

Healthy Food in Waterloo Region:

Enhancing knowledge and skills report



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES

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Description of the Healthy Food in Waterloo Region: Enhancing knowledge and skills event

Event purpose

The purpose of the event was to share resources and provide information and evidence to help implement food knowledge and food skill programming and to encourage networking and collaboration among the many organizations in Waterloo Region that provide food knowledge and skills programming.

Event format

On October 8, 2019, Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services hosted a half-day event in the Hauser House at the Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex.

The event started off with a review of literature focused on considerations when developing and offering food knowledge and food skills programming as well as a presentation of the resources that Region of Waterloo Public Health offers related to food knowledge and food skills development. In an adjoining room, all of the food knowledge and food skills resources were on display to give participants a chance to see what was available to them.

All participants were given a USB drive with copies of the slides and a link to book the resources from the [Region of Waterloo Public Health Resource Library](#) as well as links to a pdf copy of the resources (where applicable).

The second part of the event involved facilitated small group discussions about current programming as well as ways to collaborate with other organizations that offer food knowledge and skills programming.

Highlighted resources

The following is a list of resources that were discussed during the presentation:

Banners, displays and teaching kits

- [Balanced School Lunches – Display and Teaching Kit \(for facilitators\)](#)
- [Canada's Food Guide – Teaching Kit](#)
- [Canada's Food Guide Pull-up Banner](#)
- [Do You Have a Question About Nutrition and Healthy Eating? Pull-up Banner](#)
- [Fruit and Veggie Colour Bingo – Teaching Kit](#)
- [Healthy Eating on a Budget – Teaching Kit](#)
- [Healthy School Lunches – Teaching Kit](#)
- [Healthy School Lunches: Foods from Around the World – Display and Teaching Kit](#)

- [Healthy School Snacks – Display and Teaching Kit](#)
- [How to Enjoy Highly Processed Foods in Moderation – Display and Teaching Kit](#)
- [Learn to Read Nutrition Labels – Teaching Kit](#)
- [Let’s Make a Meal Playset – Teaching Kit](#)
- [Sugar Shockers: Drink Water Instead of Sugary Beverages Pull-up Banner and Beverage Bottles](#)
- [Wheel of Nutrition – Display \(Trivia Game\) and Teaching Kit](#)

Pamphlets and other resources

- [A Guide for Serving Food and Beverages at Meetings and Events](#)
- [A Recipe for Successful Cooking Workshops](#)
- [Better Foods to Buy List](#)
- [Buying Healthy Food through a Group Purchasing Organization](#)
- [Food Literacy Framework and Resources](#)
- [Freezing and Blanching Vegetables](#)
- [Freezing Fruits](#)
- [Healthy Eating Recipe Book](#)
- [Resources for Child Care Settings](#)
- [School Food Gardens Start-up Guide](#)
- [School Lunch Your Kids Will Munch](#)
- [The Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket Infographic](#)
- [The Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket Report](#)

Newsletter

- [Healthy Eating Communications Corner Newsletter](#)

Findings from facilitated discussions

Participants were divided into four groups, where facilitators led the following discussion questions:

Question 1: What is the best way to work together to offer food knowledge and food skills programming in Waterloo Region?

There were several examples of organizations already working together to offer food knowledge and food skills programs in Waterloo Region:

- Two organizations used kitchen space that belonged to another organization, including a church and a long term care facility.
- Several organizations noted that their staff go out into the community to offer programming.
- Three organizations noted that they refer clients to other programs that help them gain the skills that they need.
- A number of programs described working with other organizations by sharing resources such as food, equipment and transportation.
- Some organizations described working with outside grassroots groups to help the groups offer programming that they would like to see in their community.
- Two participants mentioned that they worked with the school board and schools to create a connection to the community and to reach priority populations.

