



## Project Performance Report

“Small Scale Food Processors  
Scale Up Support Program”

Submitted by

Small Scale Food Processor Association

<https://ssfpa.net/>

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Prepared by | Sustainable Results Group

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## **Executive Summary**

The Food Business Refresh Program concluded in 2021; however, participants within this program served as a foundational reference for this report. The writer's research and findings are derived from feedback provided by a Cohort of Graduates from the Food Business Refresh Program. The Cohort represents small scale food processors located throughout the province. The Cohort member feedback provided a comprehensive perspective on the current needs of small scale food processors within the province. Their feedback formed the basis for the findings and recommendations included in this report.

The Small Scale Food Processor Association is Federally Incorporated under the Canada Business Corporation Act and operates as an Extra Provincial Organization under the BC Societies Act. The Small Scale Food Processors Scale Up Support Program for British Columbia, has been pivotal in addressing critical challenges highlighted within the Project Performance Report and detailed in the Final Report. The report underscores the key obstacles facing small scale food processors within the Province of British Columbia in an every-changing and challenging sector. Labour challenges, inflationary pressures, supply chain disruptions, lack of business acumen and access to co-packers are just a few challenges the small scale processors are navigating. Despite these challenges, the program may have equipped participants with the necessary tools and resources to navigate complexities, possibly resulting in improvements in product quality, market expansion, and profitability.

The recommendations section attempts to address the challenges detailed in the Final Report in fostering resilience within the small scale food processing sector. By leveraging insights from the Final Report and implementing targeted support, it is possible to assist small scale processors in overcoming obstacles and achieving sustained growth and competitiveness. Through continued collaboration with stakeholders and proactive measures outlined in the Final Report, the recommendations may help navigate the evolving landscape and ensure the success of small scale food processors in the face of ongoing challenges.

## **Introduction**

The current small scale processor sector is characterized by economic volatility, the small scale food processing sector is fraught with labour shortages, inflationary pressures, and supply chain disruptions. Within this context, the Small Scale Food Processors Scale Up Support Program emerged as a focused initiative, offering assistance and guidance to an industry struggling with multifaceted hurdles. The small scale food processors are faced with a unique challenge, where traditional practices intersect with current realities, and where the need for profitability coexists with the focus on sustainability. Against this backdrop, the program assumed a central role, which may provide focused support(s) and an avenue for progress for small scale processors striving to overcome adversities.

As a result of the program, it became evident the challenges facing the small scale food processing sector are both complex and varied. Labour shortages are a pervasive issue affecting processors of all sizes, and disrupt production schedules and strain operational capacities, underscoring the need for innovative solutions to address workforce gaps.

Similarly, the sector has been affected by the impact of inflation, which exerts upward pressure on input costs and poses financial challenges for processors. Fluctuations in commodity prices and rising transportation expenses contribute to uncertainty, prompting processors to seek cost-saving measures and strategic partnerships to mitigate the effects of inflation. Supporting small scale processors with access to resources and guidance on navigating cost pressures could be beneficial in many aspects.

Additionally, disruptions in global supply chains present additional hurdles for small scale processors, affecting the timely procurement of raw materials and hindering market competitiveness. While the program recognizes the challenges posed by supply chain disruptions, the lack of business acumen and limited access to co-packers for most small scale processors, may also be hindering their growth and scalability.

In summary, the program's intent was to empower processors to overcome obstacles and identify existing training and other capacity building gaps. The Small Scale Food Processors Scale Up Support Program was delivered within a dynamic and evolving landscape, offering assistance and guidance to small scale processors as they navigated challenges and pursue opportunities for scalability and sustainability. Although the program was a pilot, the issues and opportunities identified through the various phases, possibly created a clear roadmap for what the sector needs for scalability and sustainability for the sector over the short, middle, and long term.

## Overview of Program Success

The Small Scale Food Processors Scale Up Program has been a success in the sense of capacity-building and sustainability initiatives for small scale food processors. Through a comprehensive approach that included tailored training, collaborative networking opportunities, and expert coaching, the program has achieved notable outcomes for its participants.

