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Nutrition North Canada Engagement 2016: Final report of what we heard

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Executive summary

Nutrition North Canada (NNC (Nutrition North Canada)) is a retail subsidy program for perishable, nutritious food for Northerners and Indigenous people in isolated communities. The program seeks to make nutritious food more accessible and more affordable to residents of isolated northern communities that lack year-round surface (i.e. permanent, road, rail, or marine) transportation links.

Launched in April 2011 to replace the Food Mail Program, NNC (Nutrition North Canada) is a joint initiative between Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada)) which provides retail subsidies, and Health Canada (HC) and Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) that fund culturally appropriate retail and community-based nutrition education initiatives.

As a result of feedback from Northerners and Indigenous people, as well as the Auditor General of Canada and the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board, the program initiated a broad public engagement. The intent was to hear from Northerners and Indigenous people, community groups, provincial/territorial and municipal government members, registered retailers and suppliers, and other interested parties on how to improve the program.

Interis | BDO was contracted to undertake the engagement on behalf of INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada). The engagement consisted of public meetings or "town halls" within northern communities, in-person and telephone interviews, written submissions, online and paper-based surveys, and comments through Twitter.

The key findings from the engagement have been summarized in the following themes: General Observations, Program Sustainability and Cost Effectiveness, Capacity and Efficiency, Fairness and Consistency, Transparency, Communications, and Innovation.

General observations

Northerners feel that everything in the North is expensive, with a number of participants stating that, as Southerners, it is difficult to understand those struggles, which is then further intensified with many people living off a fixed income. Even with the subsidy provided through NNC (Nutrition North Canada), for which they generally expressed an appreciation, many families are not able to afford healthy food. There were significant concerns regarding the overall quality and availability of nutritious perishable food in the North. In addition, there was significant concern regarding how climate change will impact food availability through changing availability of country/traditional food and seasonal transportation, such as a shortened timeframe for the winter road and unreliable sealift.

Program sustainability and cost effectiveness

In order to understand what Northerners and Indigenous people are eating and would like subsidized, there was a desire for regions/communities to have their own customized eligibility lists. However, comments received regarding what items should be included on and off the eligibility list were generally homogeneous across regions.

Engagement participants were concerned that the eligibility list was developed from a southern perspective and did not take into account traditional diets. As a result, the majority of participants desired that increased subsidy was given to:

- ingredients for baking bannock and bread (flour, baking soda, butter, lard, etc. (etcetera))
- support for country/traditional food through a variety of channels
- "staples" including rice, pasta, nutritious dried/dehydrated foods, coffee/tea
- all juice sizes and canned goods

In addition, it was found that there was largely support for personal/direct orders to remain a part of the program.

Capacity and efficiency

From interviews it was often mentioned that the program (especially the INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) component) appeared to operate in a standalone fashion rather than working with the large number of other government and non-government organizations tackling food security in the North. Across the interviews, suggestions were made for NNC (Nutrition North Canada) to investigate partnerships with potential programs and organizations to better operate within the fixed budget.

Because of the cost and complexity of shipping food by air to remote northern communities, a number of potential program efficiencies related to better transportation and supply chain management were identified by participants. Examples of such changes include developing partnerships (e.g. (example) leveraging complimentary subsidy programs, etc. (etcetera)) or redesigning the program, including increasing program scope and/or funding. Other examples included reevaluating and/or considering alternative transportation methods, while noting the issues and possible efficiency gains with air transportation. There were also examples provided on addressing issues related to spoilage and waste (e.g. (example) enforcing packaging, penalizing waste, etc. (etcetera)), enhancing nutrition education initiatives (e.g. (example) improving reporting requirements), and considering changes to the management of the subsidy (e.g. (example) (example) allowing for inflation).

Fairness and consistency

In terms of fairness in determining the subsidy rate for communities there were a number of different approaches suggested by participants such as being based on the cost of food, cost of living, transportation freight rates, distance of the community from a major supply centre, and equalizing the cost of food, among others. Underlying this, however, was a desire by a number of participants for the subsidy rate approach/formula to be communicated clearly and transparently.

Following the implementation of the change in community eligibility criteria in October 2016, there were a number of participants who suggested that the eligibility criteria should be expanded to communities not currently eligible for the program. This included communities connected to the South with all-season surface transportation that some participants considered to be isolated northern communities that should also be eligible for the program.

In terms of developing a consistent set of eligibility criteria, there was largely support for restaurants to have access to the subsidy and limited support for hotels and outfitters to be eligible for the program.

Transparency

There were varying interpretations of program objectives by the participants, including the program's role in the larger issue of food security in the North. A number of participants mentioned a variety of ways that the program could be more transparent with respect to its objectives that would allow for better understanding of the program and measuring success. Examples include better communicating the program's purpose, setting clear and measurable goals, providing accessible information and data on the program, and addressing concerns regarding the subsidy being passed to consumers in full.

Though a number of participants felt that showing the subsidy on the store receipt was a major positive step in improving transparency, a significant number of participants expressed concerns that the subsidy was not being passed on to the consumer. A number of suggestions to improve transparency were provided, such as requiring more information from registered partners, reviewing subsidy levels, and enhancing monitoring activities.

Communications

From the engagement, it was clear that NNC (Nutrition North Canada) was not well understood within eligible (particularly newly eligible) communities or by key stakeholders. There was an overarching lack of awareness and understanding of key information including eligibility, subsidies and administration.

A number of participants suggested ways to improve communications, which included building and leveraging relationships by reaching out to and leveraging key stakeholders; creating a dialogue with stakeholders focused on improving the program using appropriate formatting of messages; developing and utilizing appropriate communication vehicles such as in-store signage, radio, social media, newsletters/magazines, online videos suggestion boxes, surveys, and in-person visits; and tailoring information and engagement at a community level such as developing community-based summaries and outreach activities.

Innovation

A large number of innovative ideas on how to improve the program were brought forward by participants. Areas of innovation included developing new program objectives; developing a new program model/design; establishing a new management and governance structure; finding additional program budget/funding sources; redesigning the subsidy; undertaking new research; and developing new nutrition education initiatives.

1 Introduction

1.1 Program background

Nutrition North Canada Program description

Nutrition North Canada (NNC (Nutrition North Canada)) is a federal government food subsidy program that seeks to make nutritious food more accessible and more affordable to residents of isolated northern communities that lack year-round surface and marine transportation links to supply centres. The program alleviates the costs of shipping healthy foods by air to isolated communities.

Launched on April 1, 2011, the program is a joint initiative between Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada)) which provides retail subsidies, and Health Canada (HC) which funds culturally appropriate retail and community-based nutrition education initiatives. As of October 1, 2016, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) joined NNC (Nutrition North Canada) to fund nutrition education initiatives in non-First Nations and Inuit communities.

Eligible communities and subsidy rates

There are currently 121 communities eligible for the program, located in Nunavut (NU), Northwest Territories (NWT), Yukon (YT), Labrador (NL), Quebec (QC (Quebec)), Ontario (ON), Manitoba (MB), Saskatchewan (SK), and Alberta (AB (Alberta)).

Two levels of subsidy rates per kilogram have been established for each community; level 1 (higher) for the most nutritious perishable food and level 2 (lower) for other eligible food items. Communities where operating and transportation costs are higher are then provided with higher subsidy rates.

Subsidy rates are set to allocate the fixed subsidy budget among eligible communities. As a result, subsidy rates differ from one community to another. To set the subsidy rates, the program considers key cost drivers for food in isolated communities, such as distance to the nearest supply centre, population size, minimum wage, and total flight distance. There is also a five percent annual compound escalator for the budget to address the growing demand for perishable foods in the North in future years.

Eligible Foods

The current list of NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Subsidized Foods (i.e. eligibility) has been in effect since October 1, 2012, and was developed with advice from HC (Health Canada), as well as input from the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board. The list focuses the subsidy on perishable, nutritious foods. Perishable foods include foods that are fresh, frozen, refrigerated, or have a shelf life of less than one year, and are, therefore, best transported by air. As indicated, there are two levels of subsidy. The higher level (level 1) of subsidy is applied to a wider variety of the healthiest perishable foods within the four food groups of Canada's Food Guide (vegetables and fruit, grain products, milk and alternatives, meat and alternatives). The lower level (level 2) of subsidy is applied to other perishable foods such as combination foods like frozen lasagna, as well as commonly used foods for making bannock, such as lard.

Country/traditional foods commercially-processed in a Canada Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) inspected facility, such as Arctic char, musk-ox and caribou (important sources of nutrients) shipped by air to an eligible community are also eligible for the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) subsidy under a specific country food rate.

Program management

Northern retailers and southern suppliers registered with the program are responsible to manage their supply chain and claim a subsidy from NNC (Nutrition North Canada) for eligible items that they ship to eligible communities. On a monthly basis, they must submit a claim (kilograms shipped [kg] x subsidy rates), a detailed shipment report (kg per item, community, client type, etc. (etcetera)), invoices and waybills to receive the payment. These claims are submitted to the program's claims processor. The claims processor verifies the claims and provides the program with a recommendation for payment. INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) monitors compliance and publishes regular compliance reviews to ensure transparency.

Registered northern retailers must also submit directly to NNC (Nutrition North Canada) a monthly pricing report for the 67 items that comprise the Revised Northern Food Basket (RNFB), a sample of foods that would provide a nutritious diet for a family of four for one week. This is the tool that INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) currently uses to monitor trends in the cost of healthy eating in isolated northern communities eligible for the program.

Nutrition education initiatives

Funding for nutrition education initiatives in eligible isolated northern communities comes from HC (Health Canada) for all First Nations and Inuit communities, and from PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) for the remainder. This part of the program funds culturally appropriate retail and community-based activities that increase knowledge of healthy eating, develop skills in selecting and preparing healthy store-bought and country/traditional food, and strengthens retail-community partnerships. Examples of funded activities include promotion of healthy food knowledge and skills among children, youth, and adults in schools and community settings; in-store taste tests and grocery store tours; traditional food harvesting and preparation; and partnerships and collaboration with other community programs.

1.2 Need to update the program

Northern and Indigenous people have raised concerns about the program to the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board, the program, and the INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) and HC (Health Canada) Ministers. There was also an internal evaluation completed in 2013 to inform the new performance measurement strategy for the program.

In addition, in 2014, the Auditor General of Canada (AG) report on NNC (Nutrition North Canada) noted a number of areas for improvement for the program in areas such as:

- program sustainability and cost-containment measures to stay within budget
- fairness and consistency of community eligibility criteria
- better transparency to ensure the subsidy is being passed on to consumers

As a result of these efforts, NNC (Nutrition North Canada) initiated a broad public engagement to hear from Northerners and Indigenous people, community groups, provincial/territorial and municipal government members, registered retailers and suppliers, and other interested parties on how to improve the program.

1.3 Overview of the engagement

Interis | BDO was contracted to undertake the engagement on behalf of INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada). In broad terms, the purpose of the engagement strategy was to canvas the views of as many NNC (Nutrition North Canada) stakeholders as possible on the objectives, operations, and impact of the current program, and to seek ideas on how to improve NNC (Nutrition North Canada) without the program incurring any additional costs.

While trying to cast as broad a net as possible to encourage innovation and creative ideas from participants, the engagement was organized around certain themes:

- program sustainability and cost effectiveness

- expanding program capacity/improving program efficiency
- fairness and consistency
- transparency
- communications
- innovation

These themes are outlined in the subsections below.

Program sustainability and cost effectiveness

In the engagement stage, ~~NNC (Nutrition North Canada)~~ sought input from Northerners and Indigenous people, as well as other participants, on how the program might be improved while remaining within its budget. Currently, there are two principal means for managing the program budget.

- adjusting the subsidy rates
- changing the list of eligible foods

Participants were asked for their views on: whether and how the subsidy rates should be adjusted; whether two levels of subsidies should be continued; and whether other subsidy options, such as seasonal rates for certain foods, should be considered.

Participants were asked about their food preferences including: what foods should be added or subtracted from the eligibility list; what foods they consume; and how food prices affect their purchases.

Further, participants were also asked about their experience with individual personal/direct orders: for example, how often they use them; why they use them; what foods are purchased; how prices compare with those in local stores; and any problems or issues.

Expanding program capacity/improving program efficiency

A number of parallel or complementary food subsidy programs already exist for remote northern communities. Indigenous and other community organizations and local, regional, provincial, and territorial governments were asked about opportunities for partnerships, cost sharing arrangements and other means to expand the program capacity of ~~NNC (Nutrition North Canada)~~ without increasing its overall costs.

