



Impact Report

**Nourish Third Anchor Cohort
2023-2025 | Team BC Lower Mainland**

A Journey Continued

Visionary health care leaders dedicated to transforming food and health systems across community, institutional, and policy scales, in the national Nourish cohorts.

Nourish's Anchor Cohort is a two-year national innovation program. The program's goal is to support health care systems across the country to develop anchor leadership and to deepen commitment to food as lever for health and well-being.

Through collaborative learning, innovative projects, and shared resources, cohort members drive change where food and health systems intersect. Cohort members lead projects that weave together sustainability, equity, and well-being to drive systemic change in food and health systems.

"Many of our successes have come from other cohorts' experiences, including both successes and downfalls with their work. We learned we don't need to reinvent it, just adapt proven concepts for our own work."

Cohort team members working together to develop their collaborative projects.

Third Cohort team members at the Food for Health Innovation Retreat at Wasan Island, September 2025.

[Click here to learn more about Nourish's Anchor Cohort program and meet the teams.](#)



Meet Team BC Lower Mainland

Fraser Health is the heart of health care from Burnaby to Boston Bar. Serving more than one in three British Columbians, Fraser Health is focused on improving the health and well-being of over two million people in 20 diverse municipalities across the region.

Providence Health Care is a Catholic health care community dedicated to meeting the physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs of those served through compassionate care, teaching and research. Located in Vancouver, Providence Health Care treats over 600,000 patients annually across 18 health care sites, including St. Paul's Hospital.

Provincial Health Services Authority works in partnership with BC's health authorities and health care professionals to improve access to evidence-informed practice closer to where people live and to effectively promote health, manage chronic conditions and reduce the burden of illness. PHSA has a unique role in BC's health authority system: to ensure that BC residents have access to a coordinated provincial network of high-quality specialized health-care services.

Feed BC is a provincial government partnership initiative led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to increase food in hospitals, residential care facilities, public post-secondary institutions, and other government-supported facilities.

(Left) Elaine Chu, Liena Pow, and Ned Bell present 'Planetary Health through Food' at the Canadian Society of Nutrition Management conference, June 2025.

(Right) Honey Extraction Workshop at Holy Family Hospital, March 2025.



A Journey Continued

Team BC's Story of Change

Team BC team consists of representatives from three Health Authorities in BC: Fraser Health (FH), Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), and Providence Health Care (PHC). We were motivated and inspired by the accomplishments of the previous Vancouver Coastal Health Team of the second Nourish Anchor Cohort, and came together in 2023 to become part of the Nourish's Third Anchor Cohort to continue the journey of promoting sustainability in health care through food.

With that goal in mind and with support from Nourish, the team went on an Inspiration Field Trip to the USA in November 2023. We aimed to learn about how both private and public health organizations in New York City joined in the Mayor's Office's vision to increase plant-based menu offering in health care facilities. And, we attended the Farm to Health Care Conference in Pennsylvania to learn about strategies to increase farm fresh produce on healthcare menus, and how lifestyle medicine nurtures wellness in people and communities.

From Inspiration to Strategy

The inspiration from the field trip became the foundation of our Cohort work, which eventually transformed into the Food Strategy for People and Planet. The Strategy is a comprehensive framework designed to highlight how food brings positive impacts to advance people's health and planetary health in hospital food systems. The strategy focuses on six pillars: Satisfaction, Menu, Waste Reduction, Procurement, Engagement and Measurement.

These pillars represent core business areas in food systems in health care. Using this strategy, the Cohort team members developed initiatives and actions in their own health authorities that focused on their strengths, and incorporated learning from others as well. We tracked progress and discussed regularly using a shared platform, although it was challenging to try to set quantifiable goals across all three health authorities due to different organizational priorities and resources.



From Strategy to Action

While it is impossible to give details of every action that the three health authorities took over the two years of the Cohort program, here are some highlights.