*Business Growth and Performance:* An essential aspect of the program's success, is its impact on participant businesses. Through targeted training sessions and personalized coaching, participants have gained valuable insights and practical strategies to improve their operations. Many participants have highlighted enhancements in various aspects of their businesses, such as product quality, market expansion, and improving their financial acumen.

*Engagement and Collaboration:* The program's success is also attributed to participant engagement and collaboration, facilitated by its cohort-based model. Participants actively participated in training sessions, networking events, and one-on-one coaching sessions, demonstrating their commitment to professional development. The cohort environment encouraged peer learning, knowledge sharing, and mutual support among participants, fostering a dynamic ecosystem where ideas flourish, and innovation thrives. This collaborative spirit has played a pivotal role in driving program success and cultivating a sense of community among participants.

*Positive Feedback and Recognition:* Feedback from program participants has been positive, highlighting the program's effectiveness and impact. Participants have commended the program for its relevance, practicality, and value-added insights, acknowledging its role in their business growth journeys.

*Continued Growth and Sustainability:* The Small Scale Food Processors Scale Up Program was a foundation for the future success of small scale processors and their business needs. By leveraging lessons learned, refining program offerings, adapting to emerging trends, empowering small scale processors, and driving positive change within the industry should be a key component of a longer term strategic plan.

In summary, The Small Scale Food Processors Scale Up Program represented a testament to the effectiveness of targeted capacity-building initiatives in driving economic growth, fostering innovation, and empowering small scale entrepreneurs. Through its inclusive approach, the program may not have only transformed participant businesses, but also contributed, in ways, to the overall resilience and vitality of the food processing sector. The focus to understand and respond to evolving needs and challenges of small scale processors is paramount in creating opportunities for scalability sustainable growth.

## Deliverables

### Overview of Assessment Section (Pages 7-12 in the Final Report and Appendix A & B Below):

The assessment section of the Final Report (pages 7-12) provides a detailed analysis of the engagement with Refresh Businesses from the 2021 Program. The section outlines the methodologies employed, data collected, and insights gleaned from assessing the impact of the program on participants. Below is an overview of the section:

- 1. Methodology Clarity:** The report outlines the methodology used to assess participant engagement and program impact. From the Final Report, the cohort from the 2021 Refresh Program was surveyed, 25 one-on-one interviews were conducted with previous cohort participants, and a working group of five companies was formed to gain further insight into internal and external program offerings utilized. The utilization of a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including surveys, one-on-one interviews, working/value-ad group, and data analysis, demonstrates a holistic approach to gathering comprehensive insights.
- 2. Data Collection and Analysis:** The Final Report demonstrates the data collection and analysis, documenting participant engagement and improvements resulting directly from program participation. The Final Report provides tangible evidence of the program's effectiveness. The use of both quantitative metrics and qualitative narratives enriches the analysis, offering an understanding of participant experiences and outcomes.
- 3. Participant Progress and Improvements:** The Final Report captures participant progress, as a result of the program. Through surveys, interviews, a working group, and analysis, it highlights specific areas where participants have experienced growth, such as increased revenue, expanded market reach, or enhanced skills. This assessment not only validates the program's impact but also identifies areas for further development and refinement.
- 4. Participant Satisfaction Levels:** The inclusion of participant satisfaction levels also adds valuable insight into the overall effectiveness of the program. By gauging satisfaction through surveys and feedback mechanisms, the Final Report captures the subjective experiences and perceptions of participants. This qualitative data complements quantitative metrics, providing a holistic understanding of participant engagement and program outcomes.
- 5. Insights and Recommendations:** The assessment phase concludes with insights drawn from the data analysis and recommendations for future program enhancements. These insights are grounded in the findings presented throughout the report. Clear and actionable recommendations reflect a commitment to continuous improvement and inform strategic decision-making for future offerings and programs for small scale processors.

Overall, the assessment section of the Final Report demonstrates a succinct effort to evaluate participant engagement and Refresh program impact. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, data collection, and insightful analysis, the report provides valuable perspective into the effectiveness of the program and offers actionable recommendations for further improvement.

