



Results from the Ontario Edible Education Network's 2017 Survey to Inform its Future Directions

The survey was open for approximately 5 weeks during May and June 2017. Over this time it received 19 responses.

Quick summary of key themes that emerged

- **The Network should put a strong focus on advancing collaborative advocacy efforts:**
 - Advocacy is both the activity that respondents are currently most involved in (61%; tied with school gardens) and that respondents would most like to be more involved in that they are not already doing (28%).
 - Collaboration support (facilitating joint advocacy efforts, coordinating collaborative projects) was respondents' top choice re: what areas the Network could focus on that would fill a gap / best support people's needs (89% of respondents).
 - Paid Sustain Ontario members chose the "Opportunity to provide feedback about or to add your signature to advocacy or policy documents" as the second-most important benefit of paid membership for them (56% of respondents).
- **The Network should support project collaboration and relationship building:**
 - Support with relationship building and creating support systems (e.g. introducing people and programs, building a community of practice) was respondents' second highest choice to the question that asked what areas the Network could focus on that would fill a gap / best support people's needs (74% of respondents).
 - Paid Sustain Ontario members stated that the potential for "Being included in joint grant applications / projects with other Network members" was the most important member benefit that was of interest to them (78% of respondents).
- **News and information (26%) and training efforts (37%) were less of a priority for respondents.**
- **Sustain Ontario members also enjoy promotional support (44%) and member rates at conferences (56%). Not many are excited about the idea of joining another listserv (33%).**

Preparing for Bring Food Home:

Respondents would like to see the Ontario Edible Education Network support each of the themes that were proposed for the discussions at Bring Food Home.

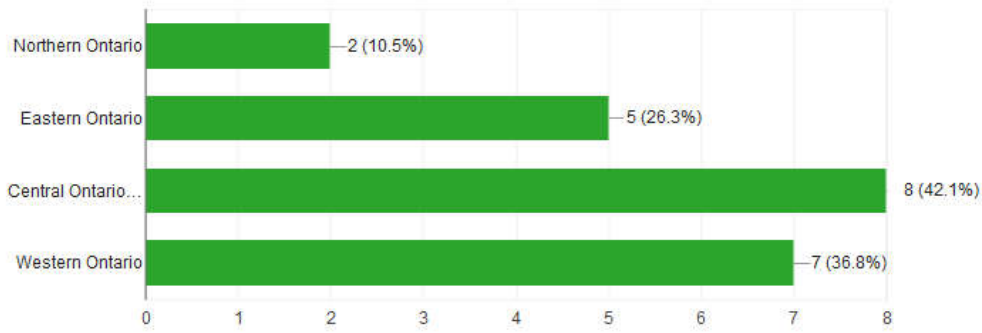
- **Local Networks:** Some key ways that the Network could play a role include connecting people and groups together, supporting advocacy efforts, and helping to share information across the province.
- **Evaluation and demonstrating impacts:** The Network could support this issue by coordinating evaluation and communication efforts, providing resources and training (evaluation tools and workshops), and offering messaging that groups can use to make the case for their programs.
- **Support for working with school boards:** The Network could help to develop relationships, support collaboration, share information, and support joint problem solving.

Detailed Survey Responses

About you and your programs

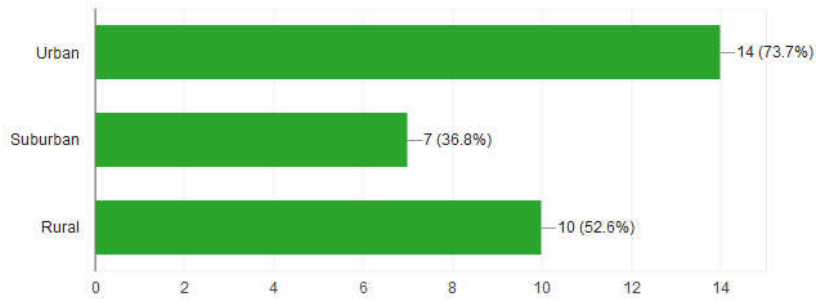
What region(s) do you work in?

