



Small Community Opportunity Program

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Small Community Opportunity Program

Organization's Information

Organization's Registered Name

Stepping Stones Crisis Society

Common Name

Municipality / Location of Project

Cold Lake, AB

Organization Website

<https://steppingstonesociety.ca/>

Type of Organization

Non-profit Entity

▼ Non-Profit Entity

Non-Profit Entity Type

The Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act with
an Economic Mandate

Registration Number

50303838

Incorporation date

November 9, 1983

CRA Registered Charity

Yes

Organization's Address & Primary Representative

Address



City/Town or Municipality

Cold Lake

Province/Territory

AB

Postal Code

T9M 1P1

Provincial Riding

Salutation

Ms

First Name

Melissa

Last Name

Francis

Primary Phone



Position Title

Chief Executive Officer

Email



General Project Information & Summary

Project Name

Food Security and Culinary Skills Development
Program

Brief summary

The Food Security and Culinary Skills Development Program at Stepping Stones Crisis Society addresses food security and workforce development by offering culinary training, meal preparation services, and classes on nutrition and budgeting. By partnering with agricultural producers, the program supports sustainable practices while creating jobs and enhancing self-sufficiency in the Cold Lake community.

Length of the project

19-24 months

What strategic directions best fit your project?

Support for labor force and skills development / Rural
economic development capacity building

**Does the project build capacity to support
agricultural economic activity?**

No

**Please describe how your project impacts the
agriculture sector in a meaningful way.**

**Describe the problem this project is intended to
address**

The Food Security and Culinary Skills Development Program addresses two interconnected challenges: food insecurity and barriers to employment in vulnerable populations, while simultaneously supporting local economic growth. 1. Food Insecurity: Many individuals and families in the Cold Lake region face limited access to affordable, nutritious food. Vulnerable populations, including women and children transitioning from crisis situations, low-income families, and underemployed individuals, often struggle to meet basic nutritional needs. This impacts their physical health, mental well-being, and overall quality of life. Food insecurity is further exacerbated by economic challenges, rising food costs, and limited access to food resources in rural areas. 2. Barriers to Employment and Skills Development: Unemployment and underemployment remain significant challenges for

individuals rebuilding their lives. A lack of access to training, certifications, and practical skills prevents them from securing stable employment. For many, re-entering the workforce can feel unattainable without opportunities to build confidence, learn marketable skills, and gain work experience. This is particularly critical in food services, a growing industry in rural communities.

3. Local Economic and Agricultural Challenges: Small-scale food producers and agricultural businesses face difficulties accessing consistent markets for their products. Surplus or imperfect produce often goes to waste, while economic instability limits opportunities for growth. Strengthening connections between local producers and community initiatives is essential to ensure sustainability and economic resilience.

Program Solution: This project directly addresses these issues by:

- Providing culinary skills training to increase employability and workforce readiness.
- Preparing nutritious, ready-to-eat meals to improve food access for underserved individuals and families.
- Educating participants on food budgeting, preservation, and nutrition to enhance long-term self-sufficiency.
- Strengthening partnerships with local food producers to create economic opportunities and reduce food waste.

The program offers a holistic approach to addressing food insecurity, workforce barriers, and rural

economic challenges, creating meaningful, sustainable benefits for individuals, families, and the broader community.

Project description

The Food Security and Culinary Skills Development Program is a comprehensive initiative designed to address food insecurity, workforce development, and economic challenges in the Cold Lake region. By leveraging a fully equipped commercial kitchen, the program offers a multi-faceted approach to improving food access, fostering job readiness, and supporting local producers. Key Components: 1. Culinary Skills Training: Participants will receive hands-on training in culinary arts, food safety, and meal preparation. This training includes certifications to enhance employability in the foodservice industry, helping individuals transition into stable employment. 2. Meal Preparation Services: The program will provide nutritious, ready-to-eat meals to underserved populations, including low-income families and individuals in crisis. These services aim to address immediate food insecurity while creating jobs for program participants. 3. Educational Workshops: Classes on food preservation, budgeting, and nutrition will empower participants to make informed choices, reduce food waste, and improve their long-term self-

