



# 2023 – 2027 Strategic Plan

Parkdale Community Food Bank

September 2023 – August 2027

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# 1. Executive Summary

At its core, the Parkdale Community Food Bank is unwavering in its commitment to alleviating food insecurity by providing essential food support to anyone in need. The food bank's focus extends beyond provision, dedicated to fostering a welcoming, respectful, and inclusive environment for all.

From March to August 2023, Parkdale Community Food Bank engaged Laridae, a leading management consulting firm, to guide the Board of Directors and staff through a strategic planning process, leading to the adoption of a new strategic plan. Together, our approach to planning supported the Board of Directors throughout the process and provided oversight in developing the final strategy.

The process enabled the Board of Directors and senior leadership to reflect on the organization's current state and the environment in which it works. It also ensured that the voices of 196 individuals were engaged and heard through a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process that included staff, volunteers, clients, and community partners.

In September 2023, the Board of Directors, leadership, and full staff team came together to give shape to the strategic path ahead through a two-part planning retreat.

## Strategic Directions

To support our mission, achieve our goal, respond to what we heard from our community, and address the internal and external considerations that shaped the planning process, our strategy is focused on the following three strategic pillars:

- **Building Internal Capacity and Resilience**
- **Engaging our Donors and Community**
- **Measuring and Communicating Impact**

Parkdale Community Food Bank is committing to a five-year strategic plan. As such, these directions are broad and oriented to the future—providing a clear focus and direction while allowing us to respond and adapt as circumstances evolve.

These directions will provide a strong framework for developing annual operational plans with measurable goals and realistic objectives for the organization to monitor our progress effectively.

## 2. Strategic Foundations

### 2.1. Mission

Embracing the belief that joy is fundamental to nourishment, our mission is to create a hunger-free community. Through barrier-free access to diverse food options, every person who walks through our doors has a place at our table.

### 2.2. Vision

In our vision, Parkdale Community Food Bank is a place of respect, support, and shared resources where everyone deserves the opportunity to access food with joy.

### 2.3. Values

**Dignity** is at the core of our approach; we strive to provide food in our community with the utmost respect of each person's inherent worth.

**Resilience** is our strength; we adapt and learn as necessary to fulfill our mission and better support our community.

We operate with **transparency**, ensuring that our clients, supporters, and partners have a clear understanding of our mission and impact.

We embrace **inclusivity** by creating a welcoming space where everyone can access nourishing food, regardless of background or circumstance.

We thrive on a sense of **unity** and collaboration, understanding that our combined efforts among staff and volunteers are the backbone of our mission to create a community where no one goes hungry.

We cherish the happiness that nourishing food brings, recognizing it as a source of joy.

## 3. Guiding Principles

Grounding our strategic plan, we will proceed with three guiding principles.

**These principles will be the common elements that interconnect our strategic directions through action and help us to navigate our current landscape.** Together, they respond to the impacts of recent years and the ever-changing service landscape. They will inform and influence decision-making, will drive action toward achieving our strategic directions and uphold our key commitments.

- **Client-Centric: Ensuring a joyful and dignified food experience**

Ensuring a joyful and dignified food experience is a core principle of the organization's identity, with our goal being to provide a dignified client experience. Placing clients at the forefront of every decision and interaction, we cultivate a culture of food-positivity, prioritizing exceptional service in our mission to provide barrier-free access to food.

- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)**

Recognizing that diversity strengthens our ability to fulfill our core mandate of feeding people, we lead with respect and empathy. We are resolutely committed to creating an inclusive, empowering experience for all, ensuring everyone feels a sense of belonging in our community.

- **Prioritizing Wellness: creating a nourishing workplace**

Aligned with our core mandate of providing sustenance, we

maintain a focus on fostering a workplace culture that prioritizes the wellness of our team. Individuals within our organization should feel valued, heard, and equipped with the tools necessary for meaningful service delivery. By prioritizing wellness, we strengthen our ability to fulfill our mandate and create a sustainable impact in our community.

## 4. Strategic Directions

An effective strategic plan sets the foundation for a clear, focused future, uniting the organization under a common purpose and strategy. At the core of our work lies the steadfast commitment to feeding people with purpose, and our strategic plan is designed to ensure that this pledge remains resolute.

Our strategic plan is shaped by our strategic directions, which provide clear focus and direction while allowing us to respond and adapt as circumstances evolve over the coming years. Each of our strategic directions upholds our overarching goal of feeding people, accompanied by a corresponding set of tangible commitments that serve as actionable steps toward achieving this fundamental goal.

