

Victoria Urban Food Table: Terms of Reference

Updated: May 2026



1. Background

Established in 2015, the Victoria Urban Food Table (UFT) endeavors to bring together diverse stakeholders – from farmers, non-profits, public health authorities, businesses, youth, seniors, and other community members – to advise on improving the City of Victoria’s food system and pollinator policies. For nearly a decade, the UFT has helped shape relevant and meaningful food systems programs and policies in Victoria.

The City supports UFT with provisions such as an annual grant, monthly meeting space, and a staff liaison to support their meetings and functions. UFT’s Terms of Reference were first adopted and approved by Council in 2018. In 2025, Council reconfirmed and acknowledged UFT’s status as the City of Victoria’s independent food policy advisory group.

2. Purpose of the Table

The Victoria Urban Food Table (the Table or ‘UFT’ interchangeably) serves as the City’s independent food policy advisory group, bridging residents, community organizations, food producers, and the City of Victoria to advance a more just, resilient, and sustainable food system. The UFT advises City Council and staff on policies, programs, and cross-sector planning that aims to strengthen food security, support regional food production, and improve equitable access to healthy, culturally appropriate, and affordable food.

Its mission is to advise and collaborate with the City of Victoria local government to foster a healthy, ecological, and inclusive local food system that supports environmental stewardship, climate resilience, community well-being, fair and dignified food access, and a strong regional food economy for current and future generations.

The Table achieves this through its primary function:

- **Policy Advocacy and Advice:** As an official advisory body, UFT helps to identify gaps and provide evidenced-based recommendations to the City of Victoria to improve food systems and pollinator policies. Existing channels include review of GITC policies and programs, input in guiding documents (Official Community Plan, Parks Open Spaces Master Plan), through staff reports, and through direct advocacy to Mayor and Council.

The table also promotes the following to further its objectives:

- **Collaborate and Build Partnerships:** UFT fosters collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including farmers, community members, non-profits and government officials, to align efforts and share knowledge.

- **Public Education and Awareness:** Leads campaigns and initiatives to educate the public on local food issues and resources. This can include co-hosting or supporting City-wide events.

3. Mandate and Scope

- Provide a forum for advocacy and policy development that works towards the creation of a food system that is ecologically sustainable, economically viable and socially just.
- Supports the development of just and sustainable food systems in alignment with the goals listed in City plans including but not limited to the Official Community Plan, Strategic Plan, Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan, and Growing in the City plans and policies;
- Advises Council and staff on policies and plans affecting the food system as they are developed, implemented, and updated;
- Works collaboratively with counterparts from other civic agencies to identify opportunities for joint action on issues of mutual interest;
- Works co-operatively with external agencies and groups whose activities affect constituent communities and whose activities are relevant in local food systems; and
- Engages in outreach to disseminate information and encourage participation from constituent communities.

4. Relationship to City Council

The Table is officially recognized as a valued independent advisory group that advises the City on issues related to food systems.

4.1 Formal Council Recognition

On May 15, 2025, City Council accepted a staff report confirming the Table's mandate and to maintain an independent advisory status. The approved motion directs staff to ensure the Table is consulted on all policy and program issues related to food systems and urban agriculture in the City. The UFT would deliver two formal updates to Mayor and Council each year, one incorporated into staff briefing notes, and the other presented at an evening Council meeting under the established Request to Address Council protocol.

- **Full Report/Option 1:** [View Document](#)
- **Council Discussion:** [Watch Recording](#)

4.2 Ongoing City Support

As a part of Council's direction, the City will continue to provide a staff liaison to attend all meetings, and will support activities that align with the mandate and scope. Additionally, the City will continue to provide monthly meeting space for Victoria Urban Food Table to gather in person at City Hall and a virtual meeting platform for those who wish to attend monthly meetings online.

5. Table Membership and Participation

The Table is an open group for individuals and organizations that share common goals related to local food systems and urban agriculture. The Table functions on the basis of inclusiveness, appreciation for

diversity, and non-discrimination.

Terms and Membership Composition

Voting Members shall meet the following essential criteria:

- Not be employed by the City of Victoria;
- Live or work in Victoria, or have a significant body of experience with issues related to the mandate of the advisory body
- Be committed to fostering and maintaining relationships to relevant food system communities, groups, and/or organizations in Victoria;
- Be able to demonstrate relevant experience or knowledge, abilities and skills related to the mandate of the advisory body;
- Be able to work in a team environment with intercultural sensitivity.

5.1 Membership Status

- **Public Participation:** Meetings are open to any members of the public who wish to attend (non-voting members). Those who attend but are not voting members may still contribute to discussions and provide input.
- **Voting Membership:** Anyone who has attended three (3) meetings over the course of 18 months is considered a voting member. If a voting member does not attend a meeting within 18 months then their membership will be considered resigned.

5.2 Representation

The Table welcomes representation from across organizations and community groups to ensure diverse voices and experiences are reflected in discussions and decisions. This includes, but is not limited to, local First Nations (ləkwəŋən, W̱SÁNEĆ), non-profits, health authorities, neighbourhood associations, food producers, retailers, developers, and demographic groups including seniors and youth. The composition of members should demonstrate a balance of the following areas of expertise (including professional, volunteer, education, research, and/or lived experience): Production, Processing and Distribution; Retail; Food Security, including Financial Accessibility and Availability; Food Waste; Indigenous Food Sovereignty; Resilience; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

5.3 Membership Removal Procedure

The Victoria Urban Food Table maintains a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment, bullying, or hateful conduct. Any public participant or member whose behaviour undermines the dignity, safety, or inclusion of others may be subject to removal from membership.

