



**Results from the
Ontario Edible Education Network Survey
January 2012 - February 2013**

What We Heard

Results from the Ontario Edible Education Network Survey January 2012 - February 2013

What We Heard

In January 2012, FoodShare Toronto, Sustain Ontario, and Green Thumbs Growing Kids launched a broad public survey to learn more about potential interest in a network that would **link groups across the province who are connecting kids with good food**, as well as to discover what these groups are already doing and what activities a network could provide that would be of use to them.

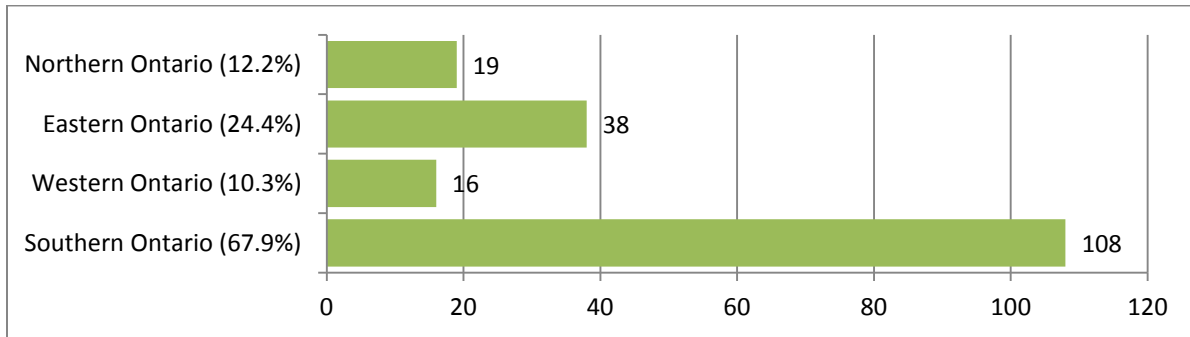
Since the launch of the survey, the Ontario Edible Education Network has been established as an initiative of Sustain Ontario with a dedicated Advisory Committee and Steering Committee. The Network has developed a strategic plan that it has begun to implement, and its purpose has been further defined:

“Across Ontario groups are doing great work to connect children and youth with good food. Our mission is 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.”