## Overview of Cohort Curriculum Section (Pages 13-24 in the Final Report):

The cohort curriculum section of the Final Report (pages 13-24) provides a comprehensive overview of the training developed to address specific gaps and needs identified through the assessment findings. The section outlines the topics covered in the curriculum and evaluates the effectiveness of the training in preparing participants to scale up their businesses. Below is a review of the section:

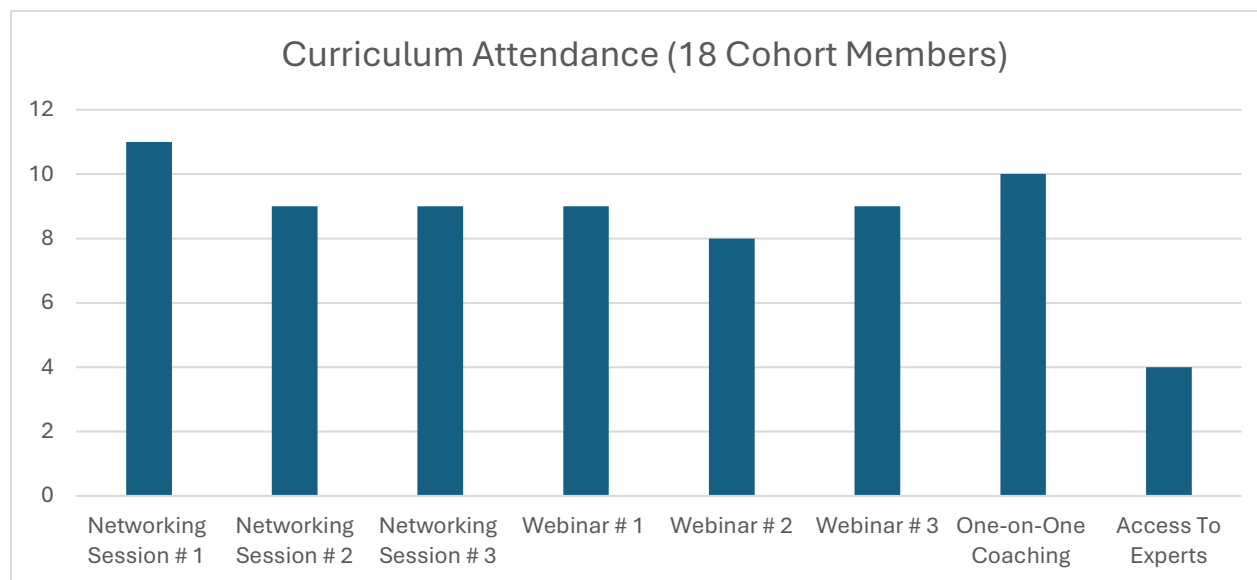
1. **Alignment with Assessment Findings:** The report demonstrates how the curriculum topics were derived from the findings of the assessment. By identifying specific gaps and needs among participants, the curriculum was tailored to address these areas of improvement. This alignment ensures the training was relevant and directly addresses the challenges identified through assessment, enhancing its effectiveness in supporting participants' business growth.
2. **Comprehensiveness of Curriculum Topics:** The curriculum covers a wide, yet targeted range of topics essential for scaling up small scale processors businesses, as identified through the assessment findings. From strategic planning and financial management to marketing strategies, operational efficiency and food safety, the curriculum addressed key areas for capacity building gaps.
3. **Relevance and Practicality:** The Final Report demonstrates the relevance and practicality of the curriculum topics by contextualizing them within the specific needs of the participants and their businesses. Through case studies, real-world examples, and interactive learning activities, the curriculum provided practical insights and actionable strategies that participants can apply directly to their businesses. This approach enhanced the relevance of the training and facilitates effective knowledge transfer.
4. **Evaluation of Training Effectiveness:** The Final Report evaluates the effectiveness of the training in addressing participants' needs and preparing them to scale up their businesses. By assessing participant engagement and feedback, the report provides insight into the coaching and training's impact. Qualitative feedback on the perceived value of the training, offers an understanding of its effectiveness.
5. **Continuous Improvement and Iteration:** The Final Report concludes with insights and recommendations that could provide small scale processors with support they have identified they require to scale and sustain their business. By reflecting on participant feedback, emerging trends, and evolving market dynamics, the report identifies areas for refinement and enhancement for future support and program offerings.

