



FOOD LEADERS & FOOD INITIATIVES IN CAPE BRETON

A Social Return On Investment (SROI) Study

August 2016

Contributors

This study is a collaboration between the Our Food Project of the Ecology Action Centre, NEF Consulting, and passionate foodies of Cape Breton.

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**THE OUR
FOODPROJECT**



This study was advised by experts at NEF Consulting. NEF Consulting is the consultancy arm of the UK think tank, New Economics Foundation (NEF). They put NEF's ideas into practice by placing people and the planet at the heart of decision making.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Developing food-related knowledge and skills is important for our community for so many reasons. The presence of this programming means greater community togetherness and a more resilient local food system.” - OF-CB Participant

The Our Food Project – Cape Breton (OF-CB) has been co-creating and leading in food systems work on the island for 2 years (2014-2016). Through delivering food and garden programming, as well as supporting and fostering a network of food leaders, OF-CB builds positive food environments across Cape Breton.

OF-CB Stakeholders	Description	Activities/Initiatives
OF-CB Participants	Community members across Cape Breton who participate in OF-CB workshops and community gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food and garden skills workshops • UpSkillin! Festival • Community gardens
Garden Leaders	Individuals who deliver workshops and support gardens in Cape Breton	
Food Collaborators	Individuals who coordinate food initiatives at a network level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UpSkillin! Festival • CBRM Local Food Network • Pan-Cape Breton Food Hub

Findings from the Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis show that **OF-CB provides positive outcomes for multiple groups**, with the most valued assets being more coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments and increasing meaning and purpose for stakeholders.

Outcomes of Our Food – Cape Breton	Stakeholder Impacted
Increased knowledge and awareness about food security	Garden Leaders and Food Collaborators
More coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments	
Increased optimism about the future	
Increased meaning and purpose	
Increased access to healthy foods	Garden Leaders and OF-CB Participants
Increased trust and belonging	
Increased competence	OF-CB Participants
Increased confidence	

The resulting SROI ratio for OF-CB is \$2.00 : \$1.00. For every \$1 invested in OF-CB, there is \$2 gained in benefit to stakeholders. In other words, **Our Food - Cape Breton generates twice as much value as it costs.**

These results validate the continuation of the Our Food Project across NS to uphold the partnerships and relationships that have been created and allow them to develop further.

INTRODUCTION

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a stakeholder-driven cost-benefit analysis methodology, which is recognized and endorsed internationally as a means of assessing full value for money. The method helps organizations manage the intangible, hard to measure economic, social, and environmental value they create. Rather than simply focusing on cost savings or outputs, the methodology takes into account the full range of **impacts that matter to key stakeholders**.

While the SROI ratio that is obtained from these studies is an important finding, the greater advantage is that it creates **a story of change that weaves qualitative and quantitative conclusions together**. Through this, SROIs can allow for organizations to better understand their impact and maximize their outcomes.¹

The Purpose of this study: Why do an SROI of Our Food – Cape Breton?

The Our Food Project (OFP) plays a leading role in the facilitation of cross-sectoral regional and provincial networks. Although observation and anecdotal evidence tells us that this work plays a direct role in advancing sectoral-level work across regions, specific outcomes are often challenging to measure using traditional evaluation approaches.

The goal of this SROI study is to map, measure, and monetize elements of the Our Food Project's sectoral-level impact^a by focusing on one of our recent network-facilitation initiatives: Our Food – Cape Breton.^b

The OF-CB project connects and mobilizes a unique collective of leaders and learners within

the various food system sectors in Cape Breton. This group involves a wide range of individuals, including public health representatives, school board staff, farmers, municipal Councillors, community development organizations and non-government organizations (NGOs). Building and deepening relationships, raising awareness, and leveraging resources has led to important outputs that are paving the way for new food work in Cape Breton (e.g., Cape Breton Garden Leaders Gatherings, 1st UpSkillin'! Festival for Cape Breton Regional Municipality, multiple community garden initiatives, and a Food Policy 101 workshop).

OF-CB is a key case study for this SROI analysis because, with our leadership, this informal regional network has grown, laying important groundwork for scaling our network-facilitation role to the provincial level. In addition, it is a platform through which we mobilize significant resources for the food sector such as organizational staff hours, intern and volunteer hours, communications support, grants, and funding.

This report

Through this SROI study, the Our Food Project analyzes the outcomes of our Cape Breton project, based on feedback from key stakeholder groups. The following sections outline the process used to gather and analyze data; the methodology used to calculate project impact; and the details of how an SROI Ratio is established while sharing the quantitative and qualitative story of the Our Food – Cape Breton.

^a See our second SROI report on our network-facilitation role with the Halifax Food Policy Alliance

^b For those readers who are Cape Breton food leaders, we acknowledge that we are drawing an artificial and imperfect boundary around OFP/Georgia's role in relation to other individuals and initiatives for this study. The intention is to understand and evaluate OFP for improvement, rather than to falsely overclaim our impact amongst other actors.

