



Ontario Edible Education Network Action Plan January 6, 2014

Background

Across Ontario people are doing great work to **connect children and youth with healthy food systems**. The Ontario Edible Education Network (the Network) has been established to bring these groups together to share resources, ideas, and experience, to work together on advocacy, and to make it easier for people across Ontario to get children and youth eating, growing, cooking, celebrating, and learning about healthy, local and sustainably produced food. More information about the Network is available on the Sustain Ontario website at <http://sustainontario.com/initiatives/ontario-edible-education-network>.

The Network engages in 3 areas of work that provides a structure for this Action Plan:

- A. Network Building and Connecting
- B. Aggregating Thought and Information
- C. Government Relations / Advocacy

This document summarizes the results of a planning process that was undertaken to determine the priorities of the Network in 6 priority areas:

1. Food in the Curriculum
2. Food Education Outside of the Classroom
3. School and Community Food Gardens
Engaging Children
4. Food Skills and Cooking Programs
5. Local / Sustainable Food in Schools
6. Student Nutrition Programs

(see <http://sustainontario.com/initiatives/ontario-edible-education-network/activities> for more information about this process)

Top 3 Immediate Priorities for the Ontario Edible Education Network

- 1. Support information sharing and collaboration among those working in this sector**
 - Enable those in this sector to better share information with and learn from each other
 - Enable collaboration and complementary efforts
- 2. Advocate for Student Nutrition Programs and food literacy education**
- 3. Build the Network's capacity**
 - Seek sustained funding to continue to fund a staff coordinator and to support network activities
 - Engage members to become Network champions, to represent the network at events, and to communicate its priority messages

Action Plan for Moving Forward

Network Structure and Sustainability:

The Network will explore what structure(s) will support the work below in the most appropriate way

- Sub-committees or working groups may be established for each of the priority areas OR a single working group may be best to address the interconnected themes
- A priority for moving the Plan forward is to continue to fund a staff coordinator
- Sustained funding for the network is essential for achieving all of the strategic priorities

Diversity:

In all of its work the Network will strive to address and highlight cultural and demographic diversity through, for example: the use of wording and images; consideration of physical abilities; suggestions for incorporating cultural backgrounds in lesson plans (e.g. encourage students to bring in recipes from home); sharing of diverse success stories.

A. Network Building and Connecting

A.1. Facilitated Relationship Building

The Network will connect with and involve a wide range of stakeholders. We will help facilitate relationship building between and across sectors (teachers, farmers, gardeners, administrators, NGOs etc...).

Priority actions to initiate with existing resources

Priority Actions	Implementation Details
A.1.1 General: Establish academic partnership(s)	Develop strategic connections with academic institutions to support the work in this Action Plan (see Gardens, SNP APs)
A.1.2 General: Connect with and engage First Nations, Francophone, and Northern Communities	Work with contacts that have existing connections. Share stories, details on related conferences / events, and contact information in newsletters, on website, etc.
A.1.3 General: Organize, promote and engage members to participate at networking events (in-person and online)	Promote events organized by Network members through e-news, website, and social media. Have members represent the Network at events: speak about the Network, provide materials, share info, communicate key messages (then report back to the Network and members) Strategic partnership building at Bring Food Home
A.1.4 General: Support partnerships (farmers, distributors, teachers, school boards, public institutions)	Share partnership models that have worked elsewhere; begin with those from survey respondents (see Outside Classroom AP) Hold webcast(s): focus conversation on challenges and opportunities for collaboration (including between schools and outside of the classroom opportunities)
A.1.5 Student Nutrition: Partner with the Ontario Student Nutrition Program Network	Collaborate and/or consult on advocacy and other initiatives (see SNP AP)

