



# Queen's University Food Insecurity Report: Update

Fall 2023



Queen's  
UNIVERSITY



This report was prepared for the Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) by Madeline Ritter, Student Food Collective Coordinator, and Dr. Susan Belyea, Chair of the Food Insecurity Advisory Committee (FIAC).



## Introduction

In 2019, in response to emerging evidence about student food insecurity at Queen's, the Food Insecurity Working Group was established by the Provost's Office to review practices and trends and provide recommendations for responses to student food insecurity at Queen's. A report was published in 2019 summarizing existing practices, identifying strategic priority areas, and setting recommendations. [The Food Insecurity Advisory Committee \(FIAC\)](#) was struck to provide oversight and guidance for this work. An update to the 2019 report was published in 2022 itemizing progress made in each priority area. Throughout 2022-23 the FIAC continued to monitor food insecurity-related initiatives on campus, consult with stakeholders, and make further recommendations. Significant progress has been made in all strategic priority areas identified in the 2019 report.

While progress on the strategic priorities is heartening, data collected since the 2019 report was written confirms that food insecurity remains a serious and growing issue amongst Queen's students. In 2022 and 2023, Queen's University administered the National College Health Assessment (NCHA), Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS), and the Shift Survey, each of which collect data on student food insecurity. All surveys demonstrate a significant rise in food insecurity among students at Queen's.

In 2022, according to the National College Health Assessment Survey:

- 11% of Queen's students faced severe food insecurity, meaning they sometimes restrict their food intake because they can't afford food
  - *Certain groups of students reported experiencing higher rates of food insecurity. Of students who reported poor grades (C-D range), 23% reported experiencing severe food insecurity. 20% of students with a disability and 17% of students not sleeping optimally on weeknights also experienced severe food insecurity*
- 18% of respondents faced moderate food insecurity, meaning they sometimes compromise the nutritional quality of the food they eat due to financial constraints

In the winter of 2023, Queen's conducted the Shift Survey, a campus climate survey which echoed this data. Among respondents to this survey:

- 41% reported they sometimes or often worried they would run out of money before buying food
- 39% sometimes or often could not afford nutritious meals
- 28% sometimes or often would run out of food and not have enough money to buy more
- 11.2% of students who responded to this survey reported that they sometimes did not eat for an entire day because they did not have enough money for food

Data from this survey also demonstrates that equity-deserving students, especially those with intersectional identities, are more likely to experience higher rates of food insecurity.

Results and analyses of these surveys can be found [here](#).

The Queen's Food Insecurity Advisory Committee recognizes that food access programming is a band-aid solution to food insecurity. While sometimes able to help meet the short-term needs of students, existing programs that provide free or subsidized food to students do not address the root cause of food insecurity – namely inadequate financial resources to afford a nutritious and adequate diet.

## **Progress on Recommendations from 2019 Food Insecurity Report**

The [2019 Queen's University Food Insecurity Report](#) identified five strategic areas to help address food insecurity at Queen's University: Education and Awareness, Environment, Community, Skill Building, and Policy. Within the five strategic areas, the 2019 Food Insecurity Working Group made 11 recommendations to address student food insecurity and foster a healthy campus community. A review of the initial recommendations was conducted in 2022 and it was noted that the majority of the recommendations had been completed or were being monitored as ongoing. Progress on the recommendations from the 2019 report is described in the [2022 update](#). In this report we focus on new and revised FIAC and stakeholder initiatives in 2022-23 categorized according to the five strategic areas. We also note initiatives that are not under the purview of the FIAC, but which contribute to improved food security at Queen's.

