

2024

Year End Report



Janey Rowland, Project Coordinator
Southern Gulf Island Community Resource Centre
12/1/2024

FOOD RESILIENCE ALLIANCE

SOUTHERN GULF ISLAND GROWER NETWORK INITIATIVE

Introduction

The Southern Gulf Islands Grower Network Initiative (GNI), a flagship project of the Food Resilience Alliance (FRA), is dedicated to fostering collaboration, enhancing agricultural resilience, and improving local food systems across the region. While 2024 saw significant progress across multiple components, the initiative also faced unforeseen challenges that required strategic pivots. This report provides an inclusive summary of the last six months' achievements, challenges, and priorities as the GNI moves into 2025.

Key Accomplishments

1. Meeting 2024 Deliverables Despite various challenges, the GNI successfully met its core deliverables for 2024, demonstrating adaptability and a commitment to its mission. Key achievements include:

- Establishing a foundational engagement strategy tailored to SGI growers.
- Developing the BC Farmgate License Resource Catalogue, set for release in early 2025.
- Initiating collaborations with critical organizations such as the Small Scale Meat Producers Association of BC (SSMPA).
- Designing and scheduling workshops for early 2025 that address vital topics for growers.

These accomplishments underscore the initiative's resilience and its dedication to supporting SGI growers and producers.

2. Engagement Strategy Development The GNI finalized a comprehensive engagement strategy designed to strengthen communication and collaboration with the SGI grower community, capitalizing on the winter months for outreach:

- **Newsletters:** Regular updates to keep growers informed about key developments, opportunities, and upcoming events.
- **Social Media Engagement:** Expanded visibility of GNI initiatives and workshops through targeted social media campaigns.
- **Direct Outreach:** Personalized communication efforts to engage grower groups across the islands and foster collaboration.

3. Farmgate License Awareness and Catalogue

- The Farmgate and Farmgate Plus Resource Catalogue was initiated to provide SGI growers with essential information about licensing requirements and available resources.
- This catalog is central to an awareness campaign promoting the BC Farmgate License Program, encouraging farmgate sales and supporting local food production.

4. Small Scale Meat Producers Association Partnership

- Collaboration with the SSMPA was initiated to bolster support for SGI livestock growers.
- This partnership will enhance regional representation and align FRA objectives with SSMPA's strategic goals, laying the groundwork for addressing systemic challenges collaboratively.

5. Abattoir Booking Service Development

- Progress on the SGI Mobile Abattoir Booking Service (MABS) framework continued, with timelines adjusted to accommodate staffing and coordination efforts.

6. Upcoming Workshops

Planning for the 2025 Knowledge Sharing Workshop Series was completed, with sessions scheduled for January and February:

- Grant Writing for Agriculture: Facilitated by Taryn Danford Consulting to empower growers with tools to access funding opportunities.
- Climate Mitigation Strategies: Practical workshops focusing on approaches such as dry planting to ensure sustainable food production in a changing climate.

Groundwork has also been laid to begin 2025 activities, including:

- **Development and Implementation of a Digital Farmstand Mapping Platform:** This platform will serve as a centralized resource for locating farmstands across the SGI, promoting direct-to-consumer sales and fostering greater visibility for local growers.
- **"Meet Your Grower" Events:** These events will take place across the SGI and will provide opportunities for growers to connect directly with consumers, share their stories, and build stronger community relationships. The initiative aims to enhance community engagement and highlight the value of supporting local agriculture.

Challenges and Adjustments

1. Recruitment Delays A 45-day delay in hiring the Grower Support Role impacted initial engagement efforts and project timelines. To address this:

- Interim communication strategies were implemented to maintain momentum.
- Adjustments were made to re-engage growers and accelerate progress once the role was filled.

2. Extended Timelines

- **Abattoir Booking Service:** Coordination with SSMPA and regional representation delayed the launch to late Spring 2025.
- **Engagement Activities:** Recruitment delays compressed timelines for community involvement strategies. Innovative solutions have since accelerated progress.

3. Change Management Solutions

- Improved coordination and resource allocation enabled the GNI to overcome earlier setbacks.

- Enhanced digital outreach and direct engagement strategies helped regain traction with growers.

Revised 2025 Timeline

January - February 2025

- Deliver workshops on Grant Writing for Agriculture and Climate Mitigation Strategies.

Spring 2025

- Launch the SGI Mobile Abattoir Booking Service pilot.
- Expand the Farmgate License Promotion and Awareness Campaign.

Ongoing

- Strengthen engagement through newsletters, social media, and direct outreach.
- Deepen collaboration with regional partners to address emerging challenges and opportunities.

Conclusion

Throughout 2024, the GNI successfully achieved its core deliverables and laid a robust foundation for future endeavors. By creating critical resources such as the Farmgate License Resource Catalogue and fostering strategic partnerships with organizations like SSMPA, the initiative has demonstrated its capacity for adaptability and forward-thinking. These milestones reflect GNI's commitment to enhancing food security and supporting SGI growers in addressing both present and future challenges.

As the GNI moves into 2025, the initiative is positioned to scale its impact further. With upcoming workshops that address key grower needs, a collaborative approach to tackling systemic issues, and innovative tools like the Mobile Abattoir Booking Service, the GNI is primed to advance food resilience and agricultural sustainability across the Southern Gulf Islands. Leveraging the lessons and momentum from 2024, the GNI will continue to champion the region's growers, ensuring a vibrant, resilient, and sustainable agricultural future.