Our strategic directions and commitments will form a strong framework which will guide our long-term vision and provide a strong foundation for developing annual operational plans. These plans will be tailored with measurable goals and achievable objectives, all reinforcing our overarching mission of providing people with access to barrier-free food and ensuring that no one in our community goes without the nourishment they need.

### 4.1. Building Internal Capacity and Resilience

At Parkdale Community Food Bank, we recognize that our impact against food insecurity depends on our resilient team. As such, our commitment to feeding people necessitates a dynamic and well-equipped team.

We are committed to building internal capacity and investing in our team's growth and well-being by providing comprehensive training and development opportunities. We will equip our team with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in their roles,



ensuring efficient and effective food delivery to our community. We will foster a culture of continuous learning, where innovation and reflection are encouraged, ensuring that our team remains adaptable and forward-thinking.

By placing an emphasis on our team's well-being and psychological safety, we aim to mitigate burnout risks and cultivate a safe and supportive work environment. This commitment underscores our belief that a resilient, empowered team is the cornerstone of our organizational strength and the key to achieving our vision of a hunger-free community.

## Impact Statement

**By 2027, we will enhance our internal capabilities by strengthening staff and volunteer capacity, revitalizing workplace culture, and creating financial flexibility. These initiatives directly contribute to the seamless and compassionate provision of food to those who need it most.**

## Key Commitments

*To fortify our commitment to feeding people, we will **build internal capacity and resilience** over the next five years by ...*

- **Streamlining training and onboarding:** our commitment to team-wellbeing is vital to our organizational health. We will provide comprehensive training, focusing on de-escalation, conflict resolution, and a deep understanding of our values and mission. This ensures staff and volunteers can thrive in their roles.
- **Committing to the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers:** our goal is to ensure volunteers and staff feel valued and engaged, fostering a positive and rewarding journey with us. We will implement practices that prioritize physical and psychological well-being, work-life balance, and offering resources to mitigate burnout.

- **Exploring diverse fundraising initiatives for financial stability:** we are committed to securing financial stability through diverse fundraising initiatives. By building team capacity to explore opportunities to diversify and maximize our funding sources, we be able to continue investing in our people, programs, and community.
- **Enhance organizational resilience and governance:** we will build effective pathways for leadership transitions and develop systems that make us more resilient at both the board and leadership levels. We will focus on inclusive governance practices that ensure transparency, accountability, and alignment with our mission.

## 4.2. Engaging our Donors and Community

Recognizing that our commitment to feeding people relies on the collective strength of our community, we are dedicated to actively engaging with our donors and partners to ensure a continuous and reliable flow of resources in support of our mission.

These connections are not merely financial transactions; they are vital partnerships integral to our journey toward a hunger-free community.

To sustain our ability to propel our mission forward, we aim to foster relationships that amplify our impact and transform the conventional donor dynamic into a collaborative approach for positive change.

### Impact Statement

**By August of 2027, PCFB will have cultivated a well-informed, engaged community, resulting in increased support, stronger partnerships, and a more connected and valued network.**

## Key Commitments

*Over the next five years, to ensure continuous food provision, we will focus on **enhancing donor and community engagement** by ...*

- **Strengthening community partnerships:** we are dedicated to creating synergistic solutions that address the complex social challenges of food insecurity, with a focus on serving our clients and breaking cycles of poverty. Our commitment involves establishing collaborative alliances with local organizations, cultural centers, and community groups. We aim to leverage our partners' unique capabilities and insights to enhance the well-being of the individuals and families we serve.
- **Enhance transparency and organizational understanding:** we will continue to foster an environment where information flows freely, ensuring stakeholders have access to clear and comprehensive data. This commitment is designed to provide donors, volunteers, and the community with a deeper insight into PCFB's operations, goals, and impact.

### 4.3. Measuring and Communicating Impact

We acknowledge that the true value of our work extends beyond just the quantity of meals distributed, emphasizing the need to prioritize and enhance our impact measurement. As such, we are committed to developing a more insightful understanding of our impact.

To fulfill our core mandate of providing barrier-free access to diverse food options, we will continue to amplify the voices of our clients, donors, and the wider community. Grounded in adaptability, transparency, and community-driven solutions, we aim to create a culture of engagement and collaboration.

Ultimately, our clients are not passive recipients; they are active participants, shaping the organization's direction. This client-

centered approach will create mechanisms for collecting feedback and ways to participate in decision-making processes.

