



## STRATEGIES FOR MEASURING IMPACT

Evaluating Farm to School Programs

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# FOCUS AREAS

**Waste  
Reduction**



**Teacher  
Education**



**Sustainability  
Education Centre**



**Local Food  
in Schools**



**Community Gardens &  
Urban Agriculture**



**Youth  
Leadership**







# Our Current Local Food Programs

Ecosource is currently expanding its local food programs through multiple projects with a focus on increasing access to field-to-table programs for all ages in Mississauga and Peel

## Community Gardens in Mississauga



Partnership with the City of Mississauga

## Peel Local Food Literacy in Action Project



Supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation

## LoyaltyOne's Good Food Machine



Partnership with LoyaltyOne

## Accessible Local Food Programs



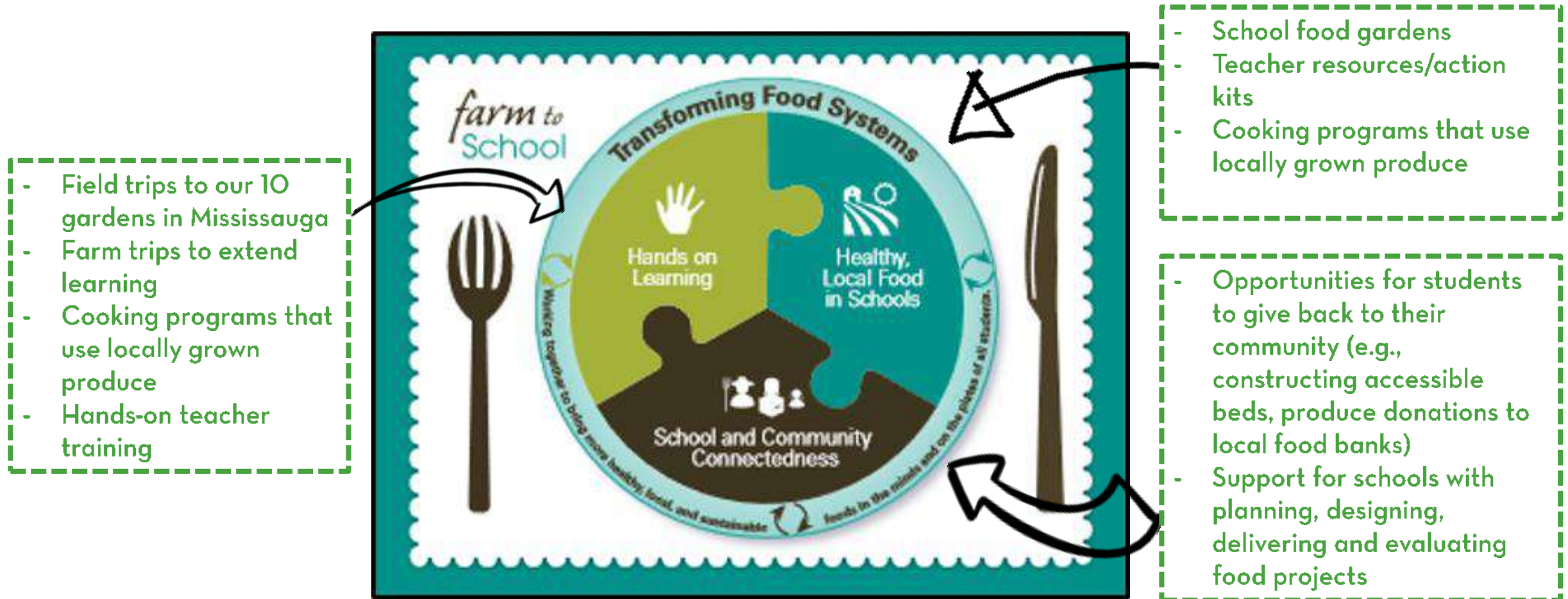
Supported by GTAA and ESDC

One common thread that underpins our work is engagement with schools and students.



# Transforming Food Systems

Our engagement with schools is multifaceted and addresses all Farm to School pillars.



