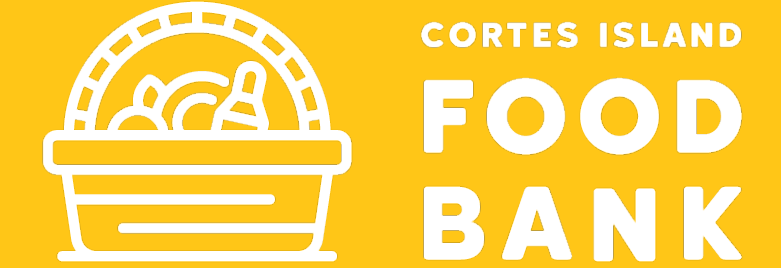




ANNUAL REPORT

2023

2023 IN REVIEW



2023 has been a very successful year for the Cortes Island Food Bank, but also a highly challenging one.

Over the final months of 2023, we served an average of 80 clients per month. That's almost as many clients as in the whole of 2022. A 616% increase year over year. The number of new clients needing help is increasing every single week - from every demographic.

This is not unique to Cortes Island but has been seen nationwide. It also reflects the 10-15% rate of poverty that the last census count estimated for our community.

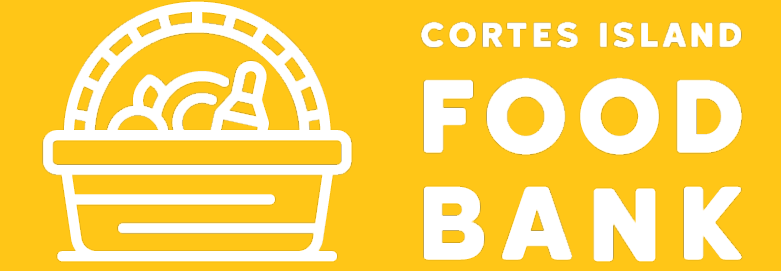
We have done well in meeting this challenge, by making it easier to find the food bank, developing more reliable and confidential ways to ask for help, better sourcing of food supplies, streamlining operations, building alliances with other groups, and fundraising. But we face many challenges should this level of poverty continue, and if we are to build a sustainable organization.

This report summarizes our achievements in 2023 and our strategic priorities objectives for 2024.



Cortes Island Food Bank hampers ready to be picked up.

CLIENTS SERVED



2022 = 110 CLIENT VISITS

2023 = 291 CLIENT VISITS

2024 = 1,200 CLIENT VISITS?