Overall, the cohort curriculum section of the Final Report demonstrates a methodical approach to developing training that addressed specific gaps and needs identified through assessment findings. Through alignment with assessment findings, comprehensiveness of curriculum topics, relevance and practicality, evaluation of training effectiveness, and commitment to continuous improvement, the report provides valuable insights into the impact of the training in supporting participants' business growth and success.



## Overview of Phase 2 Cohort Attendance (Pages 18-20)

The Cohort Attendance section of the Final Report (pages 18-20) provides a detailed analysis of the dynamics of the Cohort. The Phase 2 Scale Up Program Cohort, comprised of 18 members (originally 19 members - Queen B Kettle Korn closed her business during the initial stages of the program), engaged in various Scale Up Program offerings. The analysis below highlights the level of participation by cohort members throughout the program.



## Overview of Challenges Faced (Page 19 of the Final Report and Captured Throughout the Final Report)

1. **Timing of Program:** One of the primary challenges encountered during the program was the timing, as it coincided with the busiest season for most small scale processors (October – January). This scheduling conflict posed a significant obstacle for participants, as they struggled to balance participation in the program with the demands of their peak production and sales period. As a result, attendance rates for program activities, including networking sessions and webinars, were impacted, limiting the engagement and participation of cohort members.
2. **Labour and Inflationary/Supply Chain Challenges:** Another significant challenge faced by cohort participants was the ongoing labour shortages and inflationary pressures, coupled with disruptions in the supply chain. These challenges directly impacted participants' ability to attend the program offerings, as they faced constraints related to staffing shortages, increased operational costs, and supply chain hurdles that demanded their constant attention. The combination of labour challenges and supply chain disruptions further exacerbated the strain on participants, making it difficult for them to allocate time and resources to engage fully in the program.

**Solutions Found:**

1. **Flexible Scheduling and Delivery:** To address the timing challenge, the program implemented flexible scheduling and delivery mechanisms for program activities. This included offering multiple after hour sessions for one-on-one coaching, access to experts, and mentoring meetings to accommodate participants' availability. Additionally, recordings of the webinars and networking sessions were made available for participants to access at their convenience, allowing them to engage with program content when it was convenient for them.
2. **Peer Support and Collaboration:** Encouraging peer support and collaboration among cohort participants was another key strategy employed to mitigate challenges related to labour and supply chain issues. By fostering a sense of community and sharing best practices, participants were able to leverage collective expertise and resources to possibly overcome common challenges. This collaborative approach not only provided practical solutions but also fostered a supportive network among participants, strengthening their resilience in the face of external pressures.
3. **Continuous Communication and Feedback:** Maintaining open lines of communication and soliciting feedback from participants throughout the program was essential in addressing challenges as they arose. Regular check-ins, surveys, and feedback sessions provided opportunities for participants to voice their concerns and suggest areas for improvement. This feedback enabled program organizers to make timely adjustments and refinements to program delivery, ensuring that participant needs were effectively met.

By implementing these solutions, the program was able to mitigate the challenges faced by participants related to timing, labour shortages, and supply chain disruptions, enhancing their ability to engage in program activities and derive maximum benefit from the program.

## Lessons Learned from the Small Scale Processors Scale Up Program:

1. **Flexibility:** One of the most significant lessons learned from the program is the importance of flexibility in program design and delivery. Adapting to the unique circumstances and challenges faced by small scale processors, such as timing conflicts and labour shortages, requires a flexible approach that accommodates varying needs and constraints. By offering multiple scheduling options, alternative delivery formats, and tailored support, future offerings would be better equipped to meet the diverse needs of participants and maximize their engagement.
2. **Tailored Support is Essential:** Another key lesson learned is the importance of providing tailored support to address participants' specific challenges and barriers to success. Recognizing that each participant may face unique obstacles related to their business operations, such as labour shortages or supply chain disruptions, the program implemented targeted interventions and resources to support participants in overcoming these challenges. This personalized approach not only enhanced participants' ability to navigate obstacles but also fostered a sense of trust and partnership between program organizers and participants.
3. **Community Building Promotes Resilience:** Building a sense of community and collaboration among participants emerged as a critical factor in promoting resilience and overcoming challenges. By fostering peer support networks and encouraging knowledge sharing and collaboration, the program created a supportive environment where participants could learn from each other, share best practices, and leverage collective expertise to address common challenges. This sense of community not only enhanced participants' ability to overcome individual obstacles but likely contributed to the overall success and sustainability of the program.
4. **Continuous Communication and Feedback Drive Improvement:** Maintaining open lines of communication and soliciting feedback from participants throughout the program proved instrumental in driving continuous improvement and refinement. Regular check-ins, surveys, and feedback sessions provided valuable insights into participants' experiences, needs, and challenges, enabling program organizers to make timely adjustments and enhancements to program delivery.
5. **Adaptability is Key to Resilience:** Finally, the program underscored the importance of adaptability in navigating dynamic and uncertain environments. From adjusting program schedules to accommodate participants' busiest seasons to pivoting delivery methods in response to emerging challenges, the program demonstrated the value of adaptability in maintaining relevance and effectiveness.