## Impact Statement

**By 2027, PCFB will actively involve clients in decision-making processes, creating an empowered and engaged community. We will implement a community-based impact measurement system, ensuring that our strategies are not just informed but inspired by the diverse needs and experiences of those we serve.**

## Key Commitments

*Over the next five years, we will **measure and communicate impact** to sustain our mission of feeding people, by...*

- **Develop a clear donor and funder strategy:** recognizing that our mission thrives through the support of our donors, we aim to strengthen donor engagement and inspire ongoing support for PCFB's mission. Personalized communication will be a key focus to ensure meaningful connections with our donors.
- **Assess organizational impact through a community and client-based feedback system:** this community-centered approach aims to capture diverse perspectives, insights into program impact, and understand how our services positively affect clients' lives. Utilizing qualitative data, including well-being and long-term outcomes, we seek to provide a nuanced and meaningful assessment of PCFB's effectiveness. Communication of our impact will involve sharing stories that highlight the resilience, strength, and aspirations of our clients and community members.
- **Embracing a data-driven decision-making model and fostering participatory planning:** we will leverage the power of data for informed decisions, ensuring that every choice is grounded in evidence and insights. Building capacity for data collection and reporting systems, we are committed to actively engaging clients and community members in planning and evaluating our initiatives.

- **Redefine our approach to food security:** PCFB is committed to empowering individuals and families with sovereignty over their food, allowing them to choose and control what is right for them. Our programs and services will be tailored to go beyond the conventional view of food as a basic need. Instead, we will celebrate it as a source of joy, community building, and cultural richness.

## 5. Appendix: Stakeholder Engagement

### 5.1. Why Engage?

#### Leadership Through Genuine Engagement




Strategic plans that provide meaningful direction over their stated duration rely on an authentic engagement process that genuinely seeks input and allows those invested in an organization's success to provide ideas and feedback.

Properly conducted, stakeholder engagement is in no way an abdication or devolution of leadership.

#### **It's the opposite.**

Leaders who reach out to and seek the input of the people delivering or accessing services are far more likely to craft future strategic directions that will resonate with those they affect and those who must implement them.

## The Multiple Purposes of Engagement

 <p><b>Listen</b></p> <p>To listen to stakeholders by gathering input, ideas, and suggestions.</p>	 <p><b>Include</b></p> <p>To include stakeholders in the planning process, helping to generate buy-in.</p>	 <p><b>Educate</b></p> <p>To educate stakeholders about the great work you do.</p>
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## 5.2. Engagement Process

Engagement served as the foundation for the process, informing subsequent discussion, deliberation, and decision-making.

Laridae developed and facilitated the engagement process from April until May 2023, prior to the food bank’s move to 263 Dunn. The process was designed to engage with and listen to Parkdale Community Food Bank’s key stakeholders.

As a result of this engagement, our strategic plan is informed by experience, evidence, and the most broadly held perceptions of all those we serve.

### Audiences

Primary stakeholders engaged through the process.

Clients receiving service	Past clients	Donors or Funders	Community Partners
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## Stakeholder Participation



### 5.3. Common Themes

The following themes capture some of the common sentiments we heard during the stakeholder engagement process.

#### Fulfillment of Emergency Service

Stakeholders highly regard Parkdale Community Food Bank for its commitment and efficiency in fulfilling an emergency food service. Across all engagement groups, the food bank was recognized for its ability to respond to hunger challenges and meet the needs of community members facing food insecurity. Stakeholders referred to PCFB as a **trusted resource** which has earned the community's appreciation.

In relation, many stakeholders shared their excitement for the return to a grocery style model, which was described as a **personalized experience** that fosters **dignity** among clients seeking support.

Notably, stakeholders also acknowledged that PCFB is not a long-term solution to food insecurity, but a **temporary lifeline**. Described as an effective community response to food emergencies and an organization that “gets the job done”.

While it is not a systemic solution to food insecurity, PCFB leans into its strengths and continues to be a pillar of support within Parkdale.

Stakeholders spoke to the following:

- PCFB is highly regarded for fulfilling a fundamental need.
- The delivery model is praised for its efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
- Stakeholders emphasized PCFB’s crucial role as a lifeline for vulnerable people.

## Humanizing Food Insecurity

Stakeholders commended PCFB efforts to put a human face to hunger and food insecurity, acknowledging the importance of **understanding the real experiences of those affected**.

This commitment is evident in the organization’s powerful use of storytelling, which amplified the voices of beneficiaries and **reduces the isolation that often accompanies food insecurity**. By sharing their experiences respectfully and with consent, particularly through social media, the food bank aims to **reduce the stigma** surrounding food insecurity and poverty. Stakeholders praised PCFB for giving a voice to the experiences of individuals experiencing hunger challenges, becoming more than just statistics, and transforming them into relatable, real-life narratives that resonate with the community.