Further, wholesalers, retailers, transportation companies, and other stakeholders in the supply chain were asked for ideas on improving efficiencies within the existing program.

Fairness and consistency

Many questions have been raised about the fairness of the current design of the program, such as whether eligibility is based on community need or other factors. Communities, governments, non-governmental organizations, and others were asked about whether the current program design is fair, and if not, how it can be improved to ensure that there is fairness and consistency for remote northern communities.

Along the same lines, during the engagement stage participants were asked whether ~~NNC (Nutrition North Canada)~~ is responding to the needs of particular groups within eligible communities, groups which may not be adequately served by the program.

From a macro perspective, local, regional, provincial, and territorial governments, as well as community organizations, were asked for their perspectives on how ~~NNC (Nutrition North Canada)~~ could be more fair, consistent, and responsive, and what factors should be taken into account in a redesign of the program in terms of community eligibility.

Transparency

There have been a number of complaints about the lack of transparency of certain aspects of the current program. Participants were asked for their views on where there is a lack of transparency and how this might be resolved through a redesign of certain aspects of the program.

Communications

Since its launch, there has been widespread lack of awareness or understanding of the objectives and operations of ~~NNC (Nutrition North Canada)~~. Gaps in information and/or failure to use the correct channels have often led to misconceptions and misinformation about the program. Participants were asked about how the overall communication for the program can be improved, their preferred methods for engagement and outreach, and ideas on direct and responsive feedback mechanisms.

Innovation

To allow for some innovative thinking, participants were asked to imagine what ~~NNC (Nutrition North Canada)~~ might look like in a perfect world. This technique was used to identify obstacles and barriers and often resulted in creative solutions that may never have been considered.

1.4 Structure of the engagement

In terms of guiding principles, it was important to hear from a broad cross-section of stakeholders and representatives on the current program and how it might be improved. The engagement exercise had to be cost and time-efficient. The engagement involved:

- Public engagement sessions (i.e. town halls) were conducted in 16 eligible communities. The list of communities is provided in Appendix A.
- Interviews either in-person or by telephone with key stakeholder groups. The list of organizations and participants interviewed is provided in Appendix B and include:
 - regional and community leadership
 - national and regional stakeholder groups
 - retailers
 - provincial and territorial governments
 - air carriers
 - health workers
 - hunter and trapper organizations;
 - academics
- Written submissions provided by direct mail or email. The list of organizations and individuals who provided written submissions is provided in Appendix C.
- Questionnaire submissions provided by direct mail or completed online. There were 260 anonymous questionnaires received.

Engagement sessions were moderated by Interis | BDO. Participants were given an opportunity to propose any new ideas so that there was not a feeling of restrictiveness to the engagement. The process of the engagement and content were sufficiently flexible to allow a broad range of input. In addition, all reasonable means were taken to make engagement sessions accessible to as many participants as possible.

1.5 Content of this report

This report is a summary of what was heard during the engagement. Given the breadth of the engagement, it was not possible to detail all of the comments received having engaged more than 500 people and noted over 3,500 comments, which included the review and incorporation of content from written submissions and hundreds of surveys. This report represents Interis | BDO's independent view of the highlights and themes of what was heard.

"One-off" comments are typically not reflected in this report – particularly if they were divergent from all other comments received. In addition, many people were unaware of ~~NNC (Nutrition North Canada)~~ or how it operates, so some comments in this report may reflect a misunderstanding of the program rather than an error in reporting.

Throughout this report, Interis | BDO will refer to groups/individuals engaged as participants. Participants included regional and community leadership, national and regional stakeholder groups, retailers, provincial and territorial governments, hunter and trapper organizations, health workers, air carriers, academics, and individuals.

1.6 Terms used in this report

A glossary of terms related to ~~NNC (Nutrition North Canada)~~ can be found in Appendix D.

Specific to this report, the following terms were used to describe how often certain views were voiced by various participants:

- Vast Majority: Greater than 80% as observed by Interis | BDO;
- Majority: Greater than 50% but less than 80% as observed by Interis | BDO;
- Minority: Fewer than 50% but occurred more than twice as observed by Interis | BDO; and
- One-Off: No more than two comments as observed by Interis | BDO.

2 General observations

There are a number of general/overarching observations and comments which were prevalent with most participants taking part in the engagement. The following is a summary of these observations/comments:

- Within eligible communities, community members were largely appreciative of the program and the subsidy.

"I certainly appreciate the ~~NNC (Nutrition North Canada)~~ subsidy... I buy a lot more eggs and milk than I would otherwise"

— Community member, Nunavut

- Participants thought it was important and valuable to be engaged in an effort to improve the program and northern communities were pleased that the engagement involved community visits.
- Everything in the North is expensive given the high cost of living paired with the prevalence of a fixed income. Even with the program, many families are not able to afford healthy food. Consistently throughout the engagement, it was heard that ~~NNC (Nutrition North Canada)~~ subsidy is

not having a big enough effect on the price of food.

"Healthy food choices are very expensive, even with the subsidy"

— Member of regional Indigenous organization

- Some participants expressed a desire to have a program budget "escalator" to account for inflation in food prices and operating costs, as well as population growth and increases in the consumption of food.
- Climate change will have an impact on food availability in the future through the reduced availability of country/traditional food, and the impact on seasonal transportation routes (specifically winter roads).
- There is significant concern regarding the quality of perishable food in the North and high levels of spoiled food. In addition, concerns were voiced in most communities that retailers are selling food that is past the "best before" date /expiry date or throwing away food that was still fit to be eaten, rather than putting it on sale.
- There is a lack of clarity regarding the program objectives. Despite its budget, there were expectations that NNC (Nutrition North Canada) would help improve all aspects of northern living including:
 - improving the economy in the north and income of northerners
 - reducing the cost of all goods in the north
 - eliminating food insecurity
- There is a significant concern regarding the lack of selection (e.g. (example) choice, variety, quality) of food within stores in the North. Stores were frequently noted as being "out of stock" of core every-day items.
- There is a lack of clarity on how the findings within this report will be used by INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) and the next steps for INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) in refining the program.

3 Program sustainability and cost effectiveness

In order to understand what Northerners and Indigenous people are eating and would like subsidized, participants were given an outline of the program and it was explained how the program needs to operate under a fixed budget. Adding to or subtracting items from the eligibility list will affect the dollars available for other goods. Participants were asked a variety of questions regarding which types of food should be added or removed from the list, whether certain types of foods should have their subsidy level changed, and whether personal/direct orders should be permitted.

There were a number of general comments regarding the eligibility list and a significant numbers of comments regarding specific items on the list. The following subsections of the report outline the comments received along with an indication of the extent to which communities provided this feedback.

It should be noted that there was not agreement among participants as to what should be added. For instance, within a "town hall" session, there may have been disagreement between participants as to whether an item should be added to the eligibility list. In order to show the full range of comments, this report has been inclusive and does not evaluate the relative merit of the various opinions, but rather outlines which specific items were mentioned.

3.1 General eligibility list comments

The following were general comments made regarding the creation of the eligibility list and the list itself:

- There was no agreement from participants on whether the eligibility list should be larger or smaller than it currently is, though the majority of communities stated a preference for a broad list when compared to a narrower list.
- There was a lack of awareness regarding how the list was developed, and a number of Northerners and Indigenous people and organizations were critical of NNC (Nutrition North Canada) using a list developed by Southerners.
- There was a concern that the eligibility list was developed using the Canada Food Guide rather than taking into account the First Nations Food Guide or a northern food guide.
- There was a desire for regions/communities to have their own customized eligibility lists. That said, for the most part, comments received regarding the eligibility list from across the isolated communities were very similar and communities tended to want the same items subsidized with minor exceptions.

3.2 Eligibility list comments made by the vast majority of communities

The following eligibility list additions were mentioned in the vast majority of engaged communities:

- flour (with the majority commenting on its use in baking traditional food such as bannock)
- country/traditional foods
- hunting/fishing support products including gasoline, ammunition, fishing nets, traps, and snowmobile parts

Given the extent of participant feedback regarding subsidizing country/traditional food and the complexity of subsidizing it within the program, the related comments are outlined in the Country/Traditional Food section below.

3.3 Eligibility list comments made by the majority of communities

The following eligibility list additions were mentioned by the majority of engaged communities:

- baking soda
- infant food such as formula and baby food, with some suggesting it should receive an additional subsidy beyond the level 1 subsidy ¹
- diapers, wipes and other infant or child care items such as bottles
- bottled water

The following eligibility list items were requested to be moved from level 2 subsidy to level 1 subsidy by a majority of engaged communities:

- butter
- lard and lard substitutes
- margarine
- rice
- pasta (some participants suggested all pasta while others suggested raising the subsidy level for whole wheat pasta only)
- nutritious dried and dehydrated foods (dried beans, lentils and grains)
- canned goods
- coffee/tea
- large sizes of juice

3.4 Eligibility list comments made by a minority of communities

The following eligibility list items were mentioned by a number of engaged communities (but less than the majority) that should receive an even higher subsidy (higher than level 1):

- fresh vegetables
- frozen vegetables
- fresh fruit
- frozen fruits
- meat
- milk
- soy milk
- whole grain products

The following eligibility list additions were mentioned from a number of engaged communities (but less than the majority):

- sugar
- salt
- spices and seasoning
- sauces for seasoning food
- yeast
- canned and sandwiched meats
- household cleaning products, including dish soap, laundry detergent, and kitchen cleaner
- personal hygiene products, including feminine hygiene products, toothpaste, toilet paper, and soap
- gardening supplies and equipment, including seeds, soil, fertilizer, shovels, and rakes
- dough for making bread
- camping equipment, including tents, stoves, and outdoor clothing

The following eligibility list items were mentioned to be moved from level 1 subsidy to level 2 subsidy or removed altogether by a number of engaged communities (but less than the majority):

- non-nutritious or high-sugar ready-to-eat cereals
- processed cheese

The following eligibility list items were mentioned to be moved from level 2 subsidy to level 1 subsidy by a number of engaged communities (but less than the majority):

- cooking oils (some northerners mentioned all cooking oils while others suggested only increasing the subsidy for the healthier cooking oils)
- ice cream
- crackers and biscuits
- sour cream

The following eligibility list deletions from a number of engaged communities (but less than the majority):

- "fancy" fruits and vegetables (dragon fruit, cherries and kiwis were provided as examples)
- juice
- ice cream
- canned/evaporated/powdered milk
- frozen pizza
- frozen lasagna

3.5 Eligibility list comments made by a very small number of individuals

There were a variety of comments received from a very small number of people (sometimes one person). For sake of completeness, a selection of these comments has been provided below. These comments should be considered as outliers and not representative of the broader views of participants. The following comments were made regarding items to be added to the eligibility list:

- all food
- all food except "junk food"
- all food from the Canada Healthy Food Guide
- all store-bought products
- bulk items for families
- livestock and associated supplies to maintain animals in the north
- juice crystals
- sweetened juice cocktails
- sweetened drinks that have less sugar than pop such as sport energy drinks
- reduced sugar content items (e.g. (example) plain cereal) for diabetics
- nutrition shakes or meal replacement items
- organic and non-genetically modified organism (non-GMO) food
- coconut flour (flour substitute)
- nut-based milk substitutes
- soya sauce
- artificial sweeteners
- maple syrup
- honey
- pumpkins
- "ethnic" foods
- chocolate and other treats
- frozen fried chicken
- sewing equipment and supplies
- clothing

The following comments were made regarding items to be removed from the eligibility list:

- tofu;
- side bacon ²
- fish. ³

The following comments were made regarding the use of a seasonal subsidy:

- The subsidy should be adjusted based on cost and availability of products during a particular season.
- There should be a safety net in certain seasons to ensure healthy food items are available throughout the year.

3.6 Eligibility list comments made by health workers/stakeholders

The opinions of health workers/stakeholders were not homogeneous. That said, below is a summary of the key recommendations from health workers.