CONTEXT

Cape Breton is an island off the eastern coast of Nova Scotia. It hosts a population of approximately 136,000 and is home to the second largest municipality in the province, Cape Breton Regional Municipality.² It is mostly made up of rural communities, with the western side of the island being known for its more arable land. It also has one of the higher unemployment rates in Canada, at 14%.³

Given the economic challenges faced by the general population, there are concurrent decreases to the status of general health and well-being. In 2015, Cape Breton had the highest rate of child poverty in Atlantic Canada. The average rate of child poverty for Cape Breton was 32%, and when looking specifically at children age 0-6, this rate increased to 42.7%.^{4,5} These issues are not only affecting children, as seniors are also impacted, with over 20% of seniors living in poverty in Cape Breton Regional Municipality.⁶

The Our Food Project (OFP)

OFP began in 2013, built upon 10 years of food systems initiatives at the Ecology Action Centre. The overarching goal is to strengthen communities' relationships to food by building **positive food environments**: the physical and social spaces that help to normalize healthy eating by making it easier to grow, sell, and eat good food. The project works at the individual, community and systemic level to increase the availability of nutritious food as well as access to it. By supporting local producers, educating eaters, and influencing food policy change, the intent of the project is to **actively involve people in creating a more equitable and sustainable food system.**

Our Food - Cape Breton (OF-CB)

Initially focused on Halifax Regional Municipality and Cumberland County, the Our Food Project expanded its breadth to include Cape Breton in 2014. The intent of the multi-year program was to establish a Community Food Coordinator for

Cape Breton who would connect with stakeholders across the island, assess the status of food security, and provide hands-on support and guidance for creating positive food environments in Cape Breton. The work of the Our Food Project Community Food Coordinator^c in Cape Breton goes under the title of Our Food - Cape Breton and will be referred to as OF-CB for the purposes of this SROI.

Although the barriers to accessing healthy food are similar across Cape Breton, it is not uncommon to see a geographic disconnect between food leaders and food initiatives across the Island. The key benefit of a food network is to build and foster connections amongst food systems actors for greater impact.^{7,8,9} OF-CB looks to strengthen ties between Cape Breton communities that are moving towards achieving a healthier population. It's the creation of these new ties which can inspire initiatives to support food security, while strengthening the island-wide connections amongst farmers; between farmers and customers; and between food security advocates and decision-makers.

The aim of creating positive food environments through OF-CB, in both urban and rural Cape Breton, is to increase the awareness of food security, and provide opportunities for individuals and families to increase their access to healthier foods and build the skills by which to use them.

^c For the duration of this project, the Our Food - Cape Breton Community Food Coordinator was Georgia McNeil.

SCOPE AND STAKEHOLDERS

Scope of the Analysis

The intention of this SROI is to evaluate and measure the value produced by the OF-CB network over a two year period from its inception in 2014, as determined by the key stakeholders.

To this aim, we used the SROI methodology to:

- Gather qualitative information from relevant stakeholders on the changes that occur (outcomes) as a result of OF-CB
- Quantify these outcomes, measuring the *amount* of change ('distance traveled') experienced for different stakeholders
- Place a monetary value on these outcomes, using market values or financial proxies where relevant
- Account for impact, determining the share of credit that OF-CB can claim (i.e., accounting for amount of change attributable to OF-CB and taking into account what would have happened anyway in the absence of OF-CB)



Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholders are considered those who are directly or indirectly affected, positively or negatively, due to the outcomes of the activity being analyzed. Stakeholders involved in the Cape Breton study were divided into three key groups: Garden Leaders, Food Collaborators, and OF-CB Participants.

1. **Garden Leaders** are those who are strong motivators and organizers in community garden and/or school garden initiatives as part of or affiliated with OF-CB.
2. **Food Collaborators** are those who are directly involved in food initiatives, such as the Upskilling! Festival, the Cape Breton Regional Municipality Local Food Network, and the Cape Breton Local Food Hub. Food Collaborators help spearhead these events and increase awareness of the need for positive food environments.
3. **Our Food - Cape Breton (OF-CB) Participants** are those who participate in community gardens and/or food skills workshops led (or co-led) by the OF-CB's Community Food Coordinator. They are the people whose experiences can provide insight into the direct and indirect effects of such programs on the general public.

This SROI study looks into the impact of OF-CB in relation to the three stakeholder groups listed above. Table 1 breaks down the Cape Breton stakeholders identified and reasons for including them in this analysis.^d

^d Note that there are overlaps in stakeholder sub-groups between Food Collaborators and Garden Leaders. This is due to nuanced differences in individual stakeholders that led to the creation of separate surveys, for example one person playing multiple roles. Outside of this study, these two stakeholder categories may not be a helpful distinction.