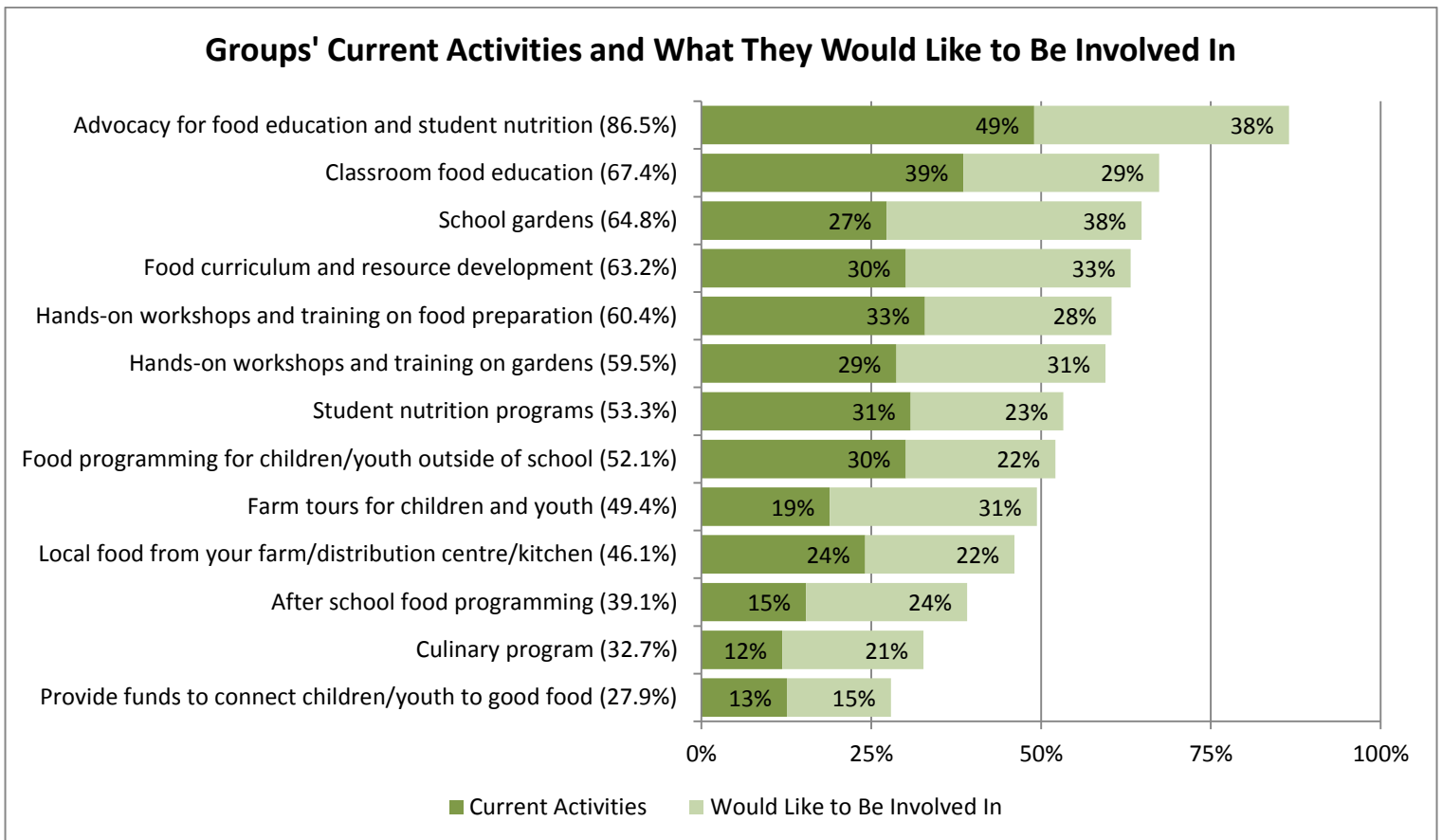
As of March 2013, the time of this report, the survey has received 163 respondents; 135 of whom wish to be contacted about next steps. This Network has gone from vision to reality and will use the survey results to inform its efforts.

For more information about the Ontario Edible Education Network, please visit our website at: <http://sustainontario.com/initiatives/children-and-youth-food-network>.

What region(s) do you live and work in?

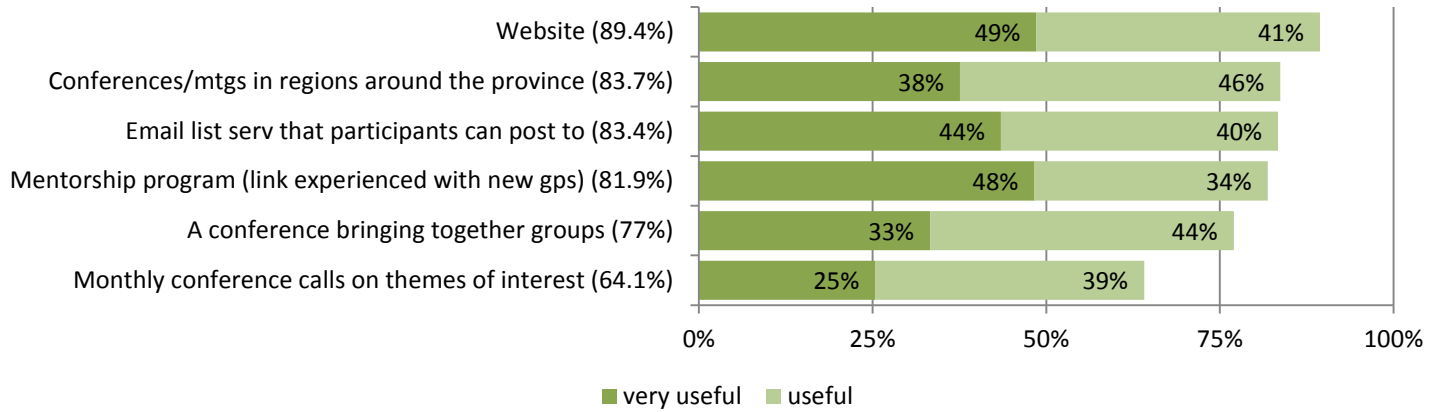


What do you do currently to help connect children to good food? Are there activities that you are not currently involved in that you would like to be?