# Evaluating Farm to School Programs



## Example Methods

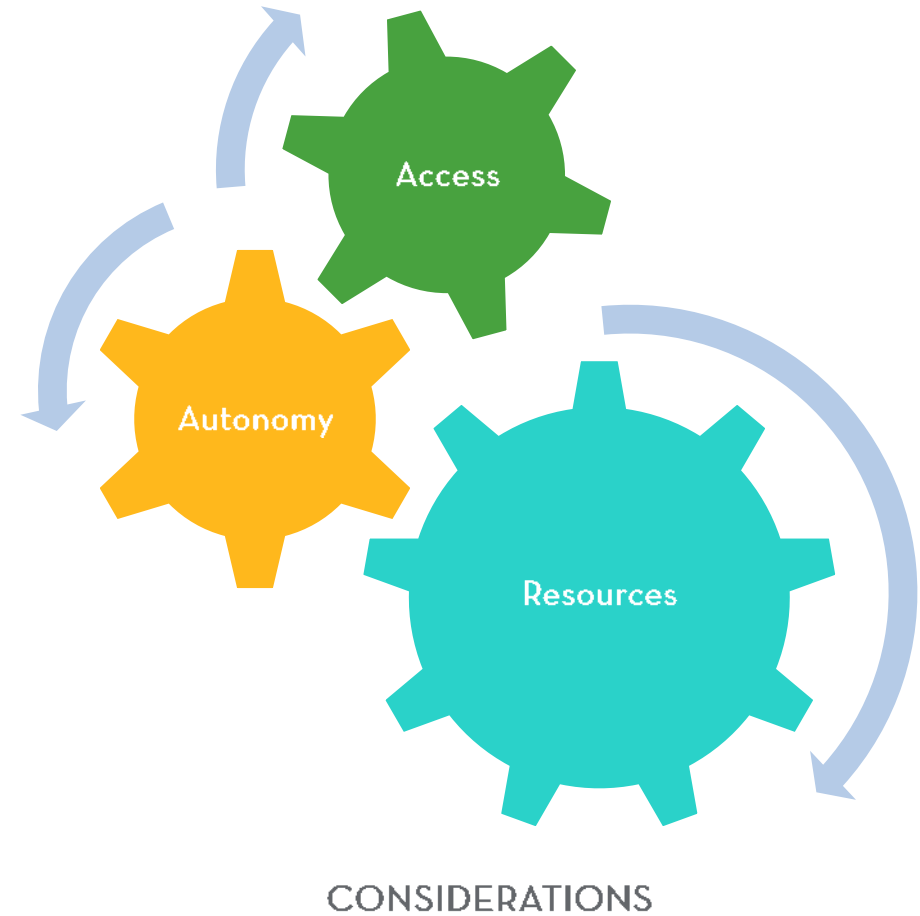
- Data tracking sheets
- Standardized surveys
- Periodic in-depth reviews
- Pledges & testimonials
- Digital methods



## Sharing Impact



## Next Steps









# METHOD 2 | Standardized Surveys

Evaluation Report: Community Roots | 2017

## 11.6 Annexure F: Evaluation Tool – Survey

### Survey for (Program Name) Program Participants



Dear Program Participants,

Thanks you for participating into this survey! We want to make them better.

Please read the following before you begin:

- The survey will take **15-20 minutes** to complete.
- The survey is completely voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, you may skip the survey at any time.
- The information provided will be anonymous.
- We will gather the data for quality improvement.
- Ask the facilitator, if you need help with the survey.

Thank you!

#### 1. Which of these media do you find most useful for

	Always	
Website		
Email Alerts		
Staff		
Flyers		
Monthly Calendar		
Family/Friend		

Evaluation Team • Access Alliance 2017

Evaluation Report: Community Roots | 2017

5. Can you provide 1-2 examples of how you can apply the knowledge and skills developed through this program in your life?

- 
- 

#### Health and Wellness

6. The (Program Name) program has:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6a. Increased my self-confidence.					
6b. Reduced my stress levels after attending program activities.					
6c. Given me a sense of pride from the skills that I have gained.					
6d. Increased my levels of physical activity.					

