

Teamwork also meant sharing responsibilities, even if they seem unrelated to the food security initiative itself. At one point during the focus group, we looked up and saw one of the husbands playing with all the children in the background, while the rest of the adults talked. One community member smiled: *"You see, that's teamwork. He's helping with the kids."* The animator agreed: *"So he's got the hand of... not his daughter, but the other one [of another community member]. And that's cool! If we haven't done this [project] all year, you would never see that, right?"*

Teamwork was indeed one asset from this community. Other **community strengths** identified in all the focus groups included perseverance, resilience, resourcefulness, inherent knowledge, and trust. Participants from the Kilkenny Community Garden group recognized that their project success was hugely dependent on perseverance:

"Because we joined after[wards], that keep going, keep trying, because it's a very good thing. And after you get many rewards for trying, it's like... be a leader, something so good. So yeah, it's a good thing, keep trying and even if it's difficult, there are many challenges" (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

Another agreed: *"Don't give up."*

Resilience and resourcefulness were particularly manifested in the Eritrean and Oromo Women Focus Group. These women adapted, or "got used" to the unfamiliar in their new environment, and called on friends and family to navigate resources.

Finally, community members pointed out that **strong leadership** in organizations is critical to jump-start food security initiatives. These leaders may be those with particular visions or ideas, or those strongly committed to a cause. For example, some of the participants in the Kilkenny Community Garden group "were committed to the meetings and helping, and supporting." Their consistent attendance at meetings was instrumental for securing resources for the project.

These positive qualities of entire groups of people therefore set the foundation for food security opportunities.

Recommendation (for the organization and community):

Tapping into community strengths

- Focus on the community, collective aspect of food security in projects
- Map and understand internal community knowledge through parents, spouses, friends, and those with previous farming experience
- Persevere through difficult patches

Program planning

- Build in mechanisms so people have opportunities to develop each other's skills and knowledge and to share ideas
- Incorporate team-building into program design and implementation
- Identify community needs and priorities through focus groups and consultations prior to the start of any project (food security related or not)

Recruitment and retention

- As a starting point, identify individuals in the community who have the capacity to stay committed
- As an initial buy-in, advertise projects as opportunities for volunteering, enabling people to build skills and experience and to help others
- As groups firm up, involve food-sharing to bring people together for discussions, combining social activity with community mobilization
- Encourage people to participate in food security activities by providing incentives
- Reach out to the women in the community
- Develop strategies to strengthen the Coalition's Community Animation Model to promote wide engagement among Coalition animators and members in food security

Building partnerships

- Connect animators from different communities to help each other out in initiatives
- Seek support from other organizations and sponsors for projects

- Support community members in employment, skill and language training at the Intercultural Centre (e.g., internship, health broker training program, ESL)

- 2) Many initiatives offered opportunities for **knowledge sharing** about food and other topics. A major takeaway from the project for many Kilkenny Community Garden participants was having **new experiences**, whether it is learning and trying out new things, developing skills, gaining knowledge, or building capacity for food security. Some folks participated without any prior experience in gardening:

"We have a new experience, to learn new things that we didn't know. I mean, my mom and my family they know how to do this [garden], but I didn't have the experience yeah. So I kind of helps sometimes my mom, but it's not something I did by myself. So... Yeah, because that, and because of our son. Because he can learn... [...] a lot about these, so it's very good learning experience, for all of us" (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

A young woman added about her participation:

"Just like everybody here, I did it for the experience. And just to gain knowledge about, you know... gardening and things like that because I have no knowledge about that. [...] Because later on when I get my own place, when I decide to buy a house, you know, I am thinking about you know, making my own garden and things like that. So this experience has taught me and maybe you know, next year, I'm more... I would have more knowledge than I did this year" (Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group).

For the Eritrean and Oromo women who came together weekly for workshops about maternity health, they frequently **shared information** with one another, building each other's knowledge base on topics including food for their children. They admitted: *"We learn from this group [of women]. We learn from friends."* The group also discusses resources such as the Canada Food Guide, which helps the women *"prepare food, for kids, [...] Vegetables daily fruit and meat."*

Recommendations (for the organization and community):

Program planning

- Incorporate information-sharing with activities, using resources such as the Canada Food Guide

Tapping into community strengths

- Identify "mentors" in the group who can help/support those new to the project

- 3) As evidenced throughout the findings, participants discussed their experiences with specific **food security initiatives**. **Gardening** was one particular example. In addition to the Kilkenny Community Garden discussion, participants from the Filipino Seniors Focus Group also talked about gardening. One Filipino senior stepped up and offered ideas for food security based on gardening:

“Actually, as we take advantage of summer, and we plant a lot of vegetables, and then at the time that we have a surplus of vegetables, you know, we can make it into, to preserve it, together you can put in a preserve” (Filipino Seniors Focus Group).

Some of the seniors agreed that “canning” was one way for food preservation.

Other types of initiatives included bulk-buying and using the food bank. While one animator shared information about his experience visiting and volunteering at the food bank, another leaned towards the food basket option: *“I don’t want to be very dependent on food bank. This [WECAN food basket program] works better because it has less stigma, more communities get involved”* (Coalition Animators Focus Group). Having a variety of options to access affordable food, as well as involving more people like this animator’s suggestion, are ways to reduce stigma attached to using food bank services.