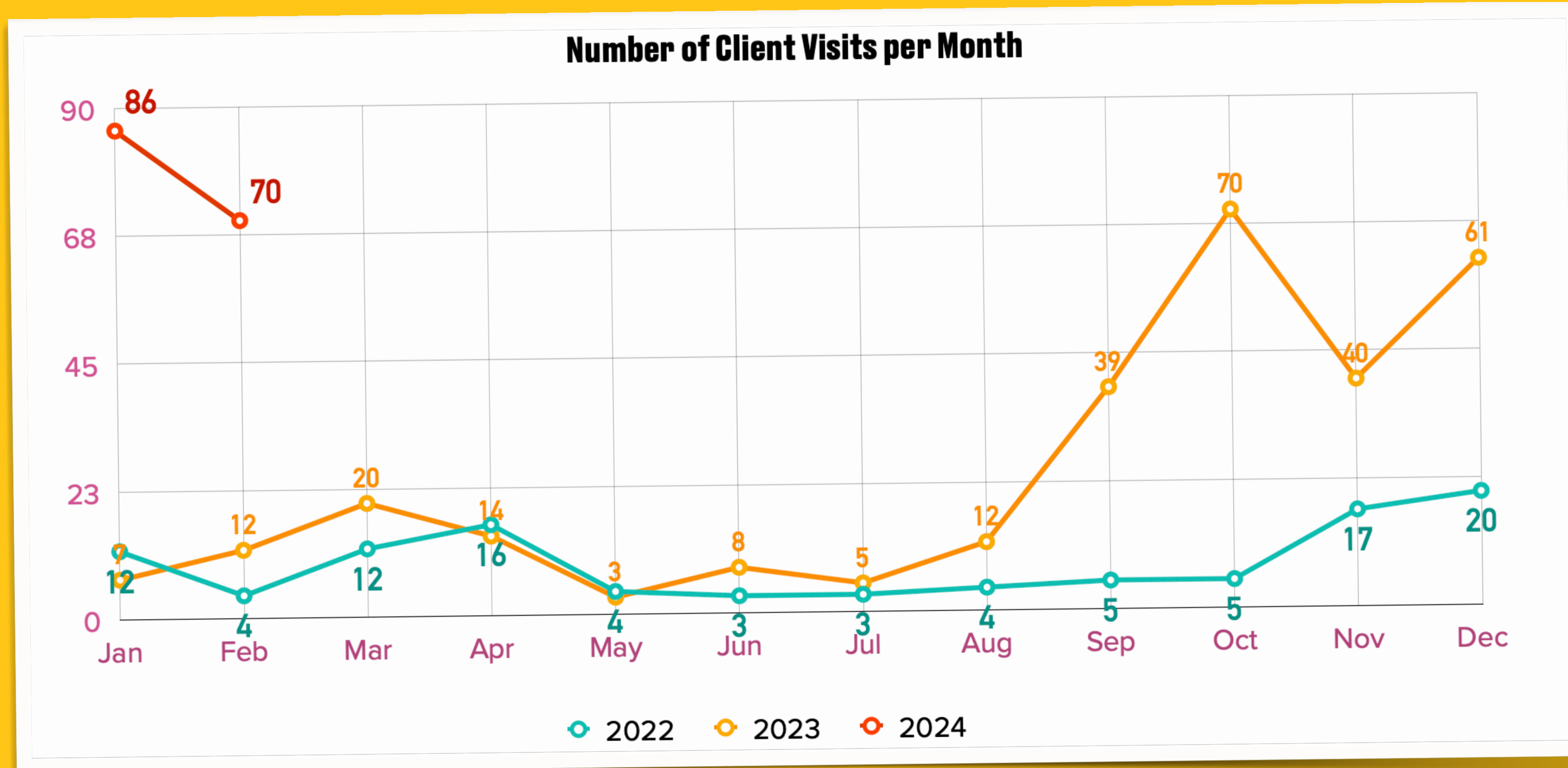
In January 2024, we hit a record **86 client visits for the month**. That's almost as many clients as in the whole of 2022. A 616% increase year over year.

Our increased level of service in August 2023 immediately exposed the real level of need on Cortes.

We anticipate that the real rate to be even higher and **may hit approximately 100 client visits per month in 2024 - that would be 1,200 client visits in a year.**

Client Visits = the number of times a client receives a food box in a month, no matter how many times an individual visits. So if a client visits twice in a month, they are counted twice. Some clients come only once every six months, or even once a year. Some clients come every week. Most clients come once a month.

Client Visits = Number of food boxes



The graph shows the sharp rise in clients needing help beginning in September 2023. This followed improvements in August in how clients could ask for help, but has also been seen at all other food banks throughout BC.

Historically, food bank use declines during the summer months on Cortes, when seasonal work is available, and when people can grow their own food. However, this year, with increased economic challenges, things may be different and the numbers may stay high.

