

Poverty Reduction Strategy for the City of Kawartha Lakes and County of Haliburton

Food Security Action Plan: Background and Recommendations

Developed and implemented by the Food Security Working Group of Kawartha Lakes Food Coalition, Haliburton County FoodNet and Harvest Haliburton for the Poverty Reduction Roundtable

What is Community Food Security?

Community Food security “is achieved when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to safe, sufficient, and nutritious foods that meets their dietary and personal preference for an active and healthy lifestyle” (1).

In this paper, community food security will simply be referred to as food security. Food security is based on the fundamental human right to food (2). Being able to feed oneself either directly from the natural resources of the land or to buy food that has been cultivated by another involves the elements of availability, accessibility, and adequacy (2). Availability has to do with food being physically present and available in sufficient amounts. Accessibility describes food being attainable by all population groups without discrimination and affordable to everyone without having to sacrifice other basic needs such as housing. Adequacy speaks to the need of food to meet individual dietary demands, to be safe for human consumption and to reflect cultural preferences (2).

The right to food in maintaining human health intersects with the importance of building a sustainable food system. A sustainable food system is one that ensures food security for all peoples does not compromise the economic viability and the ecological diversity of a community in the present and future (3). From growing food, to harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consuming, and disposing of food, a sustainable food system seeks to protect the land, water, air, and other resources while balancing human health, social justice, community resiliency and economic success (4).

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Roundtable for the City of Kawartha Lakes and County of Haliburton envisions that every person in the City of Kawartha Lakes and the County of Haliburton has access to sufficient and healthy food through a just and sustainable food system. To achieve this vision, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Roundtable for the City of Kawartha Lakes and County of Haliburton respectfully acknowledges that our local food system is located on the Treaty 20 Michi Saagiig territory and in the traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig and Chippewa Nations, collectively known as the Williams Treaties First Nations, which include: Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Alderville, Scugog Island, Rama, Beausoleil, and Georgina Island First Nations.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Roundtable for the City of Kawartha Lakes and County of Haliburton respectfully acknowledges that the Williams Treaties First Nations are the stewards and caretakers of these lands and waters in perpetuity, and that they continue to maintain this responsibility to ensure their health and integrity for generations to come.

What is Household Food Insecurity?

While it would be logical to conclude that the opposite of food security is food insecurity, in professional literature the term food insecurity has a very specific definition, and refers to the condition of “a household when one or more members do not have access to the variety or quantity of food that they need **due to lack of money.**” (5) (emphasis added). Thus food insecurity is recognized as an **income problem** (6) and not stemming from the broader aspects of availability, physical access and adequacy of food. Household income is closely tied to the risk of food insecurity for that household (6), and the same factors that contribute to poverty (inadequate income, unaffordable housing, unemployment and underemployment, unaffordable childcare and lack of transportation) are also associated with vulnerability to food insecurity (7) (8).

Income-based solutions are needed to address food insecurity and will also contribute to poverty reduction.

For this paper, household food insecurity will simply be referred to as food insecurity.

Facts about Food Insecurity

Food insecurity manifests in varying degrees and can be described as marginal (e.g. worry about running out of food before there is money to buy more), moderate (e.g. not able to afford to eat a balanced diet), or severe (e.g. going hungry, missing meals and/ or not eating for days) (6).

Based on Statistic Canada’s Canadian Community Health Survey, in 2017-2018, 12.7% of households, or 4.4 million Canadians were food insecure (6). In Ontario, that figure sat at 13.3%, representing 1.7 million individuals living in food insecure households (6).

“At a local level, a population-based survey from the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit estimated that household food insecurity in the City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton in 2019 was 14.4% (CI 12.0-17.2) (9).”

Income Scenario using the Nutrition Food Basket

Each year, the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge (HKPR) District Health Unit researches the price of a Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) to find out the local average cost of healthy eating. The basket consists of 67 food items that are nutritious and commonly purchased by Ontarians. It does not include other essential items such as soap, toilet paper, toothpaste and personal care items (10). In 2019, the cost to feed a family of four (two adults and two children age 8 and 14)

in the health unit area was \$875 (11). Put into perspective, consider that this family of four receives Ontario Works. Each month, they earn an income of \$2623¹. They rent a 3-bedroom apartment, which costs \$1576 per month based on average available rental rates in the area. Accounting for food and rent, they have a surplus of \$172 (12). This amount would need to cover other necessities for the month such as hydro, phone/internet, clothing, toiletries, childcare, transportation, and medications, a task impossible to do given the insufficiency of these surplus funds.