#### Food Access and Nutrition

7. As a result of participating in the (Program Name) program,

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7a. My knowledge of healthy eating and nutrition has improved.					
7b. I have become more aware of the food services in my neighbourhood (e.g. food banks, farmer's markets)					
7c. I eat more fruits and vegetables.					
7d. The food grown at the Iceland Community Garden is food that I would eat at home.					

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In 2017, Ecosource partnered with Access Alliance to develop standardized surveys for our Urban Agriculture program.

These standardized surveys allow us to track how our individual programs work together to achieve common goals.



## METHOD 3 | Pledges and Testimonials

Student responses, like those gathered through our pledge activity, can be coded to help analyze the data. This takes time, so it can be useful to engage students in the process.



Participants	Responses	Connecting to the Environment		Understanding Impacts		Making a Difference
		Today's activities made me feel connected to the environment		Today I learned something about the environmental benefits of growing my own food		Today's activities inspired me to make a change in my environment by...
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
15	10					How simple it is to do sprouts, Frying herbs hurt them when you use oven, I
11	11	5	6	11	0	Growing my own food (Thank you), Grow my own flowers, Growing my own food,
6	6	6	0	6	0	Buying local, Reducing my carbon footprint! Growing more things in my
7	7	6	1	7	0	Planting more, Buying Food From Local Farmers Markets and Pulling Out Weeds,
6	8	8	0	8	0	Not killing the bees, growing my own food, growing my own food, growing my
6	7	6	0	6	0	Buying local food and growing my own, Buying local foods from Farmer's
13	12	12	0	12	0	Trying gardening, Continue to grow my plants, Continuing gardening
12						Gardening+Watering, Starting my own garden, By growing sustainable food,
7	8	8	0	8	0	Looking for UA in my community, Growing my own food and shopping for
						I learned how to water/fil up the barrels for the garden, planting carrots for the
8	7	7	0	7	0	Pursuing a career in an environmental field, Buying locally, Growing food,
7	4	4	0	4	0	Maybe making a garden in my backyard, harvest and helping by cleaning weeds,





# METHOD 4 | Digital Methods

## Photo Voice

June 18, 2015



Today we made Bruschetta. It was the first time trying and after today it won't be my last. The setup alone looked phenomenal with the colour. I loved the way all the flavours came together and how a burst of ingredients danced on your taste buds. Today was a great day. – T.C.

June 25, 2015



Weeding the garden so that we can plant something new! – R.C.

## Blogging



### Youth Rain Action Storyboard

#### Post 1: What is a Rain Garden?

Water is beautiful and essential to everyday life, but too much of a good thing can also be bad, floods for example. Throughout history there have been natural ways to deal with floods, even benefits from floods.

- So why is it that the rate of flooding has been increasing in an age where technology is so prominent?

Problems with floods come down to poor city planning and urban development. With increasing populations in cities, urban centres have more pressure to build more houses to accommodate more people and more roads so that more people can travel easily in and out. Thus increasing the land size of impermeable surfaces on previous vegetative areas.

- So when it rains, where does the water go?

Sewers. The waters travel down the impermeable surfaces collecting all the different types of chemicals that collected on the ground and draining into the sewers, which leads into a major water source without being treated first.

- What natural solution can there possibly be to counter flooding from heavy rainfall in urban areas?

For one, installing more permeable surfaces. But here is a nifty little secret, what about rain gardens? Something that looks aesthetically appealing at the same time serving as an important aspect to collecting rain. Rain gardens are great – they absorb water that drains in and recharge the ground water, which flows cleaner water into the closest body of water.

This is where the Youth Rain Action project comes in. Throughout the summer, we, the youth of the community, will be taking charge of our community and will be leading the designing of the rain garden project at Sheridan Nurseries. In the process we hope to change the view that our community has towards storm water management.

## Online Surveys

Q4

Save as

How have you or how do you plan to use your takeaway Action Kits with your school community (ie: sub-irrigated planters, seed ball activities)?