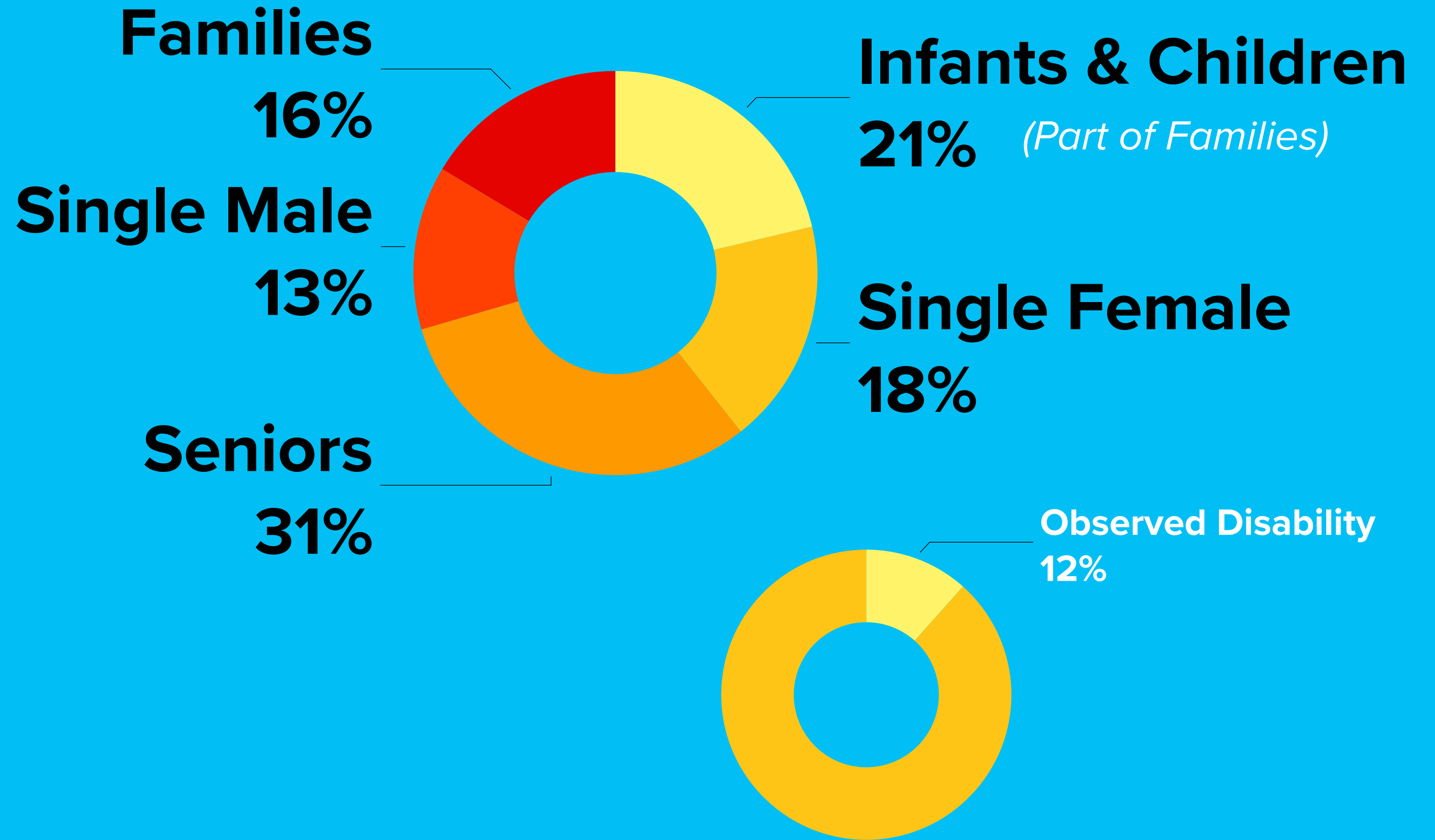
WHO WE SERVE

The chart shows the demographics of Cortes food bank clients. These are best estimates based on observed circumstances, as we do not conduct detailed intake interviews.

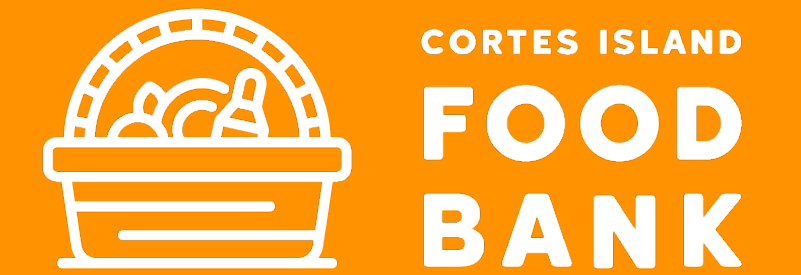
Therefore, the 12% disability rate may be significantly higher than observed. Likewise with any underlying medical or mental health conditions.