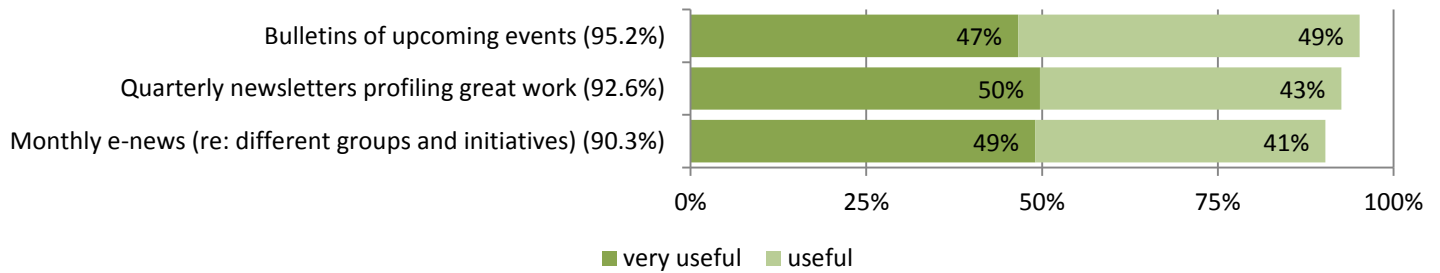


What you think would be useful: Networking, Communication, Resources & Training, and Capacity-Building

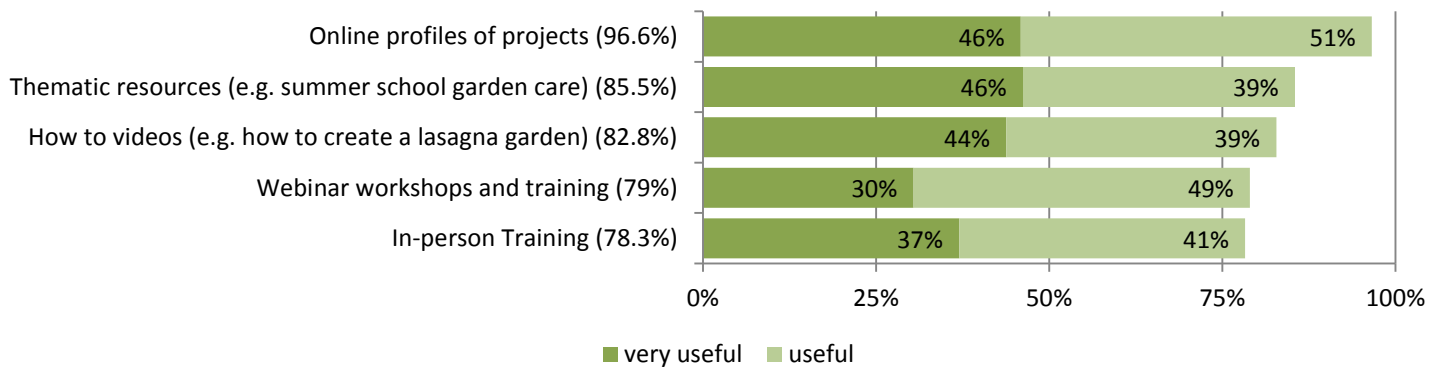
How Much Would these Networking Activities Help Your Work?



