

Exploring Food Hubs as a Vehicle for Building Resilient Local Food Systems

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Northern Dialogues Conference

Research Team

Sarah-Patricia Breen, Selkirk College

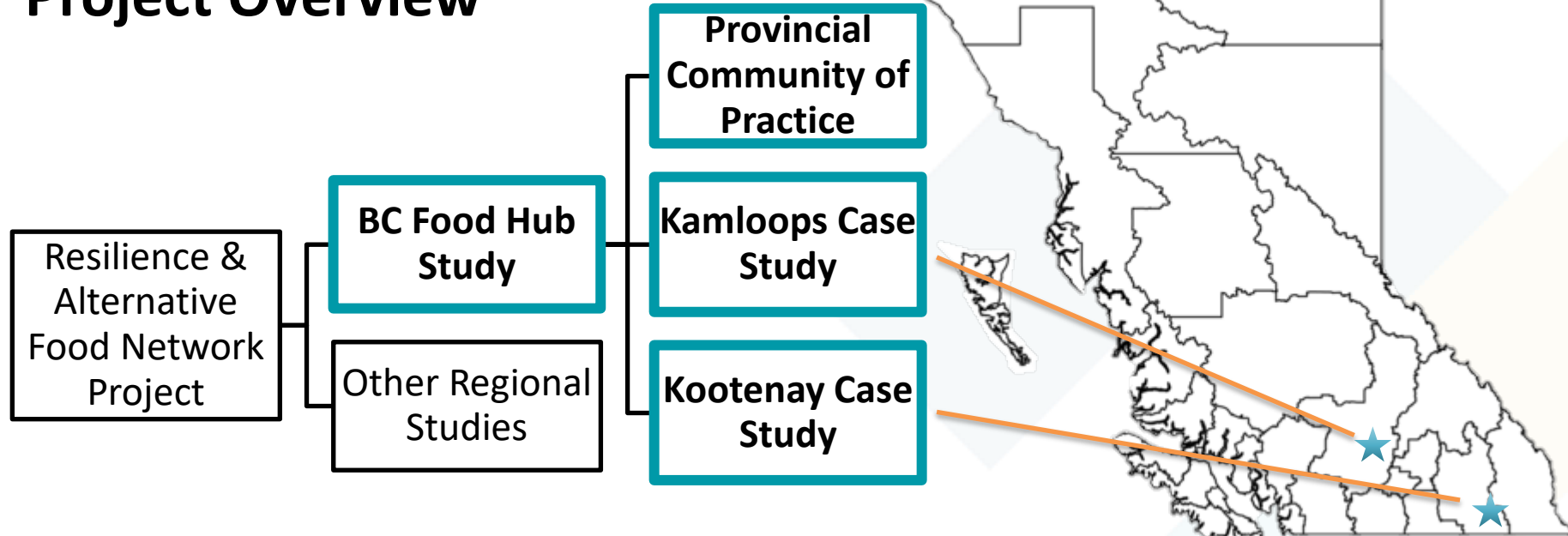
Lindsay Harris, UBCO & Kamloops Food Policy Council

Damon Chouinard, Central Kootenay Food Policy Council

Caitlin Quist, Selkirk College



Project Overview



- What roles do Food Hubs play within regional food systems?
- How do region specific conditions impact the ability of Food Hubs to be sustainable?
- What impact have major disturbances had?

The BC Food Hub Community of Practice

- **What is a food hub?**
 - “Shared-use food and beverage processing facilities that offer food and agriculture businesses access to commercial processing space, equipment, expertise and resources to support business development and growth.” (BC Min of Ag & Food)
- **Provincially funded Food Hubs:** 14 food hubs (9 operational, 4 in development, 1 closed) and 16 feasibility studies
- **BC Food Hub Community of Practice**
 - Launched in February 2023 to support commercial food hub operators
 - Hosted by Min of Ag & Food and facilitated by Tapestry Collective Co-op
 - Open to Ministry-funded and Non-Ministry funded food hubs

Kamloops Case Study

Overview

- Commercial kitchen
- Warehouse/freezer space for distribution hub in partnership with Authentic Indigenous Seafood
- Kweseltken Kitchen for mobile processing in partnership with CFDC of CIFN
- Pop-up retail storefront and riverfront courtyard event space