Table 1. Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Sub-group	Reason for inclusion	Groups represented	
Garden Leaders	Community Garden Coordinators	Community Garden Coordinators are fundamental to achieving the goals of OF-CB and have been shown to obtain positive impact from the leadership role in these programs.	Farmers, Individuals, Families, School Boards, Consumers, Businesses, Community Organizations, NGOs, Food Skills Experts	
	Pan Cape Breton Food Hub	This project is enhancing the connection between farmers and consumers while offering a food box program.		
	UpSkillling! Festival Coordinators	UpSkillling! Festival Coordinators are fundamental to achieving the goals of OF-CB and have been shown to obtain positive impact from the leadership role in these programs.		
Food Collaborators	Pan Cape Breton Food Hub	This project is enhancing the connection between farmers and consumers while offering a food box program.	Farmers, Consumers, Individuals, Families, Businesses, Food Skills Leaders, Community Organizations, Municipal leaders, Community Health Centres, Public Health Organizations, & NGOs	
	Inverness Food Security Network	This group helps to prioritize community needs for food security by initiating programs and projects to support/connect local farmers and food businesses.		
	Cape Breton Regional Municipality Local Food Network	This group is directly involved with the CB Community Food Coordinator who sits on their committee and works on local initiatives to promote eating local and networking opportunities for farmers and consumers.		
	Food Skills Workshop Coordinators	Food Skills Coordinators are fundamental to achieving the goals of OF-CB and have been shown to obtain positive impact from the leadership role in these programs.		
	UpSkillling! Festival Coordinators	UpSkillling! Festival Coordinators are fundamental to achieving the goals of OF-CB and have been shown to obtain positive impact from the leadership role in these programs.		
	UpSkillling! Festival Participants	UpSkillling! Festival participants show multiple benefits from their involvement.		Families, NGOs, Individuals, Farmers, Food Skills Experts, Community Development Organizations, Community Health Organizations, Public Health Department, Schools, School Boards
	Food Skills Workshop Participants	Food Skills workshop participants show multiple benefits from their involvement.		
Community Garden Participants	Community Garden participants show multiple benefits from their involvement.			



Stakeholder Engagement

Various methods of stakeholder engagement were used to gather data; Table 2 outlines which methods were used for each stakeholder group.

Table 2. Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder	Engagement Method	Number of Stakeholders Engaged	Total number of Stakeholders Available
Garden Leaders	Theory of Change Workshop	1	37
	Phone Interview	2	
Food Collaborators	Theory of Change Workshop	4	16
	Focus Group	2	
OF-CB Participants	Theory of Change Workshop	1	93

The stakeholder engagement process involved a Theory of Change (ToC) workshop, as well as a small focus group, 1:1 phone interviews for those who were unable to attend the workshop and selected food policy/network experts.

This ToC process helped to provide a connection between the inputs, outputs and outcomes of OF-CB and gain some understanding of how change is created through OF-CB's work. During the workshop, stakeholders mapped key outcomes that they experience through their connections with OF-CB. The results of this stakeholder-driven ToC process are presented in the impact map below, Table 3.

One **academic content expert**, Charles Levkoe, was consulted in this study regarding the impacts and challenges of regional food networks. Charles is the Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Food Systems at Lakehead University, and authored *Propagating the Food Movement: Provincial Networks and Social Mobilization in Canada*.¹⁰ He was provided with a draft impact map, including stakeholder-defined outcomes, and asked for comments. His input was integrated into the final impact map.

Using the completed impact map and refined list of outcomes, questionnaires were then administered to a larger group of stakeholders to understand the extent to which changes were occurring for them. This process is discussed further in the Outcomes & Evidence section below.



Table 3. OF-CB Impact Map

Stakeholders	Inputs	Outputs	Outcome Area	Outcome
Garden Leaders	*Time spent gardening, at coordinators gatherings	* Garden Coordinator Gatherings	Knowledge/ awareness	Increased knowledge and awareness of food security
	*Transport to and from meetings and events (gas and mileage)	* No. of community gardens & expanded gardens (infrastructure)	Access to healthy food	Increased access to healthy food
	*Time spent collaborating on food workshops	* No. of Garden workshops and/or school garden programs	Efficiency	More coordinated and strategic action to create supportive food environments
		* No. of people taking part in gardens and garden workshops	Well-being	Increased optimism about the future Increased trust and belonging Increased meaning and purpose
Food Collaborators		*Amount of produce consumed at school programs (Breakfast program)	Knowledge/ awareness	Increased knowledge and awareness of food security
		* No. of Food workshops and/or school food programs	Efficiency	More coordinated and strategic action to create supportive food environments
		* No. of people attending Food UpSkillin! Festival	Well-being	Increased optimism about the future Increased meaning and purpose
OF-CB Participants		* fresh local produce grown through use of community gardens	Access to healthy food	Increased access to healthy food
			Well-being	Increased competence to create supportive food environments Increased confidence Increased sense of trust and belonging

OUTCOMES AND EVIDENCE

Outcomes and Indicators

Outcomes are the changes that stakeholders experience based on their participation in an event or intervention, in this case the changes for different stakeholders based on their interaction with the OF-CB Community Food Coordinator. As discussed above, outcomes are determined through the stakeholder engagement process, but require assigning indicators to and collecting data from stakeholders in order to verify whether the outcomes have actually occurred and to what extent.

