

Community Food System Assessment

A Companion Tool for the Guide

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Introduction

This document is a companion resource to the [Community Food Assessment Guide](#) and its purpose is to serve as an additional resource for communities undertaking a Community Food System Assessment. It provides a listing of potential indicators as well as links to the existing data sources and tools and methods for collecting data that can help in community food assessments.

Indicators are used to measure key conditions within your community's food system. Indicators can show the quality or quantity of resources in your community. They can also be measured over time in order to assess progress or problems in a particular area. Indicators may be qualitative, such as perceptions or experiences, or quantitative, such as numbers and percentages. There is no standard set of community food security indicators because communities differ in the way their food system is organized and what issues are important to that community.¹ Given the wide variety of indicators, it is important to first prioritize which information is most important for your community to collect. Some basic criteria for selecting indicators are:

- What areas within the food system does your community want to know more about?
- How much data will be needed?
- Are data readily available or will new research need to be conducted? If new information is needed, are time and resources available to collect this information?

In this resource, we have presented a range of indicators that can be used to measure diverse aspects of the food system, from production to distribution and consumption to food-related policies. The indicators are arranged in order of accessibility and relevance. The first tier of indicators will provide information needed to do an environmental scan as well as health data. These indicators will provide the basic information needed to understand the context within which your food system is embedded. They are primarily quantitative and easily collected. A second tier of information is related to the food resources within a community; this includes community

¹ Siedenburgh, K and K. Pothukuchi (2002) What's Cooking Your Food System: A Guide to Community Food Assessment. Community Food Security Coalition.

and charitable resources. These indicators allow you to know where people are accessing food and where the gaps might lie. The third tier is comprised of indicators related to system redesign, such as local food and food policy indicators. These indicators require extensive data collection and analysis. This type of research should only be chosen if the community feels that the issue is a priority and has the resources to devote to it.

Indicators can be measured using either secondary data, information that is already collected (e.g., census data) or primary data (e.g., data gathering using surveys or interviews). This guide provides links to secondary data sources – simply click on the hyperlink to be taken to the data source. In some instances, you will need to decide on the appropriate geographic scale for your inquiry (e.g., local health area, health authority, development district). It is usually best to choose the geographic scale that most closely reflects the boundaries of your food system assessment. Definitions of the indicators are not provided in this document as they are described in the data sources.

This guide also provides additional tools for collecting primary information. These tools are briefly described and links are provided for additional information. In some instances, sample surveys have been provided. These should be used as samples only; they are meant to guide the development of situation specific surveys. They should be customized to focus on the issues of concern to each community undertaking a food system assessment.

Once the information has been collected, it is also advisable to choose a few key indicators that can be monitored over time to assess if wider economic or demographic conditions are shifting, which may require additional planning, and/or if food security programs are having their intended effect on the community.

Indicators for a Community Food System Assessment

Indicator	Data Source
<i>Environmental Scan Indicators</i>	<i>Environmental Scan Indicators are the most critical to collect because they provide an overview of the economic, social and demographic situation in your community.</i>
Demographic indicators related to food insecurity • Single parent households • Seniors • Aboriginal • Population aged 20 years and above who do not have grade nine completion. • Recent immigrants • School-aged children • Population growth /decline • Population density	Socioeconomic profiles for communities as well as Health Service Delivery Areas, Health Authorities, College Regions, School Districts, Regional Districts and Development Regions For geographic areas such as a city, town, or reserve lands, go to Statistics Canada's Community Profiles (2006) and type in the place name of your community. For breakdowns of age, education, household, and income categories, select the Additional Data button and the data you need. You can also download the data in Excel format by selecting the Download data button.
Economic Indicators • Median annual family income • % of individuals that are low-income • % of children under the age of 18 that are low-income.	For geographic areas such as a city, town, or reserve lands, go to Statistics Canada's Community Profiles (2006) and type in the place name of your community. For breakdowns of age, education, household, and income categories, select the Additional Data button and select the data you need. You can also download the data in Excel format by selecting the Download data button.