We may begin conducting more detailed voluntary intake interviews during 2024, if we can do it in a way that maintains confidentiality and is not too intrusive. This data is very useful when applying for grants and funding, and understanding how we can better serve our client needs.

(Multi- or single parent.)



OUR CLIENTS ARE EVERYBODY



SENIORS

REFUGEES

DISABLED

UNEMPLOYED

YOU

CANADIAN ECONOMIC DISPLACED

SINGLE PARENTS

& ME

INFANTS

CHILDREN

UNHOMED

SEASONALLY EMPLOYED

IN MEDICAL CRISIS

PRECARIOUSLY EMPLOYED

LOW WAGES

FOOD SOURCES

We source our food as carefully and economically as we can to create balanced and healthy food hampers. Our foods come from 4 main sources:

1. Loaves & Fishes

A Food Banks BC affiliated charity that gathers and distributes “excess” food stocks from wholesalers and retailers. This can represent very useful and high-value staples, such as rice or canned goods. But the range and availability of foods is unpredictable.

2. Union Protein Project

A union-affiliated charity based in BC that provides Food Banks with bulk own-label proteins (tuna, salmon, peanut butter). We must buy in bulk, but often at 1/4 the price of retail cost - and occasionally a refund is available from Food Banks BC.

3. Direct Food Purchases

We buy foods in bulk from Campbell River, or bulk suppliers of vegetables and fruit (Such as Freshpoint in Comox). Often these foods are significantly (1/3) cheaper than foods available on Cortes.

4. Local Donations

Whilst very welcome, local food donations account for only a small fraction of the food we distribute.

Direct Food Purchases

47%

Local Donations

1%

Subsidized

Union Protein Project

23%

Loaves & Fishes

28%

Free but unpredictable

**CHART BASED ON FOOD VALUE
PERCENTAGES FLUCTUATE**

2023 ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Understanding the real need on Cortes

A major objective during 2023 was to understand how many people really needed the food bank. To achieve this we:

- Created new ways for clients to reliably ask for help - with a website, new phone number, and monitored e-mail address.
- Promoted a high level of confidentiality
- Responded quickly and professionally to requests
- Promoted the food bank on social media and Tideline
- Got the Food Bank listed in the phone book and on Google
- Developed collaboration with agencies like Better At Home to reach clients in need

2. Building capacity

In order to be in a position to serve more clients:

- We raised more funds and applied for additional grants
- Developed more economical ways to source food
- Built a more democratic and accountable corporate structure
- Were able to pay our client care staff
- Created larger warehousing space to store increased inventory
- Developed the capacity to scale up to meet increased need
- Set up an agreement with SPCA to get free pet food for clients

3. Improved service options

- Provided two pickup locations. One in Mansons and one at the Gorge Hall - open alternate weeks
- Initiated a pilot project to make easy-to-cook frozen meals, particularly for seniors, and people with disabilities or experiencing medical crises. These meals are prepared by Sunflower Food Truck in a certified food-safe kitchen using excess foods in our inventory. This has proven to be highly cost-effective and will continue in 2024.
- Collaborated with Sunflower Food Truck to deliver food boxes and meals to clients unable to reach the food bank
- Tested a gift card system for use with local farmers
- Provided foods for those with Special Dietary Needs
- Conducted a client satisfaction and feedback survey. Results indicated that we are on the right track

4. Funding achieved for 2024

- \$25,834 - Standards of Excellence Implementation Food Banks BC
- \$25,000 - United Way - Critical Food Infrastructure Grant
- \$16,573 - Virtual Food Drive Fundraising
- \$13,475 - CBC Food Banks Fundraiser
- \$5,000 - SRD Grant in Aid

Pending: \$37,000 Gaming Grant

2024 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

A sustainable food bank

A key priority for 2024 is to build a more sustainable food bank for the future. Our accreditation with the Food Banks BC Standards of Excellence in 2024 will help us build the policies and procedures to enable this. An important factor will be recruiting new staff, enabling paid positions, and developing a succession plan.

Recruit and train new client care staff

A project that has already begun. We have recently trained and engaged some great new recruits who will be helping us in 2024.