Recommendations (for the organization and community):*Gardening*

- Plant familiar traditional foods (e.g., bitter melon in the Filipino community), providing seeds, soil, and pots free of cost
- Plan gardening initiatives holistically, thinking beyond planting and harvesting to preserving and sharing
- Offer opportunities to learn how to preserve food (canning, drying), save seeds, compost, and creatively plant indoors or in small spaces like apartments
- Learn about strategies in other countries (e.g., roof gardening in Spain, edible flowers in Scandinavia)
- Start gardening earlier in the season
- Rotate and share responsibilities to care for the garden

Food hampers

- Organize periodic food bank visits and volunteering with community members
- Increase food bank access points with ethnocultural centres (e.g., Bilal)
- Consider modes of delivery for food baskets

Food purchase and swap

- Reach out to more communities for bulk-buying
- Consider strategies for bulk-buying
- Organize food exchange fairs so people can trade food with one another

Knowledge sharing

- Share experience (e.g., from the Kilkenny Community Garden) with the wider ethnocultural community

- 4) While financial challenges were prevalent in all the conversations, only one suggestion surfaced to **overcome the economic barrier**. Several of the Filipino seniors recommended **budgeting**, which means making better financial decisions on food or spreading money out between food and other expenses to ensure a good quality of life. One animator concurred, implying better financial literacy was needed for her community members:

"That's what I'm thinking you know? You don't have to spend all income on food. Like there's another help. Like you just spend a little bit on education, taking some classes or something like that" (Coalition Animators Focus Group).

Recommendations (for the organization and community):

Program planning

- Offer learning opportunities for financial literacy and budgeting

While there are many actions here that the Coalition and communities can do to improve food security, there are also steps that the Coalition's partners, including other food security organizations and the City of Edmonton, can take to support ethnocultural communities. In contrast to the previous recommendations that are based on participants' own stories and suggestions, the following recommendations are inferred from the previous themes about barriers:

Recommendations (for other stakeholders):

Community capacity-building

- Offer greater clarity, resources, and support so ethnocultural communities can better navigate the food security system (e.g., acquiring land and water permits, setting up community gardens) and understand governance in Canada at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels
- Work with communities and organizations in a more targeted way, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, to navigate the system

Limitations and Next Steps

LIMITATIONS

A major limitation of this research is the inconsistency between the focus groups. The discussions did not always faithfully follow the focus group guide, simply because the groups and the environment in which the discussions happened varied widely. In the case where multiple languages are involved (at times three languages happening at the same time in one discussion!), some intention in the questioning, wording, and interpretation are lost through the many layers of translation.

In the end, quotes from certain focus groups dominated this report (i.e., Kilkenny Community Garden Focus Group). When data are not evenly distributed among the groups, we are unsure of how reliable the results are.

The focus group guide was adapted based on each community's level of participation in food security initiatives. The responses, as a result, were wide-ranging. More consistent questions, and subsequently the responses, would have facilitated clearer analysis and understanding of the research questions. This issue could have in part been alleviated by more adept facilitation and participant selection with stricter selection criteria, limiting participants to those who have consistently been involved with a single project, rather than those who are more drop-in in nature. On the other hand, the diversity of the participants in terms of experience with food security and related initiatives made up for a much richer picture of food security in Edmonton's ethnocultural communities.

Finally, a fundamental realization that emerged from this project was that the Coalition struggled with community engagement throughout its programs. Research participants' discussions about getting involved or not getting involved in food security projects alluded to a much bigger challenge for the organization in terms of understanding and engaging with its membership. Staff reflected later and voiced that the Coalition needed a strong leadership program, particularly as reflected by the Community Animation Model, to engage animators in various projects (including food security). Without strong engagement of leaders in the community, the Coalition would not have the proper understanding of the community organizations that make up the Coalition. This lack of knowledge could explain some animators/members' disengagement, as they might have felt issues such as food security were irrelevant to them, or they might not identify issues in their communities as "food security" even though they would describe experiences that relate to that term.

The focus groups in this research at least helped to elucidate the unique experiences of some of the communities. But in order to reach other animators and their communities, tools such as focus groups or community consultation would be important prior to the start of any project so that the Coalition can follow the impacts on the community.

Ultimately, a strong functioning and stable organization would improve the engagement of ethnocultural community members and the impacts made on the communities.

ACHIEVING RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Revisiting our initial research objectives reveals that we have indeed achieved them by openly **exploring barriers and opportunities for food security from the perspectives of Edmonton’s ethnocultural communities**. We consider the specific questions as follows:

Research questions	Did we achieve it?	How?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does food security mean to ethnocultural communities in Edmonton? 		<p>Meaning of food security was an explicit question asked during the focus groups, and was discussed and subsequently analyzed in-depth in the section “Meaning of food security” under Findings and Table 1 (Appendix D).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been done to promote food security among ethnocultural communities in Edmonton and/or other jurisdictions in Canada? 		<p>Participants discussed their involvement in a food security initiative, some of which may or may not have been organized by the Coalition. Predominantly, they felt these initiatives were beneficial, as described in the section “Benefits of food security involvement” under Findings and Table 2 (Appendix D). We did not formally scan for promising practices in other jurisdictions. However, informally, the participants shared what they knew about other provinces (e.g., Kelowna, BC) and countries (e.g., New York, U.S.; Spain).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the cultural barriers to food security, if any, among ethnocultural communities in Edmonton? 		<p>Barriers make up the largest portion of the findings, divided into practical and structural barriers (Tables 3 and 4, Appendix D). However, “cultural barrier” was not very clearly defined at the outset of the research. Therefore, only few instances were specifically coded as cultural barrier. Given that it is ethnocultural communities sharing their perspectives in this project, the comments may have cultural aspects.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What resources and actions can be implemented to 		<p>Participants did some significant brainstorming for ideas and actions. These ideas are outlined in the section</p>