Priority actions that require additional support to advance

Priority Actions	Implementation Details
A.1.6 General: Connect with, involve First Nations, Francophone, and Northern Communities	Build on A.1.2; Help facilitate regional in-person networking activities to build connections between communities
A.1.7 General: Support connections bwn schools & farmers/ gardeners/ others outside classroom to learn about each other, how to work together, how to involve students outside classroom	In addition to webcasts and sharing partnering stories (see A.1.4), ideas include teacher training; co-op education; regional meet-and-greet events; safety standards cooperation; highlighting at Royal Winter Fair or horticultural events (see Outside Classroom AP; Gardens AP) Identify key partners (see Outside Classroom AP; Gardens AP)
A.1.8 Food Skills: Establish expert panel to develop age-appropriate food skills / food literacy benchmarks, common evaluation for cooking skills and culinary programs	Establish expert panel; contact and encourage involvement from: ground level NGOs providing food skills programs; Provincial Government; Municipal Governments, Health Units, Boards of Ed (also see A.2.3 and B.4.4 for supportive materials and messages) Hold webcasts to explore details (how / why, implementation) Gather and share results from NGOs who have implemented benchmarks and evaluation
A.1.9 Local/Sustainable Food in Schools: Bring together community orgs that have delivered local food in schools projects to coord. local food action hubs	Explore Funding: Discuss opportunities for collaboration among OEEN members who have delivered local food projects Assess priority funding opportunities (Local Food Fund, SNPs); Determine best course of action - apply for funding in partnership or as individual groups
Other possible relationship building efforts:	
1) Bridge urban-rural divide. Recruit collaboration champions in both urban and rural communities to bridge divides; work with member organizations to facilitate knowledge exchange programs for young adults (See Outside Classroom AP)	

A.2. Funder Education

The Network will **educate grantors** about our Network, why food literacy and food security work are important.

Priority actions to initiate with existing resources

Priority Actions	Implementation Details
A.2.1 General: Communicate that the impacts of this work (networking and connections) are huge! (Urban-rural; Farmers-schools; Farms-general public; North-South; across cultures; English-French)	Compile and share case studies / stories of current relationships, highlighting successes, challenges, and funding needs (see Outside of Classroom AP)
A.2.2 Gardens: Communicate that school gardens and public community gardens grow healthy kids and allow us to save money on healthcare	Develop fact sheet(s) to provide case for support for government, funders (see B.4.3)

<p>A.2.3 Food Skills: Communicate that people who struggle to make healthy food choices lack cooking skills and would benefit from food literacy education.</p> <p>Share the message that age-appropriate benchmarks and a common evaluation system for food literacy and cooking skills will enable educators and program providers to reflect upon and evaluate their programs as well as measure the collective impact of food literacy / skills programming.</p>	<p>Develop fact sheet detailing the need for inclusion of sequential food literacy and food skills benchmarks in K-12 food and nutrition curriculum (see A.1.8 and B.4.4)</p>
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Priority actions that require additional support to advance

Priority Actions	Implementation Details
<p>A.2.4 Gardens: Communicate that municipal governments and public health units have a role to play by providing funding and facilitating access to outdoor growing space for students (especially summer gap)</p>	<p>Emphasize: (a) Make municipal parks and other lands available for students; (b) Encourage collaboration between municipalities and school boards re: space-sharing and summer maintenance / community sharing; (c) NGOs facilitate multi-stakeholder projects and need to be funded (for more info see Gardens AP)</p>
<p>Other possible funder education efforts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Communicate that teachers need funding to go to events and attend training (to support travel, supply teachers, etc... Bursaries for food-themed education [such as PD days, conferences, etc.] would be beneficial). 2) Circulate the message that farmers need to be compensated for their time and efforts when providing educational opportunities at their farms. Could invite funders on farm tours, prepare educational messages for broader funder education. 	

B. Aggregating Thought and Information

We will explore options to help those working in this sector build knowledge, find the information they need, and have this knowledge and information readily accessible.

B.1. Sharing information, resources and stories:

We will focus on highlighting stories, useful examples, valuable resources, and other contextual information in our newsletters and on the internet.