19 responses

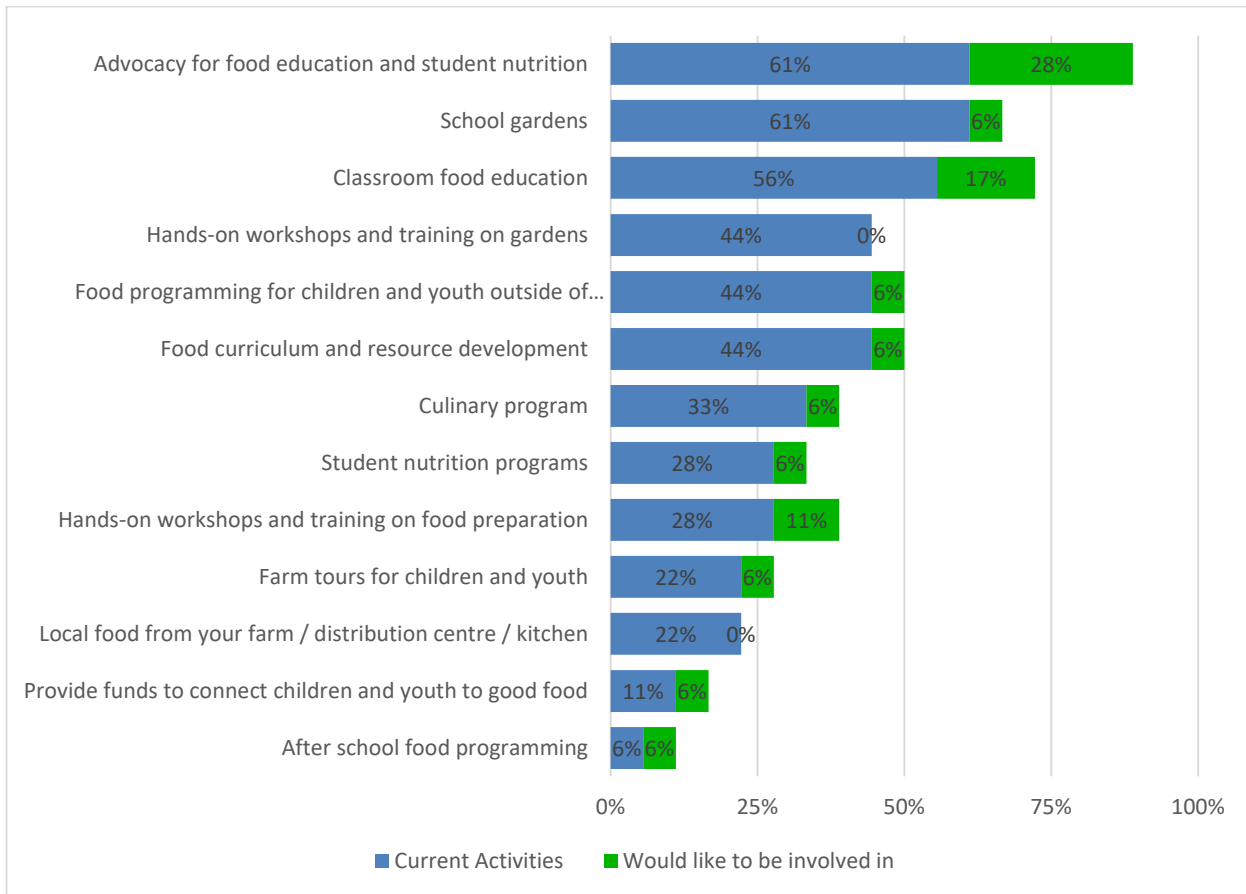


What type of setting do you work in? (Check all that apply)