Indicators are specific, observable, and measurable characteristics that demonstrate whether or not a particular outcome has occurred. We therefore assigned indicators to each of our qualitative outcomes in order to quantify the changes experienced by stakeholders. Table 4 outlines OF-CB outcomes and the indicators used for each of them, broken down by stakeholder group.

Table 4. Outcomes, Indicators and Stakeholder Groups

Outcomes	Outcome Indicator Definition	Stakeholder Group(s) Involved
Increased knowledge and awareness about food security	Self-reported increase in knowledge/ awareness of food security	Garden Leaders and Food Collaborators
Increased access to healthy foods	Self-reported increase in consumption of fruits and vegetables	
More coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments	Self-reported increase in time savings due to OF-CB fostering connections and collaborations and offering resources	
Increased competence	Self-reported increase in being able to show capability (food and garden skills)	
Increased optimism about the future	Self-reported increase in hope for the future and a feeling that life is improving	Garden Leaders and OF-CB Participants
Increased meaning and purpose	Self-reported increase in feeling that what one does in life is worthwhile	
Increased confidence	Self-reported increase in feeling positive about self	OF-CB Participants
Increased trust and belonging	Self-reported increase in feeling closer to other people in community	

Data Collection: Questionnaire

The indicator questions detailed in Table 4 were used to construct three unique questionnaires distributed to all Garden Leaders (37 in total), Food Collaborators (16 in total), and OF-CB Participants (93 in total) that had been involved in work connected to OF-CB. The questionnaire asked stakeholders to consider each indicator question and rate their level on an appropriate scale at two different points in time: (1) now, after having been involved with OF-CB and (2) before their involvement with OF-CB. Comparing responses for these two time periods thus allowed us to measure the magnitude of change or, 'distance traveled' for each outcome,^e which indicators they personally experienced and to what extent, thus determining the incidence of each outcome. The questionnaire response rates were 32.5% (12/37), 44% (7/16), and 28% (26/93), respectively.^f



^e See Appendix 1, questions 1 and 2 for an example.

^f A very small portion of the data provided by stakeholders was excluded based on their misunderstanding of the question asked.

Financial Proxies: Valuing the SROI Outcomes

One of the challenges faced in SROI is placing a monetary value on outcomes that are not connected to a particular market. Financial proxies, or substitutes, are therefore used to value these outcomes.

Our approach to valuing well-being is based on the value of the mental health component of a quality-adjusted life year (QALY). This total well-being value is then divided between different domains of well-being based on the well-being framework in NEF's National Accounts of Well-being, as shown in Appendix 2.¹¹ Table 5 outlines the outcomes and associated financial proxies for each OF-CB outcome.

Table 5. Financial Proxies by Outcome

Outcomes	Stakeholder Groups Involved	Financial Proxy Description	Proxy
Increased knowledge and awareness about food security	Garden Leaders; Food Collaborators	Cost of Ryerson University course in food security concepts and principles	\$589.48
Increased access to healthy foods	Garden Leaders; Participants	Average yearly cost of a nutritious food basket for an individual in Nova Scotia*	\$3351.04
More coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments	Garden Leaders; Food Collaborators	Time savings: minimum wage in Nova Scotia for experienced employees	\$10.70
Increased competence	Garden Leaders; Participants	Our estimated value for total well-being is based on the value of the mental health component of a QALY. This total well-being value is then divided between domains of well-being based on the well-being framework in <i>NEF's National Accounts of Well-being</i> ¹²	\$528
Increased optimism about the future	Garden Leaders; Food Collaborators		\$704
Increased meaning and purpose	Garden Leaders; Food Collaborators		\$528
Increased confidence	Participants		\$704
Increased trust and belonging	Participants		\$5280

*Average for men and women across different age groups. Data for 2012 has been uplifted to 2015 values using Statistics Canada CPIs for Nova Scotia.

A more detailed look at outcomes

Through the stakeholder engagement workshops and questionnaires, we gathered a great deal of qualitative evidence to support the outcomes included in the SROI calculation. Detailed descriptions of the outcomes, along with some of the thoughts shared by stakeholders, are outlined below.

Outcomes for Garden Leaders

Outcome 1: Increased knowledge and awareness of food security

The Our Food Project aims to enhance awareness of food security issues and build food and garden skills. In Cape Breton, we support individuals to step into teaching and facilitating roles to deliver food and garden programming by providing resources and mentorship. Because of the increased capacity of these Garden Leaders, not only are more community-members reached through our initiatives, but the Garden Leaders themselves gain deeper knowledge and awareness of food security. In other words, those who teach, learn.