Composite Index of Economic Hardship	This index is available for both Regional Districts and Local Health Areas. (Note: This index is comprised of the following indicators: % of population age 0-64 on income assistance, % of population age 0-64 on income assistance >1 year, % of population age 0-64 on income assistance <1 year, % of seniors receiving maximum Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), % of 19-64 year olds receiving Employment Insurance (4 quarter average), Average household income Per capita Income, Income inequality, Per capita net taxes paid).
Unemployment rates	BC Stats BC Unemployment Rates by Development Region and Urban Area (note: data updated monthly)
Social assistance rates	Income and Employment Insurance Rates for regional districts and local health areas (note: data updated monthly)
Housing stress: Percentage of households that spend more than 30% of their income on shelter.	Statistics Canada provides the raw numbers on housing affordability for Provinces, Territories, Census Divisions and Census Subdivisions. First, select your community from the drop-down list. To calculate the percentage of the population, divide the number of households spending more the 30% of their income on shelter by the total number of households. You can also calculate the housing stress for specific populations (e.g., single parent households).
Number of Homeless	Data must be obtained locally. For example, Homeless Count for Metro Vancouver (2008).
<i>Health-related indicators</i>	<i>Health-related indicators are important because they either directly or indirectly point to the effects of food insecurity.</i>
Percent of the population that is food insecure	See Health Inequities in British Columbia Discussion Paper, November 2008. To measure food insecurity as a smaller scale or among a particular population, please see Food Security in the United States: Household Survey Tools

	These surveys have been used and validated in Canada.
Mortality from dietary-related disease	Ministry of Health's Selected Vital Statistics and Health Status Indicators (note: these data are for 2006)
Rates of obesity/overweight Percent of the population that consumes 5 or more fruits and vegetables a day. Percent low birthweight	For rates of obesity and overweight and percentage of fruit and vegetable consumption and percent low birth weight by health regions, see Measuring Our Success: A Baseline Document (note: these data are for 2003)
Prevalence of dietary-related disease (e.g., diabetes)	See Statistics Canada, Diabetes: Canada, provinces, territories, health regions and peer groups Includes data from 2003, 2005 and 2007.
Health status of Aboriginal communities	See: Regional Analysis of Health Statistics. Birth Related and Mortality Summaries for British Columbia and 16 Health Service Delivery Areas for Status Indians in British Columbia. (note: these data are from 2002)
<i>Community Food Production</i>	<i>Food production indicators are important if you're interested in the amount and type of food being produced in your community. These can tell you about the health of the agricultural sector.</i>
Number of farms # of farm operators and average age of operators Total hectares in farmland Total hectares of land in crops Top crops (hectares) Livestock statistics Average farm size	See Statistics Canada's 2006 Census of Agriculture . The profiles include agricultural statistics on population and farm operators, land use and land practices, farm finances, crops and horticulture, and livestock for most communities at the geographic level of the census division (CD) and census agricultural region (CAR). Trends can be investigated by comparing data from the 2001 Census of Agriculture .

Number of organic farms	See Statistics Canada: Certified, transitional or uncertified organic products . These data are for Census Agricultural Regions (CAR), Census Divisions (CD) and Census Consolidated Subdivisions (CCS)
Farm type (e.g., cattle, poultry, greenhouse)	See Statistics Canada: Farm Type , 2006 Census of Agriculture.
Net change in land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) by regional district	See the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission: Area Included and Excluded from the ALR by Regional District (data updated annually)
Number of vacant lots, brownfields, and available green space that are potentially productive in urban areas Amount of vacant city land converted to food production in urban areas.	Urban Agriculture Inventory
<i>Food Access and Distribution Networks</i>	<i>Food access and distribution indicators tell you how well people are able to access retail and charitable food within their communities.</i>
Number of food wholesalers, retailers and restaurants. Number of grocery store or fast food outlets per capita	Reference Canada has a database of over one million complete business listings in Canada. You can search by business type, company name, geographic location, or standard industrial classification (SIC) code. The database provides details such as address, size, sales, and a key contact person. Data can be accessed at many libraries. See Reference Canada website for more information: http://www.referencecanada.com/ In order to determine the per capita number of grocery stores or restaurants, create an inventory of those