19 responses

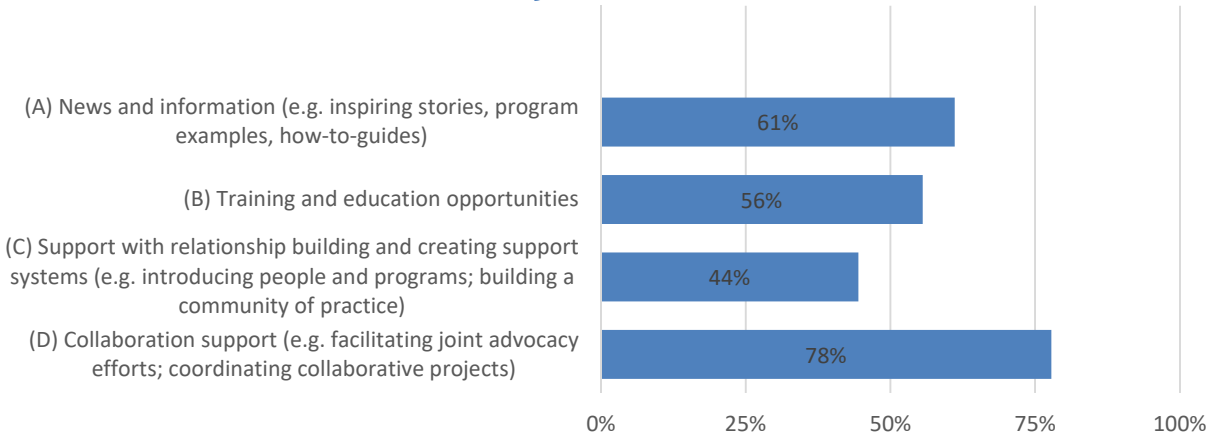


What do you do currently to help connect children to good food? Are there activities that you are not currently involved in that you would like to be?



Exploring Existing Supports and Gaps

What supports do you already receive from other networks / organizations relating to the theme of good food for children and youth? (other than the Ontario Edible Education Network)

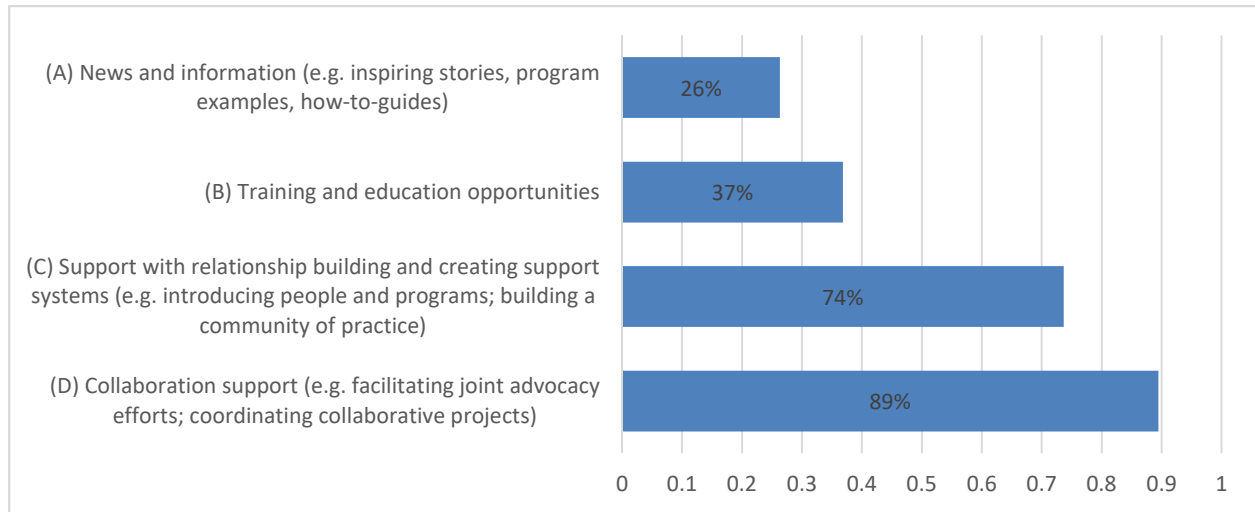


Please share which organization(s) provide you with these supports:

- Student Nutrition Ontario
- Public health units (x3)
- YRNC
- YRFN
- MyCaja.ca
- School Boards (x3)
- Master gardeners of Ottawa
- Community Food Centres Canada
- EcoSchools
- School Board Environmental Representatives Association
- York University Faculty of Environmental Studies
- Sustain Ontario (x4)
- Farm to Cafeteria Canada (x2)
- Greenbelt
- TRCA
- Municipalities (x2)
- Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition
- Headwaters Food and Farming Alliance
- Just Food
- Canadian Organic Growers
- Ottawa Network For Education
- NCCEN
- Coalition for Healthy School Food
- Edible Schoolyard Project (x2)
- U.S. Farm to School Network
- Middlesex London Food Policy Council
- Middlesex County Economic Development Corporation
- South Central Ontario Region (SCOR) Economic Development Corporation
- City of London Urban Agriculture Strategy
- Local Home School Network
- FoodShare (x2)
- The STOP community food centre
- Green Thumbs Growing Kids
- Headwaters Communities in Action
- Food Secure Canada
- Children's Foundation of Guelph and Wellington