This approach was said to foster a deeper connection between clients, volunteers, donors, and the broader public. Stakeholders emphasize that this storytelling approach has the power to break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and ultimately pave the way for a more **compassionate** and **supportive** environment.

PCFB's focus on **fostering dignity among clients** is further evident by the organization's return to a grocery style model. Stakeholders expressed their excitement for an approach which creates a **dignified and respectful experience** but also restores a sense of agency and choice to clients; there was a shared appreciation for PCFB's **commitment** to delivering a humanizing experience.

Stakeholders spoke to the following:

- PCFB is acknowledged for humanizing hunger and food insecurity by putting a human face to the issues.
- The food bank effectively uses storytelling to reduce stigma.
- By giving individuals a platform to share their stories, PCFB fosters understanding and empathy in the community.

## Resilience and Adaptability

Stakeholders recognize PCFB for its resilience and adaptability in responding to emerging needs. The food bank's **adaptive strategies**, such as mobile distribution units to reach those unable to leave their home, as well as transitioning to contactless distribution during the pandemic, demonstrate its **flexible decision-making**. Stakeholders in particular spoke to PCFB's ability to efficiently navigate fluctuations in food supplies, volunteer ability, and funding sources.

PCFB was also recognized for closely monitoring demand and supply patterns, enabling it to **allocate resources effectively to**

**areas with the greatest need**, ensuring that community members receive food support. The organization's ability to remain resilient during uncertain circumstances was acknowledged as a great strength, comments referring to PCFB as being **resourceful** and **creatively** navigating shifts in rising demand and changing needs.

Stakeholders each spoke to the following:

- PCFB's ability to be agile and adapt to landscape it operates in.
- The food bank's resiliency positions itself as an organization that can take on uncertainties.
- Proactive in adapting distribution methods, including transitioning to contactless distribution during the pandemic.

## Volunteer Ethos

PCFB's volunteers were continuously praised and recognized as the backbone of the services provided, playing a significant role in the organization's impact.

Stakeholders recognized PCFB for its strong ethos, providing a supportive and empowering environment for its volunteers. There is collective appreciation for PCFB's efforts to foster respect and inclusion. Volunteers value the opportunity to contribute positively to the community, and they **appreciate the importance of prioritizing clients' well-being.**

Stakeholders have emphasized that a **key determinant of volunteer satisfaction is the extent to which client needs are being addressed.**

Volunteers perceive their positive experiences as linked to effective client support, underscoring the interconnectedness between volunteer and client well-being. This positive impact on clients

reinforces the **importance of transparency, respect, and communication** in creating a positive volunteer experience.

Stakeholders each spoke to the following:

- PCFB provides a supportive and empowering environment for volunteers.
- Volunteers feel fulfilled when clients' needs are addressed and see positive outcomes.
- Transparency, respect, and communication are essential elements for a positive volunteer experience.

## Changing Demographics

Discussions around the demographics of individuals seeking support from the food bank was a recurring topic across engagement groups. As demand continues to increase, Parkdale Community Food Bank will face unique challenges necessitating a more **tailored approach**.

Acknowledging the significance of available resources and funding, stakeholders, on the one hand, emphasize the need for a more culturally inclusive approach as more people rely partly or entirely on the food bank.

Alternatively, PCFB can lean into its core strengths by delivering a reliable emergency service, leveraging their expertise, and allocating resources towards increasing operations and capacity to ensure a steady flow of essential foods without compromising cultural sensitivity.

Overall, the changing client demographics present an opportunity for PCFB to **enhance its impact** and adapt to the evolving needs of the community, but it also requires careful planning, resource management, and a proactive approach to ensure that all individuals facing food insecurity receive the support they need.

Stakeholders each spoke to the following:

- PCFB faces new challenges due to shifting demographics, including families, seniors on fixed incomes, and newcomers seeking support.
- Meeting the diverse and culturally specific needs of these emerging demographics requires adaptability and additional resources.
- Enhancing partnerships with cultural organizations and community groups can provide valuable insights and collaborative opportunities for enhanced service offerings.

## Enhancing Volunteer-Client Interaction and Support

Stakeholders have identified a concern in the interactions between volunteers exhibiting some **inconsistency in their treatment of clients**. Where some clients may experience warm and friendly interactions, others might encounter a more distant and colder approach. To ensure a positive and supportive environment for clients and volunteers, stakeholders would like to see greater attention paid to the **emotional toll of the roles played by volunteers** during client interactions and the **need for enhanced support** to cope with the challenges they may face.