	resources and divide by the number of residents in your area of focus.
Existence of food deserts and other barriers to accessing grocery stores.	Food Desert Analysis Shopping Habits Survey
Location of supermarkets and convenience stores in a community. Percentage of population that is within walking distance (450 meters) of a large grocery store or of public transportation that will take them to a large grocery store. Distribution of fast food outlets (including convenience stores) and relation to low-income neighbourhoods. Location of large and other grocery stores relative to public transportation routes.	GIS Food Mapping
Number of farmers markets Number of farmers attending each market	The BC Association of Farmers Markets has a listing of all markets in the Province (updated annually). Contact each market manager to determine the number of farmers participating in each market.
Number of people attending farmers markets, amount of revenue generated from farmers markets.	Rapid Market Assessment

Cost of Nutritious Food Basket relative to household income, low-income cutoff (LICO), and social assistance rates.	Cost of Eating in BC Report (updated annually) has statistics by health region. Communities can do their own research using the Nutritious Food Basket Costing Tool.
Number of charitable food resources and number per capita low-income: • food banks • soup kitchens • shelters with meals	Contact local food bank or charitable provider network in your area. The Canadian Association of Food Banks has an online list of members by province. In order to determine the per capita number of food resources, create an inventory of the charitable providers and divide the number of these resources by the number of low-income residents in your area of focus.
Number of people who use charitable food resources on a monthly basis.	Contact local food bank or charitable provider network in your area.
Demographics of residents accessing charitable food sources (age, gender, ethnicity)	Charitable Food Consumer Survey
Where charitable food comes from and the amount that is grown or processed locally. Number of programs that provide food and/or nutritional information/support for people with specific health issues (e.g., diabetes, HIV/AIDS) Charitable food provider policies regarding how food is accessed (line-ups, religious observances before food is provided, etc.)	Charitable Provider Survey

Nutritional quality of food provided at charitable food operations	Charitable Food Quality Assessment
Number of community kitchens	Fresh Choice Kitchens has a listing of community kitchens in BC.
<i>Social/Cultural Indicators</i>	<i>Social and cultural indicators are important for understanding the role that food plays in social life, food-related knowledge and skills and how food is valued within the community.</i>
Availability, accessibility and acceptability of food resources within a neighborhood or other community (communities may be geographical or based on a shared identity).	Community Food Mapping
Values placed on healthy eating Food and nutrition buying habits	Survey of Community Food Knowledge and Skills
Availability of culturally relevant and/or traditional food	Interviews, focus groups and oral histories
<i>Local Food Indicators</i>	<i>These indicators will tell you how available and accessible locally-produced food is within your community.</i>
Distance that food travels from farm to fork and associated green house gas emissions.	Food Miles Calculation Tool
The ability of local agriculture to meet the nutritional needs of residents.	Optimum Nutrition Environment Assessment Tool
The percentage of food consumed in the region that is grown or processed in the region.	Food Flow Analysis
Availability of local compared to conventional produce in retail stores	Local Food Retail Survey

Price of local produce compared to imported food	
<i>Food Policy Indicators</i>	<i>These indicators will tell you the extent to which food policy is integrated within institutions within your community.</i>
% organizations and communities that have implemented healthy food policies % of hospitals, long term care and schools districts with a healthy food policy	<u>Institutional Food Policy Inventory</u>
% of communities with intersectoral food councils % of communities with a food security needs and assets assessment	Contact the food security coordinator in your health region for information. This indicator should be used for larger-scale studies (e.g., regional-level), not for community-level food system assessments.

