

From Evaluation to Advocacy: Making the Case for Good Food Programs for Children and Youth

Background info for the Collaboration Session at Bring Food Home 2017

October 27, 2017, 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

Session Description: This working session will follow from the “Evaluation and Making the Case for Good Food Programs for Children and Youth” presentation session to allow participants to explore in more depth how we can collaborate to make a stronger case for good food programs for children and youth. The session will explore what tools, resources and knowledge we already have and know and where significant gaps exist that we could work to fill in collaboration with each other.

The following table offers some information to begin the conversation. It shows some existing initiatives along the continuum from evaluation to making the case (primarily Ontario-based) and offers some ideas about how we, as a movement, can work together to strengthen aspects along the continuum.

First and Foremost: Have we identified intended users of and intended uses for the evaluation?
Capacity: Are we ready to perform evaluation that can support our sector to do advocacy for good food programs for children and youth?
Have those involved been trained in evaluation, including purposes and methods?
Examples of existing initiatives / knowledge: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Growing Out: Evaluation and Impact Youth-Grown Tools project (led by Sustain Ontario and FoodShare) is intended to empower youth who participate in food programs throughout Ontario to evaluate and share their experiences of the impacts and processes of these projects, in ways that are authentic to them. A part of this project is training youth evaluators.• Canadian Evaluation Society: Essential Skills Series http://www.evaluationontario.ca/professional-development/upcoming-events/essential-skills-series/• Ontario Not-for-Profit Network Evaluation Resources Site http://theonnc.ca/our-work/our-structures/evaluation/• Liberating Structures (US) http://www.liberatingstructures.com/ Ideas for future initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluation webinars / trainings to develop strong tools and methods (Evaluation 101)• Online evaluation toolkit on the Greenhouse

Have priority outcomes been agreed upon that are worth consistent measurement?

Do we know what to measure? Do we have the right language / categories to measure? Have we developed a logic model to elaborate our theory of change?

Examples of existing initiatives / knowledge:

- The Ontario Society for Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) has been undertaking a process as a part of a [Locally Driven Collaborative Project](#) to develop a tool for measuring food literacy and its attributes within the context of public health practice. The project has recently undergone a broad public process to define and prioritize food literacy attributes. The project's aim is to develop a tool that public health professionals can use to assess food literacy levels and evaluate any work that is being done in the community and schools.
- PGP Evaluation Project: Sustain Ontario, Eco-Ethnomics and FoodShare partnered to review evaluation projects and tools and build a [Collective Impact Map for Ontario's Food Movement](#). This collective impact map was developed with input from hundreds of sector stakeholders and communicates many child & youth-focused indicators and outcomes.
- The [Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy](#) is an expert and evidence-informed plan for healthy food and food systems in Ontario. While the OFNS has not identified priority outcomes, it has established a number of broad goals to work towards along with directions and action areas, many of which focus on children and youth.
- [Evaluation for Transformation: A Cross-Sectoral Evaluation Framework for Farm to School \(US\)](#): This document provides an evaluation framework for farm to school. It aims to help move collective Farm to School work forward "by identifying practices and policies that have demonstrated benefits and by recommending areas for additional exploration." It is also intended to guide "how sites consistently articulate and implement program elements, evaluate efforts and report on outcomes". Table 26 (beginning on page 91) has a summary table of priority outcomes that have been identified using a collaborative process.

Ideas for future initiatives:

- Identify and make use of assessment measures from government strategies such as:
 - [Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario](#) (with its 4 goals of Achieving Excellence, Ensuring Equity, Promoting Well-Being and Enhancing Public Confidence).
 - [Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy](#)
- Do we go through a process to identify common indicators that we want to measure and bring together? If so, should we build on the work done by Evaluation to Transformation? Or do we work with the indicators put forward by the Collective Impact Map for Ontario's Food Movement? Or based on the OFNS? How could we identify our common indicators?

Are strong tools available to perform evaluation? (Survey instruments, interview or focus group schedules, appropriate software, etc...)

- Groups and projects across Ontario have been performing evaluations to assess their programs. These have not been collected or compiled.
- [Evaluation for Transformation: A Cross-Sectoral Evaluation Framework for Farm to School](#) (US): Links to sample tools for some of the measures (see Appendix 5). A fuller repository of Farm to School evaluation tools is available at www.farmtoschool.org.
- [Bearing Fruit: Farm to School Program Evaluation Resources and Recommendations](#) (US): This resource is a resource guide for planning farm to school evaluation. The report includes a compilation of farm to school evaluations and tools to conduct evaluations (in the appendix). It provides a summary of key evaluation results from farm to school projects.

Ideas for future initiatives:

- Develop an evaluation toolkit with examples / links to tools and methods that others can use to evaluate programs in a meaningful way
- Share software recommendations and tracking tools.

Evidence: What findings are available?

Are these results based on strong studies? Are these easily accessible? Have they been gathered in one place? Do we need additional information to make our case?

- The Ontario Edible Education Network website shares a [summary of impacts](#) relating to good food education for children and youth. These include primarily US data from peer reviewed journals.
- Food Secure Canada's Coalition for Healthy School Food's [position paper](#) points to the positive impacts of meal programs. The Coalition will soon be releasing a more extensive research paper relating to impacts and best practices of school food programs.
- Farm to Cafeteria Canada will soon release a "Benefits of Farm to School in Canada" factsheet summarizing scholarly and/or grey literature exploring outcomes in Canadian schools.
- [Feeding our Future](#) offers the results of an evaluation of the effects of a Universal-Free School Breakfast Program in the Toronto District School Board.
- Many groups across Ontario have been performing their own evaluations.
- [Evaluation for Transformation: A Cross-Sectoral Evaluation Framework for Farm to School](#) (US): provides many references

Ideas for future initiatives:

- How could we better point to, collect, and/or communicate evidence / findings?
- Common projects from across Ontario could come together to work on a common evaluation project.

Communications: Have publicly available tools been developed to communicate the existing evidence to the appropriate decision-makers / funders? (infographics, videos, key messages, etc.) Do we have a common language to communicate our messages? Are we using language that matters to key decision makers (e.g. school boards, the Ontario Ministry of Education, etc...)? Do we have the needed stakeholders involved in this issue? Should we be linking with environmental education, Community Food Centres, and other intersecting movements in this effort?

- Sustain Ontario's [Say Yes! to Good Food in Schools](#) materials include briefs, key messages and case studies. These tools can be used and adapted to help others make the case for good food in schools.
- A broader Say Yes! campaign and tools are being developed by the Coalition for Healthy School Food to help everyone make the case for good food in schools.
- Groups have been making submissions to the Government of Ontario. The Ontario Edible Education Network's [submissions to the Ontario government](#) are available online.

Ideas for future initiatives:

- Broaden the Say Yes! campaign.
- Compile stats from other programs (existing info) regarding food and children that might inspire people. This could also be used to support conversations on how to shift the stats.
- Connect the stories of impact in communities across Ontario to the supporting research and data. This can bring to life the visions we have for school food and the impact that programs have on the health and well-being of students across Ontario.