Prohibited conduct includes discrimination or harassment based on any protected ground under applicable law, including race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age, or socioeconomic status. Membership removal may occur following review through the UFT partner organization's governance processes and may result in immediate termination where warranted.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Members are responsible for participating in agenda setting, reviewing materials, providing updates from

their respective sectors, and voting on proposed decisions at meetings or via email.

6.1 Specific Roles

- **City of Victoria Staff:** Beyond the assigned staff liaison, staff from any relevant departments) are invited to provide topic-specific presentations and attend meetings.
- **Councillors:** There is no official Council representation at UFT (as there have been in the past from 2016 to 2021). Councillors are invited via email to attend monthly meetings to listen and provide context regarding City priorities. Ongoing staff and City Council support are critical to the work of the Table and help to align the work with current City priorities and initiatives.
- **Table Co-Chairs:** Two co-chairs are elected by voting members for staggered two-year terms, with terms overlapping by one year to maintain continuity. Key responsibilities include setting agendas and facilitating meetings. Co-chairs may serve two consecutive terms, followed by a one-year break.
 - Co-chairs may receive a stipend of \$40 per monthly general meeting they chair, subject to funding availability, to support their leadership.
 - When a co-chair position becomes available and more than 2 eligible voting members put forward their name for co-chair, a democratic election with majority rules would occur
 - If a vacancy arises, voting members will rotate to fill the co-chair role temporarily.
- **Administrative Coordinator:** Assists in taking meeting minutes, managing emails, tracking the budget and spending, circulating information and supporting the Co-Chairs.

7. Meetings & Gatherings

7.1 Meetings

The Victoria Urban Food Table holds nine regular meetings per year (between September and June), in addition to hosting community network gatherings twice a year (December, June/July). There are no meetings in the month of August. Meetings primarily occur in a hybrid format. Participants receive an agenda prior to the meeting and are encouraged to provide input during the drafting process. Co-chairs will determine the final content of the monthly agenda.

7.2 Subcommittees

The UFT at their discretion, can establish sub-committees to focus on relevant topics of interest, and hold working sessions scheduled outside of their regular meeting times. Formation must be voted upon at a monthly meeting. A subcommittee ceases to exist once its membership agrees that the goal of the committee has been achieved or members decide to disband. Membership in subcommittees is not mandated, rather encouraged to support the goals of the Table.

7.3 Gatherings

Two informal community network gatherings are hosted by the UFT bi-annually, one in December in lieu of the monthly meeting, and once in the summer in either June or July.

8. Decision-Making & Voting Procedures

The Table strives for a collaborative environment. While members are encouraged to uphold the spirit of

consensus, formal actions are finalized through a majority-vote system.

8.1 Monthly Meeting Voting (Hybrid Format)

For proposals brought forward during regularly scheduled monthly meetings:

- **Quorum:** A minimum of 6 voting members must be present. If fewer than 6 are present, the vote may be postponed or moved to an email process.
- **Approval:** Decisions are passed by a simple majority of voting members present.
- **Procedure:** Motions are introduced and discussed. Proposals may be adapted based on feedback before a finalized version is put to a vote (typically via show of hands).

8.2 Time-Sensitive Email Voting

If a proposal or letter must be submitted before the next monthly meeting, the following process applies:

1. **Submission:** A voting member emails the Co-Chair(s) (CC'ing victoriaurbanfoodtable@gmail.com) with the proposal and a request for an email vote.
2. **Dissemination:** If approved for review, an email is sent to voting members with the subject: **[Time Sensitive Vote: Action Required]**.
3. **Timeline:** Members have 72 hours to respond in favor or opposition.
4. **Requirements for Approval:** A minimum of 6 voting members must respond in support for a proposal to pass. Proposers may contact members directly to encourage participation.
5. **Objections and Blocks:** An objection does not automatically stop a proposal; however, a **formal block** by a voting member will halt the action. A block may occur if a member believes the proposal will adversely affect the Table's reputation, relationship with Council, or are in direct opposition to the Table's values.
6. **Reporting:** Results are provided as an update at the following monthly meeting.

9. Budget and Fiscal Management

The Table's work is funded via a Direct Award grant from the City of Victoria. The UFT's partner organization that holds the funds on behalf of the UFT is currently CRFAIR (*Capital Regional Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable*).

- **Annual Cycle:** Funds are administered by the City of Victoria in July. The annual budget is drafted and voted upon by voting members during the September meeting.
- **Budget Allocations:** Eligible expenses includes:
 - Support for food provisions at the community network gatherings (bi-annually);
 - Funds for annual local food systems' events supported by UFT such as Seedy Saturday;
 - Remuneration for certain skillsets required from subcommittee members that provide substantial amount of time on a project and the bi-annual reports;
 - Remuneration for co-chair responsibilities, administrative assistance, and stipend for temporary co-chair placements;
 - Cost of tabling at events to promote UFT and increase membership;
 - Support for voting-members to attend food system related workshops, conferences and events within the region; (a presentation back to the UFT is required as a part of this agreement). Voting members may request subsidy for relevant event participation and the subsidy amount will be determined by the co-chairs within the allocated budget.

- Any marketing or engagement activities deemed strategic to the UFT
- **Reallocation:** Budgeted funds may be reallocated if voted upon by members at a monthly meeting.
- **Discretionary Spending:** Any funding request or reallocation under **\$50** does not require a full membership vote and is at the sole discretion of the Co-Chair(s).
- **Transparency** is upheld via the UFT submitting a required annual report (which includes an annual budget with actuals) to be reported to Legislative Services each June.

10. Reporting Requirements

The Table provides two formal reports to the Mayor and Council and one formal report to City staff annually:

- **Policy Advising:** Two reports are submitted to City Council throughout the year advising on current food systems priorities and movement on these priorities.
- **Annual Financial Report:** One report is provided to the City outlining how grant funds were spent and how those expenditures contribute to the City's broader strategy and planning.