Work to date

- 4 interviews conducted
- Operated by KFPC which has an expansive vision to leverage food hub for resilient regional food system
- Region impacted by wildfires/flooding
- Fewer direct connection with producers than anticipated
- Fewer businesses focused on shelf-stable, processed food products than anticipated



Creston Case Study

Overview

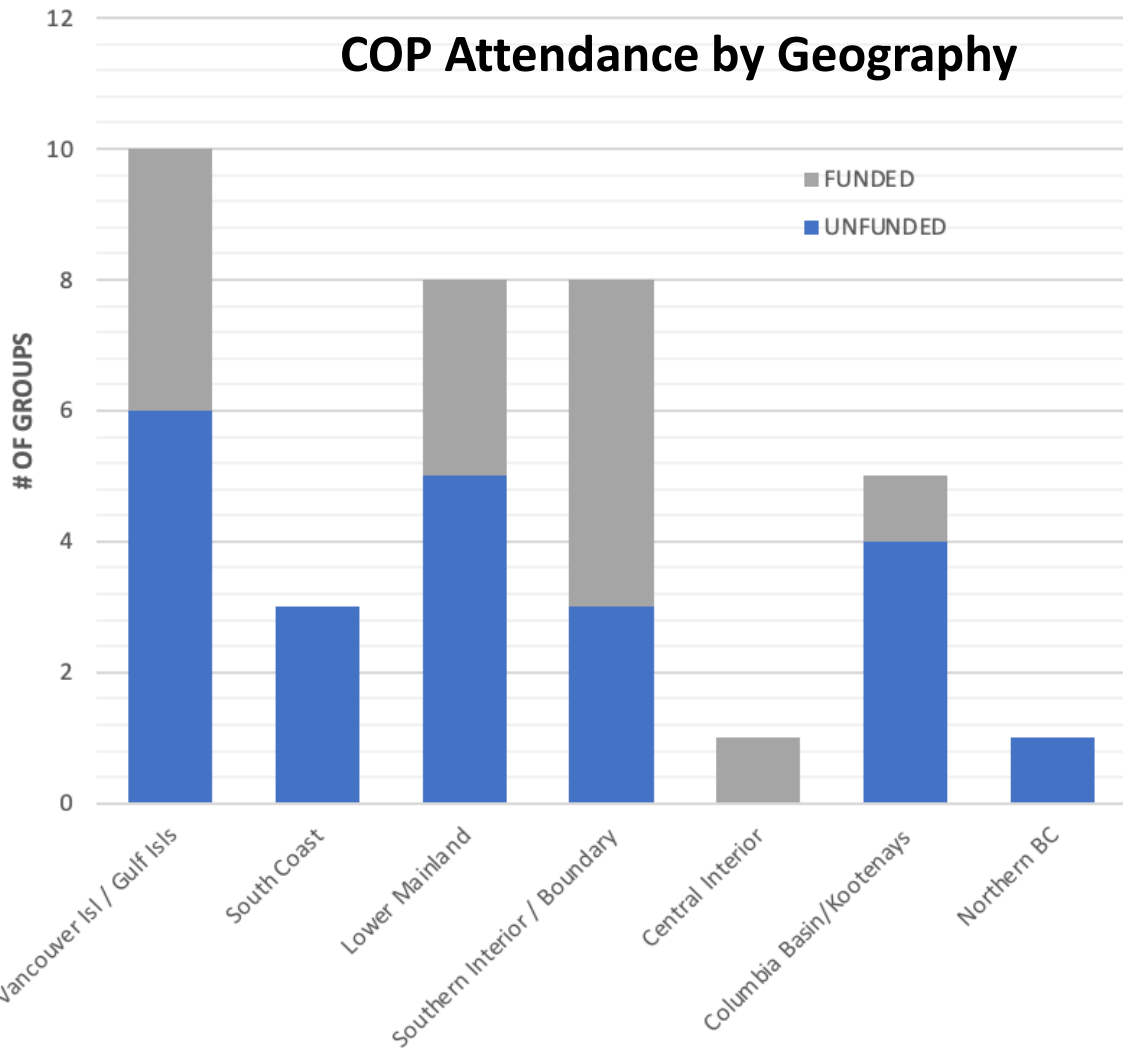
- Commissary Kitchen
- Large scale processing equipment
- Freezer Storage
- Certifications pending(CFIA)