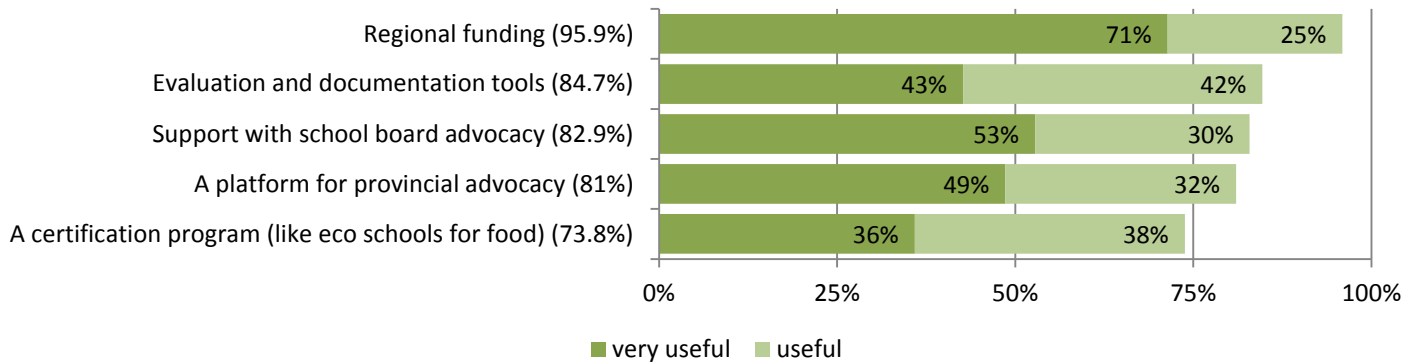
How Much Would These Communication Activities Help Your Work?



How Much Would These Resource & Training Activities Help Your Work?



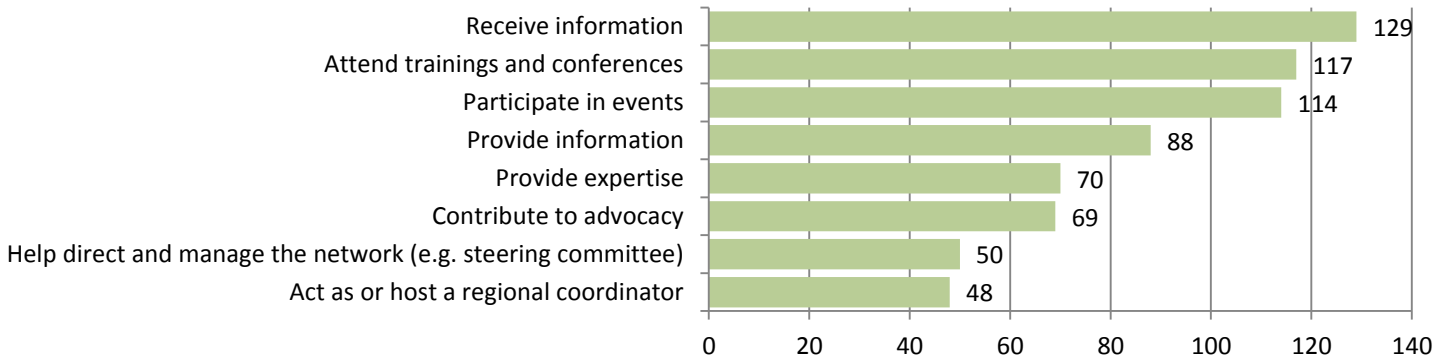
How Much Would These Capacity Building Activities Help Your Work?



Other useful activities for the network:

- Connect players: Connect communities to schools; connect farmers and teachers; build capacity for partnerships; work with existing networks.
- Support collaborative fundraising efforts and support various players to participate.
- Support players to learn from each others' experience: recognize and profile champions; publish start-up guides with tips from experienced groups; provide a blog or listserve for discussion and learning; provide practical, step-by-step news updates and profiles that can be translated into action; collect partnering suggestions that have worked; develop an online "profile of projects".
- Develop information resources: best practices sheets, fact sheets, statistics that can be used when presenting; downloadable Power Points, handouts that can be edited to suit the area, audience and program; simplify connections to curriculum and make them more accessible; provide public awareness: media about progress, public broadcast messages about local foods, a video of community efforts; celebrity champions; subject experts for events and workshops.
- Provide training and professional development for educators, administrators and school boards.
- Support advocacy efforts to achieve, for example, resources for healthy, local foods and production at schools in Northern communities; a Province-wide Nutrition Program for Elementary Schools

What Role(s) Would You Like to Play in an Ontario Food & Children Network?