Tools and Methods for Measuring Community Food Systems

Food System Mapping

Much of the information collected through a Community Food Security Assessment can be displayed on maps. These maps can show a variety of information, from where grocery stores are located to the distribution of community gardens. Maps can be very low-tech, drawn with pen and paper or can be created using sophisticated computer programs that display a variety of information.

GIS Mapping

Geographical Information Systems or GIS are computer programs that can display spatial information to produce maps. A few examples of maps that could be created from information collected as part of a food system assessment include:

- Relative location of high schools to fast food restaurants
- Location of food banks in relation to low-income populations
- The concentration or lack of grocery stores in a neighborhood

This information can inform decisions associated with the development of community plans or the provision of transit services. Some location data for mapping, such as grocery stores and fast food restaurants, can be accessed through Reference Canada:

<http://www.referencecanada.com/>.

On-Line Resources

- One example of GIS food mapping is from [The Lexington Community Food Assessment](#).

Community Food Mapping

Community food mapping provides an opportunity to develop a database of food resources within a community and helps to promote greater collaboration between various initiatives. A community food mapping exercise begins by an invitation to a community meeting — including everyone who is in some way involved in growing, supplying, distributing, and cooking food. At the meeting, ask participants to mark on a map all the initiatives and projects they know about in the area that has anything to do with food. This can include stores, community gardens, farmers' markets, community

kitchens, soup kitchens, farms or farm stands, religious institutions that provide food, food-related social enterprises, restaurants, food banks, and areas where wild food is gathered. Color-coding can be used to distinguish between various types of projects (charity, community, retail, social enterprise).

Community food maps can be used in a variety of ways. The information can be placed into a simple mapping program, such as google maps (www.google.com) or put into a brochure as a community resource guide. For example, Fraser Health has created an online food map of community gardens, farmers markets, food banks and other food resources in the region: http://cmnbc.ca/atlas_gallery/fraser-health-food-security-atlas

Tools for Collecting Data on Community Food Production Indicators

Urban Agriculture Inventory

An Urban Agriculture Inventory provides an assessment of land that is currently or could potentially be used for food production. This can be an important tool for understanding the potential for urban agriculture in a community. The inventory should include all of the following:

- Land currently being used for food production, including large and small scale agriculture, community gardens, and roof-top gardens (food producing only);
- municipally-controlled land such as under-utilized streets, right of ways, greenways, greenstreets, blooming boulevards, bikeways;
- vacant or under-utilized land on new and upcoming major developments;
- private vacant or under-utilized land;
- provincial or crown land (e.g., hospitals, schools);
- federal land.

Once an inventory of sites has been completed, the second phase is to analyze potential uses for sites that are currently not productive. The analysis covers both physical criteria (sunlight, access to water, slope, impervious surface, brownfields, adjacent buildings, contaminated soil, proximity to other urban agriculture activity) and social criteria (access to parking or transit, bikeway proximity, site security, land tenure, demonstrated need, neighbourhood support, visual impression, opportunities for community capacity

building, proximity to density). Based upon these criteria, land can be categorized into that which is appropriate for:

- small-scale growing operations (food bank gardening, herb growing, beekeeping, pocket garden, floriculture),
- large scale growing operations (community supported agriculture, urban orchards, animal husbandry),
- community gardens, or
- production on impervious surfaces or poor soil (e.g., vertical gardening; indoor growing, greenhouses, community processing, farmers' markets, container gardening, hydroponics).

More information on conducting an Urban Agriculture Inventory can be found at <http://www.diggablecity.org/>

Community Garden Assessment

Assessing the status of community gardens can provide information on how well they are being used, how productive they are and if there is demand for more gardens. This is important in areas where urbanization and densification is reducing access to private garden space. Community garden assessments can be conducted with surveys, but it is recommended that site visits be used as the primary method or in addition to surveys. Site visits are particularly useful for generating a list of foods being produced.