Answered: 2 Skipped: 1

RESPONSES (2) WORD CLOUD TAGS

#### PAID FEATURE

Text Analysis lets you search and tag comments and see word clouds of frequent words and phrases. To get this feature, upgrade to a paid plan.

UPGRADE Learn more >

Apply to Selected Filter by tag

Search responses

Showing 2 responses

- ☐ Families participated by bringing bottles for planting and they took them home. Feedback was fantastic.

5/10/2015 2:07 PM

View respondent's answers

- ☐ Green Team has planted tomatoes in the sub-irrigated planters, etc.

5/8/2015 9:00 AM

View respondent's answers

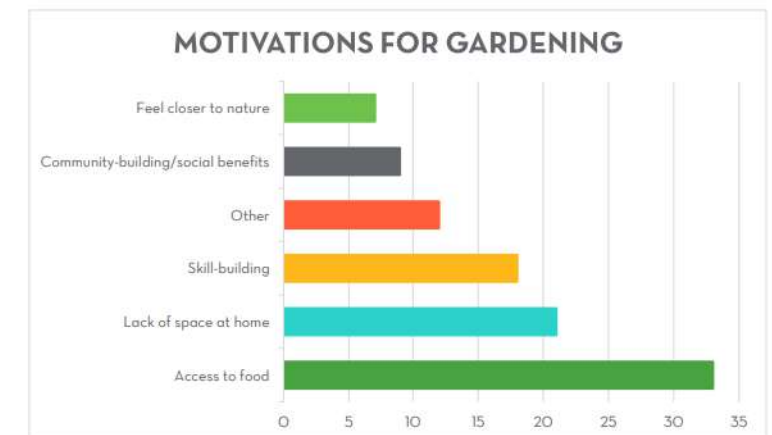
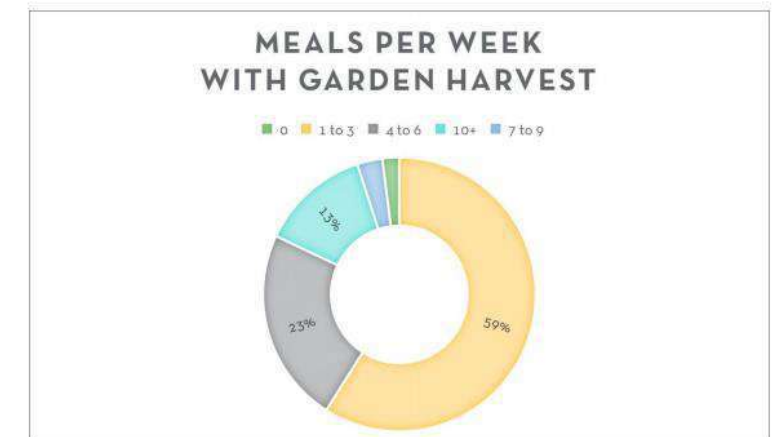
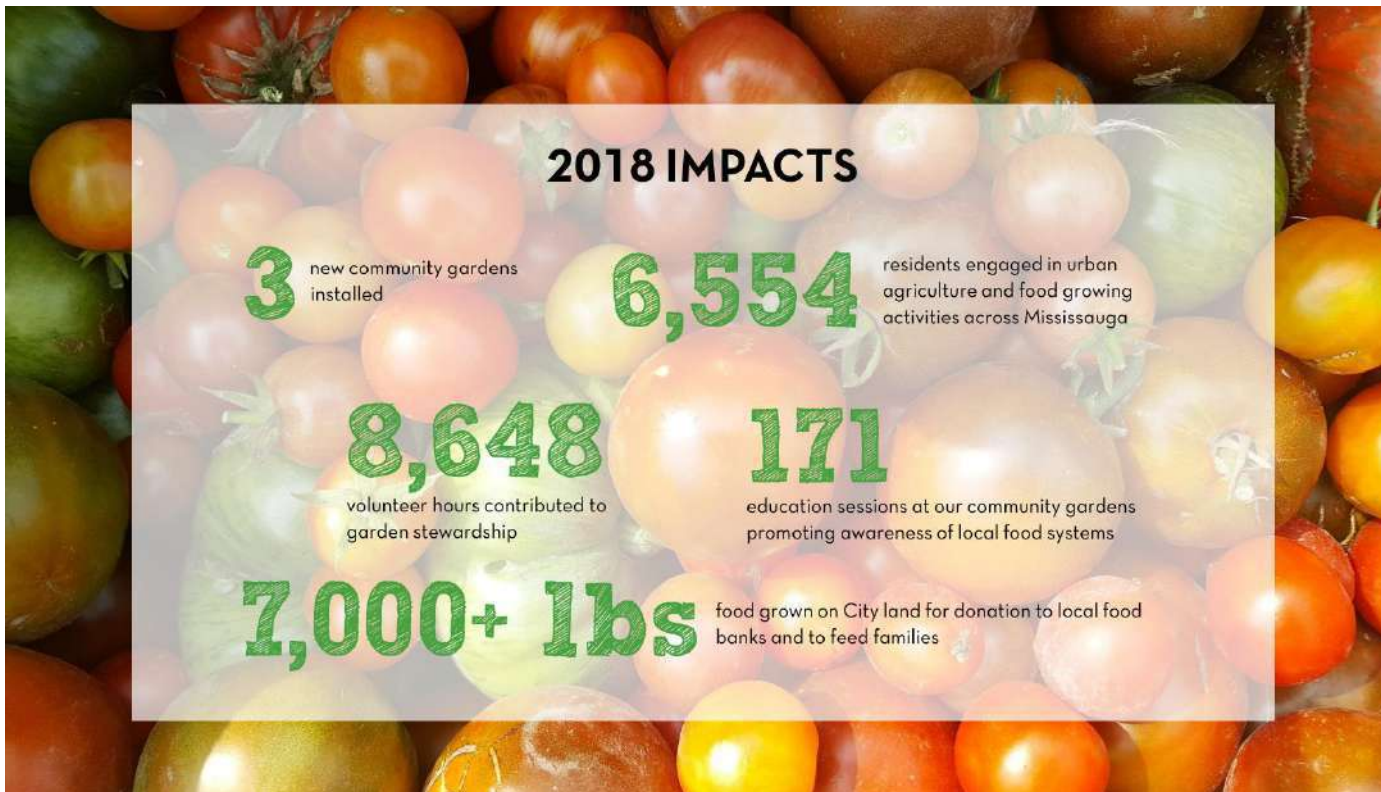