Overall, the lessons learned from The Small Scale Food Processors Scale Up Program highlight the importance of flexibility, tailored support, community building, communication, and adaptability in designing and implementing effective capacity-building initiatives for small scale processors. By incorporating these principles into program planning and execution, future initiatives can better support the needs of participants and drive meaningful impact in the small scale processing sector.

## Results:

The results section of The Small Scale Food Processors Scale Up Program provides insights into various aspects of program participation and feedback, including attendance rates, survey results, and feedback on the cohort model.

- 1. Low Attendance of Webinars and Networking Sessions (Page 18 of the Final Report):** Despite concerted efforts to accommodate participants' schedules and preferences, the program experienced challenges with low attendance in webinar and networking sessions. Factors such as timing conflicts, busy production and sales seasons, and operational constraints contributed to lower-than-expected participation rates. While low attendance posed challenges in delivering program content and facilitating meaningful engagement, it also underscored the need for continued efforts to enhance accessibility, flexibility, and relevance in program delivery.
- 2. Positive Results from Surveys Conducted (Pages 8-13 and 21-24 of the Final Report):** Surveys conducted as part of the program yielded positive results, providing valuable insights into participant experiences, needs, and perceptions. Key findings from the surveys highlighted participants' satisfaction with program content, relevance, and overall value. Participants expressed appreciation for the practical insights, actionable strategies, and networking opportunities provided through the program. Additionally, survey responses indicated a strong interest in continued participation and engagement in future program activities, underscoring the program's positive impact and value proposition for participants.
- 3. Positive Feedback on the Cohort Model:** Pages 21-24 of the Final Report highlight the Final Survey Results. Feedback on the cohort model was positive, with participants expressing appreciation for the structured learning environment, peer support networks, and collaborative opportunities afforded by the cohort approach. The cohort model fostered a sense of community and camaraderie among participants, facilitating knowledge sharing, skill development, and peer support. Participants favoured the cohort model for its effectiveness in addressing common challenges, promoting accountability, and fostering meaningful connections within the small scale processing community.

In summary, the results section of The Small Scale Food Processors Scale Up Program Final Report highlights the challenges of low attendance at webinars and networking sessions, the positive outcomes from surveys conducted, and the favorable feedback on the cohort model. While low attendance posed challenges, positive survey results and feedback on the cohort model underscored the program's effectiveness in delivering value to those who participated and fostered a supportive learning environment.

**Unanticipated Results:**

Despite meticulous planning and execution, the Small Scale Processor Scale Up Program encountered several unanticipated outcomes during its delivery. These unanticipated results shed light on participant engagement and utilization of program resources, revealing insights that could be valuable for future program iterations.

**Low Attendance for Webinars and Networking Sessions (Page 18 of the Final Report):**

One unanticipated outcome was the low attendance encountered for webinars and networking sessions. Despite efforts to accommodate participants' schedules and preferences and constant email, phone call and text reminders to encourage participation, challenges persisted, resulting in lower-than-expected participation rates. Factors contributing to this included timing conflicts, operational constraints, and competing priorities during peak sales and production seasons. The extent of low attendance underscores the need for continued refinement in program delivery methods and timing to enhance accessibility and relevance, ensuring optimal engagement among participants.