<p>provide opportunities and reduce barriers for food security in Edmonton's ethnocultural communities?</p>	<p>“Opportunities: Ideas and implications for the future” under Findings (Table 5, Appendix D).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For those who are not participating in any food initiatives, what are the barriers there? What is needed to increase opportunities to participate in food security? 	<p>Because all participants were recruited based on their participation in one food security initiative or another, this question was not directly asked. However, the section “Barriers” highlights insights for why some community members may not participate in food security.</p>

NEXT STEPS

Future actions will involve the following three major steps:

Activity	Actions	Who's responsible
<p>Community knowledge translation (Jan-Feb, 2016)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop knowledge translation materials for community members in shorter, more accessible forms such as pamphlets. - Present the research study back to the communities that participated in the focus groups. 	<p>Research facilitator Research facilitator and the Food Security Team</p>
<p>Stakeholder knowledge translation (March-April, 2016, and ongoing)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hold a knowledge translation forum to share the complete research study with stakeholders including funders, partners, other service providers, and community members. - Presentations at relevant community research forums and events 	<p>Coalition, CRAC Research facilitator Food Security Team</p>
<p>Taking action (ongoing)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incrementally implement appropriate actions and ideas as outlined in the “Opportunities” section. 	<p>Coalition, Food Security Team Stakeholders</p>

APPENDIX A. Community Research Advisory Committee (CRAC) Members

2015-2016 CRAC MEMBERS

Stephanie Kowal (Chair – 2015)

Michael Barton

Sanjaya Dhakal

Yun-Csang Ghimn (Interim Chair – 2016)

Justin Kehoe

Lucenia Ortiz

Amandla Ngwenya

Meseret Desta Haileyesus

Maricon Hidalgo

APPENDIX B. Consent form

Edmonton Multicultural Coalition Participatory Action Research Exploring barriers and opportunities to Food Security in Edmonton through an Ethnocultural Lens

Hello!

Thank you so much for joining us in today's discussion about your experience with food. This discussion is part of a bigger research project about **food and food security in Edmonton**, organized by the Edmonton Multicultural Coalition, which supports newcomer and ethnocultural communities in the city.

Animators and community leaders from the Coalition work with many diverse communities in activities and conversations about food, including access to culturally diverse, sustainable, healthy and nutritious food.

What will you be asked to do?

Today, we would like to hear about **your stories and experiences about food**, and **what you think can make the food experience of you and your community better**. We would like to record this discussion to better understand your experience. You can definitely review the notes later, as well as the final report, by letting us know how to get in touch with you.

Today's discussion is in a group. You are free to participate as you wish, there will be no penalty either way. You can say as much or as little as you'd like. You can even change information at any time, and whatever you do say will be discarded. However, 30 days after today, you won't be able to withdraw, add or change information.

How will we respect your privacy?

Everything from today – the information and your identity – will remain confidential. We may use a code or a false name for you instead. We also strongly encourage you to not discuss this meeting with people outside of today's group to respect others' privacy.

What are the risks and benefits?

This discussion will support and strengthen programs, services, and activities in the community. This will be very helpful to our communities, organizations, and service providers.

If at any time you feel uncomfortable or tired to answer a question, we will do our best to support you, and you don't have to answer if you don't want to. You can also choose to talk with us one-on-one if you'd like, or fill out a survey separately and return it to us later.

Who will have access to this information?

Only the facilitators from today (Keren and Yodit) will have access to your stories today. Those who will access the information will need to sign a confidential agreement. All information will be safely stored in a locked office and on the computer for 12 months after the project ends in April 2016.

What will we do with this information?

All information will be compiled into a final report, papers, pamphlets, and presentations, which will be shared with the community and our funders, partners, and other service providers.

What do we need from you?

If you agree to participate in this discussion, please check the “YES” box on the next page. If not, please check the “NO” box. While we **cannot pay you** since your participation is voluntary, we will do our best to provide a meal for today.

Contacts

If you have any question or concern about this project, please contact us:

- **Keren Tang** (Facilitator, 780-902-8852, keren.tang@gmail.com)
- **Yodit Tesfamicael** (Coordinator, Edmonton Multicultural Coalition, 780-760-1973, yodit@emcoalition.ca)

The Coalition has a Community Research Advisory Committee that reviewed and approved this study to make sure it is ethical. If you have any concerns about this project that you feel you cannot talk about with Keren or Yodit, you may contact Stephanie Kowal, the Chair of the Committee, at 780-667-1802.

Thank you so much!

Consent Form to Participate in the Research Project:

Exploring barriers and opportunities to Food Security through a Multicultural Lens

Please read the following carefully:

I understand:

- The information about participating in today's discussion.
- That I don't have to answer a question if I don't want to, and I can withdraw from the discussion at any time without penalty.
- That today's discussion will be recorded and later typed up.
- That I can withdraw, change or add any information up to 30 days after the discussion.
- That the data will be safely stored for 12 months after the project ends in April 2016.
- The risks and benefits of participating in this research.
- That if I choose to, I will be able to see notes from today and any final report.
- That my identity will be protected as much as possible.
- That information from these discussions may be used in pamphlets, reports, papers and presentations.

I agree and I am willing to participate in today's discussion.

Yes

No

Print Name

Signature

Date: _____

APPENDIX C. Focus Group Guide

This is not an exhaustive list of questions. This list is meant to guide the conversation. Depending on the group context and dynamic, some questions may be rephrased or not asked at all. Community animators will pilot and revise these questions at a monthly meeting.