A number of health workers/stakeholders interviewed recommended the following items be added to the eligibility list:

- country/traditional food
- locally grown vegetables
- breastfeeding support equipment including breast pumps and pads
- bottled water, specifically, though not exclusively, in communities where there are water advisories

a number of health workers/stakeholders interviewed recommended the following items be moved from level 2 to level 1:

- flour
- dried lentils and beans
- juice

A number of health workers/stakeholders interviewed recommended a reduction in eligible items by removing them from the list altogether, including:

- juice
- side bacon
- ice cream
- processed cheese spreads
- processed meats
- anything but the most basic healthy items (only fruit, vegetables, meat and milk should remain on the list) to have the biggest impact on healthy outcomes
- cereal with high sugar
- fruits and vegetables that are out of season

3.7 Personal/direct orders

Throughout the engagement, it was found that the majority of participants supported personal/direct orders to remain a part of the program. Below are a number of comments/concerns regarding personal/direct orders:

- Across communities, there was very little awareness that personal/direct orders were permitted under the program. In addition, most participants did not know which southern suppliers are registered with the program.
- In many regions/communities, participants expressed a desire for INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) to increase the number of registered southern suppliers to increase access and choice of more items, such as for dietary restrictions, for their region/community as well as create competition for local stores. Some communities reported that there were no registered southern suppliers in their area available or willing to provide personal/direct orders to individuals.
- A number of Northerners reported ordering from large non-registered southern suppliers (Walmart was frequently used as an example) due to price and selection rather than using the registered southern suppliers.
- There is a concern among participants that people without access to credit cards cannot easily access the registered southern suppliers. Some participants expressed a desire for INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) to put in place a mechanism to facilitate these individuals accessing personal/direct orders.
- There is a need for service standards to be introduced to ensure that any personal/direct orders are received in a timely manner given the nature of the perishable goods being shipped.

"Perishables orders from suppliers are not delivered within 72 hours – What is the policy?"

— Community member, Manitoba

- Some participants felt there should be a review of the packaging requirements of personal/direct goods to allow eligible items to be shipped with non-eligible items to avoid suppliers separating them into level 1 or level 2 shipments, or not including non-eligible items in a shipment with eligible items.
- Retailers expressed concerns that an increase in personal/direct orders would reduce the availability of food items in northern retailers.
- Some communities, particularly, but not exclusively, with band/local-owned stores, expressed a desire not to allow personal/direct orders to keep the money "in the community".
- There were concerns that registered southern suppliers, due to their low volume of shipments, were paying higher rates for air freight and receiving lower priority on the air carriers, making them more expensive and subject to higher levels of spoilage.
- A number of participants indicated that they travel and shop in non-isolated communities and pay for their own freight back to their community. They requested that INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) put in place a mechanism to allow these individuals to claim the subsidy.

4 Country/traditional food

All communities and the vast majority of participants indicated a desire for increased support for country/traditional food as part of NNC (Nutrition North Canada) or (as many participants preferred) as a separately managed program.

Having said that, there were concerns from a number of participants about the long-term viability of relying on country/traditional food to feed a growing population of Northerners and Indigenous people due to sometimes dwindling availability of country food and a lack of desire (perceived by some participants) of the younger generation to hunt and fish. Participants also indicated that with the increase of country/traditional food consumption, there would be an increased requirement for monitoring/oversight of wildlife (e.g. (example) herds) and traditional food (e.g. (example) berries) which would require funding.

A number of participants emphasized the importance of food sharing networks, particularly for country/traditional food. In that regard, the nature of the program by utilizing a retail-based subsidy model is counter to traditional practices. Further, there were comments made that country food that is commercially processed and/or sold in-store is not truly traditional food. There were also examples provided of barriers to food sharing, such as land claim agreements and cross-border limitations.

"Why should we not be able to subsidize locally harvested country food?"

— Community member, Ontario

There were a large number of options brought forward to better support country/traditional food both within and outside of the program (recognizing that all options would not be suited to all communities). The options brought forward by participants included:

- Subsidizing hunting/fishing support products including gasoline, ammunition, snowmobiles, snowmobile parts, fish nets, traps and camping equipment, including no restrictions on where these items can be purchased.
- Providing funding for community hunts, hunter support programs that encourage youth to participate, and community freezers. Some participants recommended partnering opportunities with regional/local organizations such as with Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI).
- Providing funding to hunters and trappers organizations who act as retailers (who sell food to Northerners) who pay hunters for country/traditional food.
- Providing funding directly to hunters/producers for locally hunted meat/fish or locally produced vegetables.
- Providing the level 1 subsidy for food in community freezers or food support organizations to buy meat/fish from hunters.
- Providing the level 1 subsidy for meat/fish to be shipped between communities to allow for inter-community trade, with one example given being the "Greenland Model" that more effectively enables country/traditional food to be accessed directly through local markets.
- Providing a tax exemption for hunters to buy hunting/fishing equipment including rifles, ammunition, snowmobiles, nets, traps, ATVs and gasoline.
- Establishing a country/traditional food marketplace to allow for intra and inter community trade of country/traditional food.
- Eliminating the requirement for country/traditional food to be from a CFIA (Canada Food Inspection Agency) approved facility to be eligible for the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) subsidy.
- Providing support for new fixed or mobile food processing facilities that would allow locally harvested food to be CFIA (Canada Food Inspection Agency) approved.
- Subsidizing charter aircraft which are used to transport meat from a community hunt back to the community, due to vast distance between some communities and hunting for country/traditional food.
- Providing additional freight subsidy for air carriers transporting country/traditional food.
- Providing increased support for country/traditional food hunting and food preparation education programs.
- Changing hunting quotas to allow for more hunting (belugas were provided as an example in Inukjuak).
- Providing support for domesticating animals for community-based herds to be kept in isolated communities.

- Licensing local hunters to supply food to community stores.
- Subsidizing local harvesters to collect and prepare traditional medicine.
- Subsidizing eligible food either seasonally or year-round for hunters and harvesters to take on the land (e.g. (example) pilot biscuits, canned goods, etc. (etcetera)).
- Not subsidizing hunters directly (with ammunition and gasoline) but rather subsidizing hunter support organizations and community infrastructure (specifically community freezers).

5 Capacity and efficiency

As NNC (Nutrition North Canada) must operate in a fixed budget, participants were asked to provide ideas and information on how the program capacity could be expanded within budget, including improving program efficiency. This question was not covered in the town hall meetings, but instead was asked in interviews with regional, provincial and territorial governments, Indigenous and other community organizations, transportation companies, and food suppliers.

The specific question asked was:

Can you suggest any ideas for working with NNC (Nutrition North Canada) to improve accessibility and affordability for Northerners and Indigenous people in isolated communities?

In the online Discussion Guide it was presented as follows:

Are there opportunities for partnership, cost sharing arrangements, improving efficiencies and other means to expand the program capacity of NNC (Nutrition North Canada) without increasing its overall costs?

The answers provided were not always specific to the question and often overlapped with information provided for Program Sustainability and Cost Effectiveness, Country/Traditional Food, and Innovation.

5.1 Program capacity – developing partnerships

In the interviews, it was often mentioned that the program (especially the INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) component) appeared to operate in a standalone fashion, despite the fact that other government and non-government organizations were quite involved with the issues of healthy eating and food security. It was suggested that there could be greater program capacity if NNC (Nutrition North Canada) reached out to investigate potential partnerships either with existing programs or by developing new ones to address the objectives of providing access to affordable nutritious foods. In the interviews, participants identified many organizations and programs which might offer an opportunity for potential partnerships.

It is important to note that many of these programs are already connected and receive funding from NNC (Nutrition North Canada), though participants seemed largely unaware of these relationships.

School meal programs

There were a variety of suggestions from participants of organizations that NNC (Nutrition North Canada) could potentially partner with regarding school meal programs. Specific comments include:

- The Assembly of First Nations has partnered with OneXOne to develop the National First Nations School Breakfast Program.
- There is the Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve Program which includes a nutrition component.
- The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) has a school breakfast program in conjunction with the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative (ADI).
- The Kids Eat Smart Foundation in Newfoundland and Labrador uses volunteers to serve over 22,000 meals a day to school aged children.
- The Nunatsiavut Government has meal programs for kids.
- The Ministry of Education in Saskatchewan has a child nutrition development program that funds various school meal programs in about 50 communities.
- In the Athabaska region of northern Saskatchewan, a dietitian from the Population Health Unit works with the schools, but there are no formal school breakfast or lunch programs.
- The Northern Healthy Foods Initiative in northern Manitoba works through partners with over 100 eligible communities to provide a number of programs including school nutrition programs.
- The Breakfast Club of Canada is a registered charity that partners with various companies to provide breakfasts to schools across Canada.

Programs for prenatal women or new mothers

Participants mentioned a number of jurisdictions have nutrition programs for prenatal or new mothers, including:

- The Kativik Regional Government (KRG) has a program that offers coupons and education to pre-natal women.

- The PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) funds 276 projects under the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program in over 2,000 communities annually. There is a separate stream run by HC (Health Canada) for Inuit and First Nations women living on-reserve. The program provides vouchers or milk coupons, for example, and may offer some potential alignment opportunities with NNC (Nutrition North Canada).
- The IRC (Inuvialuit Regional Corporation) has a prenatal cooking program.

Food security initiatives

Participants mentioned a number of organizations in Canada are doing food security work, which offer opportunities for partnerships in research, food surveys, education, outreach, and advocacy. Some of these include:

- The Inuit Food Security Working Group is coordinated by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and includes representation from the IRC (Inuvialuit Regional Corporation), NTL (Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.), Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, National Inuit Youth Council, Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Development, Nunatsiavut Government, and the Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada.
- HC (Health Canada) and Manitoba's Northern Healthy Food Initiative are funding food security work in four northern communities in Manitoba.
- Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) in northern Ontario is doing work on food security, including a current project in Fort Albany. Knowledge from the program could help promote the initiative in the territory.
- There is a food security group working in Nunavik called the Nunavik Regional Working Group on Food Security.
- Food First NL (Newfoundland and Labrador) is a provincial membership-based, non-profit organization working to improve food security in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Direct food subsidies or cost-of-living programs

In limited cases, participants mentioned there are complementary or parallel food subsidy programs:

- Makivik Corporation works with the KRG (Kativik Regional Government) to subsidize a number of basics including milk and juice. There are signs in the stores which identify the KRG (Kativik Regional Government) subsidy.
- The KRG (Kativik Regional Government) also has a Cost-of-Living Program, Inuit Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Support Program, and a Transportation Subsidy Program for the summer sealift.
- Newfoundland and Labrador did have an Air Foodlift Subsidy program which subsidized some basic foods, but the program ended in April 2016. It will be replaced by the Labrador Aboriginal Nutritional and Artistic Assistance Program which will be used among other things to assist food banks, and also to transport moose meat from Newfoundland to Labrador while there is a moratorium on caribou hunting.
- There is a program called Affordable Food in Remote Manitoba (AFFIRM) ⁴ operating in northern Manitoba that reduces the price of milk, fresh vegetables, and fresh fruits in eligible, remote communities through a subsidy.

"Whole-of-government" approach

A number of participants felt that NNC (Nutrition North Canada) should include coordination with various levels of government rather than just HC (Health Canada)/PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada). A number of examples were given:

- The former Air Foodlift Subsidy program in Newfoundland and Labrador also included health and community services, environment and conservation, natural resources, as well as non-governmental organizations. The new program will be replaced by the Labrador Aboriginal Nutritional and Artistic Assistance Program.
- Makivik Corporation which works with the KRG (Kativik Regional Government) addresses food issues as part of economic development. Makivik Corporation looks at wildlife and the natural environment and coordinates research. For example, the use of greenhouses is accelerating in Nunavik for both families and commercial organizations. Makivik Corporation is looking at the potential for burning waste to heat the greenhouses.
- Makivik Corporation is also looking at local production in Nunavik, for example, they initiated a chicken project in Kuujuaq. Their intent is to make these initiatives more economical by offering it to other stakeholders beyond community members, such as large mining companies who operate in the region.

Private partnerships or sponsorships

Participants mentioned that another way to expand program capacity is to seek out private sector partners who may have objectives supporting corporate social responsibility in addition to commercial consideration:

- The Native Women's Association of Canada's Pathways Partners for Engagement and Knowledge Exchange (NWAC/PEKE (Native Women's Association of Canada's Pathways Partners for Engagement and Knowledge Exchange)) program has developed an oral health program in the North with sponsorship and support from Colgate Palmolive. A rigorous screening process was undertaken to ensure the alignment of ethics and values of the company with the organizations.
- Another suggestion was for NNC (Nutrition North Canada) to partner with air carriers and retailers to put food on planes when they are flying under capacity.