**Utilization of Expert Coaching and One-on-One Sessions (Pages 18 of the Final Report)**

Another unanticipated result pertained to the under-utilization of expert coaching and one-on-one sessions offered as part of the program. Only 23% of participants accessed expert coaching, while 56% accessed one-on-one sessions. This low utilization rate highlights variations in participant preferences and needs, as well as potential barriers to accessing specialized support services. While expert coaching and one-on-one sessions were integral components of the program, a closer examination of barriers to participant engagement, with a view towards optimizing resource allocation and program impact should be considered.

## **Overview of Recommendations (Pages 25 – 31 of the Final Report)**

The Recommendations section of the Final Report (pages 25-31) provides a detailed overview of the recommendations and should serve as guidance, offering strategic insights and actionable suggestions drawn from the analysis conducted throughout the program. With a focus on addressing identified challenges and leveraging opportunities, the recommendations could be instrumental in guiding stakeholders towards enhancing the effectiveness and impact future program offerings. By outlining specific initiatives and interventions, the recommendations provide a clear roadmap for stakeholders to navigate through complex issues such as labour shortages, supply chain disruptions, inflationary pressures, lack of business acumen and co-packing challenges. The following recommendations are detailed in the Final Report:

**Recommendation # 1:** Exploration of a Centralized Grant and Funding Information Platform for Small Scale Food and Beverage Processors

**Recommendation # 2:** Exploration of Grant Programs for Small Scale Food and Beverage Processors to Facilitate Equipment Acquisition and Scaling Operations

**Recommendation # 3:** Exploration of Financial Literacy Program for Small Scale Food and Beverage Processors

**Recommendation # 4:** Exploration of a Food Science Support Program for Small Scale Food and Beverage Processors

**Recommendation # 5:** Investigate a Sales and Marketing Training Program for Small Scale Food and Beverage Processors

**Recommendation # 6:** Exploration of an Applicable User Friendly Food Safety Educational Resource for Small Scale Food and Beverage Processors

**Recommendation # 7:** Exploration of Cost Reduction and Business Scaling Program for Small Scale Food and Beverage Processors

**Recommendation # 8:** Investigate an Export Assistance Program for Small Scale Food and Beverage Processors

**Recommendation # 9:** Explore a Labour Attraction and Retention Program for Small Scale Food and Beverage Processors

**Recommendation# 10:** Investigate a Co-Packing Assistance Program for Small Scale Food and Beverage Processors

### **Conclusion:**

The Small Scale Food Processor Scale Up Program encountered challenges in respects to participant engagement and utilization of program resources. Low attendance for webinars and networking sessions, coupled with variations in utilization rates for expert coaching and one-on-one sessions, underscore the complexities inherent in program delivery and participant engagement. Moving forward, these unanticipated outcomes provide valuable insights for program refinement, guiding efforts to enhance accessibility, relevance, and participant satisfaction for future program offerings, to maximize effectiveness in supporting the growth and success of small scale processors.

**From two of the Scale Up Program Cohort participants:**

*“The Scale Up Program has delivered tremendous value to Not Too Sweet craft sodas. Gaining access to knowledgeable experts on issues affecting our scaling business, would be nearly impossible to source on our own. The program facilitated learnings that will highly impact our financing and sales strategies. We're glad to have participated in the program!”*

Thanks,  
Elaine Van  
CEO  
Not Too Sweet Craft Sodas

*“One of the big challenges of small food businesses like ourselves is having the time and resources to network with strategic people within the industry. Jody Marshall of Sustainable Results Group offered us valuable connections with excellent key experts experienced in their fields through the Scale Up webinars. It is these networking resources that we value the most in our journey of growth and development as a startup BC based food business.”*

Cheers,  
Mandy  
THE BOG  
Riverside Cranberry Farm

## **Appendix A**

### **Overview of Needs Assessment Survey:**

The Needs Assessment Survey served as a valuable tool for evaluating the effectiveness of the Food Business Refresh Program and other internal to government and external programs and services and identifying what the areas small scale food processors need assistance with currently.

### **Survey Summary:**

Multiple Choice Responses.

- 87% of respondents reported a positive impact on their businesses because of the Food Business Refresh Program.
- 52.8% of respondents expressed they were satisfied with the program, while 46.5% indicated they were very satisfied.
- A vast majority, 99% of respondents, found the topics covered and the delivery methods employed in the program to be valuable.
- All participants, 100%, highlighted the benefits of being part of a cohort within the program.