As illustrated by this scenario, food alone cannot address the problem of food insecurity. Rather, systems change involving local, municipal, provincial, and federal programs policies and strategies that address issues such as income, affordable housing, employment and transportation is needed.

How to Implement a Systems Change Strategy?

Household food insecurity is a matter related to income and poverty; thus, addressing it requires initiatives that extend beyond short-term emergency food relief (e.g. food banks and free-meal programs) and work towards systems change and redesign.

Systems change and redesign acknowledges fundamental problems such as inadequate income that result in food insecurity. They involve community partners and stakeholders to push for and generate change in programs, policies, strategies and social structures that can be effective at reducing the root problem (13) (14).

For example, municipalities can expand their number of affordable housing units, which increases the likelihood that low-income families may have enough money remaining to purchase enough healthy food to meet with families' needs after paying for necessary expenses such as rent and utilities. Along with local partners, they can advocate for federal and provincial policies and programs that ensure all Canadians have a sufficient income to meet their basic needs and live with dignity (14). This ideal requires that wages paid to workers meet basic living costs and not just legal minimums (15). Better employment standards are needed that protect workers from job instability and poor working conditions. Finally, everyone should receive a basic income guarantee unconditional of their employment status.

At a community level, striving for food security could involve municipalities developing and supporting partnerships across many sectors to strengthen local agricultural and local sustainable food system initiatives, policies and by-laws, including growing, harvesting, production, processing, retail, access and disposal. It can also include supporting advocacy for the development of a national school food program to increase access to healthy foods in the

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- ¹ It includes basic allowance for recipient and spouse (\$494.00/month), shelter allowance (\$756/month), Child Benefit (\$1147.00/month), GST/HST credit (\$72/month), and the Ontario Trillium benefit (\$154/month).

school-age population, as well as promoting Canadian farms and local producers for procurement of local foods (16).

Further, municipalities can prioritize sustainability plans that respect and protect biodiversity and ecosystems and fairly shares decision-making power and resources with Indigenous communities, producers, processors, retailers and consumers. The development of sustainability plans can help to ensure there is water and safe, sufficient, and nutritious foods that meets dietary and cultural preference for all now and in future generations (17). It is important to acknowledge the history and ongoing legacy of colonialism that have gravely impacted Indigenous food systems and to support Indigenous-led or Indigenous-serving groups striving to reclaim Indigenous food systems.

Individual and Community Capacity Building Programs

Community-based food programs do not impact food insecurity, but they can encourage self-empowerment by building food literacy skills needed to produce, obtain and prepare food that supports and maintain a healthy lifestyle (18). Examples include community/ collective kitchens, food skills training programs, educational components such as food label reading, community gardens, and the Good Food Box Program.

Short-term Relief Programs

Food banks and food charity programs such as soup kitchens are short-term emergency relief programs. Food banks were initially created out of the recession in 1980 (19). However, they continue to exist as the primary response to food insecurity in today's society, despite the many challenges with which food banks and food bank clients experience. For example, food banks rely on donations and often have an insufficient supply of food to meet demand. Clients are only able to seek the services of the food bank once a month, receiving a supply of food that usually lasts only three days. Fresh food is often unavailable due to storage issues and food donations frequently do not meet client's nutritional or cultural preference (14).

It is evident from research that short-term relief programs are not able to address the root cause of food insecurity, which is lack of income. Politicians, decisions makers, as well as leaders and volunteers working in charity-based program can play an integral role for advocacy of income-based solutions to address the root cause of food insecurity.

Initiatives in the City of Kawartha Lakes

Advocacy work has been happening in the City of Kawartha Lakes (CKL) and Haliburton County towards development of a sustainable local food system as well as income-based solutions to address food insecurity.