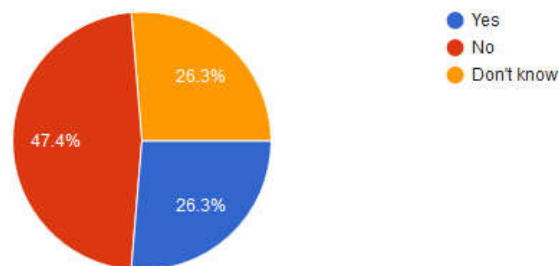
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Which of these areas could the Ontario Edible Education focus on that would fill a gap and best support your needs?

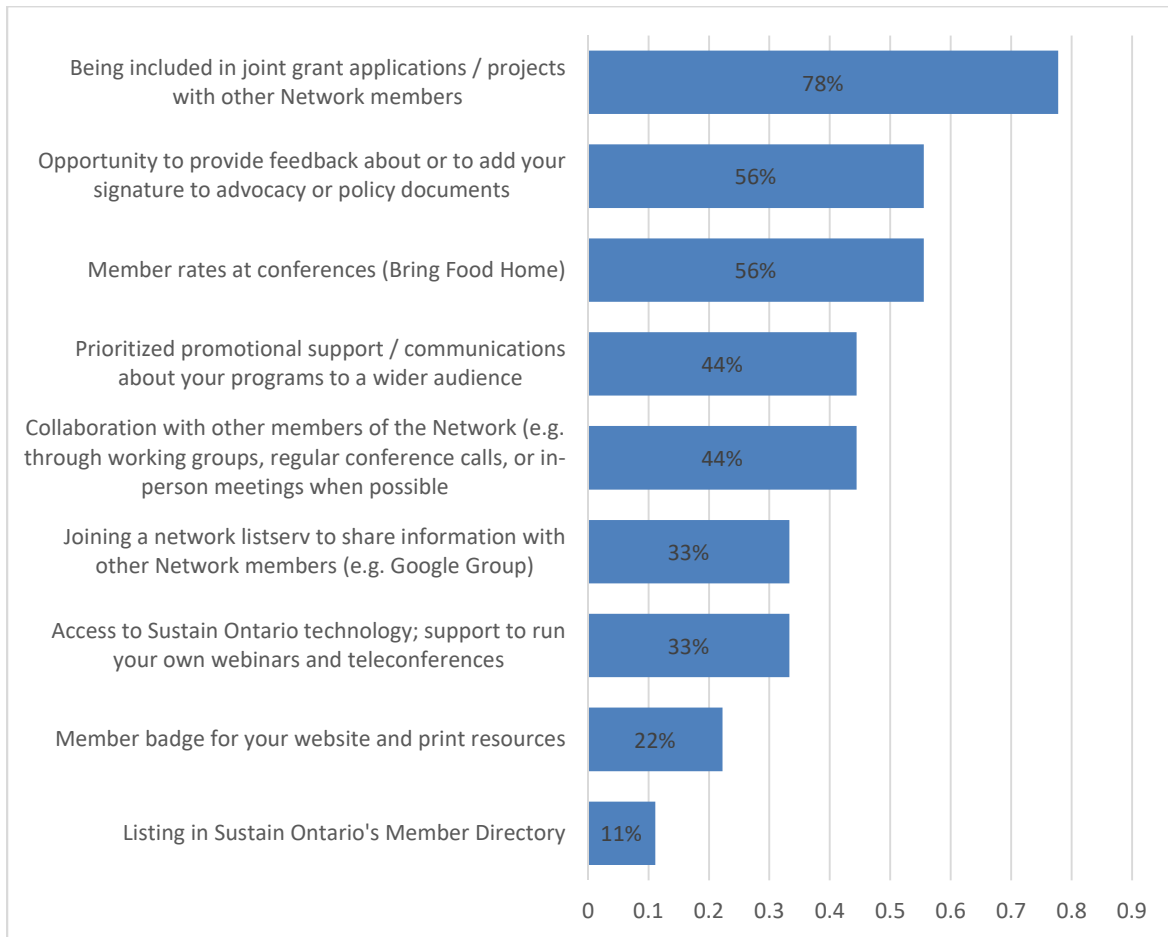


Is your organization a paid member of Sustain Ontario?