Experience of food

1. What is your understanding of the phrase “food security?”
 - a. What words do you associate with “food security?”
 - b. How important do you feel food security is to your community? [How important is food accessibility/availability to members of your community?]
 - c. How do you get information about food? How do you share it, discuss it, and talk about it with your friends/family/community?
2. What kinds of food do you, and your family/friends/community eat at home?
 - a. Why do you prefer certain foods from back home or here?
 - b. How do you cook/prepare the food from back home? What kind?
 - c. How do you find/track down the food from back home here in the city? What have been some resources or challenges for you and your family?
 - d. How do you compare the prices? Do you generally find it more expensive or cheap here? How does pricing influence your choice for food?
 - e. What about quality? Do you think food from back home is more or less healthy compared to food here? How does quality influence your choice for food?
 - f. What prevents you from providing healthy food/food from back home?
 - g. Are there any other concerns you have about food in your household?
 - h. Do you think your children share these thoughts? Do you think there is any generation gap when it comes to food?

Experience with food security initiatives

3. How have you participated in a group/community food [initiative/project/activity]? Tell me about your experience.
 - a. How did you first hear about this [initiative/project/activity]? How did you get connected to [animator/coordinator] leading this project?
 - b. What is your role in this [initiative/project/activity]?
 - c. Do you find this [initiative/project/activity] important? Why?
 - d. If you are not involved with any food [initiative/project/activity], what are some of your reasons? How can we overcome these challenges (e.g., overcoming stigma of accessing food bank services)?
4. Why are you involved in this [initiative/project/activity] or with this group/community?
 - a. Are you involved for the social connections or to learn new things for yourself?
 - b. Do you find it valuable to be part of a group doing this activity?

- c. Do you think you can do this [initiative/project/activity] on your own, in your home? Why or why not?
- d. What are some benefits for you from this [initiative/project/activity]?

Other resources and barriers

5. What are some resources you found helpful to get this [initiative/project/activity] off the ground? What are some other resources (e.g., community gardens) that might support you?
6. What have been some other challenges you/your group faced? What has been frustrating? How do you think the barriers can be removed?

Appendix D. Tables of sub-themes and representative quotes

Table 1: Meaning of food security

Name	Comment	Representative quote	Number of quotes
understanding food security	While not specific to defining food security, these quotes imply some basic understanding of food security	Animator 6: Food security is uh... everybody has to be secured. Participant 1: I heard it [the term "food security"], but I don't understand it [laughs].	24
1) quality of food	relates to cost; and sometimes distrust of the quality	Participant 4: Once in awhile, my wife is watching Filipino TV, right? Don't forget that's in the Philippines. You put food that's being sold in the Philippines, is different from the food being sold in Canada. Participant 3: Yeah, Canada. Different. Participant 4: Quality is not the same. [Agreeing] Coordinator: So the quality standard you're saying, Canada is higher. [...] Participant 4: Yeah because we expect more, we're paying for more. [...] Participant 6: They send in good inspector and everything, standards. Facilitator: So do you trust it more then? Participant 3: Yeah.	11
1.1) food safety	food is safe to eat	Participant 3: The security problem here is, how many hours does the food will be out of the fridge, from the fridge, to stay outside because there's so many... Sometimes you get [inaudible]. Facilitator: Right. So you're talking about food safety. All: Yeah, yeah, food safety.	6

1.2) traditional/ cultural food	Traditional food refers to common food found from back home; relates to the cultural legacy of food that are familiar in an ethnocultural context. Food security is a way to connect people with their cultural roots	Participant 2: Our grandchildren ask what is that. I say, you eat it, it's good for you. Participant 3: I know, they always ask what is that [traditional food]. Facilitator: So they know less about it.	
1.2.1) Diversity of food	food has many sources, comes from different cultures and backgrounds	[Agreeing] Facilitator: But why do you have a picnic? [...] Participant 12: But it's also to taste different kind of food.	6
1.3) freshness/organic	fresh and organic fruits and vegetables often imply healthy food by the participants	Participant: [We make cultural food] because we get used to it...and food from this country is not organic [in Tigrinya]. Coordinator: Ok. So the food here is not organic. And that's one of the reasons why... [...] Participant: Because our cultural food is best... cultural food [baby crying].	18
1.3.1) Nutrition/ Healthy/ Complete food	often relates to freshness of food; having balanced diet	Coordinator: It tastes good? Ok. It's healthier. [...] And you try to get organic. Participant 2: It's a balance. F: What do you mean by that? Participant 2: Like uh... there's the fish, you're not going to get meat. You know? The second one is... all vegetables, with you know, fish, or little bit of...	20
1.3.2) local goods	generally considered more fresh and organic, and sometimes more environmentally friendly compared to those imported from elsewhere	Participant 1: Rice. Participant 4: In the summer, you have farmers' market. [...] They are fresh, and organic, mostly. Participant 3: But they are expensive too you know. Participant 4: They are expensive too, but they are fresher. You're guaranteed fresh, because they can pick them up. I just went to Victoria, in Victoria, they just pick up the fruit, they'll sell it within 2 hours. They're expensive, but you're guaranteed that they pick them up. Unlike here, most of the fruits, they're coming from Costa Rica. I'm talking about bananas? I've been to Costa Rica, you know how long it will take by ship from Costa Rica to here? There's no way you can get it in 2 weeks. You have to put it in crates.	5