The City of Kawartha Lakes 2010 Agricultural Action Plan identified the need to:

“Develop a local food policy or charter which will ensure food security for the local community and strengthen production, processing and distribution of food. Facilitate the development of a local food distribution network for members of Kawartha Choice Farm Fresh, such as a cooperative marketing agency or wholesale/retail market... Promote Kawartha Lakes as a destination for agri-tourism and visitors with the continuation of Kawartha Farmfest farm tours or food trails to introduce urban residents to local growers. Encourage the use of local product at government functions and school food programs. Work with the Kawartha Lakes Public Health Department to promote consumption of local food and retention of local food production as a positive contribution to healthy living.” (20)

In March 2011, the CKL Council endorsed the City of Kawartha Lakes Food Charter, which took three years in the making. The lead partners included City of Kawartha Lakes, HKPR District Health Unit, and Victoria Stewardship Council. According to CKL Food Charter, a just and sustainable food system means a vibrant community food culture, food security, community health, a strong farming economy and a healthy ecosystem (21).

Following the development of the food charter, the “Kawartha Lakes Food Coalition (KLFC)” was formed in March 2013. The KLFC represents individuals, organizations and stakeholders for the City of Kawartha Lakes community. To implement the Food Charter, the KLFC members developed action plans related to “food security”, “growth and sustainability of local food system” and “regulatory hurdles regarding local food”.

The Food Security Working Group of KLFC leads the implementation of the Food Security action plan of the KLFC as well as implementation of the Poverty Reduction Round Table’s Food Security recommendations in CKL. The Growth and Sustainability Working Group of KLFC is responsible for promotion and implementation of programs and policies related to sustainable local food system in the CKL.

Food Security Working Group of KLFC: Over the years, the Food Security Working Group of KLFC has been working on the following strategic priorities.

- Advocate for policies and programs that address root causes of poverty and food insecurity through income-based solutions such as Basic Income, employment that provides a living wage, better employment standards, affordable housing, childcare and transportation.
- Encourage leaders and volunteers working on short term relief programs and capacity building programs to advocate for income-based solutions mentioned above and food policy development/redesign.
- Advocate for community garden policies to be incorporated into the community design and built environment components in the City’s Official Plan and Sustainability Plan.
- Advocate to the municipality to waive or assist with rental fees and insurance costs of municipally owned land and certified kitchen facilities for food security initiatives

- Advocate for continued and enhanced funding for universal student nutrition programs as well as for a national school food program.
- Advocate for development of mixed-use zoning plans and policies that protect farmland, facilitate creation of community gardens, green infrastructure and ensure access to healthy local food.
- Advocate for the development and implementation of a food emergency preparedness plan.
- Assist Growth and Sustainability Working Group in advocacy efforts to develop programs and policies that support local food and a sustainable food system.
- Promote expansion of fresh produce donation programs to food banks such as the Edible Tree Project and Plant a Row Grow a Row program.
- Support and promote food literacy/community development related initiatives in CKL i.e. community gardens, community kitchens, food skill education, and Good Food Box program.
- Partner on planning and implementation of Summer Outreach Lunch Program.

Growth and Sustainability Working Group: Over the years, the Growth and Sustainability Working Group of KLFC has been working on the following strategic priorities.

- Create opportunities to collaborate and jointly market local food.
- Strengthen the quality of Kawartha Lakes Agri-Food system labour market intelligence
- Promote opportunities to bring together Kawartha Lakes Agri-Food system players and educational institutions to facilitate dialogue and alignment between the needs of the food system and educational programs
- Facilitate stakeholder engagement in policies which impact the growth and sustainability of the Kawartha Lakes Food System.
- Promote healthy eco-system and the recognition of farmers as land stewards
- Increase consumers awareness of the symbiotic relationship between buying local and a healthy economic environment by developing a campaign to raise the profile of the farmer as a land steward and associated environmental practices
- Undertake “Kawartha Choice retail store”/ local food hub feasibility study
- Develop public awareness and commitment to local food
- Update and maintain potential agricultural land inventory
- Establish partnerships to identify potential public and private agricultural land
- Determine best use and opportunities for optimal utilization of land
- Encourage the application of geographic information system (GIS) technology to increase the understanding of farm systems and land use relationships

Community Agency Initiatives Offering Food Literacy and Access to Food in CKL

Community agencies and organizations offer a number of programs such as

Edwin Binney Community Garden: This garden is a community agriculture initiative through United Way of Kawartha Lakes Food Source. Edwin Binney's Community Garden provides over 5000lbs of fresh produce donation to 10 local food banks and 11 non-profit organizations. United Way has also started 3 pilot projects to deliver produce to clients in the City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton. In another pilot produce are being delivered to three social housing units in Lindsay. An extension of this project in Haliburton called Foodlove launched in September with 70 orders for bags of fresh produce distributed through agencies to people in need.