sufficiency. 4. Strengthening Local Partnerships: By collaborating with local food producers and businesses, the program supports economic growth in the agricultural sector. It creates consistent demand for fresh ingredients, reduces food waste by utilizing surplus products, and fosters sustainable community connections. Program Objectives: - Enhance food security for vulnerable populations. - Provide practical culinary training to prepare participants for workforce reentry. - Reduce food waste and maximize the value of agricultural outputs. - Strengthen rural economies by supporting local food producers and businesses. Impact: The program aims to improve food access for 500+ families annually, provide skills training and job opportunities for 100+ participants each year, and create meaningful economic opportunities for regional food producers. By addressing food insecurity, workforce barriers, and economic challenges in a holistic manner, this initiative will contribute to a stronger, more resilient community. This program not only provides immediate solutions to pressing issues but also builds a foundation for long-term sustainability and growth. It serves as a model for community-driven approaches to food security and workforce development in rural settings.

How does your project specifically address the problem identified?

The Food Security and Culinary Skills Development Program directly addresses the challenges of food insecurity and barriers to employment through a targeted, multi-faceted approach designed to create immediate and long-term solutions. By leveraging the resources of a fully equipped commercial kitchen, the program improves access to nutritious food, equips participants with essential job skills, and fosters economic resilience in the community. Food insecurity is tackled head-on by preparing and distributing ready-to-eat, nutritious meals for vulnerable populations, including low-income families and individuals in crisis. This ensures immediate relief for those who struggle to access affordable, healthy food. In parallel, workshops on food preservation, budgeting, and nutrition empower participants with the knowledge and skills to make sustainable, informed decisions about their food resources. This dual approach not only addresses urgent needs but also builds the foundation for long-term self-sufficiency. To overcome employment barriers, the program provides hands-on culinary training, including certifications in food safety and meal preparation. This equips participants with industry-recognized credentials and practical skills, increasing their employability in the foodservice sector, which remains a vital industry in rural communities. The

inclusion of structured work experience through meal preparation services further builds participants' confidence and readiness for the workforce. The program also strengthens local economic ecosystems by creating partnerships with food producers and businesses. Sourcing ingredients from local suppliers ensures consistent demand for their products, which supports small-scale agricultural producers and reduces food waste by incorporating surplus or imperfect goods. This integration of local resources creates a circular economy that benefits producers, participants, and the broader community. By combining food access, skills development, and local economic support, the program provides a holistic solution to the interconnected problems of food insecurity and unemployment. It not only addresses immediate challenges but also builds pathways for participants to achieve financial independence and healthier lifestyles, while contributing to the sustainability of the local agricultural economy. Through this comprehensive strategy, the program delivers meaningful, lasting change for individuals and the community.

Partners

Will this project involve a partner organization?

No

Economic Impact

What category best fits the project

Skills development

Based on your selected category, describe the anticipated economic impacts.

The Food Security and Culinary Skills Development Program leverages a fully equipped commercial kitchen to address workforce gaps, enhance food security, and build labor force capacity. This program focuses on equipping individuals with essential culinary skills, creating job opportunities, and providing community education that fosters long-term economic resilience. 1. Culinary Skills Training: Participants, including clients and community members, will receive hands-on training in meal preparation, food safety, and culinary arts. Certifications will enhance employability, providing participants with the tools to enter the workforce in the foodservice and hospitality sectors. This training addresses skill shortages and builds a pipeline of qualified workers to meet labor market demand. 2. Job Creation & Experience Through Meal Preparation Services: The program will operate meal preparation services for local businesses and schools, creating direct employment opportunities for participants. These

services generate revenue that is reinvested into the program, ensuring sustainability while fostering workforce readiness. By addressing immediate labor needs, the program stimulates job creation and provides participants with structured work experience.

3. Community Education on Food Preservation, Budgeting, and Nutrition: Classes on food preservation, budgeting, and nutrition will target low-income families, equipping them with the knowledge to manage resources efficiently, reduce food waste, and improve their overall well-being. These educational initiatives not only address food security but also empower families to build long-term financial and nutritional stability. Economic Impact: The program drives workforce development, creates employment opportunities, and strengthens local food supply chains. By providing skills training, addressing food insecurity, and supporting agricultural partners, it builds labor force capacity and fosters sustainable economic growth. This integrated approach ensures a lasting positive impact on both individuals and the broader community.

