

Food Security Investments in Ottawa

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Executive Summary

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Following the 2014 Community Conversation, the City of Ottawa has partnered with Arthur Kroeger College in order to map the current food security initiatives and investments in Ottawa ahead of the 2015 Community Conversation Forum.

Although many food security definitions exist, for the purpose of this paper, the basic definition was used which focuses on feeding hungry individuals.

The report analyzes food security in Ottawa by conducting a literature review, describing a theoretical framework for analysis, analyzing survey data, comparing other cities' programs, describing the limitations of the study, and concluding with some brief recommendations in regards to gaps in the mapping.

Theoretical Framework

The report adopted the Food Security Continuum Framework, from the Community Food Systems Assessment Guide for British Columbia produced in 2007, by taking inventory of food security programs and categorizing them into three main functions:

1. **Short-Term Relief Programs** are mostly charitable and emergency food programs. They deal with addressing immediate hunger, and do not work towards increasing food capacity or improve the system in which they operate.
2. **Capacity Building Programs** aim to empower individuals through training and education, while raising awareness about food issues. They aim to reduce reliance on short-term unsustainable resources like funding and empower individuals to be independent in feeding themselves.
3. **System Redesigning Programs** are involved in advocacy, policy development, and implementation of food policy. These programs aim to improve the ecological, economic, and social stability of the food system.

Analysis of Funding Organizations Key Findings

This section of the report looks at the 4 major funding organizations in Ottawa; it begins by examining their definitions of food security, and then looks at the types of organizations they fund, and the details about their projects.

Key Findings:

- Each of these organizations has its own definition of food security, if they have one at all, but none of them is the basic definition. Two common concepts within definitions are healthy and affordable. This variation is problematic, because, in

order to find a solution for food security, a consensus on what goals should be prioritized is critical.

- The organizations' aggregate budget for food security initiatives is \$3.94 million annually, with the largest one contributing \$3.5 million, and the smallest one contributing \$10,000 annually. This funding is spread across 39 organizations.
- Out of the 39 organizations funded, 2 of the front line organizations focus on capacity building, 1 focuses on system redesigning, and the remaining 36 focus on short term relief. This focus on providing food services is important but not as sustainable as the other types of organizations which can build long term change.

Recommendations:

- The 2015 Community Conversation Forum should aim to come to a clear consensus of what the aims are for food programs and decide on incentives on how to achieve these goals. For example, a potential goal is deciding what level of food security should be the current aim.
- Funding organizations should come to a consensus of how the food security system should be designed and then support organizations that further these ideals.

Analysis of Front Line Organizations (FLOs)

Of the 50 organizations which were identified in the initial research and subsequently surveyed, only 8 offered a response. Furthermore, of these 8, some refrained from answering certain questions, and others offered answers to questions that were either too generic or too ambiguous to extrapolate any real data. As such, it is suggested that the analysis provided of FLOs be viewed as a departure point for further research, rather than as a comprehensive overview which reflects the realities facing FLOs as a whole.

Key Findings:

- All 8 listed "low income earners" as a group that is served. Seniors were expressly listed by 3 of the 8, adults with disabilities were listed by 3 as well, and immigrants were cited by 5 of the groups.
- The aggregate food program budget of the four agencies disclosing their data totalled \$2,600,000.
- Only 4 of the 8 agencies provided responses for the number of people they feed on a monthly basis. The 4 agencies who responded to the quantity of individuals they served, when combined highlighted they serve 1,550 people.
- 4 agencies indicated the number of people that they are unable to feed, which was 2000 and specifying that they do not turn individuals away, rather, adjust overall food distribution.

- Most of the recipients were occasional users, often using the services for more than 2 months.
- All eight respondents that discussed trends in food demands identified an increase in services over the past number of years.
- All of the organizations stated concern about the future of their donations. One expressly noted that their three-year funding grant will end at the end of the calendar year, others simply mentioned that a large degree of their funding was temporary, or required considerable work to maintain, for example, fundraising.

Recommendation:

Moving forward, there are serious issues arising with respects to the levels of funding, the consistency of funding, and the increasing demand for food security programs. The manner in which the City is able to facilitate continuing and adequate funding, as well as the manner in which it is able to address the systemic and economic issues faced by these recipients will largely dictate the efficacy of programs going forward.

Comparison between other cities

This section analyzes other models of handling food security across Canada. A classification system was created by a team of food policy analysts in a report titled, “Municipal Food Policy Entrepreneurs: A preliminary analysis of how Canadian cities and regional districts are involved in food system change” in order to compare food security municipal activity across the country.

This system places cities into six different categories based on the level of resource and/or structural arrangements made between community food policy groups and local governments.

- Category 1: Municipality-driven food policy initiatives (Edmonton, Calgary, Metro Vancouver)
- Category 2: Hybrid model with direct links to government (Toronto, Vancouver, Markham)
- Category 3: Hybrid model with indirect links to government (Kamloops, BC, Waterloo Region, Hamilton)
- Category 4: Food policy organization linked to government through a secondary agency (**Ottawa**, Victoria, Saskatoon, Montreal)
- Category 5: Civil society organisation with limited government funding and participation (Kaslo, BC, Sudbury, ON, Outaouais, Quebec)
- Category 6: Civil society organisation with no direct government involvement (Kelowna, BC)

Recommendations:

- With regards to Ottawa, a more formal linkage between food policy organizations and municipal government would help to promote and sustain projects, and encourage long-term change.
- The City could also create more funding options for food policy groups, and could champion them and offer skills and resources to groups that would not usually have access to such opportunities.
- Enacting such changes would not only improve Ottawa's classification into the upper three levels, but it would also enable many more food policy initiatives to be realized in achieving future food security endeavours.

Limitations of the Research

- Low response rate to the survey
- Lack of compiled data in the organizations
- Short timeline
- Difference in definition of food security

Recommendations for future research

- For profit/sponsorship dollars (This could be anything aside from tax-receiptable donations, or governmental transfers, and could include consistent funding from the for-profit sector, in the forms of grants or bursaries, to different organizations each year)
- Measure Ottawa residents' use of community gardens and how those contribute to food security
- Examine more capacity building approaches to food security