

Appendix G: Focus Group Methods

Focus groups, each with 12 to 15 individuals, were convened to address a set of pre-tested questions. The participants were selected by sponsoring agencies, based on these agencies' knowledge of their clients' food related needs and issues.

Sponsoring agencies include:

Vancouver Native Health Society for downtown east side single people;
Ray-Cam Cooperative Centre for downtown east side families;
Britannia Community Services Centre for Grandview/Woodlands families;
Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House for Vancouver Northeast;
MOSAIC sponsored a group for Non-English Speaking families in Grandview Woodlands
DEYAS sponsored a group of at-risk, street-entrenched youth.

In addition, there was a focus group comprised of staff from Community Serving Agencies in order to elicit their perspectives and to ascertain whether the staff perspective differs substantially from the perspectives of those food insecure families and individuals who participated in our focus groups.

At the beginning of each group the Facilitator described the purpose of the work and assured participants of the confidentiality and anonymity of the enquiry. The Facilitator posed the question and ensured that everyone had an opportunity to speak to each question. At the closing the facilitator asked each individual to provide his/her closing remarks. Detailed notes were taken by a research assistant.

Focus Group Questions Include:

1. When you have money, where do you shop?
2. In any month, how long does your money last?
3. Do you use a food bank? Which one? Can you get there easily?
4. How would you describe the food bank service? Can you get what you need/want there?
5. Do you have suggestions for improving this? access? variety or choice? other?
6. Do you access prepared meals? where?
7. How would you describe the prepared meal service?
8. Do you have suggestions for improving this?
9. Do you ever grow your own vegetables?
10. Have you every taken a program about cooking or nutrition? Would you be interested?
11. Do you rely on friends or family for extra food or money?
12. Do you have a plan for improving your situation?

The agency staff members were asked:

1. Is food available to those in need? How are people currently coping?
2. Where are areas of strength in the current 'system'? What works well?
3. What are the gaps? Where are there problems?
4. What would you recommend to fill those gaps?
5. Are food bank clients being adequately served? If not, how could this be improved? Do you think line-ups are inevitable?
6. People have complained that they don't get enough fresh fruit and vegetables in what emergency food providers hand out. Yet the DTES is home to many stores selling great produce. What's the problem here?

7. Do you think people who are 'food insecure' would participate in some type of social venture or program to improve their situation? What type of program? By whom?
8. What are your ideas to improve food security?