

Hastings - Sunrise Community Food Network

Project Proposal

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Introduction

The purpose of this project is to increase community engagement, and make healthy food more accessible and affordable to members of the Hastings-Sunrise community. By working with the Hastings-Sunrise Community Food Network, we hope to utilize pre-existing assets and resources, highlighting what the community already has to offer. By involving agencies, community members, and food systems students, the gap between healthy, affordable food outlets and the Hastings-Sunrise region will continue to close.

Background and Context

The Hasting-Sunrise Community is located in northeast Vancouver bounded by the Burrard inlet, Boundary road, East Broadway and Nanaimo St (City of Vancouver, n.d). It is a multicultural community, with 35% of the total population speaking primarily Chinese, 41% as English speaking residents, and the remaining speaking Italian, Vietnamese, Tagalog and Spanish (City of Vancouver, n.d). Such diversity poses a challenge to meeting all the needs of the community members, especially when community engagement being tied in to the goals of the Hastings-Sunrise Community Food Network. In 2011, among 12070 households in this community, less than one-fifth of the households are low income status and the median income of the community is \$59,952. 16.3% of families are single parent families and a large proportion of families are immigrants. Considering that 43.7% of lone parent families and 37.4% of recent immigrants in Vancouver live under the Low Income Cut Off, these groups are much more vulnerable to food insecurity (VCH Food Security Profile, n.d.).

Significance

Considering the number of low-income residents in the Vancouver area, there is certainly a need for addressing food security issues. A sustainable food system is a complex idea containing both single entities and relationships, and the Hastings-Sunrise community food system is no exception. This project will focus on community food security and food programs because of their important role in this complex

system and their potential for growth. According to Roncarolo, Adam, Bisset & Potvin, there are two types of community food security interventions: traditional interventions, like food banks and soup kitchens; and alternative interventions, like community gardens aimed at social integration (2015). Their paper shows that people participating in alternative programs are more likely to be civically engaged and less food insecure as those who were more empowered were more likely to access sustainable, healthy choices (Roncarolo, Adam, Bisset & Potvin, 2015). The study ran by the Metro Vancouver Housing Corporation showed comparable results where 69% of community food program participants noted a positive impact on their access to food (BCNPHA, 2012).

The connections between food security programs and residents are also extremely important when considering the cost of choosing healthier, more sustainable foods. People with low incomes in BC are unable to purchase food with adequate nutritional value, a concern when taking the proportion of single parent families and recent immigrants in the area (Dietitians of Canada, 2009). By working with community members, this project aims to find ways of empowering residents to become involved in their food system. Our objectives will incorporate various programs to target community members of diverse social networks and demographics via food programs uniquely catered to each group (Roncarolo, Adam, Bisset, & Potvin, 2015).

Moreover, the City of Vancouver has been working towards a sustainable food system, and as highlighted in the Vancouver Food Strategy, the City has a unique set of urban food system assets. However, “in spite of a strong foundation of food system assets that Vancouver enjoys, there are a number of gaps and vulnerabilities... there is considerable variation in socioeconomic and demographic conditions” (City of Vancouver, 2013, p. 3). One of the five priority action areas of the Vancouver Food Strategy includes empowering residents to enhance access and agency for residents to participate in the food system. This project will work within the gaps and vulnerabilities mentioned in the Food Strategy, specifically in the “priority action area” of empowering residents (City of Vancouver, 2013, p. 6). All things considered, it is evident that we share a common goal between students, community partners, the City, and residents to achieve food security for all Vancouver residents.

Objectives

The objectives of the Hastings-Sunrise Community Food Network project include training up to 12 community members as facilitators so they are well equipped to conduct sessions with 6-8 focus groups. Another project objective includes using information recorded during focus group sessions to clearly identify the most prominent barriers currently straining access to healthy and affordable food for community members. From the compiled information from a varied demographic within the community, we will then explore possible strategies and viable solutions such as improved or new community programs. These recommendations and strategies are ultimately meant to work towards the broader project objective of alleviating the strained access to healthy and affordable food and thereby increase community food security.

Inquiry Questions

1. What are effective ways to engage community members in the community food network?
2. What are the barriers in accessing healthy and affordable food?
3. What strategies can be implemented to overcome these barriers?

Methodology + Methods

The methodology of this project is a case-study approach, building evidence of existing barriers within the community food system based on a subset of a population.

The first step in our research process will be to participate in four facilitator training sessions. Following these sessions we will research and discuss questions to ask at focus groups and formulate a clear plan and outline to direct group members while attending facilitator training sessions. A study in Vancouver that looked at the implementation of community gardens and engaged community members by asking questions based on garden statistics, initiation and operation, structure of administration and membership,

as well as participant motivations and potential for improvement (Seto, 2011). Our approach will follow a similar strategy of concrete, logistical questions to gain an idea of the existing framework, as well as theoretical questions in finding improvements to this framework. There will be 6-8 focus group meetings that will take place at various locations throughout the community in November. We will help facilitate the focus group meetings, as well as record observations including the time and location of meeting, demographic, quotes from community members, atmosphere and dynamic of the meetings. This is the bulk of the research process where most of our evidence of the barriers to accessibility of an affordable, healthy community food system will come from. Following a similar case study of the Think&EatGreen@School Alliance, our research method will combine input from community members, as well as ourselves as food system academics, in order to create new knowledge and locally-based solutions (Rojas *et al.*, 2011).

Budget

Taken care of by Hastings-Sunrise Community Food Network Coordinator.

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