Participants also identified ways that would enable them to work with other organizations in the future, such as:

- Networking with other agencies, including attending in-person networking events and also through written communications. Creating connections with other agencies allows organizations to cross-promote existing programs and to collaborate on offering services to the community. Many organizations expressed that they were unaware of other programs in the community, and therefore unable to refer/cross-promote services.
- Cross-sector collaboration to set and achieve common goals, such as educating clients about financial literacy, sharing space, sharing staff and partnering with agencies that do not traditionally offer food knowledge and skills programs.
- Partnering with schools, universities, tech companies, local food producers and companies and organizations that give back to the community to make connections and elicit volunteer contributions. For example, having a “website of asks” to address needs such as food donations, administrative support, tech

support, organizational mentoring to enhance the operation of the non-profit agency, teaching non-profit staff to use computer programs, having producers dispel myths and provide expertise on food issues, etc.

- Sharing successes and challenges that other organizations have experienced in their programs so that successful models can be used at their own organizations.

Other program-related ideas were highlighted, including:

- Offering food knowledge and skills programs for individuals who are involved in food programs but do not have any formal training. For example, volunteers and educators working with the Student Nutrition Program.
- Working together to come up with ideas to incorporate cultural food, so that Canadian newcomers know how to utilize what is available to them in Ontario while being culturally appropriate.

Question 2: Do you know of any resources or programs that could benefit food knowledge and food skills programming in Waterloo Region?

Existing programs

Several existing food knowledge and skills programs were identified in Waterloo Region:

- **Peer Program** offering food preparation, budgeting, food from around the world, cook and eat together and send the leftovers home with participants, canning, freezing, and look who's cooking for nine to 12-year-olds ([Multiple Organizations - the program is funded by the Region of Waterloo Public Health](#)).
- **Eat Well Spend Less** program on healthy eating on a budget ([Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre](#)).
- **Culture Kitchen** provides a speaker on cultural foods and nutrition education, cooking together ([Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre](#)).
- **Gardening Workshops** and **Tasting Tuesdays** provide information on growing food, nutrition information, and a tasting and cooking demo ([Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre](#)).
- **Live Well Cooking Group** plans meals and cooks together, participants take food home, the program offers workshops while the food cooks ([Mennonite Central Committee](#)).
- **Global Kitchen** a workshop where participants cook meals from around the world together ([Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank](#)).
- **Lunch and Learn** program allows parents and children to learn together. The program includes: information on how to pack school lunches, learning how to use vegetables and fruits in meals and snacks, and a one week supply of vegetables and fruits ([Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank](#)).
- **Food Savers** program uses fresh food donations that would otherwise go to landfill. Food rescued in this program is distributed in the emergency food hamper and co-op programs. Participants learn how to chop, blanch and freeze produce ([Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank](#)).
- **Lunch Crunch** program provides vegetables and fruits for children's lunches five days per week. Participants learn to prepare vegetables and fruits as well as shopping for vegetables and fruits on a budget ([Woolwich/Wilmot](#)).
- **Recipe Cards** on how to prepare vegetables and fruits, including freezing and storage information ([Waterloo Region Food Bank](#)).
- **Rock What You've Got: Recipes for Preventing Food Waste** ([University of Guelph](#)).
- **Cooking programs for kids and adults** to learn food preparation skills ([PC Cooking School](#)).

- **Tween Scene** – Chef brings 30 prepared snacks for children and youth and other groups Monday to Friday for after school. Has a learning garden and beehives (role in pollination) ([Kitchener Central Branch Library](#)).