Basic questions to ask regarding community gardens:

- Where are gardens located? Are they easily accessible via walking or public transportation?
- How many plots exist at each garden? What size are the plots?
- What is being grown? (These data should be collected through site visits.)
- Does the community garden have collective growing areas such as an orchard, herb gardens, and bee farms? If yes, how much is harvested and how is it distributed?
- Do the gardens have waiting lists? If so, how long (average length of wait)?

The Community Food Security Coalition has developed a community garden survey for adults and youth that can be used to assess the effects of community gardens in terms of social capital, healthy eating and exercise:

http://www.communitygarden.org/docs/community_gardener_survey_for_adults_template.doc. For more evaluation tools please visit the Community Food Security Coalition: http://www.foodsecurity.org/evaluation_pg2.html

Tools for Collecting Data on Food Access and Distribution Networks

The Nutritious Food Basket Costing Tool

Using a food-costing tool can be helpful in determining if residents can afford healthy food. To analyze the cost of a healthy diet and compare costs across different areas, a standard costing tool is Health Canada's Nutritious Food Basket (NFB), which lists 66 food items with standard container sizes or volumes, in the following categories: milk products, eggs, meat, poultry and fish, meat alternatives, grain products, citrus fruit and tomatoes, other fruit, potatoes, other vegetables, fats and oils, and sugar and other sweets. The strength of this tool is that it allows a comparison between the cost of a healthy diet and measures of income, thus providing one indicator of low-income barriers to health and nutrition. You can refer to the [Nutritious Food Basket Guidance Document from the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion](#) for more details on how to conduct this type of analysis.

Because food items may be priced differently in stores of different sizes, it is useful to determine the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket in both small and large grocery stores. The Reference Canada database, available at Small Business BC, maintains a database of retail grocers, which offers a number of metrics, including seven categories of total annual sales. Consolidating the seven into three categories results in stores with annual sales of less than \$1 million, between \$1 and \$2.5 million, and \$2.5 million and greater. Determining the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket at several stores of each size will provide a comparison between stores of different size within a neighbourhood and across a city or town. Measuring the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket in several neighbourhoods with different household or family income levels provides a comparison of the relative cost of healthy eating in neighbourhoods with different incomes. Further, the differences in cost, if any, between differently sized stores or between different neighbourhoods can be broken down by food group to investigate whether one or more food groups accounts for a larger or smaller part of the difference in cost. The cost of the

Nutritious Food Basket can further be compared to the Low Income Cutoff and to the current provincial welfare rates.

Food Desert Analysis

A food desert can be defined as an area where healthy food is unavailable due to lack of retail outlets, food prices that are unaffordable for residents or both. One relatively simple way of measuring food deserts is to create maps that allow you to compare the location of grocery stores to income levels within your community. This is best done using a GIS mapping program in which both income and location data can be entered.

From these maps, you can explore the following questions:

- Do low-income neighborhoods have fewer grocery stores than high income ones?
- What type of grocery stores exist in low and high income neighborhoods?
- Are they large or small stores?

If low-income neighborhoods have fewer or lower quality stores, this may mean that the area is a food desert. For more information on how to conduct a food desert analysis see: <http://www.fooddesert.net/>

Shopping Habits Survey

Measuring food access can also be done with a survey of residents about their shopping habits and preferences. Questions can include where people shop, what they buy and how they feel about the options available to them. This information can be combined with maps in order to provide a more complete picture of the food landscape in your community.

Online Resources

- [*Food Preferences in San Francisco's Southeast Sector*](#), provides a sample set of questions on shopping habits.

Rapid Market Assessment

Conducting an assessment of farmers markets in your community can help you understand the consumer demand for local food, the economic and social contributions of farmers markets, and the viability of the local agricultural sector. Rapid Market Assessment is a tool developed to assist farmers' markets to gather quickly and cost effectively the information necessary to understand their market. This tool combines

quantitative methods, attendance counts, and “dot” surveys, with Constructive Comments and Observations (CCO) that are provided by a group of selected market reviewers (often other market managers).