Work to date

- 12 interviews conducted
- Early challenges with business sustainability
- Revised focus and business planning
- Large agriculture base to service
 - Adopted co-op model for larger processing equipment(juice press, freeze dryer, egg washer)
- Shifted greater focus to commissary / business dev services
 - High turnover / cash flow
 - Innovation
- Local ag impact from weather can have positive and negative impacts to hub



COP Attendance by Geography



COP Attendance Analysis

Attendance reviewed by:

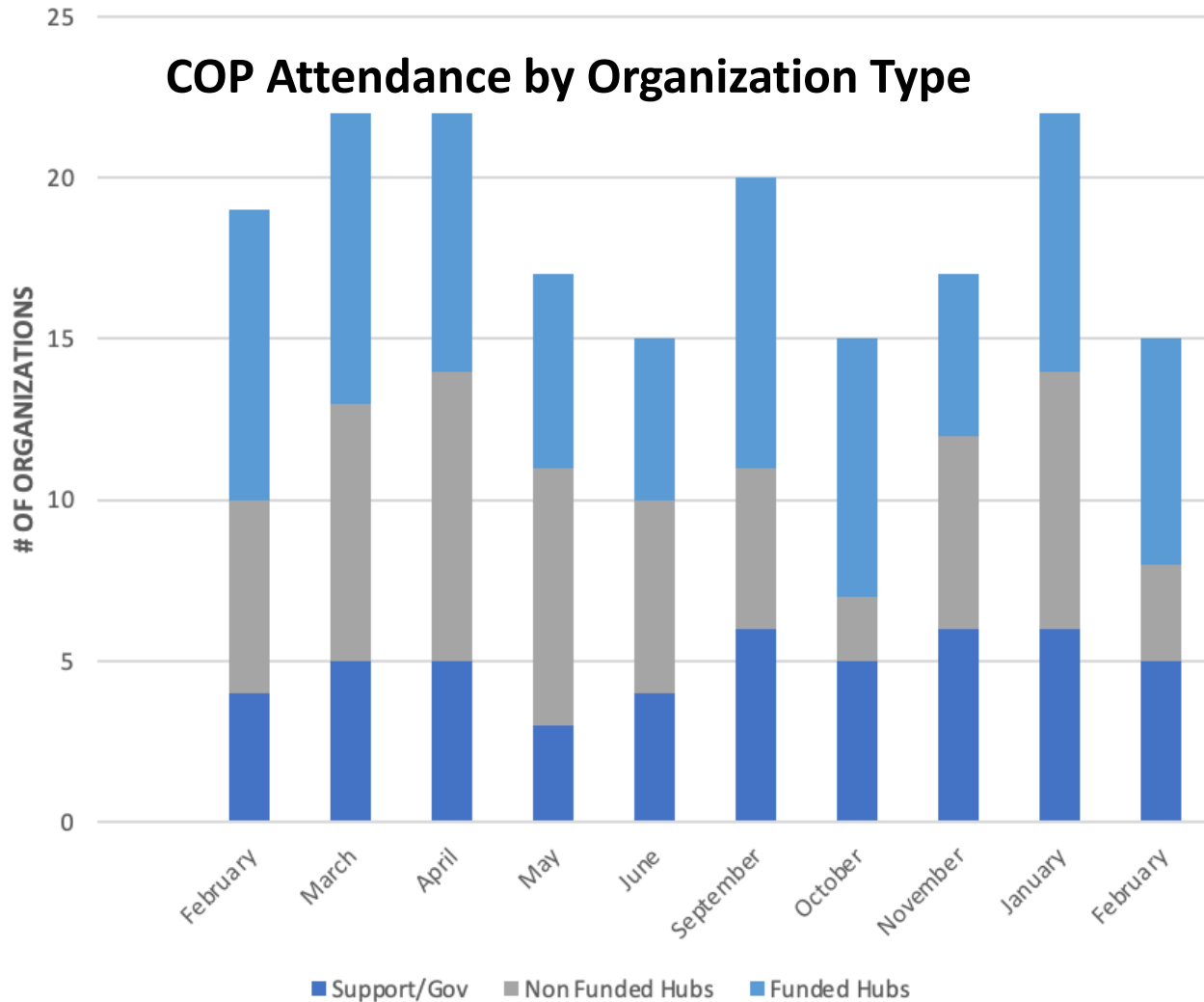
- Geography
- Funding
- Ratio of participant types

