



A non-profit for local, equitable &  
sustainable food systems.  
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## **Project Proposal for The First Ever Okanogan Region Food System Assessment and Okanogan Region 10 Year Food Action Plan**

### **Executive Summary:**

Blue Sky Minds (BSM) nonprofit, located in Mazama, Wa. Works on behalf of the Okanogan County and Colville Reservation food system. BSM's proposal for the first of its kind Okanogan Region Food System Assessment and Okanogan Region 10 Year Food Action Plan is a critical component to support the growth of an equitable, sustainable, and economically thriving food system for everyone in the Okanogan region. We include Okanogan County and Colville Reservation as the geographic location.

For this project to be driven by the community, for the community, Blue Sky Minds has spent the past year recruiting over 100 high level food system stakeholders to form the first ever Okanogan Region Food System Roundtable, which serves as a food council. Blue Sky Minds coordinates and facilitates all roundtable meetings. Roundtable participants include organizations such as Okanogan Public Health, Okanogan Community Action Council, local farmers, farmers markets, local ranchers, WSDA, Washington State University (WSU) Colville Reservation extension program, Colville Reservation Conservation District, Okanogan County Conservation District, WSU Okanogan County extension program, Room One, LIGHT Foundation, Washington State Dept. of Commerce outreach, Colville Reservation food distribution, 11 local food banks, farm to school programs, and more.

The Okanogan Region Food System Assessment and Okanogan Region 10 Year Food Action Plan will allow us to identify the gaps and opportunities within our local food system. This highly collaborative process will bring food system experts, community members, farmers, ranchers, local agencies, academia, food banks, conservation districts from Okanogan County and Colville Reservation to deliver solutions to our top priority food system issues. It will also include appointing a project lead for each solution we co-create in the food action plan to give us the highest rate of success.

### **Projected Impacts and Solutions:**

Projected impacts include increased collaboration from all sectors of our local food system, job creation, increase in our local food economy, more resources for our local food producers and food retail operations, equitable access to local healthy food, increased production of culturally appropriate foods, small incubator food businesses, increased local food access in schools and food pantries, saving farmland, and increased sustainable farming practices.

**Methodology:** Surveys done in the Tailored Design Method, Data gathered from local, state and federal resources, Community-based participatory research, food system community stakeholder leader listen workshop, food system community tribal led workshops

**Budget for Food System Assessment & Food Action Plan: \$100,000**

**Food System Assessment & Food Action Plan Sponsors, Funding Sources, and In-Kind Donations:**

**Blue Sky Minds** = \$7,800 for a Colville Reservation food security survey on Colville Reservation and Okanogan County

**Blue Sky Minds** = In-Kind Donation to complete project management

**Community Foundation North Central Washington** = \$6,000 unrestricted cash donation

**Washington State University** = In-Kind Donation to coalesce data for Okanogan County and Colville Reservation first ever food system assessment

**Western Washington Sustainability Pathways** = In-Kind Donation of student intern time to assist with the community participatory listening sessions for the development of the 10-year food action plan.

**Project Lead:** Blue Sky Minds Founder / Executive Director, Maria Hines

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**Food System Assessment and Food Action Plan Partners:** WSU, LIGHT Foundation, Blue Sky Minds, Western Washington University Sustainability Pathways Program

**Food System Assessment Project Plan:**

To develop the first ever Okanogan County and Colville Reservation food system assessment. The robust assessment will be a 40-50 page living document that will allow us to update information in the future and will assess the following topics:

- Sustainable Production & Farmland Preservation
- Small Food Producer & Small Food Business Worker Livelihood
- Food Access & Equity & Security
- Processing & Marketing & Distribution
- Economic Benefit
- Energy & Waste
- Policy & Regulation

**Project Milestones:**

- **April 2023 - completed** - Okanogan Region Food System Roundtable listening session to determine what should be a part of the assessment.
- **May 2023 - completed** - Work with WSU food systems department to review and advise scope of work of the assessment.
- **July 2023 - completed** - Identify WSU partner to assist with assessment.
- **January 2024** - Delivery of the first draft of the assessment.

- **March 2024** - Delivery of final assessment.

### **10 Year Food Action Project Plan:**

The plan will include infrastructure design, planning, and coordinating steps. We'll conduct 12 meetings with growers, food retailers, nonprofits, local agencies, academia, and community members to ensure all voices are represented on Colville Reservation and Okanogan County. Many of these participants will be the implementers of the plan. The action plan will be developed using SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound).

### **Project Milestones:**

- **February 2024** - Project structure and timeline created.
- **March 2024** - First round of stakeholder meetings held.
- **August 2024** - Food Action plan survey to be conducted.
- **November 2024** - Last round of stakeholder meetings.
- **January 2025** - First draft of food action plan to be delivered.
- **March 2025** - Final food action plan delivered.

A food system assessment and food action plan has never been done for our region. Imagine the possibilities that it holds. This strategic collaboration of food system stakeholders hailing from all parts of our region will help develop a plan that is inclusive, equitable, and impactful. It will open opportunities to support a **vision to end hunger, have a resilient local food economy, replenish natural resources, and to ensure that every single person has close access to culturally relevant, locally grown nutritious food in the Okanogan region.**