

Food Security

2012 LOS Conference Notes

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Participant backgrounds

- Working with low income families to increase access to food
 - Working to move food security forward in Ottawa
 - Increasing food security/sovereignty in food “deserts” in Ottawa
 - o West Centretown, Caldwell, Russell Heights
 - Educating the public on how to eat healthy
 - Food security is a big social determinant of health
 - Looking at local sustainable food systems
 - Assisting clients with accessing food banks
 - Outreach worker in the Bayshore area, lack of grocery stores
- Health Units, Community based organizations, Christie Lake Kids

Objective for Session: Picking up on the ideas that Paul highlighted re: Collective Impact

- How can we continue to develop the work that Just Food has started, and how do we get to a point where we are having collective impact
- **What is our shared vision around food security?**
- **What is in place?**
- **What do we need, what could we be focusing on?**

(EK)

What is *Food for All*?

- True partnership between Just Food and uOttawa
- Steering committee that is very cohesive: Ottawa Public Health, City of Ottawa, CHRCs, Ottawa Food Bank, Carleton University
- Work is done by consensus

- Flexible funding from CHIR
- *Goals:*
 - *Develop municipal food security policies*
 - *Develop a food security assessment toolkit*
 - *Build community capacity to deal with food security*
- Policy conversations continued for 6 months, followed by the hiring of policy writing teams to put conversations/consultations from the community into policies
- Over 200 (up to 300 now) community researchers engaged
 - 14 action plan proposals developed
- Working to develop a Food Policy Council that will help with the implementation of Food Action Plans, and to develop a user friendly food security toolkit developed collaboratively
- Toolkit has been tested in 5 neighbourhoods
 - Feedback: participants felt welcomed and listened to, that the toolkit was useful
- Toolkit is backed by evidence and research
- Working on spreading the toolkit to other neighbourhoods

(MG)

Common Agenda

The term “food security” has changed over time. Came from international development context, and has moved towards community food security, and now to food sovereignty. More appropriate term would be “Food and Farming”

Solutions often feel short term – but by working together we can all contribute to the longer term solution

Shouldn’t just focus on specific issues (such as access to food, local food) – we could undermine other realities related to food.

Need a systems approach to food security, so that we are looking at the broader system, and *then* focus on our individual areas

Success can only be achieved, and action plans implemented when the conditions are right, but for this, you need to have all stakeholders at the table.

Need to improve: food link directory, to highlight food related programs, and ensure that we are not duplicating work.

Need long term thinking!

Shared Measurements

- Need a shared vocabulary before you can have an shared indicator set
- Need to start with process evaluations first
- Some skepticism around technical evaluation solutions – need to focus on conversations and convening

Need to pull topic from 30min marker

Continuous Communication

- People have been talking to each other for up to two decades, working on this problem (*this is a good thing*)
 - o Have been able to develop a common vocabulary and common understanding
- Conversations important to come to a common understanding
- Strategy can only come about when everyone is comfortable being open and honest with others at the “table”

Backbone Organizations

- Helpful to have community based organizations as the backbones of the process
- Food sector is able to work with business to bring access to healthy food. Need to ensure that community organizations are still driving the process forward.
- Funders are interested in collaborative governance – everyone owns the project together, which helps when funding issues arise, since everyone is invested in the process moving forward successfully.

- Play a role as a facilitator
- Not about centralization, but regionalization – everyone needs to contribute to the food and farming

Group Discussion

Who has been involved in food policy discussions in Ottawa?

- Most people in the group have *not* been involved

What is happening outside Ottawa towards a shared vision of food security?

Stormont Dundas Glengarry

- Network of 20/25 community organizations: public health, food banks.
- Meet 4 to 5 times a year
- Communicate regularly by phone/email
- At the community level, want to foster community conversations
- Regional food assessment being conducted
- *Do you feel that a shared agenda exists:*
 - Some partners more knowledgeable than others
 - Need to educate people

Leeds Grenville

- Focus on advocacy
- Poverty is often invisible in rural areas
- Engagement with counselors
- Recognition of issues by the community
- Different initiatives started by the community
- Working on identifying food deserts
- It feels like there is a lot of work to do, especially for a small organization in a rural community

MG

- Urban toolkits are often challenging to apply to rural areas – require knowledge of the area (food deserts in rural areas are not the same as food deserts in urban areas)

*Participants were interested in learning more about the **Ottawa Neighbourhood Study***

Poverty and Hunger Group: Pop-up “Good Food” markets – lower cost food options for communities, where people can go to those markets and purchase. Social Planning Council run program, a group of women purchase items in bulk from sales, etc. Program is being

Poverty and Hunger Working Group: Transport project - grocery buses, farm trips, etc in the fall. Needs participation from different groups to ensure success.