Outcome 2: Increased access to healthy food

In Cape Breton, there are high numbers of people without access to healthy food. The creation and implementation of programs, such as the Our Food Project, provide economical healthy-eating options for at-risk communities. Garden Leaders themselves have experienced increased access to healthy foods through participating more in food-based initiatives such as leading garden workdays and food skills workshops.

Outcome 3: More coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments

There are established groups that are working on food security initiatives in Cape Breton, however most are geographically bound (with some unrepresented areas) and not always able to work in an integrated manner across the island. OF-CB has acted as a catalyst in fostering relationships between these groups, for example developing and hosting Garden Coordinators' Gatherings. At these gatherings, Garden Leaders from across the island build new relationships, some meeting for the very first time. These

and other activities have provided excellent opportunities for sharing ideas and resources, learning from each other, and collaborating on new initiatives. This strengthens ties for Garden Leaders across Cape Breton, lessening duplication and leading to more coordinated and strategic action in creating positive food environments.

Outcome 4: Increased optimism about the future

While many Garden Leaders feel positive about the work they do, they may also be concerned about the future and the issue of food insecurity in Cape Breton. Through delivering food and garden skills workshops, supporting community gardens, and being more connected to others doing similar work, the feeling of optimism has improved among Garden Leaders. Reasons for this include witnessing others learning and being inspired by connecting to their food in a more authentic way; and seeing how many people are interested and will take part when an opportunity, such as a community garden or workshop, is presented.

Outcome 5: Increased meaning and purpose

Through engaging in OF-CB food and garden initiatives or by collaborating with OF-CB, Garden Leaders develop a greater feeling that what they do in life is valuable and valued by others. OF-CB provides the resources, capacity and venues for Garden Leaders to share their knowledge, which improves the community's health and wellness. By being involved in this work, Garden Leaders feel increased meaning in their life and others show appreciation for what they do.

Garden Leader Quotes

“[Without OF-CB] I wouldn’t have a purpose and a sense of belonging in my community.”

“The biggest eye opener was when I asked my students where food comes from and their answer was ‘the Co-op’. Now that they have had the experience of growing their own food their understanding of food has changed. It makes healthy eating habits fun. I don’t think any of this would have been possible without the community garden or OF-CB’s help.”

“[Without OF-CB] I would never have planted my own garden and talked so much about local food with my class.”

“I think it’s great to have someone [OF-CB] with the capacity to reach the groups who need assistance in getting things off the ground. I was doing [community gardens] on my own and it is a lot of work. The work they have done with the Upskilling! Festival is great.”

“[Without OF-CB] there would be less access to fresh wholesome food and a community of like-minded individuals would not have developed... the satisfaction of sharing my skills with the community would have been lost.”



Outcomes for Food Collaborators

Outcome 1: Increased knowledge and awareness of food security

The Our Food Project aims to enhance awareness of food security issues and build cross-sectoral networks of food leaders. In Cape Breton, we work with Food Collaborators and their organizations in coordinating events like the UpSkilling! Festival and network activities like 'Dine and Discuss'. Through these initiatives we bring our expertise and knowledge of food security to more deeply inform the event and Food Collaborators express learning a lot through the process.

Outcome 2: More coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments

There are established groups that are working on food security initiatives in Cape Breton, however most are geographically bound (with some unrepresented areas) and not always able to work in an integrated manner across the island. OF-CB has acted as a catalyst in fostering relationships between these groups, working towards a pan-Cape Breton network. For Food Collaborators, working collectively on events like the Upskilling! Festival has provided excellent opportunities for sharing ideas and resources, and learning from each other. This strengthens ties for Food Collaborators across Cape Breton, lessening duplication and leading to more coordinated and strategic action in creating positive food environments.

Outcome 3: Increased optimism about the future

While Food Collaborators may feel positive about the work they do, they may also be concerned about the future and the issue of food insecurity in Cape Breton. Through collaborating with OF-CB on network events and seeing the variety of food skills education being delivered in schools, government, and community, Food Collaborators have expressed feeling a new wave of hope

for underserved populations in Cape Breton. For example, Food Collaborators have shared their hope for successful implementation of Of-CB food and garden skills programs and the achievement of shared goals for a healthier population.

Outcome 4: Increased meaning and purpose

Through engaging with OF-CB on initiatives, Food Collaborators develop a greater feeling that what they do in life is valuable and valued by others. OF-CB has provided platforms like the UpSkilling! Festival for Food Collaborators to create positive experiences for the community which support improved wellness and community cohesion. By taking a leading role in food and garden initiatives that OF-CB supports, Food Collaborators feel increased meaning in their life and others show appreciation for what they do.

Food Collaborators Quotes

“On a personal level I love being a part of the network and really value the people I have met at events.”

“I think involvement in food and agricultural issues is one of the most direct ways to have an impact on the quality of life in Cape Breton, in terms of both physical well-being and social justice.”

“Having a network to connect with certainly helps save time when making plans for work with other community groups. This saves time and effort at work.”