Fraser Health has introduced three new vegan menu items as part of the goal to include delicious, nutritious, plant-based options to patient menus: hearty mushroom pot pie, maple baked beans casserole, and cashew yogurt. Another initiative that covered both areas of Menu and Engagement is the Dietitian Planetary Health Recipe Contest, which engaged dietitians in advancing planetary health through food, and harnessed their passion and skills for plant-based menu development. In summer 2025, Fraser Health piloted the Farm to Hospital concept to purchase farm-fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables directly from local farms to improve meal quality, support local communities, and take steps towards more value-based procurement.

At Providence Health Care, exciting initiatives are happening as well, including their very popular interdepartmental Sustainability Fair, featuring plant-based menu samples and lots of learning on sustainability topics. Providence Health Care also collaborated with a beekeeper to bring beehives to two of their sites. The project had both staff and residents as the audience, helping them appreciate nature, and encouraging care and nurturing of our environment. In the area of menus, Providence Health Care emphasized increasing Indigenous foods offerings, which included serving bannock to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day, made with a recipe gifted by an Indigenous community leader.

Provincial Health Services Authorities also worked to implement the Food Strategy for People and Planet, including engagement activities like Planetary Health Food Fairs and celebrating Earth Day. PHSA is also working to increase Indigenous food choices on patient menus and to remove beef from patient menus. PHSA spearheaded purchasing of local salmon from a local Indigenous supplier - a complicated process involving supply chain, procurement, and environmental health officers, highlighting the need to remove systematic barriers to enable the vision of value-based procurement.

These are just some examples. Fraser Health, Providence Healthcare, and PHSA are implementing many other initiatives around the Food Strategy for People and Planet, all with the goals of better health for people and the planet.



(Above) Elva Yeh, Katie Wilkie, and Sumandeep Kaur from Fraser Health's Patient Food Service Team at the 'Let's Salad-brate' Food Fair at Royal Columbian Hospital, featuring local products and plant-forward foods.

Fraser Health:

- Choice Dining Expansion
- Converting disposables to reusables
- Homemade salad dressing with homegrown herbs

PHSA:

- Reusable coffee lids
- Ordering from Organic Ocean (sustainable fishing protocol)
- Reduced printing and paper waste

Providence Health Care:

- Local BC coffee
- Orbisk waste scanning and tracking project
- Rescued Foods Project

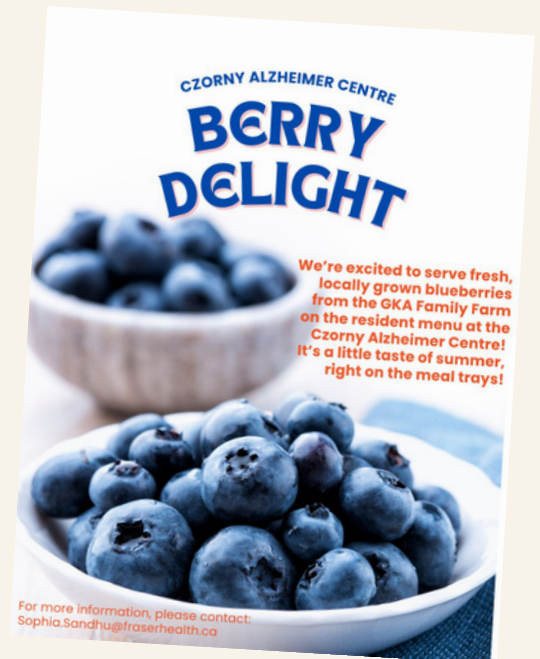


(Top) At the Rodale regenerative farm at St. Luke's Anderson Hospital Campus in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Members of Nourish's Third Cohort attended the Farm to Healthcare Conference in November 2023 as part of the Inspiration Field Trip, supported by a Nourish Inspiration Grant. This trip inspired the *Food Strategy for People and Planet* that has become the shared vision for food service teams across all health authorities in BC.