### **Strategic Priority Area: Education and Awareness**

- Provided training for food insecurity programming stakeholders on campus regarding best practices and offered consultation and collaboration on continuing and emerging initiatives, particularly the new PEACH Market
- Facilitated collaboration across food security stakeholders on campus to keep an updated online list of food access resources available on campus
- Created a draft of a comprehensive food access hand-out/poster
- Worked collaboratively with stakeholders on campus to create food-access program surveys and support qualitative and quantitative data collection

### **Strategic Priority Area: Environment**

- Promoted end-of-winter-term food collection/food drive spearheaded by Student Wellness Services



- Supported an internal review of the operations of the AMS Food Bank, as per previous FIAC recommendations. The results of this review are expanded upon in the Stakeholder Updates below
- Promoted a staff community garden located behind Jeffery Hall, an initiative of Employee Health and Wellness Services
- Welcomed the new kitchen at the Queen's University International Centre (QUIC), used for QUIC programming and available for booking by campus partners

## Strategic Priority Area: Community

- Actively worked towards a stigma-reduction approach in food security programming through the new PEACH Market
- Liaised with food providers in the Kingston community to discuss capacity

## Strategic Priority Area: Skill Building

- Partnered with Queen's Human Rights and Equity Office and the Student Experience Office to enhance food security training for AMS Food Bank managers and volunteers, and enhanced equity-based trainings for students on campus to include explicitly intersectional perspectives on food insecurity

## Strategic Priority Area: Policy

- The FIAC continued to collaborate, inform, and consult on food insecurity-related policy across campus
- While not targeted specifically at reducing food insecurity, the University, through the Financial Aid and Awards Office, has expanded need-based funding at the undergraduate and graduate levels, a move which fundamentally improves student financial access to food

## Stakeholder and Key Initiative Updates

### AMS Food Bank

[The AMS Food Bank](#) continued successful operations throughout the 2022-2023 school year, despite the challenge of relocating twice to accommodate JDUC construction. Currently, the Food Bank operates out of a temporary space in the Rideau Building which offers adequate space for both food storage and for customers on service days.

COVID-19 lockdowns dramatically changed the operations of the AMS Food Bank. Demand for the service increased against the backdrop of COVID-19 and remained high as they moved back to regular service.

Post-lockdown challenges included concerns about increasingly long lines and wait times, the regulation of behavior in lines, and concerns about food items running out because of increased demand.

The AMS Food Bank engaged in ongoing strategic planning throughout the year to address issues of concern. Topics included financial sustainability, strategies for food purchasing and transportation, and operational strategies to address gaps in food provision during school breaks and exam periods.

The Food Bank saw a rise in student demand in 2022-23. According to a survey conducted last year, the Food Bank served an equal number of undergraduate and graduate/professional students in 2022-23; and approximately 46% of respondents were international students. 18% of student respondents reported they were parents to dependent children.

## Good Food Box

The AMS Food Bank is a campus host site for the Kingston Community Health Centre's [Good Food Box](#) program. Through this program, students can register online to receive a box of fresh produce, monthly. The United Way of KFL&A currently funds 20 free boxes for Queen's students; however, registration filled up very quickly. The AMS Food Bank handles orders and logistics for this program. In 2022-2023, the AMS Food bank also coordinated the student volunteers who staff the new PEACH Market discussed below.

## Providing Equal Access, Changing Hunger (PEACH) Market

An exciting new initiative for food insecurity support at Queen's University in 2022-23 was the pilot [PEACH Market](#), a pay-what-you-can outlet operating on a sliding-scale basis. PEACH (Providing Equal Access, Changing Hunger), offers pre-packaged entrees, soups, and sides from the campus dining halls operated by Queen's Hospitality Services. During its regular semester hours in 2022-23, PEACH was open 11 am–2 pm on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday in the School of Medicine Building. PEACH Market fell under the management and staffing of the AMS Food Bank and AMS Operations for daily operations, while Hospitality Services handled food provisions and coordination of supplies. PEACH was staffed by the same pool of volunteers recruited to staff the AMS Food Bank.

During the 2022-23 pilot, 5735 meals were rescued from Queen's dining halls. Of these meals, 4378 were purchased by patrons at PEACH, with leftovers (408 meals) donated to the AMS Food Bank. A survey of PEACH users was conducted in the fall of 2022 and received 70 responses. The majority of respondents (68%) reported experiencing some degree of food insecurity. 23% of respondents were graduate or professional students, 38.6% were enrolled in the Faculty of Arts and Science, and 67% of respondents identified as a domestic student.