Geography:

Contrast between:

- North and South
- Population density
- Local Ag/food sector

COP Attendance by Organization Type



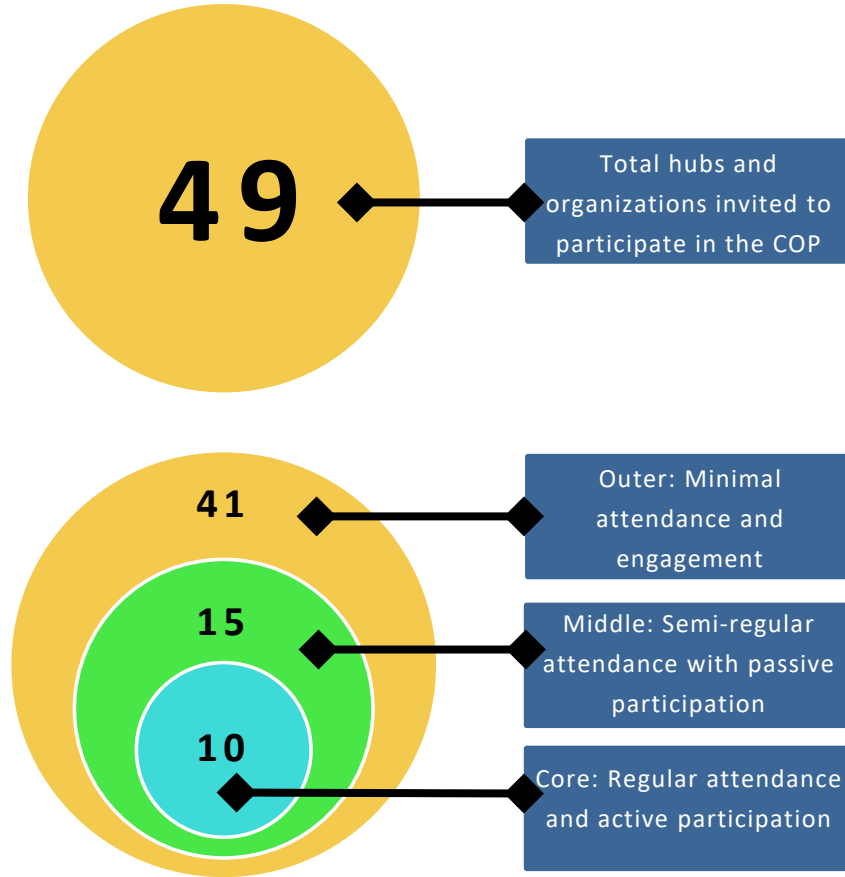
Funding:

- Gov funded vs unfunded

Participant Ratios

- Actual hubs vs other groups
- Influences on conversation and topics
- Who is missing?