Support to local production

Participants mentioned that another way to enhance capacity is to increase the amount of local food production which would reduce transportation costs, increase local economic development, and enhance community pride and cohesiveness. A number of initiatives are already underway:

- As mentioned, Makivik Corporation is supporting the development of greenhouses in Nunavik, as well as the cultivation of livestock.
- The Nunatsiavut government supports local gardening projects.
- The Northern Healthy Foods Initiative in Manitoba assigns partners to communities to focus on local self-sufficiency, including greenhouses, poultry, and gardening.
- The Ministry of Agriculture in Saskatchewan has asked if there is some way that small businesses and food producers could connect to and work with NNC (Nutrition North Canada).
- The NWAC/PEKE (Native Women's Association of Canada's Pathways Partners for Engagement and Knowledge Exchange) program supports work on community gardens using the example of Haida Gwaii.
- It was also suggested that there be greater cooperation with the NTI (Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.) Nunavut Harvester Support Program.

Joint communications

Participants mentioned that many organizations have communications vehicles which could be used by the program. These organizations include:

- The Athabasca Health Authority sends out a monthly newsletter to stores, airports and health clinics, and a digital version is sent to Athabasca health centres.
- Digital signage on health centre monitors where NNC (Nutrition North Canada) could provide program information and updates.
- Makivik Corporation has a magazine which goes regularly to beneficiary households.
- Makivik Corporation also owns First Air and Air Inuit which have in-flight magazines.

5.2 Program capacity – program design

A number of comments were made about the current program design which potentially limited the capacity of the program. A number of these will also be discussed in the section on Innovation.

Although participants were advised that NNC (Nutrition North Canada) was to work within its budget with an annual escalator, many still requested that the program be expanded both in scope and funding.

Increase program scope

Participants mentioned that the program should broaden its scope to include more than eligible food. Specifically, Interis | BDO heard the following:

- The program should provide support to local soup kitchens.
- Local competition should be increased by supplying support and/or incentives to locally-owned businesses (such as convenience stores), or by removing barriers for small businesses to become part of the program.
- There should be more funding available for communities to find out, discuss, and implement lessons learned and best practices.
- Some excluded communities (e.g. (example) Inuvik, NWT (Northwest Territories); Fox Lake, AB (Alberta); Churchill, MB (Manitoba); Moose Factory, ON (Ontario); and Moosonee, ON (Ontario)) should become eligible for the subsidy.

Increase program funding

Participants raised concerns over the amount of program funds available. Interis | BDO heard the following:

- Increase the program budget to cover the rate of inflation as well as the increases in population growth and food consumption covered by the current escalator.
- Provide multi-year funding for the program to support nutrition education and other longer term initiatives.

5.3 Program efficiency – transportation and supply chain management

Because of the cost and complexity of shipping food by air to remote northern communities, the majority of potential program efficiencies revolved around better transportation and supply chain management.

Air transportation issues

Participants raised concerns about the air transportation industry. Interis | BDO heard the following:

- It was noted that the northern air transportation industry is fragile because of costs, distance, and small populations.
- It was stated that NNC (Nutrition North Canada) put the bargaining power into the hands of the retailers:

"The program gave retailers the ability to grind down the rates they would pay air carriers".

— *Supply chain stakeholder*

- The retailers claimed that the substantial savings on transportation (changing from the Food Mail Program) were passed on to consumers in their entirety.
- Retailers said that they were subject to monopoly prices for air freight in areas where there was a single carrier.
- Air carriers said that smaller carriers could undercut them on certain routes, eliminating potential economies of scale.
- Air carriers also indicated that it could take up to three years for new entrants to come into a region, with heavy initial investments required for aircraft and infrastructure.
- It was pointed out that there are barriers to entry in Nunavut because carriers are not allowed to own buildings for storage.
- One view for a preferred solution was "one operator per route" in northern Canada to lock in price and provide economies of scale, with fragmented segments being detrimental to efficiency.
- It is important to reduce the number of "touches" (i.e. amount of times freight is moved) when transporting freight, including consideration on the higher cost touches like air freight.
- Airlines need stable operating costs and the predictability that they will have sufficient business to make investments in planes and infrastructure.
- One model that was referred to was the system of Permanent Standing Offers in Europe (e.g. (example) Norway, Sweden) where carriers bid on routes to northern communities and the government decides which airlines service which routes and whether they would be subsidized.
- One participant said:

"The government expects private companies to provide a public service".

— *Supply chain stakeholder*

- Given the fragility of northern air transportation, without proper incentives a carrier could pull out of a community at any time, affecting not only the delivery of food, but also medical supplies and personal travel.

Air transportation efficiencies

In terms of efficiencies, the following were suggested by participants:

- Consider changing some of the southern hubs such as using Whitehorse or Dawson City to service Old Crow rather than Winnipeg.
- Source north-bound supplies closer to primary air hubs (for example Hamilton which is close to Toronto rather than Ottawa).
- One airline is eliminating combi aircraft (i.e. carries either passengers and/or freight).
- Reduce air carrier costs by reducing, eliminating or rebating fuel taxes, landing fees, or NAV Canada fees for flights that service NNC (Nutrition North Canada).
- Reject new reduced foreign ownership requirements for air carriers (moving from 49% to 25%) which could impact dependable, low-cost service.
- Modify new pilot fatigue rules to follow the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations for all-cargo flights. Implementing the new rules which are designed for passenger airlines would result in higher costs for northern customers; reduce or eliminate essential domestic supply chains to the North for the program due to aircraft and scheduling issues; and reduce space for cargo (as they would have to build sleeping facilities in aircraft).
- Eliminate pilot fatigue rules to reduce costs and increase air carrier flexibility. One air carrier mentioned that the industry has already determined that rejecting pilot fatigue rules would not affect safety.

Using other transportation modes

To increase program efficiency, participants mentioned that other modes should be considered in certain circumstances. Specifically, Interis | BDO was told:

- Look at alternate modes of transportation during certain seasons (e.g. (example) spring breakup) and look at seasonal subsidy rates for those modes. This would mean expanding the program to more communities (for example, in Yukon).
- Consider subsidizing road or marine transportation to incentivize cheaper methods of transport.

Other supply chain issues

Besides air transportation, other supply chain issues were raised by participants which affect program efficiency. These include:

- There may be a lack of enforcement resulting in food getting bumped from flights (resulting in spoilage or food shortages).
- Many communities have insufficient storage and refrigeration facilities.

- There are problems in some areas (e.g. (example) northern coast of Labrador) finding a southern supplier to complete personal/direct orders to individuals, and only to institutions.
- Some regions, such as northern Ontario, have no barge service year-round or it is only used for heavy materials and not food.
- The availability of subsidized food is often dependent on the skill and temperament of individual store managers (could result in a lack of inventory).

5.4 Spoilage and waste

An issue that was raised often by participants was food spoilage. Not only does it affect the food supply in a community, but it also adds to the cost of the program. Specifically, the following comments were made about spoilage:

- It was reported that some air carriers were not following the rules in place through negotiated and agreed to contracts to ship perishables first.
- There was concern about the temperatures on aircraft in the freight areas.
- There was concern with the packaging methods used by suppliers when sending perishable food to the North, with participants noting that it is packaged for the South and extra precautions (e.g. (example) plastic-wrapped, boxed, etc. (etcetera)) are required to avoid spoilage.
- Some communities lack the necessary infrastructure, such as freezers.
- There is poor refrigeration in some stores.
- It was suggested that there be penalties for excessive waste and non-compliance.
- Some people questioned why certain unpopular food (e.g. (example) tofu) were sent to certain regions (perhaps suggesting that it was simply to take advantage of a subsidy that might be greater than the freight rates).

5.5 Nutrition education

There were a number of comments by participants on the nutrition education aspect of the program that might affect its efficiency. It is worth noting that though funding for nutrition education initiatives is provided to all eligible communities, there is no consistent manner on how funding is provided by the program, with HC (Health Canada) funding First Nation and Inuit communities and with PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) funding the remainder. In some circumstances, funding is transferred to and managed by another entity (e.g. (example) provincial/territorial government). Interis | BDO heard:

- There are too many players involved in the nutrition education component (e.g. (example) First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, HC (Health Canada)/PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) regional offices, etc. (etcetera)).
- HC (Health Canada)/PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) provides the nutrition education only in certain areas in certain regions.
- There has to be better linkages between the INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) and HC (Health Canada)/PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) aspects of the program.
- There should be stronger links to other health programs, including the Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program and the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative (see comments under Developing Partnerships earlier in this section).
- There should be more reporting on the nutrition education component of the program.
- There are partnership opportunities such as implementing home economics classes in school.

5.6 Management of the subsidy

The prime way to control the efficiency of NNC (Nutrition North Canada) is through the subsidy. The subsidy is paid to eligible retailers and suppliers who provide eligible products to eligible communities. Because of its importance to the management of the program, Interis | BDO heard the following comments about the subsidy:

- The subsidy rate does not allow for inflation as well as for increases in population and consumption of eligible foods, and as such, there is a need for an escalator clause in the subsidy. As currently set, the subsidy is inadequate and will continue to lead to food security inequities between communities.
- The subsidy rates have not changed since the start of the program and need to be reviewed and updated.
- Concern that the subsidy rates are not equal to the airline freight rates.
- There were reports that the subsidy for certain communities is greater than the freight rates in place.
- High subsidy rates could lead to "gaming" of the system where companies may have an incentive to ship food even if it does not sell, or to ship spoiled or unwanted products just to capture the subsidy.
- The program needs to verify the accuracy of the subsidy for each eligible community.
- Level 2 subsidies should be raised to meaningful amounts or not provided at all in order to preserve the integrity of the program.
- If the subsidy is to be changed, clear program objectives must be established and objective, and meaningful criteria must be used to assess program efficiency.

6 Fairness and consistency

For fairness and consistency, questions were asked about the criteria for decision making on food eligibility rates, whether there are groups in the community that are not being served by NNC (Nutrition North Canada) in a fair way and whether various specific companies (hotels, restaurants and outfitters) should continue to be eligible for the subsidy. Comments related to these areas are outlined in the subsections below.

6.1 Fairness in subsidy rates

In terms of criteria for determining the subsidy rate between communities, there were very different perspectives from the various participants. Some perspectives were shared among a number of participants, while other approaches were raised by only a few participants. The following is a list of the criteria raised by participants:

- Subsidy rates should be based on the cost of food with some participants adding that income levels should be taken into consideration as well.
- Subsidy rates should be based on transportation freight rates to the community.
- Subsidy rates should be based on the cost of living either alone or taking into account income levels.
- Subsidy rates should be based on distance of the community from the supplier.
- Subsidy rates should be the same within a particular region.
- Subsidy rates should be comparable to the (average food prices of the) nearest, non-isolated centre, such as Yellowknife for NWT (Northwest Territories) communities.
- Subsidy rates should make the cost of food equal for a particular region, with more isolated regions having a higher cost of food than less isolated regions.
- Subsidy rates should take into account micro-economic effects related to the community (for instance, if a community is on an island or has unique surface transportation issues).
- Subsidy rates should be based on a measure of isolation.
- Subsidy rates should be based on the program objectives to maximize the impact on what the program is actually trying to achieve.
- Subsidy rates should consider seasonality, weather, surface-access, and other factors that could influence the price of food.
- Subsidy rates should consider the size of the community.
- Subsidy rates should consider the number of retailers in a community.
- Subsidy rates should consider the availability of commercial flights.
- Subsidy rates should be the same for every community.
- Subsidy rates should make food costs comparable to the South.

6.2 Fairness within the community

The majority of participants felt that NNC (Nutrition North Canada) was fair to all members of northern isolated communities as the retail model made it accessible to everyone in the community.

A minority of participants felt that the program was not fair within a community in the following areas:

- Hunters, trappers, and local food producers do not receive subsidy for the food they produce.
- Personal/direct orders are most accessible to those with credit cards and is difficult for those without Internet and telephone access, so it is harder for the most vulnerable populations to access personal/direct orders. ⁵
- Program communications and information are largely web-based, so not accessible to those without Internet.
- Low and fixed income families did not get their fair share of the subsidy as they could not afford to buy the nutritious perishables subsidized by the program.
- Government employees who already receive a northern allowance are perceived to be "double dipping".

6.3 Fairness of community eligibility criteria

During the overall engagement, the eligibility criteria for communities changed (announced July 2016 and implemented October 2016).

Prior to the change to the eligibility criteria, there were several comments received regarding the need for a more needs-based approach to community eligibility criteria.