There were several key lessons learned from the PEACH pilot. PEACH experienced increased demand as the year progressed, doubling from 20 to 40 entrees and 19 L of soup each operating day. PEACH developed a strategy for patrons to discreetly identify the dollar value they wish to pay for a meal following feedback from patrons that they were embarrassed to declare a dollar amount they could afford. Coffee service, initially offered, was halted to prioritize food rescue and ensure traffic driven to PEACH was due to patron need. PEACH was closed over the summer of 2023 and resumed operations at the start of the 2023-24 academic year.

## Hospitality Services

In addition to its new partnership with the AMS on PEACH Market, Hospitality Services renewed its unique-in-Canada Swipe It Forward Queen's program and, in partnership with Student Affairs, implemented a grocery card pilot program in 2022-23.

### Swipe It Forward Queen's

Over the year the [Swipe It Forward Queen's](#) program received 350 form submissions. 7576 meals were loaded onto student cards through the program, and 4707 of these meals were utilized. 212 meals were donated by students. Compared to 2021-22, Swipe it Forward Queen's experienced a significant increase in demand in 2022-23, with an 87% increase in the number of form submissions, 2.1 times the number of students accessing the program, and 1.9 times the number of meals being loaded. Based on unique form submissions, 254 students used the program in 2022-23, in comparison to 118 in 2021-22. Meanwhile, the percentage of meals used in 2022-23 decreased from 2021-22, with 62% in 2022-23 as compared to 73.5% the previous year. In 2022-23, meals could only be accessed at Queen's dining hall locations; previously they could be redeemed in the dining halls or at campus retail food locations.

### The Grocery Card Pilot

The Grocery Card program was launched in January 2023 in an attempt to address the needs of students who faced barriers in using other food-access programs on campus. Operating on a referral basis, the pilot consisted of 30 grocery cards each loaded with \$100. The initial uptake for the pilot program was lower than expected, with nine approved referrals and six of those approved cards accessed by approved participants. Four of these referrals were undergraduate students; five were graduate students. Researching barriers to entry to the program and accessing the card will be useful in maximizing its utilization in the future.

## Student Wellness Services

Throughout 2022-23, Health Promotion in Student Wellness Services provided 220 [Fresh Food Boxes](#), 270 [Mason Jar Meals](#), and conducted cooking classes with 50 students. These programs continued to be popular, with registration filling up quickly.

## Other Campus Food Insecurity Initiatives:

In addition to the universally accessible food-access programming listed on the Student Affairs [food access webpage](#), several offices on campus provide food supports to targeted student populations by making free meals a regular part of their programming. These units include the [Ban Righ Centre](#), [Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre](#), and the [Queen's University International Centre \(QUIC\)](#).

While not directly represented on the FIAC, the following initiatives also contribute to campus food security at Queen's:

### **The Good Times Diner**

The [Good Times Diner](#) is an ASUS-run meal program providing takeout meals to members of the Queen's and Kingston community. Operating out of the kitchen of Chalmers United Church, they provided a weekly take-out meal through 2022-23.

### **Soul Food**

[Soul Food](#) is a student-run organization that delivers unconsumed food from Queen's University campus cafeterias to local Kingston shelters.

### **Queen's Community Gardens**

[Queen's Community Gardens](#) include four garden sites:

- The West Campus Community Garden consists of 22 raised garden plots on West Campus. Gardeners pay an annual fee of \$25 for a 3 x 7 ft plot
- The Employee Community Garden is on main campus in the courtyard adjacent to Jeffery Hall. Communal plots are shared garden spaces open to all registered gardeners for cultivating vegetables, fruits, and herbs
- The An Clachan Community Garden is located at 47 Van Order Drive. The garden has 15 allotments for use by the tenants of An Clachan
- Facilities has established a "Working on Wellness" community garden at 355 King St. for the staff who work in the building. The garden is equipped with 10 allotments

## Future Directions

This year, the Food Insecurity Advisory Committee and Student Food Collective arrived at a milestone. The original calls to action from the first and second report have been fulfilled, with outstanding items calling only for the continuation and monitoring of programs and initiatives.



