Middlesex-London Community Food Assessment Implementation Team

# Research – Key Informant Interviews

# Key Informant Interviews (40-60 minutes each)

**Target:** stakeholders who have expertise, knowledge and a unique perspective on the Middlesex-London food system.

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| Key Points to Cover Eco-Ethonomics Inc. is working with the London Food Bank, Middlesex-London Health Unit and the Community Food Assessment Implementation Team to conduct a Community Food Assessment for Middlesex-London. The assessment is intended to provide an overview of the local food system to help determine priorities for future action to help build a stronger and sustainable local food system.   * The interview is 40-60 minutes in length. * You have been identified as an interviewee because of your unique knowledge, expertise and perspective on the local food system in Middlesex-London. * The focus of this interview is on questions related to you, your perspective on the local food system, and more specifically:   + What makes your perspective unique   + Strengths and assets in the Middlesex-London food system   + Major problems and challenges in the Middlesex-London food system   + Solutions to five major problems/challenges identified through research on the Middlesex-London food system   + Key opportunities and your potential contribution to changes that you want to see   + Gaps in information * In this interview we are seeking your informed opinion and value your unique perspective and input. * Your responses will not be associated with your name and will be kept anonymous. Anonymous quotes may be included in the final report and if we wish to quote and reference you as an individual, we will ask for your permission. This report will be made available in late 2015 on the Middlesex-London Health Unit’s website. * You may have more to say for some questions or may choose not to answer a specific question. In either case, please feel free to state this and respond to the questions to the best of your knowledge. * Thanks very much for your willingness to participate! |

**Definitions**

A **community food assessment** is a collaborative process of examining the food-related resources and issues in an area. It helps guide actions and decision-making to improve community food security and move towards a healthier and more sustainable food system. It identifies what needs to be done to get there and how to measure success.

**Community Food Assessment Implementation Team:** a group of individuals from Middlesex-London who work in the local food system and have come together to help guide the Community Food Assessment process.

**Food literacy** is the knowledge and skills that help us plan, prepare and cook healthy and affordable meals.

**Food insecurity**: when people cannot access enough healthy, culturally acceptable and safe food to eat or experience anxiety about being able to afford enough food.

**Local Food:** food that is grown, harvested, or produced in Middlesex-London, or made from ingredients that are grown, harvested, or produced in Middlesex-London.

A **local food system** includes all those actors, activities, and resources needed to feed the people in a given area. This includes everything needed to grow, process, package, distribute, consume and dispose of food. For this assessment, London and Middlesex County is the area for our local food system.

A **sustainable food system** is a food system that is economically and environmentally maintainable and improves the health of the community and environment.

## Interview Questions:

**A. Introduction**

1. Please describe how you are involved in the local food system?
2. What areas of the food system are you most familiar with and/or knowledgeable about?
3. What resources do you use to stay informed about food trends, issues, and local food system activities?

**B. Strengths/Assets**

Each region and community has many strengths or assets within its food system. For example, some communities have a large number of community gardens, a regional culinary tourism strategy, agricultural land protection policy, the support of elected officials, or even a regional distribution hub for local food. These are all strengths (or assets) that are unique to that region’s food system, which can be built upon to move to a more local, sustainable and healthy food system.*[Interviewer to read the above paragraph]*

1. What are the strengths/assets of the Middlesex-London food system?
2. We have identified a few areas where we have limited information on the strengths/assets in the Middlesex-London food system. Can you tell me about any strengths/assets you know about in the following areas:
   1. Food Purchasing and Consumption (e.g. farmers’ markets)
   2. Food Policy and Advocacy (e.g. food charter)
   3. Food Innovation and Technology (e.g. agri-food research centre)
   4. Food Funding, Finance and Investment (e.g. grants specific to local food projects)

**C. Problems, Challenges and Solutions**

1. What concerns you most about the Middlesex-London food system? What are the major problems/challenges you see ahead? (please describe)

Provide list of 5 problems to group A and provide list of other 5 to group B

*[****Note:*** *interviewees will be randomly put into two groups of 15. Each group will be asked a series of standard questions on five larger problems within the Middlesex-London Food System (identified and evidenced through research). This will ensure that all 10 problems listed will have the benefit of 15 different stakeholder perspectives and solution oriented ideas.]*

## Group A (15 interviewees)

*[Each interviewee will be sent the problem statements in advance in order to ensure that they have had some time to review and consider them in detail before the interview]*