Outcomes for Participants

Outcome 1: Increased access to healthy foods

The UpSkilling! Festival, food/garden skills workshops, and community garden events all provide opportunities for increased access to healthy foods for participants. This is a foundational principal for OF-CB initiatives, which are designed with healthy food access in mind. Hundreds of people have now taken part in these programs, workshops and events, and participants report having more access to healthy foods than they would otherwise have.

Outcome 2: Increased competence

Increasing the skill level of OF-CB participants is a central goal of offering food and garden workshops. The hands-on learning approach increases participants' retention and ability to re-apply these skills. Feedback from participants shows that not only are they using the skills they've learned, but they feel a sense of accomplishment in using them, as well as an increased feeling of competence in their daily lives.

Outcome 3: Increased confidence

Just as gaining competence is a crucial part of what OF-CB participants acquire, an increase in participants' self-confidence is another key outcome. The knowledge gained, the secure social atmosphere provided, where everyone is starting something new, and the positive environment for learning—all lead to increasing participants' self-confidence.

Outcome 4: Increased trust and belonging

Establishing relationships with like-minded community members offers a wonderful experience for the participants of OF-CB food and garden skills workshops, community gardens and the UpSkilling! Festival. Participants feel a deeper sense of belonging with and support from people where they live, which comes from developing trust and being treated fairly and respectfully by others. These relationships provide mutual support in continuing healthy food habits.

OF-CB Participant Quotes

“The event allowed me to connect with people in my local community with similar interests in a non-threatening environment.”

“These programs are an amazing opportunity to connect like-minded people with the resources they need to implement our desire for self-sufficiency and a healthier lifestyle.”

“[Without OF-CB] I would not have the same access to vegetables and I would not have the same knowledge about growing vegetables.”

“...I am utilizing the skills I learned from last year’s workshops, and soon again I’ll be learning even more. I feel more competent and ready to grow and prepare local and homegrown foods.”

“[Without the UpSkilling! Festival] I would not feel confident in my ability to grow food and ask others for assistance. The Upskilling! Festival was a wonderful resource both practically and socially to connect people with one and other which helped me not only to learn new skills but to gain confidence that there are many people who wish to grow their own healthy food...”



CALCULATING IMPACT

The Our Food Project strives to create positive food environments, but the project does not act in isolation. The SROI methodology takes this into account to ensure that an analysis does not overclaim the value of a given intervention. This SROI analysis of OF-CB therefore considers the following concepts in order to calculate true impact: deadweight, displacement, attribution and drop-off of values over time.

Deadweight is the extent to which the outcomes studied would have occurred anyway in the absence of the intervention. For the outcome on increased access to healthy food, the deadweight value was taken from secondary source data on daily fruit and vegetable consumption among Nova Scotians. For all other outcomes, the deadweight value was self-estimated by questionnaire respondents.^g For example, after rating their level of optimism before and after their involvement with OF-CB, Garden Leaders and Food Collaborators were then asked to rate what their level of optimism would be at present if OF-CB had not existed.

Displacement is the means by which one accounts for how much of the value generated by the program is simply the result of a shift in value from one place to another, rather than a true creation of new value. For instance, by improving one stakeholder's situation with respect to a particular outcome, has the program inadvertently worsened another stakeholder's situation? Given that the outcomes of OF-CB do not take away from or conflict with any other program's/stakeholder's ability to achieve positive outcomes, the displacement value was set at 0% for each outcome.

Attribution assesses how much of the outcome is due to the work of OF-CB versus how much was caused by the contribution of other organizations or people. Each outcome has been assigned an attribution value by directly asking stakeholders to estimate this in the questionnaire. For example, Food Collaborators said (on average) "50% of my increased optimism about the future is because of my interaction with the Cape Breton Food Coordinator and/or my involvement with OF-CB" (therefore 50% is because of other factors, such as personal interest or other professional roles/associations).^h See Table 6 for further details on the attribution of the outcomes of this project.

Benefit period and drop-off note that while many outcomes often last into the future, their magnitude and the amount of credit OF-CB may take for them is likely to diminish over time. We therefore also consider in the SROI analysis how long the outcomes are likely to last into the future (**benefit period**) and the rate at which the outcomes decrease over time (**drop-off**).

For this SROI analysis, we assume the benefit period to be three years in total (in other words, the benefits last for one additional year beyond the investment period). OF-CB was assumed to have a steady value during the two-year investment period, but then a steep drop-off of 80% afterwards (third year). This is because we assume that most of the benefits for stakeholders come from continued involvement with the OF-CB Community Food Coordinator, and while some well-being benefits may last beyond this involvement, they are likely to drop-off rather quickly in the absence of continued interaction with the network.

^g See Appendix 1, question 4 for an example.

^h See Appendix 1, question 3 for an example.