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1.3.3) environmental protection	being food secure relates to being environmentally responsible in terms of eating local foods, pesticide and chemical free treatment of food	Participant 12: We as a family, we have a problem because we don't live near here. So in that case we have to drive [...] to be here yeah? It's not like, sometimes I tell him we have some production there [that needs harvesting] but it takes time and it takes some gas to go. Yeah? [...] Because it's not near our home. So if we see this is good for the environment in that, for us, I don't know because we have to do that, to water the plants, that's not so good. Yeah, but... Anyways it's a good experience. [...] Animator 2: Well, if you're farther away and we're trying to... if we as a group decide that it's important to not waste all that gas to do watering when others are coming anyway, then that's our decision as a group [to help you water], and then you don't have to feel guilty right? [Others agreeing] Animator 2: No, that's all about environment and food security is related to environment right? Participant 11: Exactly, yeah.	10
2) quality of life	being food secure is related to having good quality of life	Participant 11: Food is one of the basic needs that people have... [...] It's the first step, you know, in order to... to live, to have a quality of life. You know, you don't put food in your mouth, you can't be healthy, or live in... you know what I mean?	6
2.1) survival	food is a basic human need, it is critical to our survival	Animator 6: You choose whenever you get the food. Before you ate the food, you just fill your tummy with something, that's what I know. You don't get uh... [...] healthy food like that. No! First, survival. Second, you use uh... safety food.	6
2.2) Choice/control	having the choice to determine the quality of food; having the choice to eat; food is a choice; recognizing that sometimes factors are outside of one's control	Participant 12: Yeah, because we plant our garden, we plant only organic stuff, so we value a lot that, about the last question that you had yeah? Why is this important for us? It's also that, because we value that, organic stuff. And now we're growing ourselves [P11 laughs]. So that's good yeah? Because we buy stuff outside it's not as natural. Yeah. Facilitator: Not as natural you feel...?	19
2.3) self sufficiency	can be grouped with fulfillment; because it's expressing the same idea that people are being independent and are fulfilled because of that feeling.	Participant 11: As we decide. You know what I mean? Participant 9: Because we all live in apartment, none of us have gardens, we always go buy and buy, you know like, it feels so good to have your own gardening, [...] and to come and pick it, I guess and take it home, fresh, you know. [...] And you don't have to ask for other people, oh can I like... for example, for me, you know I would always call my mom, "can I have some of this, some of this." And this year, she comes to get my stuff. [...] It feels good to grow your own stuff, you know!	21

Table 2. Perceived benefits of participating in food security initiatives

Name	Comment	Representative quote	Number of quotes
1) emotional benefit	reference to the emotional attachments participants feel towards the food security initiative whether as grieving, feeling good or being self-sufficient; emotional feelings are also associated with self-sufficiency.	Participant 13: You know what? I lost my grandma, and it's been really painful this summer for me. [...] But when I do [gardening], I always remember my grandma. Animator 2: [The community garden is] a good way of grieving.	17
1.1) fulfillment	a sense of pride and happiness in addressing food security in a meaningful way	Participant 8: Not only that, but the experience of you, harvesting what you plant... Participant 3: Makes you happy. [Others agreeing/talking] Participant 8: ... see that you're harvesting it. It's kind of like uh... P6: Happy. [...] P3: Fulfillment. P8: Yes, fulfillment.	15
1.2) resistance to urban pressure	resisting the negative pressures of urban life is more than simply living an urban life; it is a way of asserting oneself and making a statement in the urban environment	Animator 2: You know, I grew up on a farm, and you were close to the land all the time, and I was very close to my father who was the major person outside right? And to me... it's like ok, I can live in the city but I can still be close to the land, I can still grow my own... [...] It's like we don't have to give in to the pressure of... [...] It's like... yes we can do this, it's like fighting the negative ways that urban life can wreck our soul, that we're inside too much, and... you know, to me it's kind of a resistance or protest in some way, against... You know, your parents grew up with working outside, and your urban life forced you out of that. It's like, no! We can do both, right? [...] It's kind of a resistance.	2
2) social benefit	initiative provides an opportunity for social interaction, network, and support	Facilitator: But why do you have a picnic? Participant 15: To socialize. [...] Participant 13: And to discuss about the garden... [...] To get together because we don't have the chance to do it in some other time. Participant 11: Yeah, to have the opportunity to interact with people, different people, to talk about different things, not only what we are planting or harvesting.	12

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2.1) Diverse life experiences	initiative provides an opportunity to meet people from diverse backgrounds, which in turn enriches one's own life; an intercultural space that also demonstrates to others the strength and knowledge the community has	Participant 9: Most important thing is the neighbors can see you know, there's community gathering, and sitting down. I've seen people watching us what we do, and gardening... [...] seeing us all different nationalities sitting down and doing stuff. I have seen a lot of that, I've seen people are like, 'oh my god, I've been watching you guys, what you guys do here.' You know, that's the most important like... [...] We can do something and people never have the you know, never knew about us, and we can do something you know, like, yeah, we're from somewhere else, but we do have a lot of experience too, we can do, you know.	12
2.2) Practicing language	initiative is an opportunity practice English, particularly for those who recently immigrated to Alberta	Facilitator: Tell me, how do you like this community garden experience? [...] Participant 14: I like it because the most important to me is socialize with other people, and also [...] to taste new food [laughs], the other country. And also to practice my English [laughs]. [...] Because I can improve my English. I know various words speaking, but I try to communicate with others.	3
3) health promoting benefit	Initiative is a way to promote health, through nutrition and physical activity	Participant 13: It's something you don't do here in the city, like the city doesn't have a promotion of going outside and do sports. No you don't see, you see, the park is empty. And the kids here, they don't go outside. But this [garden]... my daughters are being outside, half an hour at least and watering and chasing the rabbits and... [...] [The children] are enjoying summer and that's something they are not able to do if we don't have this garden.	11
3.1) being outdoor	initiative provides an opportunity to be outside, breathing in fresh air	Participant 9: You know when we live in apartments, who knows when the summer begins and when it ends. We DON'T know, because we're always in that apartment. [...] We're not out. When do we always get out, you know? Yeah we go to the park a lot, but you know, you don't know when [summer] started. [...] If you live in an apartment, you don't have your own garden, you don't know what's going on out there. But if you have your garden and stuff, you just come out and you just enjoy the stuff you know.	7
4) economic benefit	initiative has cost-saving benefits relating to accessing or purchasing food	Facilitator: So can you tell me some more benefits that you think [planting vegetables] will bring? [...] Participant 3: We're not going to spend too much money. Facilitator: OK, so, so it's economical	4