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| **Problem Statement:** | Most agriculture and agricultural policy is focused on large-scale production of cash crops for export. This is leading to a decrease in the number of small-scale producers and an increase in the number of powerful producers, and this may be harmful to building a local sustainable food system in Middlesex-London. |
| **Supporting Evidence (Facts):** | * The number of farms in Middlesex-London has decreased by 25.62% from 1991 to 2011. * In 2011, 1320 of the 2052 local farms were involved in oilseed and grain farming. * The greatest contributor to farm receipts in 2013 was corn production. * From 2006 to 2011 the number of farms with gross farm receipts of $1,000,000 or less decreased by 214 farms (8.82%) while the number of farms with gross farm receipts of $1,000,000 and above grew by 41 farms (29.5%). This is a loss of 173 farms in Middlesex-London from 2006 to 2011. |
| **Question One:** | Could you provide any further information, explanation or insight to support our understanding of this problem? |
| **Answer One:** |  |
| **Question Two:** | What solutions would help to address this problem? *[Probing Question: In what ways can we consider this problem as an opportunity for needed change?]* |
| **Answer Two:** |  |
| **Question Three:** | What strategies can be used to start or strengthen community action in this area? |
| **Answer Three:** |  |

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| **Problem Statement:** | The Middlesex-London food system has limited ability to process and distribute local food within the area. This problem is called the “missing middle”. This affects the ability for smaller-scale local farms to compete in the marketplace because it is difficult for them to have value added to their products and even more difficult to get them to market, unless they sell it directly to residents. As such, this greatly affects residents’ access to local food products and the variety of local food products they are able to access. |
| **Supporting Evidence (Facts):** | * There are 2 abattoirs in Middlesex-London and 1 in London. There are eight (8) registered processed egg stations in Ontario, none are in Middlesex-London ; but of the 23 registered shell egg stations in Ontario, two are within Middlesex-London. * 12 food businesses are involved in the wholesale and distribution of food in Middlesex-London, of which 4 are wholesalers open to the public and 8 are distributors to the retail and foodservice industries. * There are 18 farmers’ markets, with most (12) in London. In addition, 33 farm gate retail operations sell their product directly to residents in Middlesex-London. |
| **Question One:** | Could you provide any further information, explanation or insight to support our understanding of this problem? |
| **Answer One:** |  |
| **Question Two:** | What solutions would help to address this problem? *[Probing Question: In what ways can we consider this problem as an opportunity for needed change?]* |
| **Answer Two:** |  |
| **Question Three:** | What strategies can be used to start or strengthen community action in this area? |
| **Answer Three:** |  |

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| **Problem Statement:** | The average age of farm operators is increasing. This increases the need to plan for and support future farmers so they are successful. However, there are significant barriers for new farmers, such as increased land prices, the cost of meeting agriculture standards, limited access to dollars, limited ability to put their agricultural knowledge to practice, skills gaps, etc. |
| **Supporting Evidence (Facts):** | * Middlesex-London has 3, 405 farm operators. 2,070 operators are from farms with two or more operators, and 1,335 are from farms with one operator. * The average age of Middlesex farmers in 1991 was 48.3 and this has increased to 54.5 in 2011. * The price of farmland in Middlesex East went from $10,500 per acre in 2012 to $12,000 in 2014. In Middlesex West it went from $7,500 per acre in 2012 to $8,500 in 2014. |
| **Question One:** | Could you provide any further information, explanation or insight to support our understanding of this problem? |
| **Answer One:** |  |
| **Question Two:** | What solutions would help to address this problem? *[Probing Question: In what ways can we consider this problem as an opportunity for needed change?]* |
| **Answer Two:** |  |
| **Question Three:** | What strategies can be used to start or strengthen community action in this area? |
| **Answer Three:** |  |

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| **Problem Statement:** | No database of information on local food system funding is exists. The main information about food system project grants comes from grantors. Therefore, it is difficult to know the types and amount of financial resources available to food system projects.  Limited financial resources are set aside for local food projects but most of the funding is very small and does not focus on big problems with the food system or solutions that can help to build a local and sustainable food system. |
| **Supporting Evidence (Facts):** | * Information on the total number, type, and value of grants for food system projects is difficult to access. * Most of the known food system funding comes from OMAFRA and the Greenbelt Fund. |
| **Question One:** | Could you provide any further information, explanation or insight to support our understanding of this problem? |
| **Answer One:** |  |
| **Question Two:** | What solutions would help to address this problem? *[Probing Question: In what ways can we consider this problem as an opportunity for needed change?]* |
| **Answer Two:** |  |
| **Question Three:** | What strategies can be used to start or strengthen community action in this area? |
| **Answer Three:** |  |