19 responses



If Yes, which of the following member benefits are / would be most useful for you?

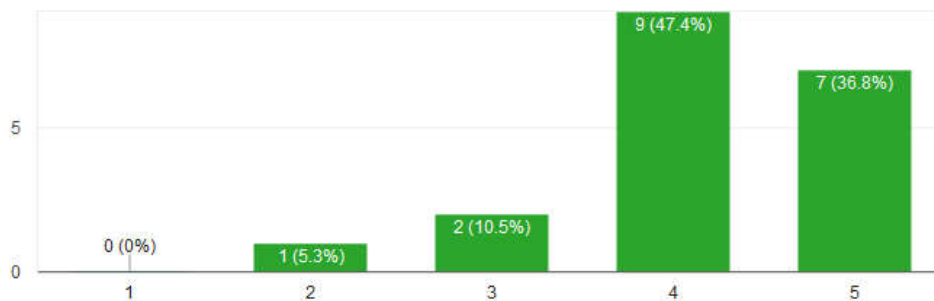


Planning for Bring Food Home 2017

Theme 1: Building local networks (i.e. in your municipality or region) relating to children, youth & good food

How important is it to you that the Ontario Edible Education Network focuses on supporting / building local networks?
(1 = not at all important and 5 = very important)

19 responses



What could the Ontario Edible Education Network do to support or help build local networks relating to children, youth & food?

- Connect groups together:
 - Help to share best practices, find funding, and possibly help creative and progressive programs to thrive. It would also be great to have a food hub, where interested parties can find resources etc.
 - Platform management for developing networks.
 - Coordinate efforts so that different parts of the province are not duplicating efforts. Don't limit to children but include post-secondary settings to provide food literacy coordination of messaging.
 - Support and celebrate innovation and new start-up programming with some mentorship and sharing in small groups or individuals.
 - Provide school boards, home school associations, grade school teachers with names of local experts and orgs.
 - Place organizations on a map of Ontario and make it accessible to schools; identify needs of every organization in addition to the map so that collaborations can take place.
 - Create opportunities for people to learn from each other, share experiences, resources and lessons learned. Could provide a central or standardized tool for organizing, documenting, building, updating the local networks online; perhaps a directory of connections by region.
- Advocacy:
 - Advocate for food production and preparation to be included in elementary secondary curriculums.

- Support the advocacy work of Coalition for Healthy School Food in Ontario so that local communities, schools, parents, etc. can have a stronger collective and local voice in the healthy school food movement!
- Partner with School Boards to build school gardens and train teachers.
- Provide free opportunities for organizations to feature their programs or success stories.

Are there any barriers or opportunities that you foresee with building local networks? (Please list).

Barriers:

- Time and capacity:
 - Time and commitment.
 - All volunteer work.
 - Finding the time to connect.
 - Time, whose budget does it come out of, finding money for it, long-term sustainability, especially for network admin/coordinator beyond start.
 - Time and location (travel).
 - Capacity for small organizations to sustain staff time for networking.
 - Lack of time and resources.
 - Resources, small local orgs can't afford Sustain Ontario's membership fee.
 - Time, capacity, funding - the usual list.
 - I wouldn't build more networks. Everyone that I know says that we all have too many meetings, committees, etc. already. We need to find a better way of connecting and working smarter rather than harder.
- Policy barriers within school boards related to school gardens.
- Ontario Local Food Act seems to have little influence over what is happening across the province. Needs more legislative "teeth".
- Differing needs.
- Local government / bylaw barriers are slowing the creation.
- Too many voices at the table for small projects.
- Overlap in programming between organizations and groups.