Table 6. Outcomes, Indicators and Attribution

Outcomes	Outcome Indicator Definition	Stakeholder Group	Attribution
Increased knowledge and awareness about food security	Self-reported increase in knowledge/awareness of food security	Garden Leaders	38%
		Food Collaborators	33%
Increased access to healthy foods	Self-reported increase in consumption of fruits and vegetables	Garden Leaders	38%
		OF-CB Participants	33%
More coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments	Self-reported increase in time savings due to OF-CB fostering connections and collaborations and offering resources	Garden Leaders	n/a*
		Food Collaborators	n/a*
Increased competence to create supportive food environments	Self-reported increase in being able to show capability (food and garden skills)	OF-CB Participants	31%
Increased optimism about the future	Self-reported increase in hope for the future and a feeling that life is improving	Garden Leaders	20%
		Food Collaborators	50%
Increased meaning and purpose	Self-reported increase in feeling that what one does in life is worthwhile	Garden Leaders	20%
		Food Collaborators	50%
Increased confidence	Self-reported increase in feeling positive about self	OF-CB Participants	31%
Increased trust and belonging	Self-reported increase in feeling closer to other people in community	OF-CB Participants	31%

*Attribution for this outcome is incorporated into the indicator question.

PROGRAM INPUTS

Inputs are the resources invested in an activity in order for it to take place. In this case, the inputs include the costs associated with the time contribution of the Community Food Coordinator for Cape Breton (valued using salary of this individual) as well as expenses paid by the EAC, including travel and overhead office expenses. These various costs were then combined to create a total investment cost (total inputs) for the OF-CB's social return on investment. Table 7 summarizes these inputs.

Table 7. Program Inputs

Our Food - Cape Breton	Costs 2014-15	Costs 2015-16	Expenses
Costs	\$49,475.00	\$46,908.00	Staff salary, staff training, travel, office expenses (phone/internet), support staff (summer student)
Total Inputs 2014-16	\$96,382.76		

The combined total costs for the two-year period of this study are \$96,382.76

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The SROI Ratio, based on the data acquired, shows the social value gained for every dollar invested and is determined by dividing the total value of benefits generated by OF-CB (after accounting for impact) by the value of investment in the network, as shown in the formula below. We calculate the total net present value (NPV) of benefits by adding together the benefits in each year, applying a discount rate to those which are projected to be generated in the future (i.e., beyond the investment period). This is to reflect the fact that people 'discount the present'—the value of benefits occurring now are worth more to them than the value of those occurring in the future. We therefore discount any values generated after the investment period using a commonly used discount rate of 3.5%.

$$\text{SROI Ratio} = \frac{\text{Total Net Present Value (NPV)}}{\text{Total Inputs Value}}$$

$$\text{SROI Ratio} = \frac{\$192,524}{\$96,383}$$

The resulting **SROI ratio is \$2.00 : \$1:00**. For every \$1 invested in Our Food - Cape Breton, there is \$2 gained in benefit to stakeholders. In other words, **Our Food - Cape Breton generates twice as much value as it costs**.



Sensitivity Analysis

Sensitivity checks are a means of testing the robustness of our SROI analysis. In this SROI analysis, we do this by altering various assumptions to consider alternative scenarios and seeing what the impact is on our SROI ratio. Applying sensitivity checks also allows insight into which assumptions may have the greatest impact on our overall conclusions. Table 8 presents the sensitivity checks conducted for the OF-CB SROI in which alternative scenarios were considered for benefit/drop-off period, proxy values, and the discount rate.

Table 8. Sensitivity of OF-CB SROI Ratio

Assumption	SROI Ratio
Baseline SROI ratio (3-year benefit period with a steep drop off of 80% in third year)	\$2.00 : \$1.00
100% drop-off after investment period; benefits do not extend past 2-year investment period	\$1.82 : \$1.00
3-year benefit period with 70% drop-off in third year; benefits extend past 2-year investment period at a lower drop-off % than in baseline	\$2.08 : \$1:00
Adjusted discount rate from 3.5% (baseline) to 5%	\$1.95 : \$1:00
Adjusted discount rate from 3.5% (baseline) to 8%	\$1.86 : \$1:00
Adjusted all proxy values to 90% of their original values	\$1.80 : \$1.00
Adjusted all proxy values to 75% of their original values	\$1.50 : \$1.00
Adjusted all proxy values to 60% of their original values	\$1.20 : \$1.00

As the table shows, the adjustments to benefit period/drop-off assumptions and discount rates do not greatly affect the SROI ratio, but the changes to proxy values do begin to show a stronger impact on figures when they are adjusted to 75% or 60% of their original value. However, there is assurance in the fact that, in all of the cases analyzed, the return is higher than the investment, indicating that the model's general finding of a positive return on investment is reasonably robust.

CONCLUSION

Findings from this SROI analysis show that OF-CB produces positive benefits for various stakeholder groups including OF-CB participants, Garden Leaders and Food Collaborators.