Kawartha Lakes Food Source Open Garden: Located at the Alternative and Adult Training Centre, the Kawartha Lakes Food Source has a large open garden from which members of community are welcome to pick what they need any time. Due to COVID-19, the garden is unfortunately no longer "open" as per the HKPRDHU's guidelines during COVID-19 but once COVID-19 is no longer a threat, the garden will resume its open status.

Lindsay Community Garden: Hosted by Fleming College. There are 88 plots, approximately 8 ft by 16 ft., and a shared herb garden. Plot fees are \$30 per year which includes access to water, gardening tools, and wheelbarrows. A section of the gardens are set aside for donations to Kawartha Lakes Food Source and A Place Called Home.

St. Andrews Presbyterian Soup Kitchen: Hot meals for community members provided Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 11:30 AM – 12:00 PM on a drop-in basis.

Summer Outreach Lunch Program: This program is an annual partnership between the Kawartha Lakes Food Coalition, the Kawartha Lakes Food Source, Salvation Army and the HKPR District Health Unit. Over two months in the summer, free and healthy bagged lunches are made available to any elementary aged children at popup locations outside of local schools.

FoodRescue.ca: FoodRescue.ca is an online platform which allows local businesses to donate their perfectly edible surplus food directly to non-profits in our area who feed community members. This initiative was brought to the City of Kawartha Lakes through a partnership between the Kawartha Lakes Food Source and Second Harvest, Canada's largest national food rescue organization. For more information, please visit <https://www.foodrescue.ca/>

Food Banks: There are fourteen food banks in total across the City of Kawartha Lakes. Ten of those are members of the Kawartha Lakes Food Source. Of these ten, three are located within Lindsay. The rest are in Coboconk, Dunsford, Fenelon Falls, Kinmount, Little Britain, Omemee, and Woodville. The additional four food banks are in Bethany, Bobcaygeon, Janetville and

Lindsay. For information on food banks in the City of Kawartha Lakes, please visit <https://kawarthalakesfoodsource.com/find-a-food-bank/>

Food for Kids Kawartha Lakes: Food For Kids supports Student Nutrition Programs operating in all 31 schools within the City of Kawartha Lakes serving over 10,000 students every day in Trillium Lakelands District School Board, Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board, as well as the Boys & Girls Club.

John Howard Society: Offers “Towards a healthy future cooking program” for youth.

Community Care Programs:

- Good Food Box
- Garden at Your Table – New program in collaboration with United Way as a way to connect produce from the community garden with members of the community.
- Cooking Classes
- Virtual Cooking Club
- Meals and Wheels
- Care Crew – a team from support services supporting clients by picking up and dropping off grocery orders.
- Diner’s clubs

Initiatives in Haliburton County

Haliburton County FoodNet works together as a community-based network to increase the food literacy and security of people in Haliburton County. The network is comprised of representatives from agencies that deliver food programs and support people who are, or are at risk of becoming, food insecure as well as concerned individuals with an interest in community food security. FoodNet members meet bi-monthly to:

- Support each other’s programs by sharing success stories, resources and assisting with challenges.
- Respond to needs for information and tools to help people access nutritious, safe and personally acceptable food.
- Identify needs for, and support programs that build personal skills, strengthen community capacity and create supportive environments around food.
- Support community education initiatives that advocate for income-based solutions to food insecurity such as Basic Income, employment that provides a living wage, better employment standards, affordable housing, childcare and transportation.

Examples of initiatives that FoodNet has supported over the past few years include:

- The Food for All brochure – a print and web resource that is updated annually of where to access free and low-cost food in the county as well as other support services.