Following the announcement of the change to the community eligibility criteria, there were a number of comments from participants who suggested that the eligibility criteria should be expanded to include more communities. Suggested changes included adding communities connected to the South with an all-season road with one or more of the following:

- High costs of food;

- Poor condition road or other surface transportation for part of the year, which included communities with infrequent and/or unreliable service (rail was used as an example);
- Small communities that are a long distance from a store; and
- Communities that lose their surface transportation for very short parts of the year.

6.4 Subsidy for restaurants, hotels, and outfitters

There were varying opinions among participants on whether hotels, restaurants, and outfitters should continue to have access to NNC (Nutrition North Canada) given the breadth of comments. Interis | BDO's opinion as to weighting of opinion (i.e. majority, minority, etc. (etcetera)) of the participants are shown in the subsections below.

Restaurants

Though some participants felt that restaurants should not have access to the subsidy, the majority of participants felt that restaurants provided economic benefit and a meeting place for communities, and therefore, should be able to access the program.⁶ In addition, a number of other comments were made regarding restaurants, including:

- restaurants contribute to the local economy (e.g. (example) employment opportunity, etc. (etcetera)) and as such, should be eligible to receive the subsidy
- restaurants should only be subsidized if they are locally owned
- restaurants should receive the subsidy but only if they serve healthy foods to customers

"Who defines what is healthy, and what is not?"

— Community member, Old Crow

- if restaurants had access to the program, then there should be a mechanism to ensure that the subsidy is being passed to customers.

Hotels

Though some participants felt that hotels should have access to the subsidy, the majority of participants felt that as hotels typically cater to Southerners, they should not have access to the subsidy. A number of participants indicated that if the hotel had a restaurant that was open to the community (rather than a bed-and-breakfast style of hotel) it should be entitled to receive the subsidy.

Outfitters

The majority of participants felt that because outfitters did not typically contribute to a local northern economy and catered only to Southerners, they should not have access to the subsidy. A minority of participants said that locally-owned outfitters should receive a subsidy.

7 Transparency

There was an overwhelming response of distrust of the airlines and retailers, and skepticism of the program effectiveness noted throughout the engagement. A majority of those community members within eligible communities consistently voiced issues and concerns related to a lack of confidence that the subsidy is being passed to the consumer, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the program at-large.

To address the underlying concerns with the program, including with transparency, the following questions were asked:

- How could NNC (Nutrition North Canada) be more transparent?
- What additional information would you like to know about the program?

The following subsections outline specific participant comments related to their desire for increased transparency.

7.1 Improving transparency

Unclear program objectives

The objective of NNC (Nutrition North Canada) is to provide improved access to perishable nutritious food to residents of isolated northern communities. That said, there were varying interpretations of the program's objectives by participants, including the program's role in the larger issue of food security in the North.

As a result of the unclear or misunderstood program objectives, a number of participants called for increased insight on program effectiveness as captured in the quote below:

"How does the program measure success? You may be dropping the price, but it does not necessarily improve affordability".

— Community member, Nunavut

A number of participants mentioned that NNC (Nutrition North Canada) could be more transparent with respect to its objectives by undertaking the following:

- Better communicate the program's purpose and performance.
- Better communicate program strengths and limitations, including acknowledgement that the program is part of a larger public policy approach on food security.

"This program is a band-aid solution... What is the long-term solution for food security?"

— Community member, Saskatchewan

- Prepare and provide information for stakeholders to identify the contributing factors of the high cost of living in the North.
- Set clear principles, measurable objectives and goals, and relevant indicators to evaluate program impact and measure success.
- Clearly define the strategy and associated processes, and ensure it is communicated to all stakeholders using factual information.
- Use constructive and de-politicized dialogue when engaging stakeholders.

In very select cases with the in-community visits, there were questions related to the sustainability of the program based on its success, including the impact of the engagement, and not understanding the future of the program. The participant comments that were raised include:

- Will this program end? / When will this program end?
- What is being done with this report? / Will there be any changes to the program?
- What comes next? / What is the long-term plan?

Retail-based subsidy model transparency

Participants have a sense of distrust towards the retail-based subsidy model and the retailers. Feedback from participants included:

- Need to ensure the subsidy is being passed along in full to consumers, with many participants stating that there was less concern that the subsidy was actually being passed along, but rather with the pricing decisions made prior to the application of the subsidy.
- Lack of influence on the part of NNC (Nutrition North Canada) on the pricing decisions of registered southern suppliers, and in particular, registered northern retailers, to prevent them from benefitting indirectly from the application of the subsidy by raising the price of goods before the subsidy is applied.
- Concern that utilizing private enterprise through a retail-based subsidy is counter-intuitive to the objective of the program as corporate interest is to generate a profit, and not reduce the cost of goods.
- There is no mandated disclosure of the preferred shipping rates, including the actual cargo/freight rates, which are a critical for the program to set the most appropriate subsidy for a given community. In addition, there was a common feeling among community residents that retailers were manipulating the system with multiple references that their endorsements of the current program, despite the fact that it should have no real effect on profits, indicates that they are benefitting to the expense of consumers.
- Concern that the current retail model allows retailers to profit on food as opposed to treating food as a basic human right.
- A need for improved comparisons of food costs, with and without subsidies, to provide greater transparency of the subsidy's effect (for example, the effect of NNC (Nutrition North Canada) on non-subsidized goods). In addition, concern was raised by some participants over the use of the RNFB as presenting an INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) accurate depiction of the size of northern families and the food they actually consume.
- Inconsistent or unavailable information on the program, including gaps in data for a number of communities such as outdated population levels and missing data points on the RNFB prices, as well as knowledge gaps on elements like household vulnerability, and buying patterns of Northerners and Indigenous people. This extends to an inability for a large number of people to find, review, and understand the available information.
- There has been no review of the subsidy levels set in 2011 for the initially-eligible communities despite the increased cost of food throughout the world and the cost of doing business in the North.
- No systems are in place to counter "wasted" subsidy through unwanted or spoiled food.
- As the subsidy is based on the weight shipped, there was concern from a number of participants that retailers were shipping unwanted goods or had little or no concern with spoiled foods as they still benefitted from the subsidy.
- Lack of transparency on how the subsidy rates were determined.
- Concern regarding the independence of the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board to make recommendations in the best interest of Northerners and Indigenous people.

- There was concern raised by a number of participants that there was no clear association of HC (Health Canada)/PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) funding for nutrition education with in-community programs.

As of April 1, 2016, the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) subsidy is shown on store receipts in communities with larger retailers. The response has been largely positive in those communities to better demonstrate the savings in light of the above-mentioned concerns. However, there were a number of participants who were either not aware or did not think that printing the savings on the receipt demonstrated that the subsidy was being passed on to them at the time of purchase:

"Seeing the savings on the receipt still doesn't make any difference".

— Community member, Saskatchewan

However, the majority of those participants that were engaged did acknowledge that this demonstration on receipts did improve the transparency of the program. Further, in those communities where there was a smaller independent store where the savings is not required to be included on the receipt, or in other situations that fell outside of the policy for mandating subsidy savings on receipts, a suggestion was to implement that same approach.

7.2 Areas where NNC (Nutrition North Canada) could improve transparency

The program has been addressing the lack of transparency (e.g. (example) AG recommendations, subsidy savings on receipts, etc. (etcetera)), with participants asked to provide suggestions on how transparency could be further improved. To address the lack of transparency with the program, there was an effort to determine what information stakeholders required.

There were a number of suggestions observed by Interis | BDO for improving transparency of the program, including:

- Addressing all recommendations from the 2014 report for the Auditor General to demonstrate commitment to improving the program and the lack of transparency felt by the Northerners and Indigenous people.
- Consider alternative models beyond the current approach with a retail-based subsidy.
- Evaluate "profit margins over time" and review changes in "mark-up rates" pre- and post-application of the subsidy, which would also give insight into seasonal price changes.
- Mandate full transparency of all operational costs, including preferred freight rates and profit margins of registered southern suppliers and registered northern retailers. A number of participants stated that this was applicable to all items, not just those on the eligibility list, as there was concern that there was an unfair benefit being realized by marking up unsubsidized items.
- Mandate all registered northern retailers to show the subsidy saved on receipts.
- Provide information on how the subsidy rates were determined.
- Conduct periodic (e.g. (example) annual) revisions of the subsidy levels within communities and provide the results to stakeholders.
- Clearly associate any programs funded through the nutrition education initiatives budget provided by HC (Health Canada)/PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) through the program.
- Relocate administration efforts of NNC (Nutrition North Canada) to the North; have regional Northern and Indigenous staff and management.
- Implement systems/tools to effectively collect and analyze data, which would provide the ability to monitor changes in the price of food by community and by store, for eligible communities.
- Implement a standard system of claims auditing and compliance reviews for all parties receiving subsidy payments.
- Enhance monitoring and evaluation practices of the program to include measures of food availability, as well as the quality and consumption of nutritious foods.
- Introduce independent food costing for all eligible communities to ensure transparency that the subsidy is being passed along and that prices are not being raised to manipulate the system.
- Address the recommendations of the 2012 report of the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board.
- Consolidate and communicate best practices from eligible communities, as well as other national and international programs, to identify opportunities and share lessons learned.
- Provide information on NNC (Nutrition North Canada) in a more effective manner. For an overview of feedback related to improving program communications, please refer to the Communications section.

8 Communications

From the engagement, it was clear that NNC (Nutrition North Canada) was not well understood within eligible communities or by key stakeholders. There is an overarching lack of awareness and understanding on key information including eligibility, subsidies, and the general administration of the program.

The following subsections outline key areas where the lack of program understanding was most evident and the opportunities identified by participants for improving communication.

8.1 Lack of understanding of the program

A large number of individuals at a community-level stated that they knew very little or had no information on the program, including even that their community was receiving a subsidy. It was commonly suggested that this was a result of a lack of communication and failure to use the appropriate channels from INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) to Northerners and Indigenous people.

Participants suggested that the program should communicate more general information in a consistent, accessible, and supported manner across a variety of communication media.

The areas where there was little awareness or where there was a poor understanding included:

- Community eligibility criteria:
 - The criteria used to determine eligibility of a community within the program, including why it does not extend to other remote communities.
 - The reason that certain communities are only just being considered eligible within the program.
- Eligibility list:
 - the items that are eligible and their subsidy rate
 - the frequency that the subsidy rates are reviewed and changed over time to reflect the increasing cost of food in the north
 - the frequency that eligible food is reviewed to ensure alignment to preferences
 - the eligibility of country/traditional food to receive a subsidy and how people can access it
- Personal/direct orders – How to complete personal/direct orders, including actively advertising this component of the program and promoting the registered suppliers that can complete personal/direct orders.
- Application of the subsidy:
 - how the subsidy is applied
 - an overview of how the subsidy levels 1 and 2 are chosen, including the contributing factors that are considered or the formula used
 - an overview of how local retailers can leverage the program
- Program budget – What the program budget is, including any increases to reflect the growing cost of food in the North
- Program administration:
 - An overview of the evaluation activities that take place, and how those results are shared; and
 - An overview of the monitoring activities that take place, including the mechanisms to ensure the subsidy is being passed along to consumers and on avoiding food spoilage.

The majority of the most commonly requested information is readily available from the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) website for those who have access to the Internet and are aware it is available, though, as one participant said:

"All information to date is meaningless because [people] aren't seeing it".

— Researcher

8.2 Awareness of newly eligible communities

In July 2016, the Ministers of INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) and HC (Health Canada) announced an expansion to the current program budget as a result of updates to the community eligibility criteria. The program was expanded to an additional 37 communities, with a commitment in Budget 2016 for an additional \$64.5 million to NNC (Nutrition North Canada) over five years. However, there was lack of awareness of the program in the communities visited among those new communities which received full eligibility effective October 1, 2016. For the most part, community leadership as well as individuals within the newly eligible communities had very little to no awareness of the program or how it operated.

In addition, multiple stakeholder groups, including highly-engaged participants, held the misconception that these new communities took away from the current program budget. There was little knowledge of the year-over-year budgeting increase of five percent, which is also in place.

8.3 Comparing against the food mail program

The lack of understanding of NNC (Nutrition North Canada) and the many misconceptions when compared with the previous Food Mail Program were noted throughout the engagement. Nevertheless, on multiple occasions, preference was indicated for the Food Mail Program that NNC (Nutrition North Canada) replaced in April 2011. The general misconceptions raised were as follows:

- Unlike the Food Mail Program, with NNC (Nutrition North Canada), you are not able to do personal/direct orders.
- A view that with the Food Mail Program it could be assured that the subsidy could be passed on along to consumers.
- People were not always aware that retailers used the Food Mail Program.