Table 3. Practical barriers to food security

Name	Comment	Representative quote	Number of quotes
1) Economic barrier	Reference to cost of food that limits accessibility of food	Animator 4: In my community, yes [people struggle to get food], because other food [from the food bank], is one week, [...], one, that's... eating one particular food for a long time, because they don't have money, so they only buy cheap, cheap, cheap tins to eat.	44
2) Environmental barrier	Reference to seasonal factors of living in Canada (e.g., climate, weather, temperature), as related to food security; affects the growing conditions for gardening and planting	Animator 6: You know if... I'm always confused when they say uh... this food thing, you know. First of all, to make vegetables here, or to grow your own garden, Canada's weather doesn't allow you. You know?	21
3) Cultural barrier	Challenge related to cultural differences or diversity of food; unique to particular ethnocultural communities	Animator 3: I did talk about it. But whenever I said, if they include Halal meat, then everybody would do it. Because I... personally, it outside of me too. I go to get [the food]. But most people just only eat Halal food. This [food basket] chicken included, pork included. [...] We have to... talk to those [organizers], arrange something for maybe the Muslim community, to add Halal food, and then it will work.	2
3.1) Intergenerational experiences of food	References to when participants talk about generational differences (i.e., between them and their children) in terms of attitudes, perceptions, behaviours towards, experience with, or understanding of traditional and cultural food, or "food from back home;" passing on knowledge to the next generatio; related to sub-theme of cultural barrier	Participant 13: And the other thing is, you put, you give this culture to your kids, so now they are like more interested to having something more natural, having their own garden. So this is something new trust me, right?	16
4) Limited capacity	People's inability to participate in food security initiatives may include time constraints, life circumstances, and lack of knowledge	Animator 6: We start school, to teach small children Arabic and... they are there to know their traditions and something like that. We taught one hundred, about 10-15... Now how many? Animator 5: We have a lot now. Animator 6: Now... we are running away because everybody's... We are going to start to accept only two people, or one boy from each family. It grows up tremendously as soon as... it's not just... Now the Kilkenny [community garden], they're far. I don't know... about 10 families [participant]... it's going to grow more than that.	12

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4.1) Space availability	A sub-theme related to structural barrier of urban living; general references to limited space for or distance to food security initiatives	Participant 9: Because we all live in apartment, none of us have gardens, we always go buy and buy, you know like, it feels so good to have your own gardening, and to... and to come and pick it, I guess and take it home, fresh, you know. Participant 12: We as a family, we have a problem because we don't live near here. So in that case we have to drive [...] to be here yeah? It's not like, sometimes I tell [my husband] we have some [crop] production there but it takes time and it takes some gas to go.	23
4.2) Timing	Time constraints (e.g., lack of time, poor timing of opportunities) seen as a barrier to accomplish food security initiatives	Animator 2: And then this one [current community garden location], the permission came in one day. It was several things came together, and all of a sudden, oh we had permission, we got to get to work. Animator 6: Now when you say uh... gardening, I know, we take it simple, we save a lot... you know... [...] Yeah... a lot of work. Lot of time, lot of work! It's not simple!	19
4.3) Bureaucracy	Relates to red tape, permission seeking process, which diminishes hope/motivation because of bureaucracy (city needs to take a case by case approach rather than one size fits all)	Animator 2: So there was just a lot of red tape, a lot of administration. [...] Participant 9: Because there was this lady that comes from there, asking us um... ok, if we give you the land, where are you going to get the water, how are you going to get water, you know, do we have permission for the garden. [...] She was coming to us and asking us. We had to have all these answers before she would give us permission.	12
4.3.1) Land acquisition	Certain initiatives require the availability of land; process of acquiring land is challenging; also related to the sub-theme of space	Animator 6: You should know those people they have the land from the university [farm], they have a name, they have the water, you know? They just cultivate. [...] Yeah. Everything's there. To do something like that, we need an organization to give you land, water, and... shelter. We can only do this in summer only! Animator 2: By the end of this process [of building a community garden], one of the hardest things we learned was that um... it's very hard to reallocated City of Edmonton parkland for something else.	9
4.3.2) Water permit	Certain initiatives require water; process of acquiring the water permit is challenging	Participant 9: We couldn't get the water the other side. Because we had a problem to find water. [...] We had to ask the neighbor if we can use their water, or we can ask Epcor, and we had to buy tanks to use it. [...] Animator 2: So we were doing research on the water issue, but there was no real good solution.	7
4.4) Lack of knowledge	Challenge that limit the capacity of people to participate in food security or gain opportunity to access food	Participant: Most of the people do not know where to buy the organic food.	4