Opportunities:

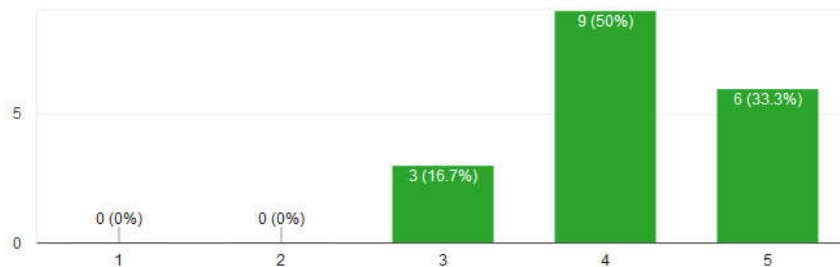
- Creative short term funding that bridges permanent integration of funding as mainstream hard funded programs.

Theme 2: Evaluation and demonstrating impacts

How important is it to you that the Ontario Edible Education Network focuses on advancing this theme?

(1 = not at all important and 5 = very important)

18 responses



What could the Ontario Edible Education Network do to support this issue?

- Coordination:
 - Coordinate evaluation efforts:
 - Find common projects from across Ontario that could come together to work on an evaluation project with all involved organizations contributing to larger project.
 - Define 5 measurable indicators that all food literacy programs collect data on - then aggregate the data in a friendly infographic for social media use and discussions w funders.
 - Support communication of evaluation findings.
- Training:
 - Workshops in developing strong surveys for better evaluation / impacts results
 - Provide an Evaluation 101 to build groups' capacity and so that they are thinking about evaluation from the start.
- Share research and tools:
 - Conduct and publish research that shows school gardening is not difficult, dangerous or time consuming!
 - It would be great to have access to up to date resources that help to build the case for support of school food and food literacy programming.
 - Provide how to examples of ways to evaluate food literacy programs.
 - Provide/create/develop resources to make it easy to evaluate programmes in a meaningful way to show impacts of the programmes to schools, parents, funders.
 - Share software recommendations and tools for tracking (it would save time to have these centrally researched and offered).
- Healthy Kids Strategy will be coming to an end. Would like to see this provincial portfolio feature more sustainable funding around farm to school or other Healthy School Food Programming.

- Bring these ideas to a larger stage. Schools, classrooms, and teachers want gardens and see the value in it for their students but don't always have the how to pair with the why. There are lots of incredible organizations that are working in Ontario that can help them and their students
- Provide stats from other programs or national / provincial "state of things" regarding food and children that might inspire people; then assist with guidance on how to act, measure, and report to change these statistics.

Are there any barriers or opportunities that you foresee with this area of focus? (Please list).

Barriers:

- Challenges with coordinating evaluation:
 - Time, funding - it will be hard to raise money for something and agree on metrics to collect.
 - There are many permutations to deciding what the measure and how to measure it - funder objectives, organizational mission, program outcomes - that providing a simple how-to may be impossible. But at least some "here's what to watch for or consider" would be useful.
- Limited best practices to be shared specifically on success with evaluation; non-profit sector is not well set-up for strong evaluation with funding cycles; Lacking honesty around current levels of evaluation.
- School boards are difficult and rarely approve research projects! And the process is very lengthy!
- Funding, hesitation from school boards regarding safety and maintenance .

Opportunities:

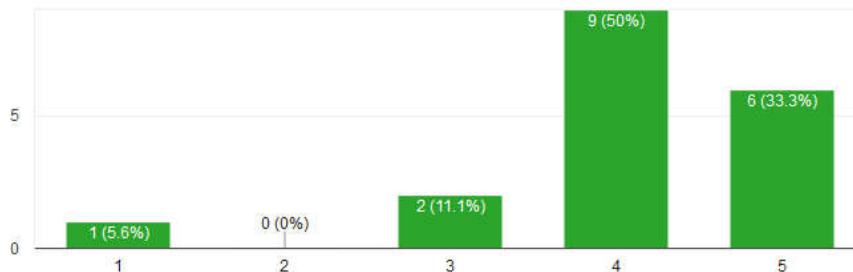
- It would be a great benefit if we were able to get funding for a coordinator, and have a formal evaluation of our program.
- The sharing of information.
- Staff time for training workshops.
- Connect the stories of impact in communities across Ontario to the supporting research and data - bringing to life the visions we have for school food - getting policy makers connected to what these programs look like, feel like, smell like and taste like, alongside the short and long term impact they have on the health and well-being of students across Ontario.
- Leadership in the provincial school food arena in Ontario.
- Securing long term land for growing in urban spaces.