From Action to Expansion

Since September 2023, the three BC health authorities collaborated as Team BC Lower Mainland. In June 2024, we engaged the other four BC health authorities to form the Provincial Food Service Planetary Health Working Group: Island Health, Interior Health, Northern Health, and Vancouver Coastal Health. The Working Group adopted the Food Strategy for People and Planet as the framework for discussion and reporting, which marked a significant milestone to establish a shared vision and platform for collaboration and resource sharing. Discussions during the first year of the working group focus on establishing common objectives, sharing practices, and identifying barriers to sustainable food practices in the health care food system.

In September 2024, the BC Ministry of Health established the new Provincial Nutrition Standards for Acute Care, which included Standard 7.0. This new standard states that health care facilities will prioritize environmentally sustainable choices, noting that “[d]esigning menus with sustainability, reduced food waste, and local food prioritization in mind is essential in hospitals to promote environmental responsibility, support local economies, and minimize ecological impact.” This provincial standard further supports the idea that food is essential to optimize human health and environmental sustainability.



“Another highlight of the work is the elevation of local growers and producers. In addition to the aspiration goal of spending 30% of total food cost on local BC food, all three Health Authorities have put in extra efforts to involve local growers and producers. PHC signed a coffee contract with an East Vancouver Coffee Roaster, PHSA bought salmon from a local indigenous community, and FH started a farm-to-hospital pilot buying blueberries and fresh corn from local farmers. This effort set the foundation for future procurement relationships to continue to support local economy and communities.”

– Team BC Lower Mainland

Equally important, the BC Health System's Climate Change and Sustainability Plan recognizes hospital food services as a source of greenhouse gas emissions, recommending that hospital food services adopt sustainable and equitable practices that incorporate local, plant-based, and culturally relevant foods, while also reducing food waste and environmental impacts. Both the Nutrition Standards and the Health System Climate Plan underscore the need for a more robust approach to implement the Food Strategy with measurable outcomes and accountability, and affirm the need for all health authorities in BC to work together towards shared goals, synchronizing energy to avoid duplication of efforts and investment.

We are happy to report that the Provincial Food Service Planetary Health Working Group has secured funding from the BC Ministry of Health to develop an implementation plan to serve as a practical and strategic guide for executing the food-related priorities outlined in the Provincial Nutrition Standards, and in the BC Health System's Climate Change and Sustainability Plan. The implementation plan will facilitate a coordinated approach across BC's health system to scale and spread with clearly defined goals, assigned responsibilities, realistic timelines, and measurable outcomes, all while remaining adaptable to real-world challenges and interest holder input. The funding associated with the implementation plan will enhance and leverage current funding sources that are supporting existing activities and to support a more efficient use of resources across the participating organizations.

With the culmination of Nourish's Third Anchor Cohort program, Team BC Lower Mainland will shift gears and continue the next phase of the journey to promote sustainability in health care through food!!

Team BC Lower Mainland, September 2025

"I have learned the value of placing food at the centre of dialogues around wellness, in terms of both wellness of people and the planet. In my two years of experience, food naturally builds connections among a wide variety of people and situations. When we transform food from being the problem to being the solution in a planetary health conversation, people feel enlightened. People can connect to the topic of sustainability through food in a positive way."

– Elaine Chu, Director of Food Service Transformation & Strategic Projects, Fraser Health

Team Aspirations

Team BC Lower Mainland’s aspirations when joining Nourish’s Third Anchor Cohort program were to increase plant-based options on patient menus, create more coordination and coherence on food for health initiatives, and enhance collaboration across health authorities. The team aimed to develop a strategic framework that could offer structure and organization to the many food and planetary health initiatives and opportunities underway - in the present and future. Along with this, the team aimed to create tools to communicate the strategy’s vision and focus areas with key audiences - inside and outside team member organizations. The strategy and related tools would support the team to develop meaningful collaborations - between health authorities; between planetary health, food services, and clinical nutrition teams; and, between local food producers, manufacturers, and hospital food service.



(Above) The six pillars of the Food Strategy for People and Planet.

“Because of our participation in the Nourish Cohort and the work around elevating food in health care, the Food Service Team also gained an elevated platform to showcase the value, good work, and good food of the team.”

