Executive Summary

Profile and perception

- A very large majority (98%) of respondents believe Food Banks Canada to be a credible organization and they are proud to be a provincial association/affiliate food bank (95%). More than nine-in-ten (95%) respondents say the organization provides value as a national association. Respondents also believe that it keeps them informed (87%), and its programs and services are valuable (88%).

- These positive perceptions have remained consistent or grown slightly from 2014 and 2011. The question whether Food Banks Canada "Works to increase the amount of funds donated to the food bank network" shows a jump from 2014 (44%) to 2017 (58%). Nine-out-of-ten respondents (90%) agree (strongly/somewhat) that the organization "offers services and programs that have a positive impact on the hunger relief network."

- Almost all respondents agree (strongly/ somewhat) that Food Banks Canada staff are courteous and friendly (96%). This shows continuous improvement from 2011 (77%) and 2014 (94%). Nine-in-ten consider staff to be willing to listen to suggestions and are responsive to questions or concerns.

Provincial associations

- The percentage of respondents in 2017 (89%) who are satisfied (very/somewhat) with the performance of their Provincial Food Bank Association is down from 2014 (98%). In general, satisfaction (very/somewhat) increased from 2011 to 2014 and then dropped in 2017, but not back to 2011 levels.

- A substantial majority (95%) of respondents say the provincial association provides a lot or some value representing the food bank community across the province. Those who perceive a "lot of value" has increased steadily since 2011.

- The biggest increases this year compared to 2014 were with "my provincial association provides me with resources to assist in my work," and "my provincial association has programs and services that are valuable to my organization."

Priorities and abilities

- Nine-out-of-ten respondents (90%) thought that influencing government policy to reduce the need for food banks is very important work. This was followed by raising funds to share with food banks nationally (86%), followed by raising food to share nationally (79%).

- Food banks that feel completely able to meet their goals fell from 2014 (44%) to 2017 (36%). The share of respondents that score their ability as 4-out-of-5 rose from 32% in 2014 to 43% in 2017.

- For the 64% of respondents that feel less than “completely able” to meet their goals, the top four reasons cited are: lack of funds (56%), lack of space (47%), lack of food (42%), and lack of infrastructure (41%).
- Respondents give the highest score of value (a lot/some) of the Food Banks Canada initiatives to the HungerCount Report (92%), followed by the National Food Sharing System, the National Retail Food Program, and Fundraising.

- The number of respondents that have ever applied to a Food Banks Canada granting program jumped from 2014 (45%) to 2017 (57%).

- Six-in-ten respondents want the organizations top two priorities in 2017 to be raising funds to share nationally and acquiring large-scale industry food donations. Half the respondents feel that arranging discounted pricing/bulk buy opportunities is a priority. A similar number want Food Banks Canada to advocate to the federal government to help find solutions to hunger.

Food distribution

- Virtually all respondents distribute non-perishable food. Nine-out-of-ten respondents are distributing fresh food that does not require refrigeration and fresh food that does require refrigeration. The fourth largest food group is frozen food.

- The biggest increase in types of food distributed from 2014 to 2017 is with “other” (15%) and diet-specific foods (e.g. gluten-free, diabetic) at 10%. The next biggest increase is with fresh food requiring refrigeration, followed by frozen food and child-specific foods.

- The top two food types that respondents would like to provide more of are fresh food requiring refrigeration and frozen foods. The third food type is fresh food not requiring refrigeration.

- The biggest roadblock to not being able to provide more of the food types desired is that not enough of the desired food is being donated. The second impediment is lack of financial resources. The third impediment is lack of equipment such as a freezer or refrigerator.

Volunteers and goals

- 87% of respondents felt they had enough volunteers to function, but 87% also felt that sometimes the work was too physically challenging for some volunteers. Almost 6-in10 (58%) felt their core group of volunteers was sometimes overworked, and 51% felt they sometimes had trouble matching the work volunteers wanted to do with the work that needed doing.

- Almost half (46%) say that acquiring more nutritious food was their top priority for the next three years. One-in-four respondents say that increasing fundraising revenue and expanding their infrastructure are their top priorities. The fourth highest priority was acquiring more food to meet community needs.

- 63% felt that the increasing competition for donor support impacted their operations in the past three to five years. The next biggest challenge was meeting requests for more fresh/perishable products. This was followed by a decline in cash donations and less food being donated.