- The Freezer Project – a project to decentralize emergency food distribution through the placement of small freezers in key locations across the County (funded by Agri-Food Canada’s Local Food Infrastructure Program).
- The Apple Sauce Project – an annual gleaning project that engages volunteers in picking apples and producing apple sauce that is frozen and distributed through local food programs.
- Plant-Grow-Share a Row – a program that encourages the donation of fresh produce to local food banks for distribution.
- Food literacy related initiatives such as You’re the Chef offered to senior elementary school students through community kitchens in the municipalities of Minden Hills and Highlands East.
- Meetings with the MPP and MP, and letter writing campaigns to advocate for the Basic Income pilot in Ontario, living wage, a national Basic Income program and a national School Nutrition Program.

Haliburton County FoodNet also administers the Community Social Investment Fund and distributes money to applicants to purchase nutritious food for food skills and other programs for at risk children, youth and other vulnerable populations.

Harvest Haliburton is grass roots, volunteer committee that supports the development of a sustainable food system for the County of Haliburton. Through networks, partnerships and collaboration, Harvest Haliburton raises awareness about, creates supportive environments around and participates in the development of local food policies that are necessary to foster a sustainable, local food system. Harvest Haliburton is an initiative of the Haliburton County Community Cooperative.

Harvest Haliburton engages in research locally, and advocacy at all levels of government, for public policy improvements to support community food security, address barriers to local food production, and support new and established producers. Examples of research reports that support community food security include:

- Haliburton Community Food Assessment (2015)
- Haliburton County Local Food Infrastructure Report (2011)

Community Agency Initiatives Offering Food Literacy and Access to Food in Haliburton County

Community agencies and organizations also offer a number of programs that support individual skill building and community capacity including:

- The *Haliburton Highlands Community Garden Network*, with 4 active community gardens located throughout the county.
- The *Good Food Box-Haliburton County* provides a bag/box of fresh fruit and vegetables once a month to an average of 300 individuals and families for \$15. The program is coordinated by the Rotary Club of Haliburton and bags/boxes are delivered by community volunteers.
- The *Haliburton County Food for Kids Program* provides a healthy breakfast and/or snack to all students in all schools – 4,000 healthy breakfasts and snacks are served to students each week.
- *Community Kitchens* at Minden Community Food Centre, the Lloyd Watson Centre in Highlands East and SIRCH Central have volunteer cooks who meet weekly/biweekly to prepare hundreds of meals that are distributed to food bank clients, human service agencies and non-profit housing locations to help individuals and families who are experiencing food insecurity or illness.
- The *Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP)* where pregnant and new moms learn about low cost meal preparation and are provided with a nutritious lunch. They also receive a \$10.00 food voucher weekly to purchase milk, fresh fruit and vegetables.
- *Community meals* – Shepard’s Table, a free community super, is held monthly at Lakeside Church in Haliburton Village and SIRCH offers Lunch is on Us, a weekly free lunch program during the winter months.

Conclusion

In order to achieve the vision of access to sufficient and healthy food for all persons in City of Kawartha Lakes and the County of Haliburton, there needs to be continued commitment and support by local municipal government for the work of Kawartha Lakes Coalition’s Food Security Working Group, Sustainable Food System Working Group, Harvest Haliburton, FoodNet Haliburton and the Poverty Reduction Round Table. Further, local municipal government continue to play a key role as representatives at the provincial and federal table to advocate for policies and programs to address food insecurity and the development of a sustainable food system.

Action Plan Recommendations

The following recommendations are for the Poverty Roundtable and its collaborating partners to address food insecurity and development of a sustainable food system.

Recommendation 1

Advocate to the federal and provincial government to develop policies and programs that take a comprehensive approach to address root causes of poverty and food insecurity.