– Team BC Lower Mainland

BIG HAIRY AUDACIOUS GOAL



Nourish takes a systems view of food for health transformation, working on leverage points at the intersections of equity, climate, and community well-being. All Anchor Cohort teams crafted a problem statement and identified indicators for mission achievement. Teams were also challenged to set a big, hairy, audacious goal - one that would set the course and their focus for the two years of the program. The expectation was to set focus and commitment, knowing that shifting the status quo is a long-term project.

TEAM BC: PROBLEM STATEMENT

Food is not being considered, nor consumed, as medicine in healthcare facilities to achieve nourishing and healing effects in patients and residents. Food is also a major contributor to GHG emissions.

Mission Achievement:

- Support from senior leadership to implement new strategies and practices.
- Adoption of food waste tracking and reduction practices across health authorities.
- Clear and consistent practices for ongoing collaborative action and information sharing across all health authorities.
- Growing adoption of the Coolfood Pledge across health authorities and sites.
- Increasing and regular engagement across all provincial health authorities.



TEAM BC LOWER MAINLAND: KEY OUTCOMES



Created the Food Strategy for People & Planet - adopted by all Health Authorities, this milestone is providing a framework for collaborative action & resource sharing on health care food across BC.

Built new relationships with local food producers and suppliers, trialing Farm to Hospital pathways to bring local food directly into hospitals for the patient plate.

Took Delicious Climate Action by adopting the Coolfood Pledge at multiple sites, creating more plant-forward menu items.

Put more culturally meaningful food on patient trays by working with local Indigenous staff and suppliers to source local salmon and create new recipes.

Enhanced the role and importance of food in health care by dedicating new staff roles and functions to food-related work.

Changing systems means embracing complexity.

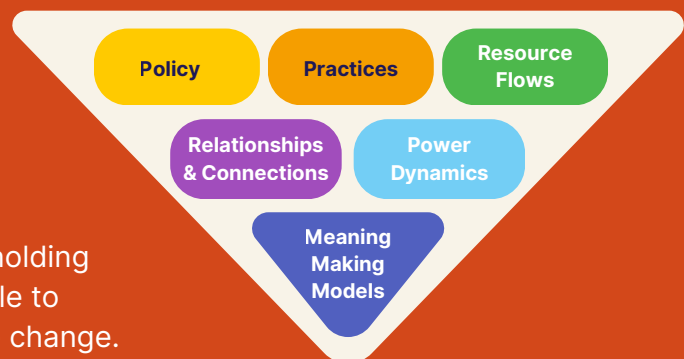
Systems change is a holistic approach to tackling large-scale societal challenges. It refers to the intentional and strategic effort to transform a system, first by building an understanding of how the system works, and then actively working to shift the underlying structures, behaviours, and mindsets that keep that system (the status quo) in place.

Systems change involves intentional effort to understand and address the **root causes** of complex issues, rather than only the symptoms, creating meaningful change and longstanding influence. For food for health systems, this can look like taking the Coolfood Pledge, increasing resources for local food sourcing, and changing how people understand the role of food in health and wellbeing.

Six Signals

Along with quantitative indicators, **all Cohort teams tracked six signals of systems change**, noticing the influence of their work over time.

When teams better understood what was holding their systems in place, they were better able to determine when, where, and how to create change.



- **Policies:** Rules, regulations, and priorities. *E.g., Coolfood adoption, local food as a strategic priority, etc.*
- **Practices:** Activities, procedures, guidelines, or informal shared habits. *E.g., new composting programs, revisions to RFP processes, etc.*
- **Resource Flows:** How money, people/staffing, knowledge, information, and other assets like infrastructure are allocated and distributed. *E.g., new staff roles, increasing funding, etc.*
- **Relationships and Connections:** The quality of connections and communication, especially among those with differing histories and perspectives. *E.g., new relationships with Indigenous elders, etc.*
- **Power Dynamics:** The distribution of decision-making power, authority, and both formal and informal influence. *E.g., regular meetings with senior leadership, etc.*
- **Meaning Making Models:** Deeply held beliefs, assumptions, ways of thinking, and unconscious behaviours that influence how we think, what we do, and how we talk. *E.g., deeper understanding of the role of food in healing, etc.*