### **Survey Written Responses**

Survey Question – Since starting your business, in which topic areas have you most needed to develop your skills and knowledge as a business?

- Sales and Marketing
- Operations and Efficiency
- Finance and Accounting
- Manufacturing and Production Scaling
- Technology and Data utilization
- Food Safety and Regulatory Compliance



## Synopsis Of Survey Questions

**Shift from Operations to Sales/Marketing:** Initially, many businesses focused on improving operations and manufacturing. Over time, the focus shifted to enhancing sales and marketing skills.

**Continued Emphasis on Finance:** The need for financial management skills remained constant, though the specific challenges evolved with business growth and market changes.

**Increasing Importance of Technology:** The growing importance of understanding and utilizing technology, social media and data for business growth was evident.

Respondents indicated accessing the following programs beyond the Food Business Refresh program:

- Export Navigator
- Canadian Digital Adoption Program
- Futurpreneur
- BuyBC (Packaging funding)
- Various grants offered by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Business Development Workshop delivered by Farm Food Drink
- Women Entrepreneurs BC (WeBC) Peer Mentoring
- Lean Marketing Program delivered by Farm Food Drink
- Export/Trade Missions through the Trade Commissioner
- CanExport Innovation Program
- Community Futures (Financing)
- National Research Council Canada (Financing)
- Northern Development Initiative (Financing)
- Traceability Program
- On-Farm and Post-Farm Programs
- Launch Online Grant
- Kimberley Food Recovery Depot
- Columbia Basin Trust (Equity Investments)
- Venture Park Labs Accelerator Program
- Young Agrarians

Survey Question - What other resources, programs, coaching, etc. would help your business expand and grow?

- Professional development and coaching
- Operational efficiency and technology
- Marketing and distribution support
- Financial support and access to capital
- Programs for scaling their business
- Mentorship and networking
- Access to resources for start-ups and small business

Note from the survey: Lack of Suitable Programs for Some Businesses: Some respondents expressed they have not found effective programs for their specific needs, specifically for export opportunities. This indicates a potential gap in the availability or awareness of suitable market readiness programs.

## Appendix B

### One-on-One Interviews

As part of the Phase 1, one-on-one interviews were conducted with each of the 25 participants who were selected for the Needs Assessment process.

#### Summarized One-on-One Interviews:

##### Current Business State:

##### 1. Product Development and Innovation:

Many businesses developed new products (e.g., canned/carbonated wine, freeze-dried products, low-alcohol options, frozen Oyster Rockefeller) and changed their packaging (e.g., from glass to cans, label changes).

##### 2. Market Position and Sales Strategy:

A shift towards direct-to-consumer sales was noted, with an emphasis on local and farmgate sales. Businesses preferred this model due to the high costs associated with wholesaling and the lack of co-packing capacity/co-packers. Some businesses experienced significant growth in retail presence, scaling up to larger grocery chains.

##### 3. Operational Changes and Challenges:

Investments in new equipment and facilities, such as freeze dryers and commercial kitchen spaces, were made to enhance production capabilities. Several businesses faced challenges like unused equipment, compliance with food safety needs, and difficulties in packaging and labeling.

##### 4. Business Planning and Management:

Improved understanding and implementation of business plans and marketing strategies were common. Setting sales targets, financial forecasting, and measuring progress were key aspects of this improvement. Utilization of coaching and mentorship provided in the various programs for practical business applications and digital support was highly valued.

##### 5. Financial Impact:

Revenue growth and increased sales figures were reported by many businesses. Some experienced a substantial increase in their annual revenue. Cost-related changes, like reducing the cost of goods sold and managing expenses better, were also noted.

##### 6. Challenges and Future Outlook:

Businesses faced various challenges, such as the lack of co-packing opportunities, staffing issues, space limitations, and meeting regulatory requirements like HACCP. There is a forward-looking approach with plans for further expansion, new product lines, and continued improvement.