Despite these efforts, however, food insecurity rates continue to rise among students, according to surveys. Food access resources are utilized at a high rate, and the providers of some services are concerned that the demand could outpace available resources.

Upon reviewing the original mandate of the FIAC in light of progress made in achieving goals, along with continuing high rates of student food insecurity, we recommend that the 2023-24 FIAC revisit the original mandate and membership, and establish concrete and reasonable goals for the future within the strategic priority areas. Further, review of FIAC meeting notes suggests the following actions for consideration in 2023-24:

## Education and Awareness

1. Regularly update information about food access resources and make them accessible for students using a variety of platforms (e.g., posters, handouts, social media posts, etc.)
2. Keep informed about promising practices to address student food insecurity on Canadian campuses and make those resources available to stakeholders
3. Support and consult on student food insecurity research
4. Provide support, training, and consultation for campus groups interested in addressing student food insecurity
5. Identify and liaise with instructors teaching about food insecurity

## Environment

1. Explore ways to improve access to food support during term breaks and in the summer
2. Foster dialogue among campus stakeholders about the multiple dimensions of food insecurity, including food quality, sustainability, access to culturally appropriate foods, etc.
3. Build relationships with Kingston's community food insecurity initiatives to provide more supports for students off-campus
4. Seek more student-discount grocery opportunities, particularly among grocers that students from varied food cultures may shop at

## Community

1. Encourage stigma-reduction strategies across all programs and phases of food insecurity initiatives, from the beginning stages of the referral process to the users' experiences
2. Support the increased number of Good Food Boxes from the expanded community partnership between the AMS Food Bank and Kingston Community Health Centres and explore further expansion of that program

## Skill-Building

1. Continue to support existing and emerging skill-building programs on topics such as budgeting, meal preparation, and culturally specific cooking programs
2. Develop a communications campaign (such as the “Food for You” campaign run by Student Wellness Services in the past) to educate students about budgeting, planning, shopping, cooking, and other food-related skills

## Policy

1. Continue to annually assess and calibrate the FIAC framework, recognizing the progress made on 2019 FIAC recommendations and the resulting new programming
2. Revisit the FIAC Terms of Reference to ensure it remains relevant to the ongoing work of the committee
3. Reassess FIAC membership structure to reflect all partners providing food programs for students, and institute a yearlong, pre-planned meeting structure
4. Continue to provide updates on student food insecurity to stakeholders and senior leadership at Queen’s



## Appendix

### Membership of the Queen's Food Insecurity Advisory Committee, 2022-2023

<b>Membership</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>
CHAIR: Vice-Provost and Dean of Student Affairs delegate	<i>Director, Ban Righ Centre</i>	Susan Belyea
Food Collective Student Coordinator	<i>Food Collective Student Coordinator</i>	Madeline Ritter
Representative from Student Wellness Services	<i>Health Promotion Coordinator, Student Wellness Services</i>	Kathryn Humphrys
Representatives from Hospitality Services	<i>Associate Director, Housing and Ancillary Services RD; Wellness and Sustainability Manager</i>	Jennifer Pete Theresa Couto
Representative from the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs	<i>Manager, Recruitment &amp; Events</i>	Colette Steer
Representative from Financial Aid and Awards	<i>Associate University Registrar, Student Awards</i>	Teresa Alm
Representative from the Alma Mater Society	<i>Environmental and Sustainability Commissioner, Alma Mater Society</i>	Emily Rolph
Representative from the Society for Graduate and Professional Students	<i>Vice-President Community, Society for Graduate and Professional Students</i>	Emilia Ganslandt
One Graduate Student at Large	<i>Student delegate</i>	Clare Gaherty
One Undergraduate Student at Large	<i>Student delegate</i>	Sierra Gaspari
Community Member	<i>Senior Director Community Impact, United Way KFL&amp;A</i>	Kim Hockey
Community Member	<i>Urban Agriculture Organizer, Loving Spoonful</i>	Fiona Smith





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