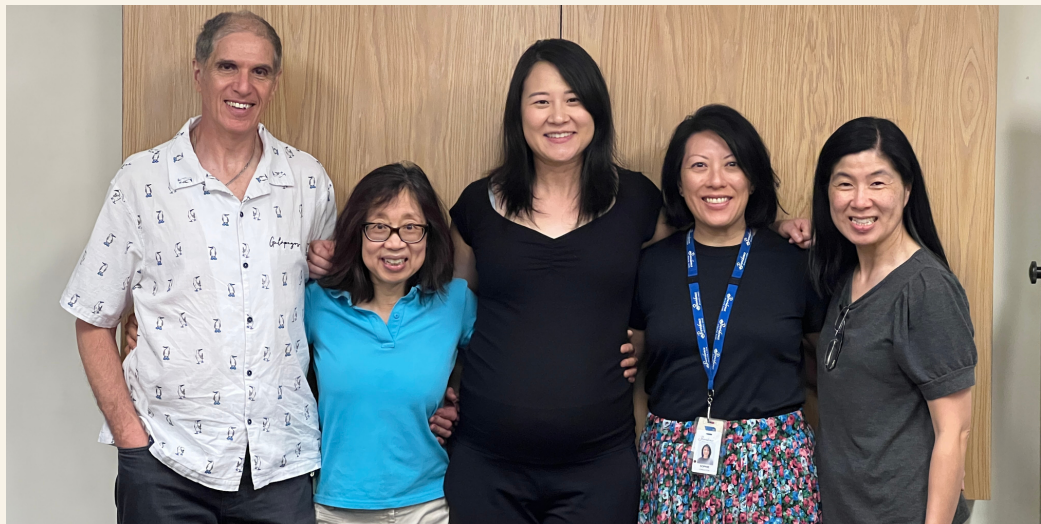
For more on signals of systems change, see [The Water of Systems Change](#) (2018) by John Kania, Mark Kramer, and Peter Senge.

TEAM BC LOWER MAINLAND: SIGNALS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE

Providence Health Care (PHC) and three Fraser Health sites signed onto the Coolfood Pledge.	Revised the PHC Environmental Sustainability Committee's governance to improve efficiency in managing sustainability initiatives.	PHC now holds monthly Environmental Sustainability Team meetings.
Created the Food Strategy for People and Planet, adopted by all Health Authorities.	PHSA's Heartwood Women's Unit started including Indigenous menu items.	St. Paul's Hospital is offering (retail) 10 Indigenous menu options and 20% vegetarian options.
Fraser Health piloted a Farm to Hospital concept to bring in farm fresh blueberries and corn directly from local farmers.	New relationships established with the Ministry of Health, resulting in new grants for further Food Strategy implementation.	New relationship between PHSA and Gitanyow First Nation that lets the fish come to them (i.e., no boats, very low carbon footprint, caught using dipnets).
Fraser Health added two new plant-based entrées, and is testing a plant-based yogurt.	Goals and objectives within PHC Food Services' scope of work updated to include a sustainability component.	PHC switched to local, Indigenous coffee for inpatient and retail food services.
PHC hired a Planetary Health Lead.	Fraser Health added a culinary medicine staff position to enhance food quality.	Fraser Health created a new Director role for food service transformation.
Sustainability information is now widely shared on PHC Connect (internal site).	Created the Provincial Food Service Planetary Health Working Group.	Fraser Health expanded Choice Dining.
Food has become a connector in many dialogues and collaborations.		



(Above) The Sustainability Fair at Providence Health Care, which featured sustainable programs across different departments - a highly popular event that raised awareness on planetary health among health care staff. (Below) Local cashew based yogurts were trialed at Royal Columbian Hospital as part of the work to increase plant based options for patients. Team BC project team members José Morais, Dr. Eileen Wong, Jill Liu, Sophia Chan, and Elaine Chu.