Attendance counts provide information that is useful for estimating vendor sales and the economic impact of farmers’ markets on surrounding businesses. It can also provide support for the contention that farmers’ markets are important sites of social interaction. In a “dot” survey, farmers’ market customers respond to questions regarding where they live, how much they spent (or plan to spend) at the market, and what draws them to the market. The CCO component asks reviewers to comment on the atmosphere, product quality and quantity and physical characteristics of the market and make suggestions for improvement.

For more details on how to conduct a RMA, go to [Tools for Rapid Market Assessment](#).

Charitable Food Consumer Surveys

A survey of charitable food consumers is a method of understanding the demographics and other characteristics of this population. The Daily Bread Food Bank (DBFB) in Toronto conducts annual assessments of who is utilizing their services. They collect information on demographics, income, immigration, housing, and disability in order to help advocate for specific programs to address the needs of the specific populations who use their services. In addition, the DBFB conducted an *area analysis* of food bank users, to provide information collected through food bank user surveys and categorize them according to location within the city. This was done in order to identify the key issues driving food bank use in different parts of the region and to ensure that food distribution is aligned with area needs.

Online Resources

- See [Who's Hungry: 2008 Profile of Hunger in the GTA](#).
- Another example of food bank client surveys can be found at the State of Washington’s [Emergency Food Assistance Program Customer Survey Report](#).

Charitable Food Provider Survey

Charitable food providers can be surveyed in order to understand the process by which they obtain and distribute food. For example, the Redwood Empire Food Bank and the University of California Cooperative Extension developed an [Emergency Food Provider Survey](#) for charitable food providers that collects information on:

- who is served by the program;
- the number and type of hampers or meals;
- the number of clients served and the criteria used to receive food;
- where food is obtained;
- types of foods that are lacking;
- food storage and waste.

Charitable Food Quality Assessment

In order to assess the nutritional quality of the food provided through the charitable food system, begin by surveying a representative sample of charitable food providers in your area (if the area is small and there are few providers, try to obtain information from all). For this survey, site visits may be optimal as it provides the opportunity to see actual food quality and portion sizes. If site visits are not possible, ask each organization to tell you in as much detail as possible the menu of items being served that day. Be sure to ask how the food is prepared and, for items such as soups and stews, which ingredients are used.

The assessment of food quality can be done in several ways. One is to categorize food into types (e.g., fruits and vegetables, meat, dairy) and then estimate how well charitable hampers or prepared meals meet recommended daily intakes. Alternatively, you may wish to conduct a more detailed assessment by determining the actual nutritional content of each meal. There are many online calculators to help with this. For example, the University of Illinois' The [Nutrition Analysis Tool \(NAT\)](#) can provide information on calories, fat, fiber, protein, carbohydrates along with vitamin and mineral content for selected foods.

Tools for Measuring Social and Cultural Indicators

Survey of Community Food Knowledge and Skills

A survey of food knowledge and skills can provide an understanding of how people perceive food issues (e.g., local food, healthy food) and the skills and resources they possess to act upon their knowledge. This information can help to target interventions. For example, people may have knowledge about food issues but not have access to the resources to make good choices. In this instance, more education would not address the

issue, however, more resources would. Alternatively, if there is a gap in knowledge, then more effort should be put into increasing awareness. These interviews can be conducted by phone, mail or face-to-face. Some important questions to ask are:

- How many residents feel they know basic nutrition information? What is the main source of nutrition information in your community? How many residents in your neighbourhood know how to cook? How many cook regularly?
- Do all residents in your community have access to an oven, a refrigerator and functioning gas and electricity? Do all residents in your community have the tools they need to cook — pots, pans, and utensils?
- How important is food to the people in your community? What does it mean to them? What are the specific cultural meanings of food in your community?
- How many community residents make food/eating choices based on nutrition and health considerations?