The resulting SROI ratio is \$2.00 : \$1:00. For every \$1 invested in Our Food - Cape Breton, there is \$2 gained in benefit to stakeholders. In other words, **Our Food - Cape Breton generates twice as much value as it costs.**

The findings from our analysis provide insight into the value of projects like Our Food - Cape Breton, with our study showing the positive impact of having a Community Food Coordinator in an at-risk region that deals with food insecurity issues.

Looking at the outcomes

Our Food - Cape Breton stakeholders experience the following outcomes:

- Increased knowledge and awareness of food security
- Increased access to healthy foods
- More coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments
- Increased trust and belonging
- Increased competence to create positive food environments
- Increased meaning and purpose
- Increased confidence



The Our Food Project's Network-Facilitation Role

The goal of this SROI study was to explore OFP's sectoral-level impact by focusing on Our Food - Cape Breton as one of our network-facilitation roles. The results demonstrate that the investment of staff time and related resources by the OFP into community initiatives and leadership roles in the development of a more equitable and sustainable food system is considered worthwhile and should be continued. **As OFP transitions towards scaling-up its reach and impact, this study deepens the understanding of what this role is and why it's important, further honing our strategic directions.**

Further Thoughts

This study showed a demonstrated need/want for more Community Food Coordinators throughout Cape Breton. The benefit of strengthening the support system for positive food environments through the OF-CB's initiatives has been acknowledged by stakeholders and could potentially advance to changing the food environment rather than simply changing individual behaviours.

The long-term intent is to fortify positive food environments and shift the food system by means of cross-sectoral networks—moving from individual-level impact to institutional and policy-level impacts—in order to create sustainable, population-level change. Based on feedback from stakeholders in this study, there is interest in maintaining the grassroots approach to community-level positive food environments, while investing more in a cross-sectoral network to support policy change and systems-level impact.

APPENDIX 1:

Example Survey Questions

Where question 1 implies “distanced traveled – after intervention”, question 2 implies “distanced traveled – before intervention”, question 3 implies “attribution”, and question 4 implies “deadweight”.

In this section, we are hoping to understand whether being a Food Collaborator and working with Georgia (Community Food Coordinator) has influenced your knowledge, well-being and other factors in your life.

Knowledge and awareness

1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I have a comprehensive knowledge and awareness of food security issues						

2. Thinking about your knowledge before you became a Food Collaborator, how much would you agree or disagree with the following statement?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I have a comprehensive knowledge and awareness of food security issues						

3. To what extent do you think the changes, if any, in your answers above are due to the fact that you’re a Food Collaborator and worked with Georgia (as opposed to any other factors that might have changed your knowledge and awareness)?

Not at all 0%	A little 25%	Some 50%	Quite a lot 75%	A great deal 100%

Not applicable / no change

4. Imagine how you would be feeling now if you had not become a Food Collaborator. How much would you have agreed or disagreed with the following statement?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I have a comprehensive knowledge and awareness of food security issues						

APPENDIX 2:

Domains of well-being

This table demonstrates the division of value for different domains of well-being.¹³

According to NEF's national accounts of wellbeing, overall well-being is divided between personal and social well-being which we have each assumed to take 50% of the total well-being value. Each of these are then divided evenly between their different components and sub-components. This of course assumes that personal and social well-being are of equal value and the components and sub-components of a given area are also of equal value. Further research could potentially recommend alternative distributions for this.

Well-being type	Components	Subcomponents	Subcomponent value	Component value
PERSONAL well-being	Emotional well-being	Positive feelings	5%	10%
		Absence of negative feelings	5%	
	Satisfying life		10%	10%
	Vitality		10%	10%
	Resilience and self-esteem	Self-esteem	3.33%	10%
		Optimism	3.33%	
		Resilience	3.33%	
	Positive functioning	Competence	2.5%	10%
		Autonomy	2.5%	
		Engagement	2.5%	
Meaning and purpose		2.5%		
SOCIAL well-being	Supportive relationships		25%	25%
	Trust and belonging		25%	25%
TOTAL Well-being			100%	100%

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- ¹¹ We used a healthcare economics approach for valuing overall well-being by equating mental health with well-being and using data from various sources. An incremental cost effectiveness ratio threshold per quality adjusted life year (QALY) of \$20,000 to \$100,000 has been proposed in Canada. Taking a midpoint of this threshold (\$60,000) and multiplying it by the UK Centre for Mental Health's estimate of the loss of health status from a severe mental health problem (0.352 QALYs) allowed an estimate of overall well-being of $\$60,000 \times 0.352 = \$21,120$. We then split this total well-being value across different domains of well-being according to the framework outlined in NEF's National Accounts of Well-being (<http://www.nationalaccountsofwellbeing.org/public-data/files/national-accounts-of-well-being-report.pdf>).
- ¹² See Endnote 11 for a breakdown of how these figures are established
- ¹³ Breakdown of domains on p.21 of NEF's report National Accounts of Well-being. Available at: <http://www.nationalaccountsofwellbeing.org/public-data/files/national-accounts-of-well-being-report.pdf>