(Above Left) Fraser Health's Patient Food Service leadership team at the 'Let's Salad-brate' food fair event, March 2025. (Above Right) Mushroom pot pie - one of the new, plant-based entrée choices at Royal Columbian Hospital, part of the effort to reduce the menu's carbon footprint.

Looking Ahead

The provincial Food Service Planetary Health Working Group has secured funding from the BC Ministry of Health to develop an implementation plan. The plan will serve as a practical and strategic guide for executing food-related priorities as outlined in the BC Health System's Climate Change and Sustainability Plan. The implementation plan will facilitate a coordinated approach across BC's health system with clearly defined goals, assigned responsibilities, realistic timelines, and measurable outcomes, all while remaining adaptable to real-world challenges and interest-holder input.

The implementation plan and related work will enhance and leverage current funding sources that are supporting existing activities and to support a more efficient use of resources across the participating organizations.

With this, Team BC Lower Mainland will shift gears and continue the journey to promote sustainability in health care through food!

In Fraser Health, a special promotion video was produced in June 2024 which showcased a cooking demo with Culinary Lead Chef Steven Courtney and Indigenous Health liaison social worker Carol Peters together making baked bannock topped with a salmon and zucchini relish salad and a side of three sisters soup.

"I'm excited to see this because there's so many times that our people are in the hospital and they don't like the food, so they refuse to eat it and we end up bringing food from home... I am actually excited and can't wait to try it."

– Carol Peters, Indigenous Health Liaison Social Worker, Fraser Health



Acknowledgements

On behalf of Team BC, thank you to Nourish for such an amazing opportunity for us to learn and experiment for Food and Planetary Health in this two years of experience. The team first came together because we saw how food can be the lever for people's health and planetary health, and now we want to see how much further we can take the vision if we unite our resources together across health authorities in BC. That definitely has set the foundation for all subsequent work we are doing provincially, although we are individual health authorities. Along the way, each health authority has encountered challenges and obstacles that required us to pivot and adapt, so that we could stay focused on the pathway to materializing our vision one small step at a time. Together, we look forward to continuing this work to nourish health, strengthen communities, and advance equitable, food-based care across BC. – *Team BC Lower Mainland*

Fraser Health

Elaine Chu - Team Lead
Tina Hartnell

Feed BC

Stacie Irwin
Christina Waters

Providence Health Care

Jill Liu
Sophie Chan

Provincial Health Services Authority

José Morais
Anne Kayler
Jonathan Ampana

Third Anchor Cohort: Team Leads

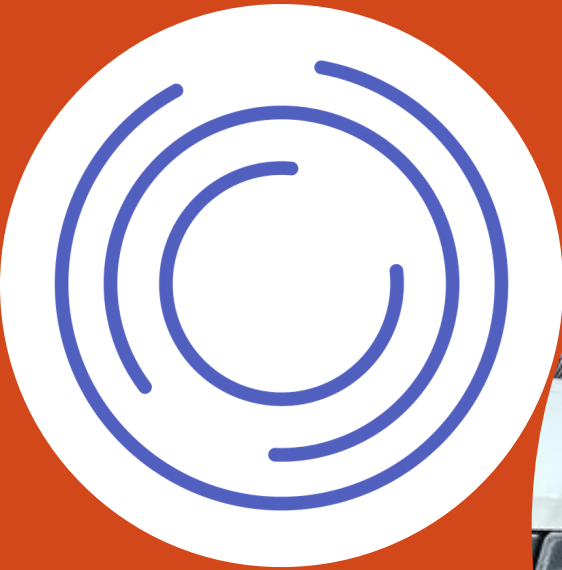
Michelle Stranges (London)
Dana Marshall (NL)

Avery McCorkell, Kaya Hill, Kendal Garlow, Kyleigh Farmer, and Sara Montour (Six Nations)
Donna Kwan, Heather Goodison, and Shelly Durrant (Toronto)

Nourish

Roya Damabi
Amy Ford
Hayley Lapalme

Ngaire Leaf
Jennifer Reynolds



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