Problem:

- Easy to do the “cool projects”
- Often see lots of small projects (that are important) that have very little impact.
- What is the benefit of a collective agenda?
- Community fatigue – get tired of short term projects – loss of credibility as the community isn’t sure how long the project will be there.

Solutions:

Highlight cool projects in the context of a larger hub, so that these individual projects can have a longer term benefit – so that successes (and failures) can be shared beyond the “cool” project.

If you’re an innovator, your failures are just as important as your successes.

Systematic reviews of interventions or initiatives, to see which ones have potential, which ones are working and why they are working.

Need to move beyond projects.

(EK) Need to work together against the elephant in the room: Neo-Liberalism

MG: Starting an incubator farm in the City of Ottawa in the greenbelt, to give individuals an opportunity to see how it works.

Bayshore area:

- Good Food Box program is low impact in the community, and seems to be used by other communities, as it is possible to order online
- Fluctuating demand for good food boxes
- Immigrant population doesn't always understand how to use the products.
- Farmer's market prices are considered high by members of the community, even though some participants feel that the market is a success.

Benefits of a Shared Agenda:

Collaboration:

- Working with a lot of small organizations, the biggest challenge is that everyone is trying to reinvent the wheel ← a shared agenda would help with this
 - o Need to be careful as certain things work in certain places, but not in others – need to identify *true* failures
 - o Not everything will work the way you expect it to work, so still need to learn
- Solutions need to be sold as a good idea for everyone (not just for lower income individuals) – we need to be a non-class movement

Evaluation of programs is important, and need to share this information

- Shared understanding and conversations are useful → lead to shared values, shared responsibilities

Are there any missing pieces to the food security vision for Ottawa?

- Need to adjust for economic realities
- Funding is often allocated to new projects, and not to those ones that have been working well
 - ***Need to build relationships to ensure that there is an understanding of what is being done, and the need for funding for existing projects.***

Government leadership often wants “quick wins” → long term mindset is not always present

It is important to engage private sector and community to highlight value of projects and to solicit longer term support.

Funding is sometimes catchment specific.

Diversified partnerships are important. Can use strengths and compensate for weaknesses.

Sustainability is an issue

Advocacy is often difficult, as it involves speaking out against funders, and other powerful actors.

10% allowance for advocacy is not being used well – all members of the organization should be advocating. Doesn't have to be Political

Moe mentioned that people should consider joining the Food Policy Council

Issues get boiled down to their symptoms – often resulting in blame being assigned to victims.

Think about where we need to go to push the shared vision to the next level? What *is* the next level? What would that look like, and what would we need?

Next Steps

- **Important to remember to make the message for everybody**
 - o Important to serve vulnerable populations, but need everyone to understand that food security is an issue, and to get buy in from everyone.
 - o This is *not* just an income security issue
- **Knowledge of food and food preparation**
 - o Microwaved food, obesity diabetes
- **Need to highlight the importance of mandating projects that are related to food security**

- Senior management needs to buy into these types of programs
- Meetings need to lead to community involvement
- *Tone at the top is important*
- Need to engage senior management, and get them to champion the process within the organization.
- Membership in Food Policy Council

- **Members of the community need to be at the table**

- **Need to engage grocery stores**
 - How do we engage these stores?
 - Important to realize that there are other issues at play
 - How do we deal with the cartel nature of grocery companies?
 - How do we deal with corporate agreements that dictate what the store can/cannot do?

- **Need to engage corner stores, and other less obvious sources of food**
 - Other distribution channels can help get around the corporate nature of grocery stores

- **Need to get around the silo effect in larger organizations**
 - Need to share more information
 - Need to communicate more often
 - Perhaps a community partner targeted newsletter?
 - Easy way to inform senior management as well
 - Share powerful stories with people (example of the metro that closed 30 min early, to avoid having to deal with members of the youth group coming into the store at closing time, rather than engaging and finding a solution).
 - Stories should supplement the data, not replace it

- **Community engagement**
 - Get buy in from community organizations (e.g. CHRCs)

- **Need inter-sectoral involvement**

- **Need a food indicator (similar to an EDI)**

- **Educate non-food organizations**

How can we get organizations to work in an aligned fashion?

Other comments:

- Being rural presents a challenge
- Food Matters coalition is useful – allows members of organizations a bit more freedom
- People on ODSP cannot afford food
- Need to keep food on the agenda