Priority actions to initiate with existing resources

Priority Actions	Implementation Details
<p>B.1.1 General: Circulate Action Planning results</p>	<p>Widely share action plan results and findings for other groups to use in their advocacy efforts</p>
<p>B.1.2 General: Provide info and contacts relating to the 6 themes</p>	<p>Post links to other sites, resources and contacts on the Network website regarding, for example, how to start a local food procurement program or a school garden etc...</p>
<p>B.1.3 General: Develop an OEEEN member directory</p>	<p>Include searchable categories, types of programs, skills and resources members are looking for and can share</p>

B.1.4 General: Support member collaboration “Together We are Stronger”	Hold webcasts, enable information sharing to support complementary projects and grant applications Support members to share information about meetings attended and other information that could help others in the sector
B.1.5 General: Share theme-specific resources to profile monthly in the Ontario Edible Education Network newsletter	Recruit dedicated communications interns / volunteers who can develop profiles, pull content from partner websites, etc. specific to each theme. (see Food Skills, SNP APs)
B.1.6 General: Develop a list / point to existing lists of possible relevant grantors	Include opportunities for many different audiences include farmers and other outside-the-classroom program providers
B.1.7 General: Develop mechanism to identify and share lesson plans and other resources related to food	Facilitate sharing stories about ‘favourite lesson plans’ and other resources that are rated or endorsed by those who have used them Research existing curriculum connections resources; Ask Network members to share any related resources
B.1.8 Outside Classroom: Develop directory of outside- classroom food education pgms; promote province-wide to teachers	Engage survey respondents to help begin populating directory (and provide other contacts) Advertise at Bring Food Home and begin collecting information and ideas
B.1.9 Food Skills: Create How-to Manual for implementing portable Culinary Programs	Build on existing how-to-manuals for cooking / food skills programs; address how large or small community organizations with no access to commercial or teaching kitchen spaces can offer effective and low cost culinary programs (see Food Skills AP)
B.1.10 Local/Sustainable Food In Schools: Increase use of Ontariofresh.ca website to connect regional school projects with local food producers and distributors	Have local food projects test the Ontariofresh.ca site for further gaps; send feedback to Greenbelt Include use of Ontariofresh.ca as part of future local food projects

Priority actions that require additional support to advance

Priority Actions	Implementation Details
B.1.11 Curriculum: Develop mechanism to identify and share lesson plans related to food	Build on B.1.7 Research existing lesson plans; add them to OEEN website (with permission) Create or use other searchable database of lesson plans and other teaching tools and resources. (see Curriculum and Gardens APs)
B.1.12 Outside Classroom: Further advance directory of outside-the-classroom food education programs; promote province-wide to teachers	Build on B.1.8. Investigate trade shows, tourism groups, agricultural events, etc. who could also help to quickly populate a directory
B.1.13 Student Nutrition: Develop a comprehensive snap shot of the state of student nutrition programs in Ontario	Include both infographic and website content re: (a) how funding is allocated; (b) where SNPs are located (c) who is working on SNPs in the province with profiles (see SNP AP)
Other possible information sharing efforts:	
1) Collect and share local food procurement contract and policy language used by school boards (see Local/Sustainable Food in Schools AP)	

- 2) **Encourage stakeholders to showcase projects and share information** via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram photos (see Gardens AP)
- 3) Develop a **tool for networking and requesting skills or resources** from each other (begin a blog, listserv, or other means of networking that is easy to access, user-friendly, and easy to maintain)

B.2. Education and Training:

Priority actions to initiate with existing resources

Priority Actions	Implementation Details
B.2.1 Curriculum, Gardens: Promote teacher training opportunities and information sharing about food literacy and gardens programming	Promote / support existing food-themed teacher training provided by member organizations (PD days, workshops, conferences, etc) Could be shared via an online platform and newsletters, listserves etc. (for more info see Curriculum, Gardens APs)

Priority actions that require additional support to advance

Priority Actions	Implementation Details
B.2.2 General: Provide / support teacher training and information sharing about food literacy programming (including gardens and food skills)	Seek funding for teachers / educators to attend member events and trainings Promote stronger focus on agriculture and food literacy in teacher training programs Messaging: “food literacy education is interdisciplinary and food-themed lesson plans and hands-on experiential learning can be used to address curriculum requirements in nearly all school subject areas”. (see Curriculum, Outside Classroom, Gardens APs)
B.2.3 Local/Sustainable Food in Schools: Train SNP coordinators on local food procurement and connect them to local food distribution options	Leverage the priorities of the Local Food Act and Local Food Fund, as well as their synergies with the expanded School Nutrition Program goals
Other possible education and training efforts:	
1) Develop a mentorship program for groups to learn from others’ experience.	