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| **Problem Statement:** | Although the use of sustainable production methods (e.g. organic, non-GMO, biodynamic, permaculture, alternative energy use) is increasing across Canada, few Middlesex-London farmers use sustainable production methods on their farms. |
| **Supporting Evidence (Facts):** | * The number of Middlesex-London farms with Environmental Farm Plans is unknown and there is little data on the number of farms with their own sustainable agricultural policies or that use sustainable production methods. * Of 2052 farms in Middlesex-London in 2011, only 27 reported certified organic products for sale and 3 reported transitional organic products for sale. The number of farms producing organic products has increased from 8 in 2006 but this is because there were 24 transitioning to organic at that time, whereas there are only 3 transitioning to organic in 2011. * In “Seizing Canada’s Moment: Moving Forward in Science, Technology, and Innovation, 2014,” Industry Canada has made environment and agriculture a research priority, and food and food systems a focus area. |
| **Question One:** | Could you provide any further information, explanation or insight to support our understanding of this problem? |
| **Answer One:** |  |
| **Question Two:** | What solutions would help to address this problem? *[Probing Question: In what ways can we consider this problem as an opportunity for needed change?]* |
| **Answer Two:** |  |
| **Question Three:** | What strategies can be used to start or strengthen community action in this area? |
| **Answer Three:** |  |

## Group B (15 interviewees)

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| **Problem Statement:** | Middlesex-London families in need of emergency food have limited access to the food they need. Many emergency food locations close before people finish work and are not open on the weekends. The food available at food banks often needs to be non-perishable; therefore, the food distributed is often not fresh or locally produced. In addition, elementary schools are less likely to have a snack or meal program in comparison to high schools. |
| **Supporting Evidence (Facts):** | * London has 31 meal programs (e.g. Meals on Wheels) and 17 food banks. Middlesex County has O meal programs and only 3 food banks. Although Middlesex County residents can attend some food banks and meal programs in London. * Only one food bank is open past 4:00pm making it difficult for working families to access emergency food. * Of the 80 Ontario Student Nutrition Programs in Middlesex-London, 56 are available in elementary schools and 24 are offered in secondary schools. When compared to the total number of elementary and secondary schools in Middlesex-London, only 35% of elementary schools offer OSNP whereas 73% of high schools offer OSNPs. * Central food banks in London provide food items on an emergency basis, usually one to three days supply, and are available for pick up once a month to once every three months. * Food banks and meal programs are offered at different times of the day, for limited hours, and usually only once a week. These changing service hours can make it difficult for individuals and families to access emergency food when in need. |
| **Question One:** | Could you provide any further information, explanation or insight to support our understanding of this problem? |
| **Answer One:** |  |
| **Question Two:** | What solutions would help to address this problem? *[Probing Question: In what ways can we consider this problem as an opportunity for needed change?]* |
| **Answer Two:** |  |
| **Question Three:** | What strategies can be used to start or strengthen community action in this area? |
| **Answer Three:** |  |

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| **Problem Statement:** | In Middlesex-London, opportunities are limited for children, youth, and young adults to learn about food and the food system. There is not much food education included in the elementary school curriculum. Secondary school students are not required to take courses about food, except for Grade 9 Physical Education & Health. Finally, post-secondary courses require students to register in nutrition-related programs and these are often expensive. Less expensive courses are not as available or well promoted. |
| **Supporting Evidence (Facts):** | * Enrollment in post-secondary courses cost several hundred dollars. * Secondary students are not required to take hospitality, tourism or family studies classes. In these courses students learn about food and the important skill of meal preparation. * Students in grades 1-9 are required to take Physical Education and Health. However, these courses include little information on the food system, except for some discussion of healthy eating. |
| **Question One:** | Could you provide any further information, explanation or insight to support our understanding of this problem? |
| **Answer One:** |  |
| **Question Two:** | What solutions would help to address this problem? *[Probing Question: In what ways can we consider this problem as an opportunity for needed change?]* |
| **Answer Two:** |  |
| **Question Three:** | What strategies can be used to start or strengthen community action in this area? |
| **Answer Three:** |  |