Economic Impact

Outcomes	A community increases the number of economic development trainings
Indicator 1	Increase in job training sessions (e.g. safety training required in agriculture or other sections)
Others 1	
Indicator 2	Increase in workshops related to strategic planning and budgeting
Others 2	
Indicator 3	Increase in number of community trainings/best practice sessions
Others 3	
Economic Impact	
Outcomes	A community develops programs and services to support economic development service providers
Indicator 1	Increase in information sessions for all community EDOs including local First Nations and Metis EDOs

Others 1

Indicator 2

Increase in program and service project planning sessions with community EDOs

Others 2

Indicator 3

Increase in new economic development programs and services provided by EDOs (e.g. agriculture, youth, entrepreneurship, and job creation programs)

Others 3

Economic Impact

Outcomes

A community increases community networks and/or local partnership

Indicator 1

Increase in local partnerships for economic development endeavours (e.g. agricultural, trades, etc.)

Others 1

Indicator 2

Increase in networking events and meetings (e.g. to support economic opportunities, planning, sharing information)

Others 2

Indicator 3

Increase in number of partnerships with communities and local First Nations or Metis Settlements

Others 3

Project Budget

▼ Project Budget

Staffing	\$52000.00
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Rent/Utilities	\$9500.00
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Staffing Description	The Assistant Chef plays a vital role in the Food Security and Culinary Skills Development Program, supporting the delivery of culinary training, meal preparation services, and educational workshops. Working under the direction of the lead chef, the Assistant Chef will provide hands-on guidance to program participants, helping them develop essential culinary skills, including food preparation, kitchen
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safety, and food handling best practices. This role is critical in creating a positive and supportive learning environment where participants can build confidence and achieve industry-recognized certifications, enhancing their readiness for employment in the foodservice sector. The Assistant Chef will also assist with daily meal preparation services that support local businesses, schools, and community food programs. This includes helping oversee meal production workflows, ensuring quality control, and maintaining food safety standards. By contributing to the operational success of the commercial kitchen, the Assistant Chef supports the program's ability to address food insecurity while creating structured work experience opportunities for participants. In addition, they will assist in hosting workshops on food preservation, budgeting, and nutrition, helping low-income families gain the knowledge and skills to reduce food waste and improve their long-term food security. Maintaining an organized and efficient kitchen environment is another key responsibility. The Assistant Chef will manage inventory, supplies, and equipment, ensuring seamless program delivery. By fostering

relationships with participants, the Assistant Chef also serves as a mentor, offering encouragement and guidance to help individuals progress through training and achieve their goals. Overall, the Assistant Chef is integral to the program's success, balancing operational responsibilities with participant support to ensure high-quality training and meal services. Through their contributions, the Assistant Chef helps address food insecurity, equip individuals with valuable skills, and build workforce capacity in the community, delivering both immediate and long-term economic and social impacts.

Rent/Utilities Description

The Utilities cost of \$9,500 for the duration of the project covers essential operational expenses required to maintain the fully equipped commercial kitchen utilized in the Food Security and Culinary Skills Development Program. These utilities include electricity, water, heating, and gas, all of which are critical to the effective delivery of program activities, including culinary skills training, meal preparation services, and educational workshops. Electricity supports the operation of commercial kitchen equipment such as ovens, refrigerators, freezers, and food

preparation tools, ensuring a fully functional learning environment for participants. Water is essential for food preparation, sanitation, and maintaining the highest food safety standards in the kitchen. Heating and gas are required for cooking, meal production, and creating a safe and comfortable space for participants and staff. The program's success relies on maintaining a reliable and efficient kitchen environment that allows participants to gain hands-on culinary skills, complete food safety training, and contribute to meal preparation services for local businesses, schools, and vulnerable community members. By covering utility costs, the program ensures uninterrupted access to a professional-grade kitchen that supports skills development, workforce readiness, and food security initiatives. In summary, the \$9,500 allocated for utilities ensures the commercial kitchen remains fully operational for the duration of the project, enabling participants to acquire essential skills, produce high-quality meals, and positively impact the broader community.