Further, there were a number of other comments made related the Food Mail Program:

- The Food Mail Program was more efficient and resulted in better food quality at lower prices for consumers. People could purchase items at the same costs found in the South.
- The more limited choice of subsidized goods, as a result of NNC (Nutrition North Canada), led to retailers making their profits elsewhere, including on items that were previously subsidized through the Food Mail Program. Retailers are the only ones benefitting from the current program.
- There are problems with completing personal/direct orders, unlike the Food Mail Program.
- The Food Mail Program was better, especially for those on a fixed income or social assistance, because they had more ability to choose where and how to spend their money.
- There were a number of comments from participants stating a preference for the Food Mail Program due to preferring the Food Mail Program eligibility list over the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) eligibility list.²
- Some people still refer to personal/direct orders as "Food Mail".

"When we used the Food Mail Program in the past, products were delivered promptly and in good condition. It was affordable and provided much more variety for the consumer. How does NNC (Nutrition North Canada) compare?"

— Community member, Nunavut

There was also some disdain for the structure of the Food Mail Program as a possible alternative:

"As a community leader, I would not accept NNC (Nutrition North Canada) directly subsidizing people as the Food Mail Program did".

— Community leader, Alberta

8.4 Improving communications

To provide a more clear understanding, NNC (Nutrition North Canada) is looking to improve its communication to better share the important and necessary information with people in the eligible communities, and the relevant stakeholder groups.

To improve communication practices, the question that was asked was:

What would be the best way for the program to communicate to and engage with the community?

The general observation was that NNC (Nutrition North Canada) needs to ensure a sustainable and long-term engagement with the eligible communities. These findings can be categorized into four key focus areas:

- building and leveraging relationships
- creating lasting dialogue
- developing and utilizing appropriate communication vehicles
- tailoring information and focusing engagement at a community-level

Building and leveraging relationships

The engagement involved collecting feedback from a number of different stakeholder groups, including provincial and territorial governments, regional governments, Indigenous organizations, food security organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, beyond community visits. Many participants stated that there was limited involvement/dialogue with INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada), including the program, and provided the following suggestions:

- Reach out to key stakeholder groups and related programs to develop strong, committed, ongoing relationships.
- Leverage other organizations that hold strong relationships with the eligible communities to engage people.
- Formalize a communication arrangement with stakeholders to provide consistent and standardized messaging in an appropriate manner.

Creating lasting dialogue

A number of participants requested that NNC (Nutrition North Canada) form meaningful dialogues with key stakeholders in order to provide a greater understanding of the program. The underlying finding was to ensure an ongoing dialogue is carried forward following the engagement through active interaction with stakeholders. The suggestions to create a lasting dialogue included:

- Ensure constructive, de-politicized dialogue with best advice on improvements.
- Follow the appropriate formatting of messages, including the use of visuals (e.g. (example) pictures) to ensure readability.
- Utilize local agencies to ensure there is a strong understanding of the community and/or region.
- Develop better tools for dialogue which is covered in more depth in the "Develop Communication Vehicles" section below.

Developing and utilizing appropriate communication vehicles

Participants suggested a variety of methods to communicate, particularly community members without Internet access. Suggestions included:

- Have the registered northern retailers within the communities play a more active role in communication, including advertising and promoting the program. Participants felt there should be better communication through in-store advertisements that are enforced by the program.
- Develop a series of effective communication vehicles and consistent messages across a variety of media, including:
 - In-store signage – To engage community members while in-store, as it is a retail-based subsidy, and any savings are most apparent while shopping. This would include shelf-talkers and itemized labels with before and after (i.e. applied subsidy) costs, as well as posters and flyers.
 - Radio talk-shows and advertisements – To engage community members via presentations, call-in shows, and pre-recorded advertisements. This was stated as a widely used media for the exchange of information across all ages in the North.
 - Social media postings – To engage with many community members, particularly youth, who were noted to use it actively, and provide information on the program. It was often suggested that NNC (Nutrition North Canada) post directly on community-run Facebook pages in eligible communities. Twitter was not a commonly-used tool as there were very few tweets received as a part of this engagement.
 - News outlets – To leverage existing news outlets (e.g. example CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) North) that are actively read by Northerners and Indigenous people to provide or reinforce messages about the program.
 - Newsletters/Magazines – To provide an opportunity for cross-promotion with potential partners (e.g. example federal and provincial/territorial governments, regional government/tribal councils, band offices, health centres, community programs, local agencies, etc. (etcetera)).
 - Online videos – To summarize key information in a more visible format, in the preferred Indigenous language, that can be watched at the viewer's convenience.
 - Visuals – To summarize key information in a highly visible format that would be quickly and easily understood relying on graphics (e.g. example comics).
 - In-person community meetings – To provide and receive feedback by speaking directly with community members.

When discussing effective communication, many participants urged that content be in plain language, use illustrations where appropriate, and deliver consistent messaging. Further, it was important to ensure repeated outreach to create and maintain awareness of the program.

Another common observation was that, in the future, all communication materials should be provided in English as well as the local language and dialect, for each community. A number of participants also recommended that community members be hired to complete translation/communication activities within communities. Further, not all documents available online are in the preferred Indigenous language(s) and there were many requests to translate materials appropriately.

"It is a waste to translate posters and advertisements into French, and especially frustrating when it is then not available in our local language"

— Community member, Ontario

Tailoring information and focusing engagement at the community-level

To extend the basic understanding of the program, many participants felt that there should be a focus in providing tailored communications in some manner. Participants suggested the following activities be undertaken:

- Develop and distribute community summary sheets – A tailored overview outlining how the community is being impacted by NNC (Nutrition North Canada), including the specific subsidy rates.
- Undertake community-based outreach activities – A focus on community-based institutions to leverage partnership opportunities and create awareness. This was most applicable in schools within eligible communities to develop awareness of healthy eating among youth.

For community residents to provide feedback to the program the question asked was:

What would be your preferred way to provide direct feedback to the program?

There were limited, yet consistent, suggestions for the most preferred way for people to provide their feedback. The participants mentioned the following:

- Current feedback mechanisms, including the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board, program email address, and direct mail should be continued.
- Using in-store feedback boxes to engage store management with their concerns, comments, and suggestions that can also be shared with the program.
- Developing targeted surveys (that can be responded to both by paper and online, similar to the engagement) to receive specific feedback.
- Given the popularity of radio, and the nature of how it is utilized in the North, allow for community members to call-in with any questions or clarifications, as well as provide an opportunity to provide feedback.
- Allow for people to provide feedback via social media, preferably through Facebook, since Twitter was not considered to be a preferred feedback mechanism, as observed by Interis | BDO, to post and comment on eligible, community-run accounts or a central account administered by NNC (Nutrition North Canada).

- There was repeated concern raised about ensuring methods be available to provide feedback that did not rely solely on online-based technology, including using a toll-free telephone number.
- More visits to meet with community members and programs in-person. This was raised most often as the preferred method of people to provide direct feedback to the program and in a manner that allows equal access to all community members, and in particular, elders.
- Establish community or regionally dedicated representatives, as well as readily accessible resources to collect feedback, in addition to playing a role in creating awareness and offering education. There were recommendations to utilize current positions already within the communities, such as health representatives (e.g. (example) ADI (Aboriginal Diabetes Initiatives) worker, etc. (etcetera)) or volunteers. To support this method, it was suggested that the program could leverage the nutrition education funding available from HC (Health Canada)/PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada).

8.5 Role of the advisory board

The NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board is in place to allow Northerners and Indigenous people a direct voice in the program. Their role involves providing information and advice to the Minister of INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) to help direct the program to ensure people receive its full benefits. It is worth noting that board members serve as volunteers and do not act as representatives of any particular organization, area, or special interest. In order to better understand the role, participants want them to take in the future of the program; the following question was asked:

What role should the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board play in terms of outreach, engagement, and communications?

The following is a list of observations provided by participants:

- In general, there was little or no awareness of the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board, particularly in newly eligible communities.
- Those who were aware of the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board felt that their continued, and active, involvement was necessary.
- NNC (Nutrition North Canada) should provide a follow-up on the recommendations of the 2012 report of the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board.
- There should be broader geographical representation of the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board, including currently unrepresented areas such as Nunavut and northern Ontario.
- The NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board should have a greater role in providing oversight and advocacy for Northerners and Indigenous people, including the ability to enact change.
- The NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board should be independent, acting in the best interest of Northerners and Indigenous people, and not have to promote the program.
- The selection criteria should be open and transparent, and ensure the necessary experience and expertise.
- There should be Indigenous people on the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board.
- There should be efforts to increase the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board visibility, including completing additional community visits, which would have the bi-annual meetings take place in eligible communities across the country on a revolving basis, whenever possible.
- There are some feelings of INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) accessibility to reach members of the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board, with many participants not knowing how to reach them.
- There is interest in better understanding how people can apply to be on the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) Advisory Board, including the appointment process and criteria.

9 Innovation

The following questions were asked usually at the end of a town hall or interview:

- What would an ideal program look like?
- Can you suggest any ideas that would improve the program?
- Can you suggest any ideas that would improve the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) nutrition education initiatives?

This section of questioning was asked to draw out any other ideas that might improve NNC (Nutrition North Canada), including the nutrition education component. The rationale was that people and organizations involved with the program might have innovative ideas, best practices, or lessons learned that would assist the program. Some of the ideas mentioned overlap with or complement other information in this report.

9.1 Develop new program objectives

A number of participants felt there was a need to expand and restate the program objectives, as noted in the Improving Transparency section. The current goal of the program "to make nutritious foods more accessible and more affordable for Northerners and Indigenous people who do not have year-round land or water transportation links to supply centres" was seen as too narrow and restrictive.

The following comments were heard:

- The program should address overall food security in the North which includes, but is not restricted to, accessibility and affordability. This also involved a recognition that Northerners have the same right to access affordable food as Southerners.
- The program, and its objectives, should recognize and address the affordability of food in context to income as well as the price of food.
- The program should be aligned/linked to the new National Food Policy being developed by Agriculture Canada.
- The program should recognize and respond to Canada's human rights obligations, under various United Nations charters and covenants including: Article 11 of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and Articles 20 and 26 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- The program should expand beyond nutrition to supporting healthy living (i.e. lifestyle), including personal hygiene products, infant products, and household cleaning products.
- The focus should be on communities, and those groups and individuals living within them, rather than on just reducing the price of food alone, in respect to the people seeking to afford eating healthy perishables in the North.
- Local food production should be tied to community economic development.
- The program should support specific community initiatives, such as school meal programs, soup kitchens, and food banks.
- The program should recognize the health benefits of country/traditional foods and support their harvesting, transport, and consumption.
- The program should support the values of a sharing system for food, particularly for country/traditional food, rather than a market economy.
- The program should develop clear performance targets and metrics on food costs to assess its efficiency and effectiveness against the stated program objectives.
- INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada), in its best effort, should ensure that the program be or become sustainable, including maintaining its current funding while also developing sustainable practices in support of food security in eligible communities.

9.2 Develop new program model

There was a great deal of feedback in changing the existing program model, ranging from minor tweaks to wholesale restructuring. The following represent some of the ideas that Interis | BDO heard:

- The program should be flexible to each community, not "one size fits all".
- The program should be innovative, with innovation coming from local communities supported by additional research on northern food security (see section on Need for New Research and Strategies later in this section).
- Many people wanted a new standalone program for country/traditional food, although, some wanted an expanded version within NNC (Nutrition North Canada).
- Some participants wanted the program to include "more than food", including investment in harvesting, hunting and fishing equipment, greenhouses, community freezers, as well as income support and additional nutrition education programs.
- There was support for exploring community-based models or social enterprise. ⁹
- Some supported a multi-channel program, including:
 - subsidies on food (nutritious, culturally appropriate, etc. (etcetera))
 - subsidies for individuals to ship country/traditional food to relatives
 - support to local production (greenhouses, community gardens, hydroponics, grow tunnels, etc. (etcetera))
 - support to harvesting country/traditional foods
 - community infrastructure (freezers, food processing units, etc. (etcetera))
 - support to community programs (school meals, soup kitchens, elders, etc. (etcetera))
 - provide nutrition education. ⁹

9.3 Develop new program design

Interis | BDO heard comments on both the design of the current program as well as the design of a new program model. Many of these comments also appear in other sections of this report.