Activities

- Advocate in partnership with organizations and local groups for programs and policies that promote equity, such as adequate and accessible income-based supports, safe and decent employment that protect employees and provide fair pay and benefits, safe and affordable housing, and accessible and quality childcare, transportation
- Assist emergency food organizations such as food banks to help inform, support and advocate for policies and programs that address food insecurity
- Advocate for continued municipal support services including affordable/subsidized childcare, employment and income supports, and Rent-Gear-income housing/affordable housing
- Contact ministry officials, MPP and MP to schedule meetings to advocate for change

Collaborators

- Agencies/organizations/groups currently involved in food insecurity related work such as Kawartha Lakes Food Coalition Food Security Working Group, Haliburton County FoodNet, and Poverty Reduction Roundtable
- Municipalities of Haliburton County and CKL
- HKPR District Health Unit

Resources Required

- Haliburton and CKL municipal staff expertise
- Haliburton County Council members and CKL Council members
- HKPR District Health Unit staff expertise
- Poverty Reduction Roundtable Coordinator
- Evidence based resources from PROOF an interdisciplinary [research team](#) from University of Toronto, Ontario Dietitians from Public Health, Food Secure Canada, Tamarak etc.

Measurable Indicators

- Type of advocacy efforts

- # of campaigns developed and implemented
- # of meetings held with political leaders and officials
- An annual delegation made to Council to keep members informed and engaged
- -# of effective advocacy efforts contributed to change

Recommendation 2

Support initiatives that develop a just and sustainable food system.

Activities

- Advocate for the inclusion of polices and zoning bylaws related to the conservation of the land, soil, water, air and natural resources, enhancement of biodiversity, and promotion of sustainable food systems
- Develop and implement strategies that engage diverse community members, groups and organizations to shape structures, policies and programs that impact our environment and local food system
- Engage with and develop relationships with Indigenous communities of practice in supporting Indigenous self-determination, leadership, knowledge, culture and practices of hunting, fishing, and gathering
- Build relationships with local producers, processors and farmers to create and market a sustainable food supply system
- Promote resource-efficient equipment, renewable energy sources, and management systems and tools that minimizes food and packaging waste.

Collaborators

- Agencies/organizations/groups currently involved in sustainable food system related work such as Kawartha Lakes Food Coalition Growth and Sustainability Working Group, Harvest Haliburton, and Poverty Reduction Roundtable
- Municipalities of Haliburton County and CKL
- HKPR District Health Unit
- Indigenous communities of practice

Resources

- Haliburton and CKL municipal staff expertise
- Haliburton County Council members and CKL Council members
- HKPR District Health Unit staff expertise
- Poverty Reduction Roundtable Coordinator

- Indigenous communities of practice
- Health Equity Impact Assessment (an assessment tool),

Measurable Indicators

- Diversity of groups engaged for development of policies and bylaws
- Type of strategies used to engage diverse groups regarding policies/ programs
- # of advocacy efforts towards a sustainable food system

Recommendation 3

Support food literacy initiatives and programs that increase access to healthy, sustainable and safe foods.

Activities

- Advocate for safe municipal lands for community garden and edible tree initiatives to help increase access to local fresh produce
- Support and promote innovative community food literacy initiatives i.e. community/collective kitchens that teach healthy cooking skills, gardening, and healthy eating
- Engage with and develop relationships with Indigenous communities of practice in supporting Indigenous-led food literacy initiatives.
- Advocate for development and implementation of a plan to assist with rental fees and insurance costs of municipally owned buildings for food literacy related initiatives
- Advocate for development and implementation of a national healthy school food program
- Support promotion and expansion of fresh produce donation to food banks and other emergency food related programs

Collaborators

- Agencies/organizations/groups currently involved in food literacy and access to food related work such as Kawartha Lakes Food Coalition Food Security Working Group, Haliburton FoodNet, Kawartha Lakes Food Source, Poverty Reduction Roundtable, Community Gardens, Community Kitchens
- Municipalities of Haliburton County and CKL
- HKPR District Health Unit
- Indigenous communities of practice

Resources

- Haliburton and CKL municipal staff expertise
- Haliburton County Council members and CKL Council members
- HKPR District Health Unit staff expertise
- Poverty Reduction Roundtable Coordinator
- Health Equity Impact Assessment (an assessment tool)
- Indigenous communities of practice

Measurable Indicators:

- Type of advocacy efforts
- # of campaigns developed and implemented
- # of meetings held with political leaders and officials
- An annual delegation made to Council to keep members informed and engaged
- # of effective advocacy efforts contributed to change

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