Program gaps

Participants noted several gaps in food knowledge and skills programming in Waterloo Region:

- college and university students – living on your own, low income
- cooking for seniors or people living on their own (cooking for one)
- curriculum-based food skills program to learn about food and preparation skills in class – knowledge of where food comes from

Food provision programs in Waterloo Region

Participants made note of programs they run that provide food and may include offering some information to participants:

- **Circle of Friends** Partners with other organizations such as St. Mary's church and Eby village to help people transition from homelessness ([Mennonite Central Committee](#)).
- **Community Pantry** this program provides residents of Cambridge or North Dumfries with three days' worth of emergency food up to eight times per year ([Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank](#)).
- **Emergency Food Hampers and Community Meals** – offers charitable food to many neighbourhoods throughout Waterloo Region ([House of Friendship](#)).
- **Food Co-operative** is a membership program where participants shop two times per month at a cost of \$10, to supplement their grocery budget ([Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank](#)).
- **Food4Kids Waterloo Region** Over 570 kids aged one to 14 years are provided with a bag of food, and something they need to prepare i.e. child-friendly recipes, on the weekend and over school breaks ([Food4Kids Waterloo Region](#)).

Question 3: What assets does your organization have (e.g. a kitchen, equipment) that could potentially be shared with other organizations? Are you interested in participating in a Google Map for food knowledge and food skills programs in Waterloo Region?

Assets that could be shared

Equipment lending could occur if there was a lead agency to take this on. Suggestion to create a kitchen equipment lending agency similar to the library of things in Kitchener. Food safety is the main concern as the lead agency would need to be able to sanitize equipment before lending it out again. i.e. must have an industrial dishwasher or three dedicated sinks for cleaning and sanitizing.

Interest in participating in a Google Map of food knowledge and skills programs

There was interest in participating in a [Google Map](#) to show where the food skills programming is occurring as well as where there are kitchens for rent, etc. Participants agreed that this could help them to look at other nearby programs and plan accordingly. Participants identified that the attendees of the current event may not be the most appropriate people to make this decision. Therefore, the attendees wanted to discuss the idea with their supervisors or managers.

Participants were to take back the following information to their agencies for a decision on participation:

- The Google Map would be featured on the [Region of Waterloo Public Health Food Skills](#) webpage. The map link could also be embedded within the websites of other agencies.
- At the request of the participants, agencies would receive a reminder four times a year to update the link as programs and funding change frequently.
- In the event that Public Health is no longer able to maintain the Google Map, it was determined that the sign-in information could be transferred to another agency.
- In order for participating agencies to access rights to add and modify their listing, agencies would need to provide a Gmail address and would be provided with instructions on how to add and modify listings.
- Agencies could be added on an ongoing basis by submitting a Gmail address to use to manage their listing.

Question 4: How can the aspects of food literacy be incorporated into your existing programming?

Participants offered insights into ways that they can incorporate the [Key Attributes of Food Literacy](#) into their organization's food knowledge and food skills programs.

Food and nutrition knowledge

Increase awareness by:

- incorporating healthy messaging into existing communication
- using recipe cards and posters

Provide education about:

- how to make healthy lunches
- healthier canned and packaged foods with regards to safety and nutritional quality
- best before dates (i.e. to prevent food waste)
- healthier food donations for food drives
- how to use items in the good food box (e.g. lower-cost, in-season foods)
- how to compare products to find the least expensive option (e.g. unit price)
- budgeting for food
- Ontario foods and purchasing food in-season
- foods that are unfamiliar to new Canadians
- label reading

Food skills

Provide hands-on activities:

- sample new foods and recipes
- sampling vegetables and fruits
- create fun experiences for kids to learn

Provide cooking classes with a focus on:

- basic food skills for youth and young adults
- simple recipes, basic food preparation and cooking skills
- how to continue to make traditional foods with the produce available in Ontario

Event registrants

The Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services would like to thank the following organizations for taking the time to share their experience and expertise during the *Healthy Food in Waterloo Region: Enhancing knowledge and skills* event.

Cambridge Self-Help Foodbank
Conestoga Students Inc.
Food 4 Kids Waterloo Region
House of Friendship
Idea Exchange Cambridge
Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre
Kinbridge Community Association
Kindred Credit Union
Kitchener Public Library
Marillac Place
Mennonite Central Committee
Ray of Hope Community Centre
Stirling Ave Mennonite Church
The Foodbank of Waterloo Region
The Salvation Army
Woolwich Community Services
YMCA of Cambridge and Kitchener-Waterloo