Do you have any concerns about the creation of this network? If so, do you have any advice about how to address those concerns?

Concern: Duplication of initiatives and efforts; desire not to re-invent the wheel; questioning the need for another network.

Recommendations:

- Clearly define the goals and work of the network.
- Complement other networks / initiatives such as OAFE (Ontario Agri-food Education Network); Ontario Local Food Co-operatives; Good Food Box network; FoodNet; Public health networks...
- Learn from out-of-province networks such as: U.S. farm-to-school models; FBEA.
- Fill gaps, share great existing resources and initiatives (rather than create new ones).
- Strategic advocacy to build capacity and sustain models that are working / have worked.
- Leverage groups' existing participation in other initiatives and networks to gather information and share knowledge and resources.

Concern: Limited resources (time and money) to organize, participate and travel to conferences, events or meetings, especially for those from the North.

Recommendations:

- Be sure that meetings or conferences are centrally located and address pertinent information.
- Ensure that this network helps people work smarter (learning from each other) not harder.
- Develop regional pods / networks for information sharing.
- Have a youth and food stream at the Bring Food Home Conference rather than organizing a separate conference.
- Provide e-conferences (suggestion to refer to the Wallace Group for their webinar format).

Concern: Information overload.

Recommendation:

- Streamline communication and provide very selective emailing.

Concern: Need for sustainable long-term funding for the Network to continue and be self-reliant.

Concern: Transparency and structure of governance, involvement, decision-making.

Recommendations:

- Make sure governance / partners are carefully considered; clarify roles and decision-making.
- Have complete transparency in how decisions are made - clear criteria and communications for project selection, appointment to committees, dispensing of fees, etc.
- Ensure fairness in regional representation (develop criteria and make them transparent).
- The network and its agenda should be community-driven and participatory; this is the network's strength. Priorities should be driven by needs, not existing frameworks such as curriculum.
- Have an open online forum to post concerns for all to see. Some interaction with the administration would help.

Concern: Challenge achieving action and practical gains, very broad agenda of network.

Recommendations:

- Set realistic, practical, focused and tangible goals to ensure that the network makes progress on action rather than talking about action or getting bogged down in policy development.
- Put emphasis on program delivery, not theory and creation of documents.
- Start with small and successful projects, build strong human resource capacity, and eventually appoint a full time "leader" focusing solely on this.

Concern: Setting back groups and achievements made to date.

Recommendations:

- Safeguard intellectual property and acknowledge good work of organizations: identify contributors on resources to be shared and write in mentorship or training fees, when fundraising, for organizations providing these services.

Concern: Potential for the network to not represent / recognize the needs of diverse players.

Recommendations:

- Reflect the unique interests and challenges of Northern communities (accessibility, isolation...).
- Make the network equally available to rural schools and city schools.
- Consider the needs of inner-city schools, which don't have the land for gardens.
- Include small to mid-size agricultural organizations.
- Develop regional groups to address specific needs and share resources.
- Consider costs to families; ensure access to programming regardless of income.

Concern: Potential for information shared and scope of programming to lack diversity and complexity.

Recommendations:

- Be open-minded to all kinds/ ways of learning and communicating.
- Programs should promote culturally diverse foods (cultivation and consumption).
- Network should focus on extracurricular food literacy programs as well as classroom education.
- Ensure that any nutrition resources are consistent with public health nutrition messages (consult EatRight Ontario, Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health, Dietitians of Canada, Public Health Dietitians).
- Local food education should discuss the challenges of our existing food supply chain including tough issues such as GMO feed/seed, fumigation of soil, climate change, use of pesticides that kill pollinators, use of fossil-fuel based fertilizer. Resources, sessions, and tools can represent a full spectrum of agronomic approaches and emphasize the learner's decision-making process.
- Stay away from black-and-white presentation of information; avoid creating divides within farm communities. Can focus on food re-skilling and basic food education.