B.3. Research Gaps / Data Collection

The Network will focus on collecting data and performing other research to fill existing gaps:

Priority actions to initiate with existing resources

Priority Actions	Implementation Details
B.3.1 General: Highlight and communicate student / academic research	Partner with schools and post-secondary institutions to secure community based researchers AND to highlight and communicate existing student research
B.3.2 Gardens: Compile scans on community and school gardens	Continue gathering information about what is happening in Ontario (via the IGES survey of school projects, and the OCGN survey via Sustain Ontario); share results widely

B.3.3 Local/Sustainable Food in Schools: Compile updated scan on Regional food hubs	Secure a university intern position overseen by Network member organization
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Priority actions that require additional support to advance

Priority Actions	Implementation Details
B.3.4 General: Follow up with survey respondents for a fuller picture of food education connections, partnerships, networks	Determine whether connections are mainly locally / regionally-based and how such connections can be built on, replicated, or encouraged across the province to develop a larger, more cohesive network
B.3.5 Gardens: Increase research into impacts of school gardening	Help address gap in (a) longitudinal studies that examine the impact of gardens on the health and wellbeing of children and youth over time and (b) indicators that can be used to understand different aspects of garden participation (e.g. best practices to evaluate nutritional impacts, physical exercise impacts etc) (see Gardens AP)
B.3.6 Food Skills: Share best practices to support the development of benchmarks and evaluation systems	Gather and share results from NGOs who have implemented benchmarks and evaluation systems.
B.3.7 Student Nutrition: Research and compile existing SNP best practices; support evaluation of SNP programs	Include best practices, policy and advocacy efforts at the regional, municipal, provincial and federal level. Determine what metrics would be valuable to make the case for increased resources for SNPs; develop evaluation tools; and coordinate needed evaluation research.
Other possible research efforts:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Research what “sustainable” Ontario products and options are available (see School Procurement AP) 2) Find gaps in existing lesson plans; support development of new lesson plans (see Curriculum AP) 3) Follow up with groups that provide culturally diverse programming outside of the classroom to learn more about their activities and partnership / mentoring opportunities. Contact organizations working with culturally diverse groups to find out if they provide programs for children and youth and, if not, if they would be interested in developing some with the help of the Network (see Outside Classroom AP) 	

B.4. Communications: Fact Sheets, Handouts, other resources

With the support of interns, volunteers, and research partnerships the Network will prepare fact sheets and handouts to support those working in this sector in their advocacy / education efforts. The Network will regularly circulate information that has been collected in its newsletters / on the website.

Priority actions to initiate with existing resources

Priority Actions	Implementation Details
B.4.1 General: Develop resources for stakeholders to use to advocate for (a) food literacy education and (b) resources for SNPs	Create and share resources for schools, parents, community members and organizations to use to advocate for food literacy programming and increased resources for SNPs (presentations, hand-outs, fact sheets, case studies, toolkits, videos, social media campaign, etc.) Can adapt food literacy backgrounder & messages (see Curriculum and SNP APs)
B.4.2 Outside Classroom, Gardens: Prepare a tip sheet for approaching school boards	Contact survey respondents who identified connections with school boards; build on Bring Food Home workshop May need various tip sheets for different issues: Re: outside classroom: safety

	concerns and requirements, insurance requirements (for field trip destinations); Re: school gardens: benefits of gardens / how to address common school board logistics problems and concerns
B.4.3 Gardens: Prepare a factsheet of ‘how gardens impact the community’ to use in educating funders, other communications	Intended for funders in health; communicate how school gardens could save them money, using a health promotion and wellness lens. (see A.2.2 and Gardens AP)
B.4.4 Food Skills: Develop fact sheet detailing the need for inclusion of sequential food literacy and food skills benchmarks in K-12 food and nutrition curriculum	To complement establishment of expert panel (see A.1.8, A.2.3)