Community meals

We will continue to support these important initiatives and are looking for funding to provide more help.

Healthy school food programs

We would like to explore options to support both the hot lunch program, but also a healthy breakfast program. We will explore funding options and further collaboration with food producers on Cortes.

Client intake process

Develop a better client intake data tracking system.

Community gardens pilot & local food production

Funding may be available to explore pilot projects to grow food bank foods locally and seasonally. In addition, teaching clients skills in wild food harvesting has been proposed and may be explored.

Emergency food support

Work with ESS, Fire Department, and SRD to create quickly accessible food stores in the event of an island-wide emergency.

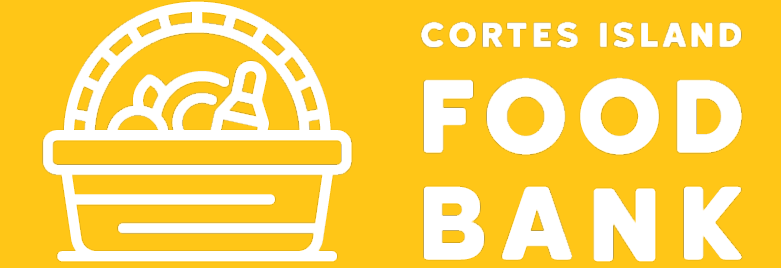
A food bank van or truck

With the steep rise in client numbers, using personal vehicles to transport food hampers to food pickup days is becoming very challenging. Funding may be available to help us purchase a larger van or truck.

A purpose-built food bank facility

Most communities of our size have a purpose-built food bank or food security hub. Not having a facility makes it very costly to operate our food bank. We are exploring funding options and suitable locations. This will be part of a three-year plan, and whilst ambitious, it is attainable.

STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE



This year, CIFBA will work to develop policies and procedures to meet all **87** of the criteria that we must meet to become accredited with Food Banks Canada's Standards of Excellence. We have received some funding to achieve these standards.

The underlying values and expectations of this standard is the **Ethical Food Banking Code**. This aligns perfectly with our society's purpose, values, and strategic priorities for 2024.