Table 4. Structural barriers to food security

Name	Comment	Representative quote	Number of quotes
1) Economic security			
1.1) employment and income	financial barriers due to lack of employment, qualifications, and underemployment, and subsequent low income circumstances are fundamental challenges to food security and quality of life	Animator 3: What I see that... a big part of income goes towards food. Like, I think it's too much. I don't know. It shouldn't be like that. People have to learn how to kind of... shop better, something to save, they will be secure for future years, to have something in savings like... In our family, we spend almost everything on food. I don't know how to stop it.	17
1.2) housing and rent	basic need of housing, and related rent; this sub-theme is linked to income and employment	Participant F: So for example, so you live in a building...there may be bedbugs, it's dirty, or smells like cigarettes so you hate it and you want to move to another building...so you're currently paying \$1500 for rent and then another place is \$1300 but then you have to pay the deposit...it's very expensive therefore if you're married, only the husband can go to work and the wife has to watch the children, it's extremely difficult [In Tigrinya] [...]	12
1.3) childcare	childcare is a challenge for many in the ethnocultural community to gain employment with living wage and food security	Health broker (translating for a participant): It's very challenging... what she says, let's say, she used to live in a residence, every month pay \$1000. [Interruption with lunch] So with government housing support, they drop \$120, to \$880. What's the difference? Government housing, affordable housing... What do we do with \$120?	2
2) Transition			
2.1) immigration/ sponsorship	various modes of immigration including private sponsorship pose challenges to the quality of people's lives	Participant A: So I came as a group 5 sponsorship [private sponsorship] and I lived with my uncle for about 1 year and 1/2 . My husband doesn't know English and he doesn't find work even if he wants to work...so I stayed with my uncle for 1 year or so...and when he [women's husband] works he finds one job for 3 months and then another job he might work for 2 months it's extremely hard [to live here]. Since my uncle does not have a family of his own we were able to stay with him for a long time, but if he had a family, we would have had to move out much earlier. The longest I would have stayed is a month or so but since he didn't have a family I stayed longer without feeling bad. [In Tigrinya]	22
2.2) transition life challenges	adapting to life in the new country has fundamental challenges	Participant B: Until you leave their house, you need to live under their rules and expectations. But later...[inaudible] but once you move out...once you started work and you start your own life it's also not easy. Buying food, paying your own rent, you'll need a bed, you'll need a couch, just like any other home you'll need things. So it's very difficult. [In Tigrinya] Participant C: Especially in Edmonton, since everyone is so busy, and you only know your family members, it's hard. So if you wanted to move and you don't drive and you don't have a way of going places, you need to find out where is the Superstore, you have to wait in the cold for the bus. Then there's looking for work, you have to write a	17

2.3) difference in food experience	part of life in the new country means things, experiences, food are different from back home - some of these differences are recognized as challenges	<p>resume and not knowing the language, everything is hard. [In Tigrinya] Participant D: Here, it's not real organic. [...] The taste, is different. Especially, when I arrived the first month, the first time here? We can't eat most of the ... we can't accept the food. First time, yeah. The first one year, it's very difficult, for newcomers.</p> <p>Coordinator: Oh ok. Ok. Even the fruits and vegetables?</p> <p>Women: Everything! [...]</p>	14
2.4) urban living	new life in Edmonton comes tied to barriers such as cost, rent, and space	<p>Participant E: The meat is very different. [...] It doesn't have good taste. Especially, when you compare from back home to here, it's very different. When you cook this one, and it's... it doesn't have the taste, it doesn't keep the taste.</p> <p>Coordinator: But those of you who live in apartments, do you know how to garden? [In Tigrinya]</p> <p>Participant A: But we can't...[In Tigrinya]</p> <p>Coordinator: What I mean is, it's not if you have the place but did you used to [garden] back home? [In Tigrinya]</p> <p>Women: Yeah</p> <p>Coordinator: It's just a lack of space. [In Tigrinya] So they'd like to, but they only live in apartments, so they can't find land. They would like to garden.</p>	18
3) Societal factors			
3.1) discrimination / inherent inequality	relates to community voice not being listened to; inherent inequality, sometimes within a community, is a barrier to food security	Participant 8: In every [...] organization or every nationality, you know sometimes there is discrimination. Sometimes even though your idea is good, if you are not being listened to, it will not materialize. [...] If you don't have the status you're not listened to, that is, if you can recognize it. [...] So not in my situation right now, I could probably in the middle but I could be listened to. But if I could... break the barrier maybe everybody will listen to me.	2
3.2) gender roles	distinct references to experiences of men and women; this could potentially be an opportunity about shared responsibility - setting an example for next generation about the role of both genders around food	Participant 4: You should get more men to talk, because they are the gardeners, not the women. Animator 6: Because... you know, we communicate with women, women are the ones who know around the house you know? Women they know about the kitchen. That's what we did. Yeah! We asked the women, I didn't care about the husbands, they might be proud, I don't know. Women and their children, they have to feed themselves. That's what you have to do. You should talk with the women... Health broker: ... Kids are all younger than 2 years. Most marriages, lots of fighting. Family violence. Let's say you're working, husband is working, most in the culture, the woman takes care of the home. For rent, utility bills, poverty, a lot pile on... Tension. There's a lot of that. All they fight about is work.	7

Table 5. Opportunities and actions for change (ideas to support food security)