Theme 3: Working with School Boards

How important is it to you that the Ontario Edible Education Network focuses on supporting groups in their work with school boards?

(1 = not at all important and 5 = very important)

18 responses



What could the Ontario Edible Education Network do to support this issue?

- Develop relationships:
 - Develop rapport with school boards and share their partnership process and procedures with members. Every one of them is different and the processes are sometimes convoluted.
 - Connect with other school boards making significant advancement on school food policies.
 - Make connections.
- Share information:
 - Help with awareness of SNP programs in schools across the province.
 - Share case studies and developed resources; share funding opportunities appropriate to larger school board wide projects.
- Collaboration and coordination:
 - Coordination across the province.
 - Work with school boards and orgs to try and change the attitudes and regulations towards and around school gardens.
 - Support workshops with breakout sessions to share and solve problems that arise and some who have resolutions.
 - Help establish standard practices in partnering (MOUs) with school boards.
 - Lead key food literacy campaigns - local food week, big crunch, etc. and provide materials for schools to download and use. Bring a stronger voice to these international campaigns - much like how the municipalities in the GTHA have brought more prominence to Bike to School week. Municipalities and Health Units might be a great partner in this idea.
- Lobby ministry.
- As a small regional organization it would be helpful to have the weight of a provincial organization with credibility doing advocacy and influencing or working in committee with the ministry and school boards to create a welcoming environment for good food initiatives. Ontario EcoSchools offers a great model for a provincial program.

Are there any barriers or opportunities that you foresee with this area of focus? (Please list).

Barriers:

- Time and capacity:
 - All volunteer work.
 - Capacity.
 - Tight budgets for school boards, demonstrating impact and need of program simultaneously.
- Existing policies / bureaucracy:
 - Competitive, not many examples to draw from, initiatives rely heavily on teachers who have a lot on their plates already, working around established purchasing contracts.
 - School boards' policies re: the development of production spaces on school grounds.
 - Political and economic pushback.
 - Bureaucracy and slow pace of school boards.
 - Cost of cheap bad food in procurement. Perceived complexity of switching policy/culture on school food, even for events.
- Lack of service providers: there is a lot of demand for school gardens in schools and good food programs, but the expertise lies outside the school board at this point so people who can support schools with these big undertakings are scarce and have little funding.

Opportunities:

- Building supply networks if prioritizing local food (but a healthy / local continuum and best effort for local could be encouraged).

Is there anything else you would like to add or share from your experiences or point of view that can be useful for the Ontario Edible Education Network in moving forward?

- Build a warm email list outside of social media
- Use a poverty lens on all that we do. Make sure that food that is provided actually relieves hunger (how do we evaluate programs that are intended to feed kids?) What happens after school, at weekends, on holidays?
- Would love to see more advocacy and action - helping to animate enthusiasm, and giving opportunities for the broad base of supporters that exist, and building out support from parents, students, etc. to get behind a transformation of how children and youth access, learn about, experience and enjoy good healthy food.
- THANK YOU and keep up the great work!
- I hear very little about Sustain Ontario. Not even a word about the outcome of these surveys.
- Keep doing what you're doing! Sustain Ontario and OEEN provide an incredibly valuable service to the province. Working with our small grassroots operation, I have often felt like I wish we could just sign on as a local chapter of a broader organization with aligned goals and better recognition / credibility, who could tell us what to do and how to do it, and share tech, funds and tools, while we

focus on local network development and program delivery. SO and the OEEN represent the closest thing to what I envisioned that to look like. That said, I know there is value in the fact that our mandate and priorities came directly from our community members, so we must stay true to that direction. But it seems like there's an opportunity to satisfy both cravings by using your research, tools and best practices to guide our efforts toward our local-specific mandate, and we can fly each others' flags where our goals overlap. With a network maintained at the provincial level, it would help reduce overlap at the local/regional level for groups that want to get started, or for disparate groups that are already doing work to get together and possibly pool resources, and avoid redundancy and competition for people and funds.