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| **Problem Statement:** | There are big differences between how the rural and urban parts of the Middlesex-London food system operate. The City of London has more food system strengths because funding is based on how many people live in a particular area (e.g. London has more effective waste management and more food banks). Middlesex County communities grow most of the food, but without public transportation may have more difficulty getting food. |
| **Supporting Evidence (Facts):** | * London has 42 transit routes. Shuttle programs are used in Middlesex County to address the lack of public transportation. * Middlesex County has 29 food delivery service providers. 9 provide meal preparation and delivery services and 20 (8 being Shoppers Drug Marts) provide grocery shopping and delivery services. * Despite Middlesex County having a population of 17% of the Middlesex-London area, it keeps only 1% of its organic waste out of landfills. * In Middlesex-London the cost of a healthy food basket for a family of four in 2014 was $139.38 weekly. * London has 31 meal programs and 17 food banks. Middlesex County has O meal programs and only 3 food banks. Although Middlesex County residents can attend some food banks and meal programs in London. |
| **Question One:** | Could you provide any further information, explanation or insight to support our understanding of this problem? |
| **Answer One:** |  |
| **Question Two:** | What solutions would help to address this problem? *[Probing Question: In what ways can we consider this problem as an opportunity for needed change?]* |
| **Answer Two:** |  |
| **Question Three:** | What strategies can be used to start or strengthen community action in this area? |
| **Answer Three:** |  |

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| **Problem Statement:** | Middlesex-London has concerning diet-related health issues. The youth obesity rate is higher than the Canadian average. More youth are obese than in Canada. The number of people with heart disease or diabetes is a concern. People can greatly lower their chance of having these health issues with a healthy lifestyle (e.g. healthy food, exercise, not smoking). |
| **Supporting Evidence (Facts):** | * In 2011, 89% of Middlesex-London residents (12 years and older) did not eat the recommended amount of fruit and vegetables each day. People 12 years and older should eat 6 to 10 servings each day based on age and gender. * Middlesex-London has a higher youth obesity rate than Canada, at 26.4% versus 23.4%, respectively, but a slightly lower adult rate (16.6%) than the adult obesity rate for Canada (18.4%) * Middlesex-London’s main cause of preventable death is heart disease. 14.8% of London and 19.2% of Middlesex County residents have heart disease. * Middlesex-London has similar rates as Ontario for other diet-related diseases: diabetes; cardiovascular disease; ischemic heart disease; cerebrovascular disease; and stroke. |
| **Question One:** | Could you provide any further information, explanation or insight to support our understanding of this problem? |
| **Answer One:** |  |
| **Question Two:** | What solutions would help to address this problem? *[Probing Question: In what ways can we consider this problem as an opportunity for needed change?]* |
| **Answer Two:** |  |
| **Question Three:** | What strategies can be used to start or strengthen community action in this area? |
| **Answer Three:** |  |

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| **Problem Statement:** | A portion of the Middlesex-London population is at risk for food insecurity. The average income in the area is 14% lower than the provincial average but the cost of nutritious food is relatively the same, making it challenging for families who are working to afford healthy food. |
| **Supporting Evidence (Facts):** | * In 2012, 11% of the total population in Middlesex-London (approx. 48,307 in 2011) spent more than 30% of their income on rent or mortgage payments. * In 2011, the average household income for Middlesex-London was $74,765, while in Ontario it was $85,772. * In 2011, 8.5% of Middlesex-London residents were unemployed. * In 2013, the cost of the nutritious food basket for a family of four for one week was $181.64 in Middlesex-London and $187.03 on average in Ontario. * In 2009/10 nearly 8% of the households in Middlesex-London were considered moderately or severely food insecure. * The proportion of households considered moderately or severely food insecure in Middlesex-London in 2009/10 was not significantly different from the proportions in Ontario or the Peer Group, or from the proportions in 2007/08. |
| **Question One:** | Could you provide any further information, explanation or insight to support the framing of this problem? |
| **Answer One:** |  |
| **Question Two:** | What solutions would help to address this problem? *[Probing Question: In what ways can we consider this problem as an opportunity for needed change?]* |
| **Answer Two:** |  |
| **Question Three:** | What strategies can be used to start or strengthen community action in this area? |
| **Answer Three:** |  |

1. Are there other important problems or challenges within the Middlesex-London food system that have not been mentioned?
   1. What solutions would you suggest to address these challenges?