Specifically, Interis | BDO heard a number of comments in the areas of food costs and competition, transportation, waste and spoilage, new program components, and new program links.

Food costs and competition

- Review the use of a retail-based subsidy model:

"A retail subsidy cannot work in a non-competitive market".

— *Researcher*

- Ensure a fixed price for products (i.e. mandatory pricing).
- Establish regulated state-run stores (as in Europe, such as in Greenland) or community co-operatives.
- Attempt to attract some smaller retailers and producers into the program.
- Evaluate the food system earlier on (i.e. "upstream") to better understand if there is a better point to bring down costs.

Transportation

- Evaluate the economics of northern transportation and anticipate the future of transportation in the North.
- Provide greater certainty for investment in transportation (aircraft, runways, hangars, etc. (etcetera) (etcetera)).
- Consider the option of utilizing "one air carrier per route" to improve the service offerings of air carriers, with fragmented segments being detrimental to efficiency.
- Evaluate a system using Permanent Standing Offers such as that used in Europe (e.g. (example) Norway, Sweden).
- Balance distribution costs between communities, with higher markups assigned to easier distribution points to help equalize the selling price of products.
- Reduce, eliminate, or rebate fuel taxes, airport landing fees, and NAV Canada fees on flights serving NNC (Nutrition North Canada).
- Consider the possibility of subsidizing private businesses to coordinate the purchase and transport of eligible food by winter road.
- Expand the use of sealifts and provide a subsidy for marine transportation.
- Investigate putting food on planes with extra capacity going North.
- Evaluate aggregating demand and invest in large trucks for communities with winter road access.

Waste and spoilage

- Monitor spoilage and find methods to control and eliminate spoilage and waste.
- Establish stronger regulation of food suppliers to control waste and prevent gaming of the system (where retailers can ship spoiled products where subsidy rates exceed freight rates), including monitoring shipments for shipping times.
- Establish and enforce refined packaging techniques, including setting requirements and/or regulations, for food shipped from the North to avoid freezing, damage, and spoilage.

New program components

- Support school breakfast and lunch programs.
- Support the creation and/or maintenance of band-owned stores, such as through providing loans or subsidizing building materials.
- Support co-operative development and locally owned businesses, including reducing the administrative burden on smaller retailers.

"Change the program to support butcher shops who prepare country food, and then could invest in a processing facility in the community"

— *Community member, Northwest Territories*

- Support local food production, including subsidizing farming and gardening products such as soil, seeds, fertilizer, farming equipment, greenhouse materials, poultry operation equipment, fencing, and other related supplies.
- Provide training and information to retailers to improve ordering.
- Provide program money to local seamstresses to strengthen the local community.
- Invest in local infrastructure (e.g. (example) community freezers, heated warehouses).
- Develop a program to support breastfeeding.
- Consider funding food processing plants for country/traditional food.

New program links

- Link the program to income support programs.
- Consider subsidizing food production via agriculture subsidies.
- Make the program intercommunity and/or interjurisdictional (e.g. (example) trade of country/traditional food with stakeholders from Alaska).

- Consider the impacts of climate change (e.g. (example) on winter roads, caribou herds, etc. (etcetera)) and link to appropriate environmental programs.
- There is need for a better program to support social assistance including an index for costs of living in the North.

9.4 New management and governance structure

Some participants felt that the current management and governance structure of the program had to be amended when looking at any changes in the program objectives, model, and design. One participant stated:

"This program feels like it was designed by Southerners... Northerners should be consulted".

— Community member, Nunavut

In terms of the management and governance structures of a future program, Interis | BDO heard the following:

- The program should reflect a "whole-of-government" approach, and leverage partnership opportunities amongst various levels of government.
- Other departments such as Transport Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada should have greater involvement.
- Establish a management and decision making governance body that would give Northerners and Indigenous people more say in the program.
- There should be a greater role for and broader geographical representation on the [NNC \(Nutrition North Canada\) Advisory Board](#).
- A working group should be formed to look at northern food accessibility and affordability.
- There should be consideration to implement and support community advisory committees consisting of community members to provide information on and collect feedback for the program.
- Relocate the administration of the program to the North, or have regionally-based employees. This includes ensuring that there is Indigenous staff working for the program.
- There should be greater coordination between [INAC \(Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada\)](#) and [HC \(Health Canada\)/PHAC \(Public Health Agency of Canada\)](#) on determining the allocation of funding.
- Eliminate the involvement of the [CFIA \(Canada Food Inspection Agency\)](#) in country/traditional food (seen as barrier).
- There should be better policy alignment and support for local agricultural initiatives.
- There should be more direct regulation of food suppliers.
- Set a minimum quality on food being transported to the North by the program, and provide oversight that it is being met.

9.5 Increase program budget

Despite the fact that participants were advised that [NNC \(Nutrition North Canada\)](#) must remain in budget, which did expand as of October 1, 2016, most still felt that the budget of the program should be increased further. Some participants also provided ideas on where additional money could be found to increase the program budget.

There was a broad range of opinion raised by participants as to how much the cost of food in the North should be affected as a result of the program. These comments ranged from equalizing to the cost of food in the South, or comparable to the nearest non-isolated centre.

Specifically, with respect to increasing program budget, Interis | BDO heard:

- The program requires more than \$80 million a year to address food security in the North. Participants could not determine what the overall cost might be for eliminating food insecurity altogether in the North.
- Take political action to redistribute benefits from the South to the North, such as applying a sugar tax and using the proceeds to offset food insecurity.
- Investigate partnerships with private sector organizations (as exemplified by the [NWAC/PEKE \(Native Women's Association of Canada's Pathways Partners for Engagement and Knowledge Exchange\)](#) partnership with Colgate Palmolive).

9.6 Redesign the program model

Interis | BDO received many comments on the existing subsidy and how it could or should be redesigned. The following subsections outline key comments made by participants.

Specifically, Interis | BDO heard a number of comments in the areas of changing the current subsidy model, modifying the current subsidy model, capping retailer profits, changing the calculation of the subsidy, and improving the subsidy calculation process. There was no consensus from participants on their preference for redesigning the program model, however, Interis | BDO received many suggestions noted below.

Change the current subsidy model

- The retail-based subsidy model should be discarded and replaced with one of a number of different models. Several options were brought forward by participants:
 - give the subsidy directly to individuals (possibly through reimbursements, coupons, food stamps, vouchers, or rebates)
 - give the subsidy to communities (local production, infrastructure, meal programs, soup kitchens, food banks, etc. (etcetera))
 - give the subsidy to transportation companies (to apply directly to the cost of freight)
- A retail subsidy cannot work in a non-competitive market.
- Address the monopoly power dynamics in the current program through utilizing a retail-based model.
- Address the unfair competition and disincentives to local production by utilizing a retail-based model in the current program.
- Not subsidize food per se, but subsidize the nutritional content/quality whether through local food producers, such as hunting and fishing, or market foods. One example is fully subsidizing the most healthy food like fruit and vegetables, and less nutritious food to a lesser degree.
- Some participants felt that a retailer subsidy model was not the right approach. It was felt that if the retail model was retained, the best way to expand or maintain program capacity was to put a cap on retailer profits, or a cap on the price of individual products.

Modify the current subsidy model

- Eliminate the level 2 subsidy and apply it to level 1.
- Provide an ever greater subsidy on certain items by focusing on fewer products, making it easier to communicate, and have a greater impact on consumers.

"To help those on a lower or fixed income, have a narrower list for lower prices"

— Community member, Labrador

- Subsidize alternative modes of transportation, including the sealift.
- Evaluate subsidizing land transportation at certain times of the year.
- Subsidize general shipping on all items.
- Evaluate implementing a system that applies the subsidy at the point-of-shipping.
- Place a price cap on essential foods.
- Only subsidize foods that are in-season.
- Change the calculation of the subsidy to be based on the nutritional impact as opposed to its weight, or on the overall of healthy foods a retailer sells instead of on the subsidized eligible products.
- Adjust the subsidies for each community every year.

9.7 Need for new research and strategies

Some participants felt that an improved program should be supported by new research, and that it should be part of broader government strategies.

Specifically, Interis | BDO heard the following:

- A new nutrition strategy for Canada should be developed by the Government of Canada.
- A national food security strategy should be developed for Canada, as well as food security strategies for individual regions and communities.
- Northern food security should be looked at more broadly, including the economics of the northern retail system and the fragility of northern air transportation (including competition, risk, economies of scale, start-up costs, investment costs, costs of regulation, infrastructure costs, etc. (etcetera)).
- More research is required on northern family profiles to get a better understanding of family purchasing patterns and preferences. Specifically, there is a need to develop models for what families on certain budgets can afford.
- Research and test other models for food security in remote communities, including:
 - Australian and New Zealand models of food distribution focused on smaller and more remote Indigenous communities
 - Greenland model that more effectively enables people to be access country/traditional food directly through local markets
 - Greenland model of utilizing state-owned stores in small villages and highly regulated stores in larger communities
 - European models (e.g. (example) Sweden, Norway) of using Permanent Standing Offers where carriers bid on routes to northern communities and the government determines who will service which routes and whether they will be subsidized
 - farmers' market concept (e.g. (example) Fort Albany) where community members coordinate the bulk purchase and sale of healthy perishables

- programs utilizing food stamps for low income households, such as the Alaska Food Stamp Program
- Review and expand the RNFB to better reflect what Northerners consume (including more Indigenous foods) and the size of northern families.
- Evaluate the Nunavut Food Guide (which some participants indicated had been well received) in consideration of the eligibility list.
- Consider alternative methods of transportation, including modern airships that could significantly reduce the cost of food in the North.
- Support independent research by cooperating with researchers to access the necessary tools and data, including funding research completed by others.
- Consider new technologies and processes to support greenhouses, gardening, and other agricultural production in northern communities (including hydroponics).
- Evaluate programs to help raise livestock in isolated communities.
- Investigate new technologies and equipment for northern food processing, including mobile country/traditional food processing units.
- Study the differences between a sharing economy and a market economy.
- Develop an inventory of food banks and other relevant food security related initiatives.
- Set up a national food program for students.
- Develop and promote a breastfeeding strategy.
- Consider nationalizing food distribution.
- Consider nationalizing air transportation in the North.
- Encourage and utilize community-based innovation by actively engaging communities and its members.
- Develop a system to share best practices and lessons learned.

9.8 New nutrition education initiatives

While the HC (Health Canada)/PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) nutrition education initiatives under are generally well received, there was often a lack of awareness of these programs in certain communities. Participants suggested a variety of improvements to the nutrition education initiatives.

Specifically, Interis | BDO heard:

- More nutrition education and awareness of existing initiatives was desired in many communities, tailored to the individual community.

"Education makes a huge difference in increasing the consumption of healthy food within the community"

— *Community member, Alberta*

- There should be multi-year funding for nutrition education.
- The nutrition education delivered under NNC (Nutrition North Canada) should be integrated with other nutrition and health-related programs, particularly for diabetes and the treatment of cancer.
- Nutrition education should be provided on:
 - how to access healthy foods
 - how to eat healthily on a certain budget
 - when to buy seasonal foods
- There should be more courses on food preparation for both store-bought foods and country/traditional food.
- Promote healthy products in-store through appropriate signage and/or store layout.
- There should be more food demonstrations in the stores.
- Nutrition education should be provided on how to prepare big meals (more efficient use of food).
- Cooking and healthy eating should be taught in the schools.
- More nutrition education should be provided on breastfeeding.
- Nutrition education should be provided on community gardening and other local production initiatives.

