



United Way
Elgin Middlesex

LONDON FOR ALL

A ROADMAP TO END POVERTY



Food Security

7.5 Expand local food literacy programs for all ages to increase knowledge of affordable, healthy food options

London Good Food Box

Priority neighbourhoods have been identified as having minimal access to fresh produce, yet an increased access to less healthy food, such as junk food. Due to these neighbourhoods historically being considered food deserts, both adults and children may have negative attitudes towards fruit and vegetables and may be reluctant to try new produce items. There is a need to better inform residents about the health benefits of vegetables and fruit, as universal encouragement of vegetables and fruit consumption normalizes positive behaviours. Individuals and families in low-income neighbourhoods, as low-income populations have higher rates of obesity and consume less vegetables and fruit. There is a knowledge gap about available programs to influence healthy eating behaviors with children and their families. Therefore, an opportunity exists through promotion of, and participation in Food Box programs.

There are financial barriers for residents of low-income neighbourhoods that impact buying fresh vegetables and fruit. However, neighbourhood Food Box programs can collectively purchase and deliver fresh produce to neighbourhood depots through collaborative purchasing. Through community initiatives, neighbourhoods can organize and participate fully in Food Box programs.

The Good Food Box Program has grown from 2 to 14 host sites across the City of London. An average of 350 boxes are ordered every month and participants are receiving about \$15-\$20 worth of fresh produce for only \$10. Preliminary evaluation results show that this program is providing the opportunity for families to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables that were seen as too expensive before.

Hydroponic Garden Towers

Hydroponics is a method of gardening that doesn't use soil, but rather a rich nutrient solution that cycles through from a reservoir. Using this system, the plant receives nutrients through the roots, but they are not in soil. These automated *soilless* growing systems increase efficiency, maximize space, leading to higher yields, and potentially better quality produce. Community benefits include:

- Increased access to healthy, nutrient dense produce *all year*
- Increased opportunities for enhancement of food literacy skills among individuals, children, youth and families (learning, watching and participating in growing food for the benefit of all community members)
- Fully accessible: wheelchair accessible, portable and can be placed anywhere.
- Environmentally sustainable- hydroponic gardens use less water and other resources than traditional soil based gardens
- Innovative: London would be the first city to embrace garden towers as a fundamental part of community life: centring around food education and access

Currently, 17 hydroponic garden towers have been distributed to priority neighbourhoods across London and are located in Family Centres, Community Centres, and Libraries.

Growing Chefs

Growing Chefs! Ontario is a registered charity based in London that unites chefs, growers, educators and community members in children's food education projects. Cooking develops and encourages many important skills. Understanding how and where food grows, how food interacts with our senses, the history of different foods and techniques, the names we give to food, and how food relates to our own lifestyles and cultures are all important to child development. Growing Chefs! Ontario offers a variety of food education projects to get kids and communities excited about healthy, wholesome food.

Middlesex London Food Policy Council (MLFPC)

The Middlesex London Food Policy Council is compiling a directory of local food literacy programming in the city. This directory will enhance networking and the sharing of information about food skills and food literacy programming and resources.

Healthy Eating and Healthy Physical Activity (HEHPA)

The foundation of the HEHPA priority work plans include multi-level, collective impact, community-based approach that was developed around policy change, awareness and education, high quality, accessible programs and service, strategic investment, and community mobilization.

HEHPA Partners have developed the HEHPA 2020 Action Steps and will be endorsing these Action Steps in Spring 2020 and planning how the partners will work collectively to implement them.

Supports available:

Equipment lending program

The Neighbourhood Basic Needs working group through the CYN Ending Poverty priority table established the equipment lending program in 2018. The program is currently coordinated out of the Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre and it supports organizations and service providers offering Food Families training. The equipment lending program allows organizations to run food programming when they would not typically have basic kitchen supplies to offer the program.

Food Literacy best practices – in development by MLHU