Name	Comment	Representative quote	Number of quotes
brainstorming	instances of brainstorming, proposing, and suggesting ideas for action, solution, or resources for food security	Participant 8: So this is what I'm thinking, we Filipinos can start... experimenting planting our taloon, our okra, empalaya inside the house. That is... We would like to experiment this with [Animator 1], that you are really use the pot... [...] Why don't we do this? Why don't we experiment... [inaudible] with our favorite Filipino vegetable? [...] We'll provide you the seeds, and the pots. We have lots of pots we can give away.	108
1) Community support			
1.1) social capital and past experience	tapping into existing friends and family networks (social capital) and previous experiences (i.e., from back home) as opportunities to mobilize food security; linked to Social Benefit	Participant 11: Well, I actually to be honest with you, I never talk about... being part of this community here, and grow plants and harvest them [...] save some fruits and veggies. Because I initially started doing the job, I mean as a volunteer. Right? And I have done volunteering before, and I have felt that I complete, I mean, when I'm doing this. I mean, I feel happy, so happy that I mean, it's paid off, what I'm doing, I'm probably receiving more back than I volunteered, I mean, with no pay, no interest, no economical interest. So I did that, I mean, many people had helped us here, Participant 12, since we started living in Canada. [...] We didn't have any idea what volunteering was, before coming to Canada. [...]	105
		Participant 13: You know, in our country, you volunteer, but you don't call it volunteering, just because it's your friend, you take him to his place...	
		Participant 9: There is no such a thing as volunteering.	
1.2) helping each other	references about support and guidance, teamwork, and social connections that serve as community strength and resource; at times it's about recognizing and incentivizing others for encouragement	Participant 9: Most important thing is, they need a team... [...] They need to work as a group you know? Not say, oh I can't do it, this person wasn't here, this was here. First for the beds, I was not involved with that because I was... my uncle passed away, I was not even involved with it at all. When I came, it was even some dirt in it already. So those days, but they were in it, so...	60
		[Everyone looks at P10 who was with the children in the background.]	
		Animator 2: So he's got the hand of the, not his daughter, but the other one [All laugh]. And that's cool! If we haven't done this all year, you would never see that, right? [All agreeing] [...]	
		Participant 14: Is stay together and help us... and help each other. And... maybe do the potluck is a good time to discuss. [...]	
		Participant 11: And... keep on good work I mean as a team, and try to face, deal with the difficulties at the beginning, there are many, I guess. Well, it's like any project that we start. At the beginning, we face a lot of difficulties, and after that they saw that we can achieve our goals, I believe.	

PAR Report			Tang, K.
1.3) community strength	strengths such as perseverance, resilience, resourcefulness, inherent knowledge, and trust are opportunities for food security	Participant 12: Because we joined after, that keep going, keep trying, because uh, it's a very good thing. And after you get many rewards for trying, it's like eh... be a leader something so good. So yeah, it's a good thing, keep trying and even if it's difficult, there are many challenges so... yeah. Participant 9: Don't give up.	14
1.4) strong leadership	strong leadership in organizations and individuals with visions are needed to jumpstart food security initiatives	Participant 13: [...] people like Participant 9, and AA, that they were committed to the meetings and helping, and supporting. Facilitator: People who were committed.	20
2) Knowledge sharing			
2.1) new experience	learning and trying out new things, developing skills, gaining knowledge, and building capacity within the community for food security	Participant 12: It's like for the experience, yeah? Like, we have a new experience, to learn new things that we didn't know. I mean, my mom and my family they know how to do this, but I didn't have the experience yeah. So I kind of helps sometimes my mom, but it's not something I did by myself. So... Yeah, because that, and because of our son. Because he can learn... [...] a lot about these, so it's very good learning experience, for all of us. [...]	64
		Participant 15: Just like everybody here, I did it for the experience. And just to gain knowledge about, you know, uh... gardening and things like that because I have no knowledge about that. [...] Because later on when I get my own place, when I decide to buy a house, you know, I am thinking about you know, making my own garden and things like that. So this experience has taught me and maybe you know, next year, I'm more... I would have more knowledge than I did this year. So yeah.	
2.2) sharing information	instances when participants shared information with one another, building each other's knowledge base about food	Health broker: Other things for children...food for children, who teaches you? Is it from your friends?...where else do you learn things?...that you prepare...[In Tigrinya] Participant: We learn from this group [of women]. We learn from friends, and we prepare food, for kids, like Food Guide Canada. Vegetables daily fruit and meat.	57
3) Food security initiatives			
3.1) gardening	a specific food security initiative that came up more frequently than others; discussion about outdoor and/or indoor vegetable gardening	Participant 8: Actually, as we take advantage of summer, and we plant a lot of vegetables, and then at the time that we have a surplus of vegetables, you know, we can make it into, to preserve it, together you can put in a preserve. Participant 3: Canning. [All agree]	57
		P8: Also, there are... some plants that you can put inside the house.	
3.2) others	other types of food security initiatives, can be an organization or an existing/past activity (i.e., workshop)	Animator 6: Believe me, every time you go to food bank it's full. [...] Animator 3: I don't want to be very dependent on food bank. This [WECAN food basket program] works better because it has less stigma, more communities get involved.	22
4) Overcoming economic barrier			

suggestions for better financial decisions on food to overcome the economic barrier; spreading money out between food and other expenses (savings, education) to ensure quality of life

Participant 3: You have to do the budgeting. Animator 3: That's what I'm thinking you know? You don't have to spend all income on food. Like there's another help. Like you just spend a little bit on education, taking some classes or something like that.