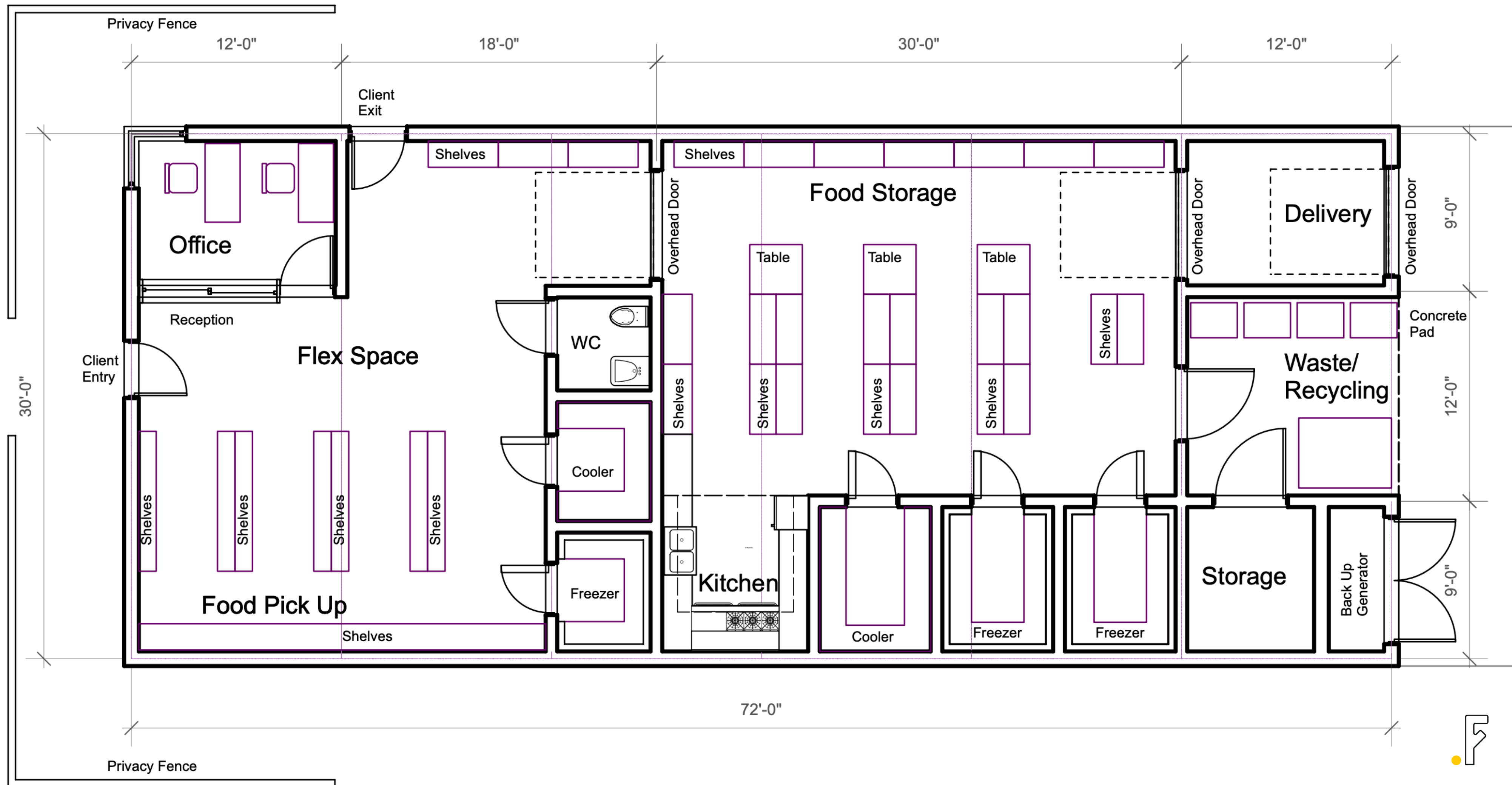
THE ETHICAL FOODBANKING CODE



Food Banks BC and its members believe that everyone in BC has the right to physical and economic access, at all times, to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences. As part of this commitment, Food Banks BC and its members and associated agencies agree to abide by the following set of ethics:

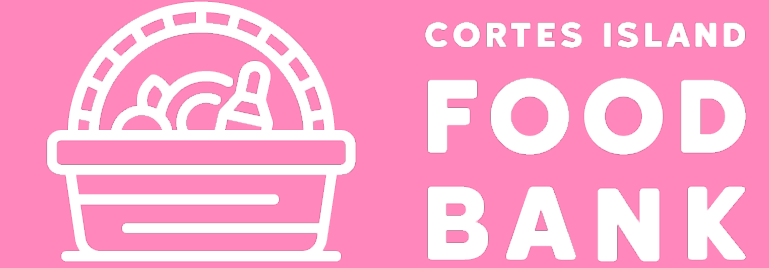
1. Provide food and other assistance to those needing help regardless of race, national or ethnic origin, citizenship, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, income source, age, and mental or physical ability.
2. Treat all those who access services with the utmost dignity and respect.
3. Implement best practices in the proper and safe storage and handling of food.
4. Respect the privacy of those served and will maintain the confidentiality of personal information.
5. Not sell donated food.
6. Acquire and share food in a spirit of cooperation with other food banks and food programs.
7. Strive to make the public aware of the existence of hunger, and of the factors that contribute to it.
8. Recognize that food banks are not a viable long-term response to hunger and devote part of their activities to reducing the need for food assistance.
9. Represent accurately, honestly, and completely their respective mission and activities to the larger community.

A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE...



A functional layout plan for a possible future Cortes Island Food Bank.

Courtesy of Bruce Haden - FLUID Architecture.



MANY THANKS!

To the many generous donors of funds & food on Cortes

To the volunteers who have donated so many unpaid hours to make the food bank work

To Lane 8 for their help with bulk deliveries

SPCA Campbell River

To Sunflower Food Truck for their awesome help with frozen meals and deliveries

To all our island partners

To our wonderful clients