Appendix A - Public engagement communities

There were **16** communities where a town hall session was held as a part of this engagement:

Date	Community	Venue
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May 30, 2016	Old Crow, <u>YK (Yukon)</u>	Old Crow Community Centre
May 31, 2016	Ulukhaktok (Holman), <u>NWT (Northwest Territories)</u>	Community Hall
June 20, 2016	Rigolet, <u>NL (Newfoundland and Labrador)</u>	Northern Lights Academy Gymnasium
September 20, 2016	Kangiqsujaq, <u>QC (Quebec)</u>	School Gymnasium
September 26, 2016	Iqaluit, <u>NU (Nunavut)</u>	Inukshuk High School
September 28, 2016	Pond Inlet, <u>NU (Nunavut)</u>	Attakaalik Hall
October 4, 2016	Hopedale, <u>NL (Newfoundland and Labrador)</u>	Nanuk Community Centre
October 17, 2016	Lutsel K'e, <u>NWT (Northwest Territories)</u>	Community Hall
October 18, 2016	Fort Chipewyan, <u>AB (Alberta)</u>	Mamawi Community Hall
October 19, 2016	Fond-du-Lac, SK	Fond-du-Lac First Nation Band Hall
October 20, 2016	Wollaston Lake, SK	Hatchet Lake First Nation Band Hall
November 2, 2016	Wekweètì, <u>NWT (Northwest Territories)</u>	Wekweètì Youth Centre
November 3, 2016	Kugaaruk, <u>NU (Nunavut)</u>	Kugaaruk Gym
November 15, 2016	St. Theresa Point, <u>MB (Manitoba)</u>	Community Hall
November 21, 2016	Inukjuak, <u>QC (Quebec)</u>	Inukjuak Recreation Centre
November 29, 2016	Big Trout Lake, <u>ON (Ontario)</u>	Community Hall

There was an additional **four** communities where a town hall session was scheduled, but due to weather, was not completed:

- Baker Lake, NU (Nunavut)
- Eabamet Lake (Fort Hope), ON (Ontario)
- Fort Albany, ON (Ontario)
- Oxford House, MB (Manitoba)

For the identified communities where an in-person visit was not completed there were interviews completed by teleconference with available and interested participants.

There were an additional **five** communities/cities where an engagement session (not including a town hall) took place:

- Black Tickle, NL (Newfoundland and Labrador)
- Nain, NL (Newfoundland and Labrador)
- Postville, NL (Newfoundland and Labrador)
- Thunder Bay, ON (Ontario)
- Yellowknife, NWT (Northwest Territories)

Appendix B - Organizations/individuals interviewed

There were **63** interviews completed as a part of this engagement:

- Aboriginal Diabetes Initiatives (ADI) Worker, Four Arrows Regional Health Authority [St. Theresa Point, MB (Manitoba)]
- Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology – University of Toronto
- Board of Directors, Fort Chipewyan Métis [Fort Chipewyan, AB (Alberta)];
- Chair and CEO (Chief Executive Officer), Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
- Chief and Council, St. Theresa Point First Nation [St. Theresa Point, MB (Manitoba)]
- Chief and Council, and Health Director, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation [Big Trout Lake, ON (Ontario)]

- Chief and Council, Health Director, ADI (Aboriginal Diabetes Initiatives) Worker, and Ontario Works Representatives, Eabametoong First Nation [Eabamet Lake (Fort Hope), ON (Ontario)]
- Chief and Director of Finance, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation [Fort Chipewyan, AB (Alberta)]
- Chief Operating Officer, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.
- Community Wellness Coordinator, Government of Nunavut and Prenatal Program Representatives, Baker Lake Prenatal Nutrition Project
- Conseillère stratégique en environnement, Société du Plan Nord
- Mayor and Council, Hamlet of Pond Inlet [Pond Inlet, NU (Nunavut)]
- Councillors, Rigolet Inuit Community Government [Rigolet, NL (Newfoundland and Labrador)]
- Council Members, Mikisew Cree First Nation [Fort Chipewyan, AB (Alberta)]
- Council, ADI (Aboriginal Diabetes Initiatives) Worker, and Building Healthy Communities Representative from Bunibonabee Cree Nation and Northern Store Manager [Oxford House, MB (Manitoba)]
- Health Workers, Department of Health and Social Development [Rigolet, NL (Newfoundland and Labrador)]
- Department of Health and Social Services, Government of Northwest Territories
- Deputy Chief and Council Members, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation [Old Crow, YK (Yukon)]
- Deputy Grand Chief, Mushkegowuk Council
- Dieticians, Prince Albert Grand Council
- Director of Health, Director of Social Development, and Director of Human Resources, Fond-du-Lac Denesuline First Nation, and Northern Store Manager [Fond-du-Lac, SK]
- Director of Public Health Education and Food Strategy Coordinator, Nishnawbe Aski Nation
- Director of Social Policy, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
- Director of the Nunavik Research Centre, Makivik Corporation
- Executive Director and Board Member, Food Secure Canada
- Food Security Committee, Community of Hopedale [Hopedale, NL (Newfoundland and Labrador)]
- Founder, Feeding My Family
- Government of Nunavut Secretariat, Government of Nunavut
- Health and Social Members, Council of Yukon First Nations
- Health Babies and Healthy Children Coordinator, Fort Albany First Nation and Student Nutrition Coordinator, Peetabeck Academy [Fort Albany, ON (Ontario)]
 - These representatives are also responsible for, and spoke on their experiences with, the Fort Albany Farmers' Market.
- Health Director and Nurse-in-Charge, Nuneen Health Board
- Health Promotions Manager & Dietitian, Athabasca Health Authority
- Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, Government of Newfoundland & Labrador
- Manager, Mittimatalik Hunters & Trappers Association [Pond Inlet, NU (Nunavut)]
- Manager, Social Development & Research Initiatives, First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba
- Manitoba Indigenous and Municipal Relations, Government of Manitoba
- Mayor and Council Members, Northern Village of Inukjuak [Inukjuak, QC (Quebec)]
- Mayor and Council Members, Hamlet of Kugaaruk [Kugaaruk, NU (Nunavut)]
- Mayor and Town Officials, Northern Village of Kangiqsujuaq [Kangiqsujuaq, QC (Quebec)]
- Mayor, Community Corporation Board Members, and Hunters & Trappers Organization, Hamlet of Ulukhaktok [Ulukhaktok (Holman), N.W.T. (Northwest Territories)]
- Mayor, Councillor, Town Manager, and Department of Health Representatives, Community of Postville [Postville, NL (Newfoundland and Labrador)]
- Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Government of Ontario
- Nunavut Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, Food Security Coalition
- Order Management System Assistant Manager, Fédération des Coopératives du Nouveau-Québec
- Operations Manager, Stanton Group

- Policy Analyst, Food Security Research, Nunatsiavut Government
- President and CEO (Chief Executive Officer), First Air
- Professor and Canada Research Chair in Toxicology and Environmental Health – University of Ottawa, and Assistant Professor, Department of Geography – University of Winnipeg
 - They acted as representatives of the Council of Canadian Academies based on their involvement as expert panel members on the State of Knowledge of Food Security in Northern Canada.
- Public Health Director and Public Health Nutritionists, Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services
- Public Health Nutrition Consultant, Ministry of Health, Government of Saskatchewan
- Representatives, Nain Research Centre
- Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones, Gouvernement du Québec
- Senior Administrative Officer, Hamlet of Ulukhaktok [Ulukhaktok (Holman), NWT (Northwest Territories)]
- Senior Director of Administration, Tłıchǫ Investment Corp. (Corporation), Tłıchǫ Government
- Senior Policy Advisory, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
- Senior Project Analyst, Regional and Local Development Department, Kativik Regional Government
- Senior Project Manager, Pathways PEKE (Pathways Partners for Engagement and Knowledge Exchange) Program, Native Women's Association of Canada
- Strategic Policy Advisor, Assembly of First Nations
- Town Manager and Store Operators, Community of Black Tickle [Black Tickle, NL (Newfoundland and Labrador)]
- Vice Chief, Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations
- Vice Chief and Councillors, Hatchet Lake Denesuline First Nation [Wollaston Lake, SK]
- Vice President, Merchandising & Logistics, Arctic Co-Operatives Ltd.
- Vice President of Canadian Sales & Operations and Director of Business Development, North West Company

Note: This list is not exhaustive as it does not include engagement with other stakeholder organizations and individuals that did not participate, or chose to participate in another way (e.g. example questionnaires). Further, this does necessarily include additional representatives involved in any of the discussions, ad hoc discussions with community members/officials, or with store management.

Appendix C - List of organizations/individuals who provided written submissions

There were **19** written submissions received and reviewed as a part of this engagement:

- AKI Energy Inc.
- Cargojet
- Dietitians of Canada
- Food Banks Canada
- Food Matters Manitoba
- Food Secure Canada
- Inuit Food Security Working Group
- Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak
- Nishnawbe Aski Nation
- Northerners [3x]
- North West Company
- Nunavik Regional Working Group on Food Security
- Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.
- Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
- Premier Taptuna, M.L.A. – Premier, Nunavut
- Researcher [1x]
- University of British Columbia Students

Appendix D - Glossary of terms

The following are a list of definitions for the terms used in the program as found on the [NNC \(Nutrition North Canada\) website](http://www.nutritionnorthcanada.gc.ca).

Commercially prepared food

Food that is prepared and distributed by food manufacturers, and that individuals typically buy in a store. This food can be fresh, frozen, raw, or cooked, and is usually pre-packaged.

Country food

Food obtained through local hunting, fishing or harvesting. Examples include caribou, ptarmigan, seal, Arctic char, shellfish, and berries.

Country food processors/distributors

Government-regulated establishments that produce country food approved for export and are located in a community eligible for a subsidy under the program.

Direct orders

Individuals and certain institutions (for example, schools and daycares) in eligible communities are able to buy eligible subsidized items directly from a supplier in the South that is registered with the program and offers this service. Direct orders are often referred to as personal orders.

Eligible communities

Communities eligible for food subsidies. These communities lack year-round surface transportation.

Eligible food

Lists of the [types of food](#) which are eligible for a subsidy.

Non-food items

Items that are also eligible for a subsidy. For example, in all eligible communities, non-prescription drugs are subsidized. In Old Crow, Yukon, which rarely has access to surface transportation at any time of the year, other non-food items such as diapers, toilet paper and toothpaste are also subsidized.

Non-perishable food

Food which does not spoil quickly when stored at room temperature and has a shelf-life of more than one year. Examples include dry pasta, dehydrated vegetables, and canned fruit.

Northern retailers

Retailers who operate stores located in eligible communities and who sell eligible food. These retailers are registered as a business with the Canada Revenue Agency and have a contribution agreement with [INAC \(Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada\)](#) to govern the funds (the subsidy) they receive under the program.

Perishable food

Food that spoils quickly especially if it is not stored at the proper temperature. Perishable food can be fresh or frozen and has a shelf-life of less than one year. Examples include meat, milk, bread, fresh vegetables, and frozen fruit.

Personal orders

See Direct orders.

Retail subsidy

An amount of money that the federal government transfers to registered northern retailers and southern suppliers in the program to help reduce the cost of perishable nutritious food in eligible isolated, northern communities.

Revised Northern Food Basket

A list of 67 food items and quantities required to nutritiously feed a family of four for one week.

Southern suppliers

Retailers and wholesalers who operate a business located in Canada but not in a community eligible for the program and who sell food that is eligible under the program. They are registered as a business with the Canada Revenue Agency and have a contribution agreement with INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) to govern the funds (the subsidy) they receive under the program. Southern suppliers provide eligible products to small northern retailers, eligible institutions, establishments and individuals living in an eligible community.

Surface transportation

Access to permanent road, rail or marine service.

Traditional food

See country food.

Footnotes

- 1 It is worth noting that some health care workers interviewed felt that formula should not receive an additional subsidy as it would be a disincentive for women to breastfeed. This was counter to the opinion of many community members stressed the need to purchase formula due to high rates of adoption, extended family care, and inabilities to breast feed.
 - 2 There was no consensus among participants in regards to keeping side bacon on the eligibility list, however, it was commonly agreed that as a less healthy item there should be consideration to remove it that was especially shared by health workers/stakeholders.
 - 3 The suggestion to remove fish from the eligibility list was made in a community that participants stated had plentiful access to fish and as such, the subsidy would be better used on other items.
 - 4 Eligibility for the program, as determined by the Province of Manitoba, are communities that are not directly serviced by an all-weather road and which do not receive the full subsidy through the federal program, NNC (Nutrition North Canada)
 - 5 Some communities (e.g. (example) Hopedale) self-organize personal/direct orders and use available credit-cards and complete a larger order.
 - 6 This opinion was prevalent in most communities even though the approximately half of communities visited did not have a restaurant.
 - 7 The eligibility list that was in place for the Food Mail Program was not the same as the NNC (Nutrition North Canada) eligibility list, so there was a change in subsidized items at the time NNC (Nutrition North Canada) was introduced.
 - 8 A social enterprise is an organization that applies commercial strategies to maximize improvements in human and environmental well-being, and may include maximizing social impact with profits for any external shareholders.
 - 9 A number of participants suggested nutrition education initiatives be included within a new program model despite already being in the current model.
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