Travel Expenses

\$0.00

Supplies Expenses	\$38500.00
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Travel Expenses Description	None
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Supplies Expenses Description

The Supplies cost for the Community Kitchen Program is estimated at \$38,500 for the duration of the project (2 years). This estimate includes the essential materials required to successfully deliver culinary skills training, meal preparation services, and educational workshops. Supplies Breakdown: Food and Ingredients: - Fresh, non-perishable, and perishable items required for culinary training and meal preparation services. Estimated cost: \$25,000 over 2 years. Kitchen Supplies and Equipment: - Utensils, pots, pans, cutting boards, mixing bowls, and small appliances (e.g., blenders, food processors). - Consumables such as parchment paper, foil, storage containers, and cleaning supplies to maintain kitchen hygiene. Estimated cost: \$5,000 over 2 years. Training Materials: - Educational resources for participants, including workbooks, safety guidelines, recipe guides, and workshop handouts. - Certification materials for food safety and culinary skills training. Estimated cost: \$5,000 over 2 years. Workshop Supplies: -

Materials for food preservation classes (e.g., jars, labels, canning tools) and budgeting workshops. -

Supplies for hands-on demonstrations (e.g., measuring tools, sample kits). Estimated cost: \$3,500 over 2 years. Total Estimated Supplies Cost: \$38,500 This cost ensures the program is equipped with high-quality food, kitchen tools, and educational resources needed to support participants in developing practical culinary skills, gaining certifications, and preparing nutritious meals for the community. The allocation guarantees smooth program delivery while maintaining food safety standards and providing participants with a hands-on, professional kitchen experience.

Promotion Expenses

\$3500.00

Administration Expenses

\$10350.00

Promotion Expenses Description

The Promotion and Marketing Material Costs of \$3,500 over the 2-year duration of the project will support outreach efforts to raise awareness about the Food Security and Culinary Skills Development Program and its impact on the community. This funding will ensure the program

effectively engages participants, local partners,
and the broader community.

Administration Expenses Description

10% of Total Project Costs: \$10,3500 over 2 years.

Cost Breakdown: Office Supplies and Equipment:

- General supplies such as stationery, printing materials, and small office equipment (e.g., binders, filing systems). Estimated cost: \$4,500

- over 2 years. Postage and Communication: -

- Mailing costs for program materials, outreach, and reporting. - Telephone and internet expenses

- to support program coordination and

- communication. Estimated cost: \$2,000 over 2

- years. Administrative Support: - Partial allocation for administrative staff time to manage reporting,

- documentation, and program coordination.

- Estimated cost: \$3,850 over 2 years. Total

- Estimated Administration Costs: \$10,350 This

- allocation ensures the program has the necessary

- administrative resources to maintain efficient

- operations, comply with reporting requirements,

- and support successful program delivery. The

- breakdown ensures transparency and aligns with

- the 10% cap on administrative expenses.

▼ **Funding Sources**

List of project funders

Fundraising and Internal Funding

Committed funding amount

\$25000.00

▼ **Requested Funds**

Total Requested Funds

\$88850.00

Document Upload

File Upload

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Project Management

Describe the resources and skills the applicant will use to manage and complete the project

The Food Security and Culinary Skills Development Program will be led by a Director of Operations with extensive experience in operational leadership. They will oversee planning, resource allocation, and

stakeholder engagement. A Lead Chef and Assistant Chef will deliver hands-on culinary training, while an Administrative Coordinator manages reporting & finances. Using a fully equipped kitchen and structured evaluation tools, the team ensures the program's success and measurable community impact. The Team overall will be overseen by the CEO

Project Milestones

▼ **Milestones**

Project milestone or activity	Program Launch and Participant Recruitment
Expected Completion date	September 29, 2025

▼ **Milestones**

Project milestone or activity	Initial Culinary Training and Meal Preparation Services
Expected Completion date	December 30, 2025

▼ **Milestones**

Project milestone or activity

Midpoint Evaluation and Program Refinement

Expected Completion date

June 29, 2026

▼ **Milestones**

Project milestone or activity

Program Expansion and Advanced Training

Expected Completion date

August 30, 2026

▼ **Milestones**

Project milestone or activity

Final Program Evaluation and Sustainability
Planning

Expected Completion date

April 29, 2027

Project Sustainability



Strategies

The Food Security & Culinary Skills Development Program ensures long-term sustainability through revenue generation from meal preparation services, reinvested to cover operational costs. Strategic partnerships with local producers & businesses reduce expenses & provide ongoing support. Community engagement builds advocacy & donor interest, while participant success stories demonstrate impact for future funding. Operational efficiency & diversified funding, including grants and sponsorships, further ensure the program's ability to address food security & workforce development needs sustainably.