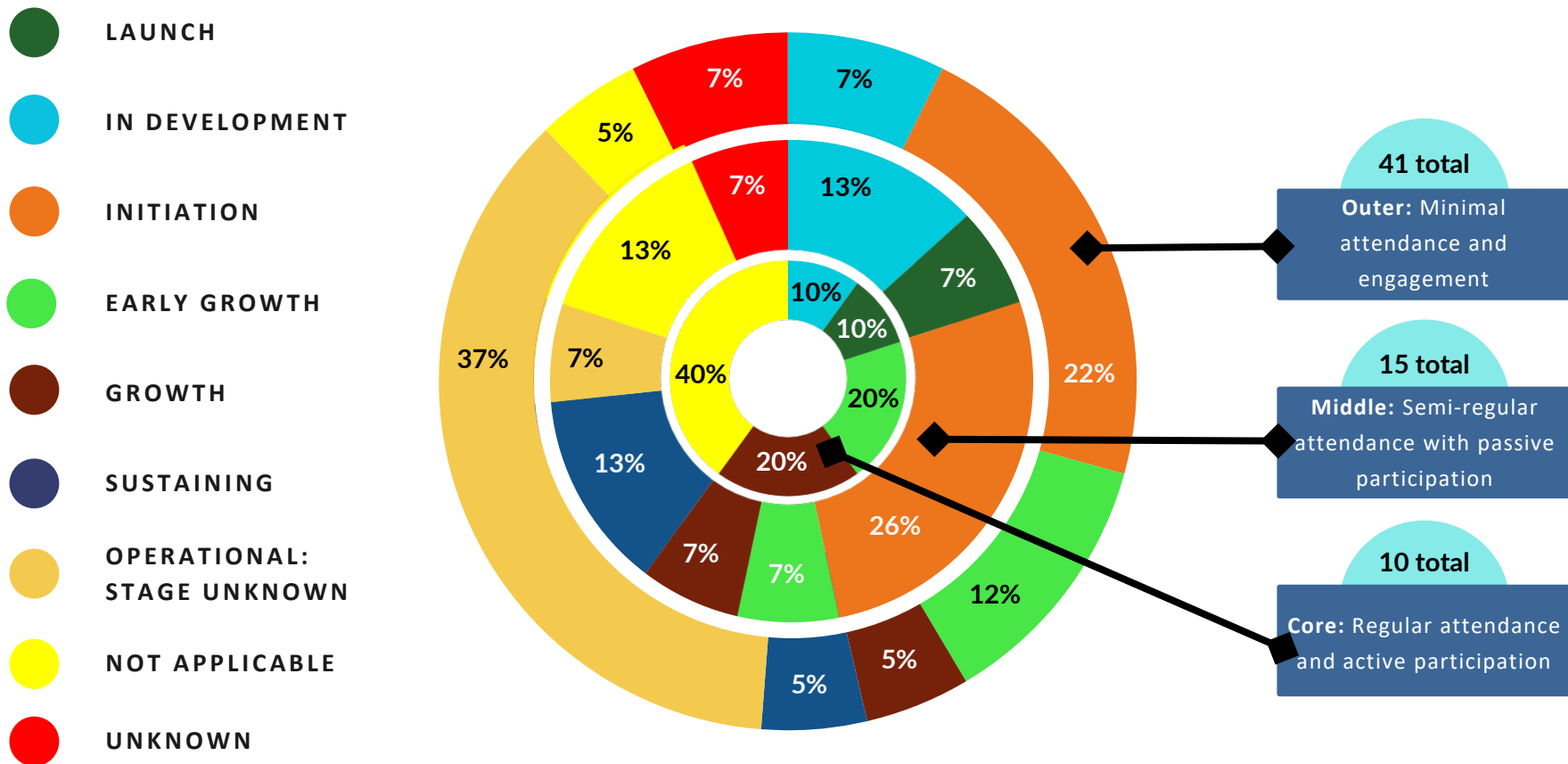
COP Attendance and Engagement



**COP YEAR
ZERO**

**COP YEAR
ONE**

Development Stage Relative to Level of Participation



Relationships

- In Year 1, we've been able to observe/track types of interactions **within** the COP meetings
- COP meetings primarily indicate flows of information:
 - To the participants (from presenters)
 - Between the participants (in discussion)
- Other types of relationships to explore in Year 2 of the study:
 - Are relationships evolving between Food Hubs **outside** COP meetings?
 - Have food hub operators followed up with someone they met at COP?
 - Have food hub operators strengthened previously existing relationships based on COP?
 - How can we better understand the relationships across the whole COP beyond the Kootenay & Kamloops case studies?