Priority actions that require additional support to advance

Priority Actions	Implementation Details
B.4.5 Curriculum: Develop a resource for connecting food to the Ontario curriculum	<p>Create a chart / table sorted by grade and subject to demonstrate food literacy links to current curriculum</p> <p>Emphasize interdisciplinary nature of food lessons and ease of connecting them to existing curriculum</p> <p>Determine whether existing resources are sufficient; develop new resource(s) to address gaps</p>
<p>Other possible communications resources:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Develop a best practices guide for farmers and other program providers to use in developing / improving food education programs that are run outside the classroom (see Outside Classroom AP) 2) Prepare a list of ‘community assets’ and asset mapping tools that can be used for groups to find both financial and non-monetary resources and supports (e.g. volunteers, partnership opportunities, etc.) (see Gardens AP) 	

C. Communications, Advocacy and Government Relations

C.1. Communications and Advocacy Objectives

The Network will develop a communications, advocacy, and government relations strategy along with priority communications messages.

- We will engage in direct advocacy and government relations.
- We will support other stakeholders’ advocacy efforts by developing key messages and materials (including backgrounders, documents that provide rationale for the work we do, and other supportive documents).
- Some key opportunities include: Local Food Act (LFA); Healthy Kids Strategy (HKS); Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy (OPRS) Renewal; and the current Education Strategy.

Priority actions to initiate with existing resources

Priority Actions	Implementation Details
C.1.1 General: Advocate for food literacy education (including the value of food skills and gardens) and support for SNPs	<p>Advocate for governments and other stakeholders to (a) support food literacy education within the education system and (b) provide additional support for SNPs. Government advocacy will leverage the LFA, HKS, OPRS, Education Strategy opportunities (see Food Skills AP)</p> <p>Promote the Network's and members' activities and events through websites, social media, news outlets, newsletters, and other communications channels. (see Curriculum and Outside Classroom APs for more detailed ideas)</p>
C.1.2 General: Advocate for new laws and policies to include multi-year implementation funding (including Local Food Act)	Communicate (a) that new policies are not 'enabling' when they are not accompanied by funding for implementation; (b) funding support should be for ongoing projects – multi-year, (ie, 3 years minimum) to support stability
C.1.3 Gardens: Advocate for the Government of Ontario to recognize school gardens as important places for food literacy	Discuss opportunities for Ministry of Education, MCYS, OMAF, and other Ministries to provide policy and funding changes that support school ground and nearby open space food literacy programs. (See Gardens AP for specific recommendations)
C.1.4 Food Skills: Advocate for cooking and food skills programs to be made accessible to all Ontario children	Possible recommendation for developing / expanding portable food skills programs. These eliminate the need for capital investment for kitchen spaces. Food skills programs can be started / expanded by investing in properly trained staff and portable equipment that help children and youth develop cooking skills they can use on a daily basis. (see Food Skills AP)

Priority actions that require additional support to advance

Priority Actions	Implementation Details
C.1.5 General: Raise awareness and support for Local Food Act and its purposes to educate about local food	Provide resources (e.g. backgrounders, fact sheets, sample letters to send to MPPs and government ministers) to a broad range of audiences to support as many Ontario voices to be heard on local food as possible (including to teachers about how the Act could be relevant to curriculum)
C.1.6 Food Skills: Promote food literacy and food skills benchmarks / expectations	To take place once guidelines have been developed by an expert panel
C.1.7 Local/Sustainable Food in Schools: Advocate for OMAF to establish policy goals and targets for local food procurement in schools	<p>(a) Compile procurement successes from top local food projects in schools in Ontario (b) Communicate results to Minister with request to set realistic procurement and policy targets at schools</p> <p>(See Local/Sustainable Food in Schools AP)</p>
C.1.8 Student Nutrition: Develop a reporting strategy to MCYS	Use this opportunity to share best practices, discuss opportunities for policy change and funding changes. (see SNP AP)
Other possible advocacy efforts:	
1) Start dialogue with government about food literacy curriculum changes; recommend changes to the curriculum to include food literacy (see Curriculum AP)	

2) Promote public awareness and education re: agriculture, local, sustainable, and ecological food production (see Outside of Classroom AP)