**D. Wrap Up**

1. Where is the food system under- and over-resourced in Middlesex-London?
2. What are the biggest opportunities for change within your local food system?
3. What contributions could you see yourself and/or your organization making towards achieving a more local sustainable food system in Middlesex-London?
4. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments you would like to share with us?
5. We will be having an asset mapping session (to identify and discuss all of the food system assets in London-Middlesex) and a community engagement session as we move forward with this project. Can we contact you in the future to provide updates on the community food assessment?
   1. Yes
   2. No

If yes, then:

* Name:
* Email:
* Phone:

**E. Gaps in Knowledge and Information**

*[Interviewers will identify relevant gaps prior to the interview and also use the information gathered during the interview itself to inform what gaps they choose to ask each key informant (i.e. interviewee) about.]*

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| **1.0 Population Statistics** |
| Population (density and distribution) |
| Percentage of elderly (over 65) |
| Percentage of lone parent households (F:M) |
| Percentage of first nations and metis |
| Percentage of recent immigrants |
| Percentage of families living below the Low-Income Cut off (LICO) |
| Average household income OR Median annual family income |
| No. of homeless |
| Mortality from dietary-related disease |
| Leading cause of death |
| Percent low birth weight |
| **2.0 Food Production** |
| Number of sustainable agriculture policies or environmental farm plans |
| Amount/proportion of food being sold to the local system versus the wider food system |
| Number of Middlesex-London (if possible, or just total) households with CSA shares |
| Amount produced by CSAs |
| **3.0 Food Access and Distribution** |
| Number of mobile food vendors and types of food sold |
| Map of retailers, distributors, warehouses |
| Interest regarding local food procurement, potential barriers and potential solutions |
| Number of wholesalers/warehouses (e.g. cool storage) |
| Number of community food hubs or small scale distributors (e.g. food aggregators) |
| Percentage of processed local food that gets sold and consumed in Middlesex-London region |
| **4.0 Food Purchasing and Consumption** |
| Total dollar value of food purchased by public institutions in the area |
| Total dollar value of food purchased by public institutions in the area |
| Total dollar value of food purchased per year for the last 10 years |
| Total dollar value of local food purchased in local area |
| Total dollar value of local food purchased by public institutions in the area |
| Total dollar value of local food purchased by food service businesses in the area |
| Total dollar value of local food purchased by food retailers in the area |
| Total dollar value of local food purchased per year for the last 10 years |
| General public’s attitudes and behaviours toward healthy, local and sustainably produced food |
| The dollar value of household food budget increase with the purchasing of food that is either healthy, local or sustainably produced |
| General eating habits by sub-population (disaggregate by age, gender, ethnicity, place of residence, education level, income level, etc.) |
| **5.0 Food Education, Knowledge and Literacy** |
| Number of student food and nutrition programs available (OSNP) available to students within Southwestern Ontario/ Ontario (comparative data) |
| Number of students enrolled in university/ college courses focused on the food system |
| Number of local students enrolled in university/ college courses focused on the food system |
| Number of twitter leaders/ influencers within the local food system (need to continue to populate this list) |
| Number of Facebook accounts for initiatives related to food (need to continue to populate this list) |
| Number of leaflets, press take ups and columns published on food and the food system (identified originally as a question for the community survey) |
| Number of public service announcements related to food and the food system (identified originally as a question for the community survey) |
| **6.0 Food Waste Management** |
| No of composters given out by municipalities in over the past 5 years |
| Total (tons) organic waste diverted from landfill |
| No of organic food waste drop off locations (e.g. farms, composter businesses) |
| Consumer Food Waste (e.g. Do you compost? Why or why not?) |
| **7.0 Policy and Advocacy** |
| Citizens ability to negotiate land use planning in relation to food issues |
| No of collaborative NGO focused food initiatives |
| No. of municipalities that have developed and adopted a Food Charter |
| No. and names of the agricultural and food related policies |
| No. of food advocacy organizations focused on the food system in each community |
| No. of municipalities that have incorporated food into official plans as a priority |
| **8.0 Risk Management and Food Safety** |
| Follow-up with the Salvation Army to figure out what exactly their role is, what they are contracted to do in the Middlesex County Emergency Response Plan |
| Number of food recalls on a provincial level that have affected food retail stores in Middlesex-London |
| Number of food confirmed illnesses reported to MLHU due to the local food system |
| **9.0 Innovation and Technology** |
| Examples of social innovation that address food system gaps |
| Examples of technological innovations available to support agri-food based small to medium enterprises |
| Innovative programming that supports a more sustainable food system |
| **10.0 Food System Funding, Financing and Investment** |
| Number and value and project type/topic of grants allocated to food system projects in Middlesex-London |
| Total dollar value of food system funding in Middlesex-London from all sources |
| Perceptions of areas within the food system that are overfunded and underfunded |
| Total number and amount of loans awarded to farms and food businesses in the Middlesex-London area |
| Perceptions of access to credit for SME’s within the food system value chain |
| Number of unique investors in the food system in the Middlesex-London area |
| Total dollar value of regional investment in food system related projects |

#### Thanks once again for your participation!!