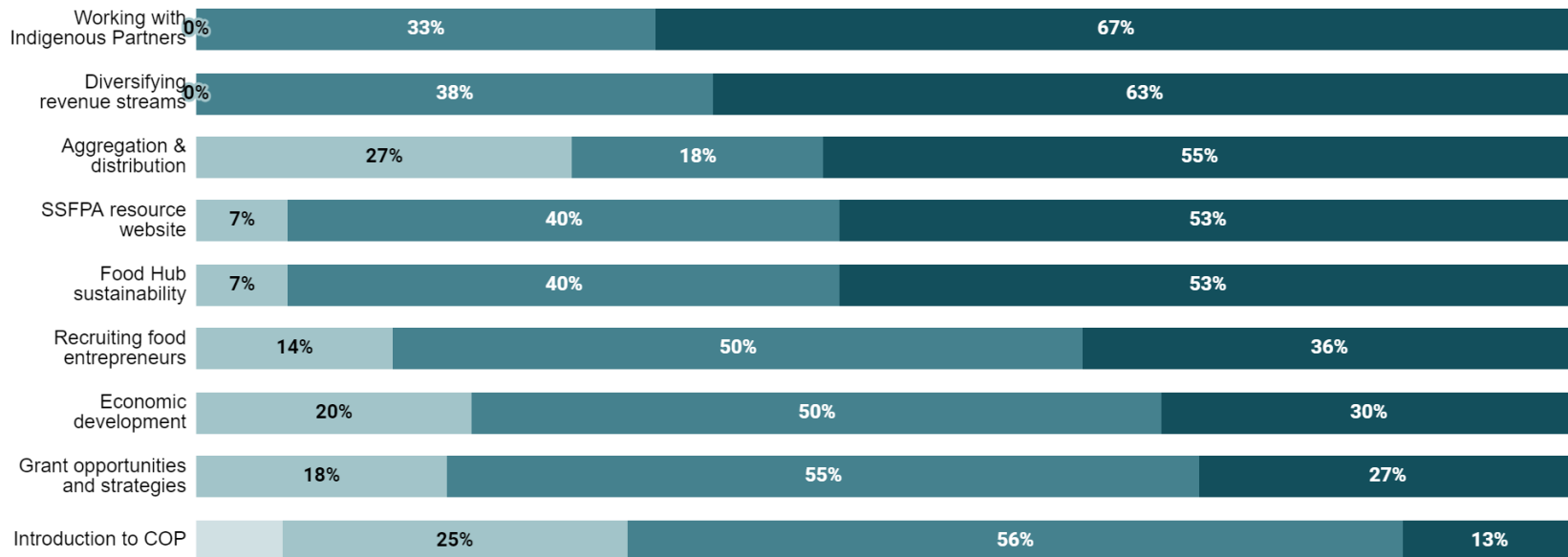
Topics

- Each COP meeting had a different topic. Topic selection was based on:
 - Engagement with food hub operators completed by Tapestry
 - Input from BC Min of Ag & Food
- Underlying and reoccurring topics emerged from COP members – primarily related to financial sustainability and funding
- Questions about topics to explore in Year 2:
 - Is there a difference in / lag time between what the group would like to discuss versus what is scheduled?
 - How much is the selection of topics determined by the COP participants vs. influence from outside the group?

Member ratings of topic usefulness of COP meetings

How useful was today's meeting, in relation to where you are at in developing or running your food hub?

not very useful somewhat useful quite useful very useful



Member ratings of usefulness of COP overall

How useful do you find this Community of Practice overall, in relation to where you are at in developing or running your food hub? (25 responses)

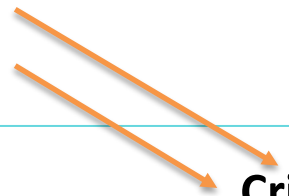


Emerging Themes

- Influences on Participation
 - Organizational values
 - Organizational capacity
- Tensions
 - Internal: values versus financials
 - External: funding priorities versus community needs
- Geographic (in)Equity
 - Missing Northern British Columbia
- COP as a Collaborative Space
- What is a Food Hub?
 - Broad range of organizations
 - Evolving based on place and sub-sector
- Future COP Direction
 - Vertical versus Horizontal approach

Food Hub Influences & Tensions

Internal to Hubs

- Organizational Values
 - Financial sustainability
 - Human capacity
 - Place
 - Scale
- 

External to Hubs

- Regulation and legislation
- Funding
- Political pressures and expectations
- Collaboration and competition

Critical Considerations for Remote and Northern Communities

- Who are the users?
- Focus on single or multiple sector?
- Requirement for self sustainability?

Transferability: Remote and Northern Examples

Examples	Ministry Funding		Status
	Feasibility	Start Up	
Sprout Kitchen, Quesnel	Yes	Yes	One of the earliest funded hubs. Operational since 2022 but has struggled to become sustainable.
Tea Creek Food Hub, Kitwanga	Yes	No	Indigenous-led, community focused model. Other programs/services already operational. Food Hub/commercial kitchen still pending start-up funding.
Hazelton	Yes	No	Feasibility study did not result in a project
Peace Region	Yes	No	Feasibility study did not result in a project



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Thank you!
For more information visit



Contact Details:

Sarah - sbreen@selkirk.ca

Lindsay - lindsay@tapestryevaluation.com

Damon - ed@ckfoodpolicy.ca