## Key Challenges Faced Now:

- 1. Compliance with Food Safety Regulations:**  
Many businesses mentioned challenges related to understanding and adapting to food safety requirements, and other regulations. This includes the cost of compliance and the need for additional equipment and staffing.
- 2. Economic Pressures and Cash Flow Issues:**  
The recession and economic uncertainty have impacted sales, particularly for luxury items like wine. Businesses are also facing challenges in managing cash flow, with some needing equipment to increase production efficiency but struggling with the associated costs.
- 3. Operational Challenges:** Several responses highlighted issues with scaling up operations, such as insufficient equipment and labour, the significant lack of co-packing capacity and services in the province, and the complexities of managing a small team. This includes balancing the need for increased production with the cost of labour and equipment.
- 4. Staffing Difficulties:** A common theme was the difficulty in sourcing, training, and retaining staff. Seasonal fluctuations in business, like closing for winter or varying product demand, exacerbate this issue. Higher labour costs and finding people with the right skills are also concerns.
- 5. Market Adaptation and Sales Strategy:** Businesses are trying to adapt to new market realities, which include shifting focus from certain product lines, like frozen foods, to others like freeze-dried products. The need to improve online sales presence and marketing efforts, including social media and website optimization, was mentioned.
- 6. Supply Chain and Production Issues:** Supply chain disruptions are affecting the availability and cost of ingredients and packaging materials. Some businesses are also facing challenges with processing capacity, such as space limitations, the lack of co-packers, and the need for more efficient equipment.
- 7. Regulatory Challenges:** New or changing regulations, are creating additional hurdles. These include meeting the requirements of government inspections and adapting to new farmgate regulations.

In conclusion, the participant surveys, interviews, and focus/working group conducted in Phase 1 of the Needs Assessment Program offered valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by the small scale food processor sector. The survey, interviews and focus/working group provided a platform for various perspectives and insights into the small scale food processor industry dynamics. This groundwork facilitated efforts in Phase 2 of the program to support the growth and success of food processing businesses.

## Appendix C

### Final Survey Results.

The Final Survey was conducted to gather input and feedback from eighteen cohort participants. Unfortunately, after numerous attempts through various communication modes to encourage cohort participants to complete the survey, only four of the eighteen participants completed the survey.

### Survey Questions

#### Question 1

Program Attendance: If you did NOT attend any of the webinars or Networking sessions, please provide your feedback as to why you were unable to attend:

#### Responses

1. Not applicable
2. While we would have really liked to participate in person, unfortunately the timing didn't work for us. The program came together very quickly and by the time it was organized we already had commitments on most of the days of the webinars.
3. Work schedule prohibited attendance to the workshop.

#### Question 2

How would you rate the effectiveness of the Scale Up Program in supporting the growth of your food processing business?

Choice	Total Responses
1 - Excellent	1
2 - Good	2
3 - Fair	1
4 – Poor	0

**Question 3**

Which specific aspects of the program did you find most valuable in assisting you with scaling up your operations (participants could select multiple choices)?

<b>Choice</b>	<b>Total</b>
Mentorship and coaching (1-on-1 and experts)	3
Access to and information on funding opportunities	1
Training and workshops	0
Networking opportunities	1

**Question 4**

In what ways, if any, do you believe the Scale Up Program could be improved for future participants (participants could select multiple choices)?

<b>Choice</b>	<b>Total</b>
More focused training sessions	1
Increased networking events	1
Enhanced mentorship opportunities	3
Greater emphasis on access to funding	2

**Question 5**

Which areas of the program did you find most beneficial for your business growth and development (participants could select multiple choices)?

<b>Choice</b>	<b>Total</b>
Financial literacy	3
Marketing and sales strategies	2
Food Safety	0
Brokerage and distribution	1

**Question 6**

Did you have sufficient time in the networking, webinar, one-on-one and access to expert sessions, to get all your questions answered?

**Responses**

1. I had the opportunity to ask questions that arose during the sessions. However, more pertinent questions tend to arise when applying the knowledge at a later time. So having networking contacts with these resources is more valuable in a practical sense.
2. Yes. Would've preferred more expert sessions. Would've preferred less networking. It seems most of the businesses in the cohort do not share the vision of scaling to become a national brand like we are. So, this part of the program didn't provide as much value for us as the expert sessions.
3. Yes

**Question 7**

Any other comments for the program?

**Responses**

1. It felt a bit condensed in the timeframe, which is understandable from a delivery perspective but harder to make an actionable impact on practical application for our business.
2. N/A
3. No