Stakeholders have highlighted the importance of providing adequate training and resources to volunteers, particularly in **customer-facing interactions and de-escalation techniques**. The lack of consistent training in these areas has been identified as a potential area for improvement, and stakeholders stress the significance of equipping volunteers with the necessary skills and knowledge to handle various client situations effectively.

Stakeholders each spoke to the following:

- Stakeholders emphasize the need for consistent interactions between volunteers and clients.
- There is a recognition for additional training in de-escalation and customer service for volunteers.
- Implementing a comprehensive orientation program can help address the emotional and mental disconnect between volunteer roles.

## Dissonance with Mission Statement

Most stakeholders recognize the importance of PCFB's mission to provide dignity and safety – but they also highlight a **gap between the organization's aspired ideals and its operational practices**, which encompasses the methods used to achieve its objectives. For PCFB, this includes how clients are served, how staff and volunteers interact, and how the organization implements their mission.

### Experience Across Stakeholder Groups

It's important to acknowledge this theme within a broader context of stakeholder perspectives, examining the interplay between group discussions and survey results. While an initial perception of dissonance between PCFB's mission and operational realities was recognized, the survey results offer a new perspective on this perceived discrepancy.

**Many survey respondents feel positively about how well PCFB aligns with its mission, with a large percentage of respondents rating the organization's alignment as "good" or "excellent".**

This contrast prompts considerations of factors such as the demographics of survey participants, who may have diverse

affiliations with PCFB, and their experiences which may impact their perception.

The different perspectives which came through from both the online survey and in-person engagement underscores the importance of understanding how different people see PCFB's alignment with its mission.

### **Operational Practices and Mission Alignment**

Collectively, stakeholders engaged through focus groups or key person interviews **aspire for more alignment between mission ideals and volunteer and client experiences in their interactions with the food bank**, which may sometimes diverge from the ideals and aspirations stated in the organization's mission.

Stakeholders illustrated various operational practices and their connection to the perception of mission alignment:

**Long wait times and accessibility barriers:** the feedback highlights instances where clients experiencing long wait times in adverse weather conditions, difficulty accessing services, and challenges in making appointments due to busy phone lines. These operational inefficiencies create a disconnect between the mission's promise of a place where people are made to feel valued, contradicting notions of safety and undermines the commitment to client well-being.

**Internal communication and transparency:** Some stakeholders expressed concern about internal communication and transparency between the Board, staff, and volunteers. As such, operational practices involving internal communication and decision-making can impact how well the organization aligns with its mission. Stakeholders spoke to the inconsistencies in volunteer support and management, as well as the importance of fostering a more positive and welcoming culture through **transparent communication and respect among staff, volunteers, and**

**clients.** Creating an environment where individuals feel valued and heard is crucial to bridging the gap between PCFB's mission and daily practices.

**Intentionality in food boxes:** Many stakeholders spoke to the lack of intentionality in the food provisions provided to clients. The feedback emphasized the need for aligning food provisions with the unique circumstances and needs of the recipients. Stakeholders highlighted instances where clients experiencing homelessness face challenges related to accessing cooking facilities and appropriate storage. Many spoke to the issue of discarded food items due to an inability to utilize them effectively. In this regard, stakeholders would like to see PCFB adopt a more deliberate and data-driven approach, allowing them to understand the demographics and specific needs of their clients to curate food boxes that align with their realities.

**Cultural barriers:** As PCFB's client demographics continue to grow, stakeholders voiced their concerns over how the organization will be able to adapt to the changes to client needs. More specifically, addressing the language barriers and providing resources for clients with diverse backgrounds. In addition, stakeholders acknowledged challenges related to the types of food provided, such as a lack of diverse and culturally appropriate options. This operational practice of selecting and distributing goods can impact how well the mission of providing dignity and inclusivity is translated into tangible support for clients.

Through continuous evaluation and feedback from stakeholders, PCFB can improve its practices and align them more closely with the core values articulated in the mission statement. By doing so, the food bank can enhance its impact and fulfill its mission of providing dignified and compassionate support to the community at large.

Stakeholders each spoke to the following:

- Stakeholders value PCFB's mission statement but note a disconnection with current operations.
- PCFB aims to align operations with the mission's core values, prioritizing client-centered services.
- Fostering a welcoming culture through transparent communication and respect is crucial.
- Continuous evaluation and feedback from stakeholders will drive improvements in fulfilling the mission.