Online Resources

- [The Local Food Questionnaire](#) developed by Kenyon College
- [La Plata County Food Assessment Consumer Survey](#)
- [The Community Food Security Coalition](#) has a number of consumer surveys

Tools for Measuring Local Food

Food Miles Calculation Tool

The concept of “food miles” is used to describe the distance that food travels from the location where it is grown or raised to the location where it is consumed. The Region of Waterloo Public Health recently conducted a study of food miles using methodology originally developed by the Lifecycles Project. Lifecycles has created an online tool for calculating food miles using import data tracked by Customs and Immigration Canada to generate average distances traveled by all imports of selected food items.

See: [Food Miles: Environmental Implications of Food Imports to Waterloo Region](#)

Food Flow Analysis

A food flow analysis allows a community or region to determine what percentage of the food that is consumed in the region has been grown, raised, and/or processed in that region. In 2005, the Region of Waterloo undertook a food flow analysis. It was concluded that most of the items in the Region of Waterloo Food Basket were readily available in

local supermarkets and convenience stores and that most food items have a moderate to high degree of Ontario content. See: [Region of Waterloo's Food Flow Analysis](#).

Optimum Nutrition Environment Assessment

This study, conducted for the Region of Waterloo Public Health, looked at the nutritional needs of their community and assessed the potential for meeting those needs with the products of local agriculture. (For a detailed description of this study and methodology, please see [Optimal Nutrition Environment for Waterloo Region, 2006–2046](#).)

Local Food Retail Survey

Measuring the amount of local food available within grocery stores can provide a good indicator of availability of these items. Measuring the amount of local food available in grocery stores can be done by measuring the amount of shelf space devoted to local items (and then calculating the percentage that is local) or measuring the percentage of a particular food category (e.g., dairy or produce) that comes from local sources. It may also be useful to record the price of local food in comparison to non-local items to determine if local food is more economically accessible. Surveys can also assess the current and potential use of local food by restaurants and other venues.

On-line Resources

- The Bitterroot Valley - - Community Food Project (CFP) Coalition developed a [Grocery Store Survey](#) that asks about local food procurement.
- The Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana used a [Local Food Survey for Restaurants](#) in order to gauge how much local food was being utilized in restaurants within the community.

Tools for Measuring Food Policy

Institutional Food Policy Inventory

Institutional food policies can have a critical role in redesigning a community's food system. Large institutions, whether they are school, universities, prisons, hospitals, or even municipalities can play a role in promoting a sustainable food system by facilitating access to healthy, local food. This not only improves the dietary health of members of those institutions but also reduces environmental pollution caused by unsustainable growing and transportation methods. This contributes to the health of the wider community.

To make an institutional food inventory, begin by asking, “Are our food policies and practices aligned with patient, member, student and employee wellness and with health education programs?” Conduct an inventory of the food offered onsite. This will include inpatient food services, cafeterias, vending machines, food carts, and catered meals.

Consider the following:

- What kinds of food are provided? What proportion could be considered healthy (e.g., fresh fruits and vegetables, low-fat meat, low-fat dairy, water) and what proportion is “junk” (e.g., candy, soda, pastries)?
- What is the price difference between a healthy and an unhealthy option (e.g., compare the price of an apple to that of a candy bar)?
- What is the quality of healthy foods?
- Are healthy options readily available or are they difficult to find?
- What proportion of the food is locally sourced?
- Are there food producing gardens and how is the food used?
- How is food waste disposed of? What percent is recycled? What percent of unused food is donated?

On-line Resources

- The Food Action Coalition in Surrey, BC has created a [Food Policy Toolkit](#) with checklists to help guide your analysis of institutional food policies and practices.
- The La Plata County Food Assessment has a [School Food Services Survey](#) that can be used to assess the school food providers.