We conduct phone interviews with teachers using our survey scripts and enter the responses as we go.



## SHARING IMPACT| Quantitative

Quantitative data can be represented visually to showcase impact in numbers. Visuals like these can demonstrate the value of programs to stakeholders.



*\*Results from our 2018 Community Gardens Program (left) and excerpts from our 2016 Community Gardener Survey (right).*





## SHARING IMPACT| Qualitative

Stories from participants help illustrate the personal impacts behind the data. They provide the narrative that inspires stakeholders to support or participate in the program.

### Bringing Out the Leader in Local Food Ambassador

Many of Ecosource's most valuable volunteers and impactful role models are the younger members of our community. Between school, extracurricular activities, and her social life, Cindy Qiu is always wondering how she can reduce her environmental impact and if she and her friends can translate their social media engagement into real-world community change. When the opportunity arose to become a Local Food Ambassador, Cindy decided that it was time she stepped up to create a vibrant and healthy community.

As a dedicated ambassador, Cindy helps her community grow and access local, fresh, and organic produce. Understanding the importance of taking personal action for the environment, Cindy always brings a new friend to the garden to help them become more conscious of the food systems in which they engage. She helps empower and mentor youth by sharing her skills and knowledge of urban agriculture and watches as the self-confidence of her peers grows alongside the sprouting garden. Cindy is a constant reminder of how powerful your voice and actions can be, even if you still have a curfew to follow!

"Do I hope for a better future? Well yes, but I know that hope itself isn't enough. Hope itself cannot bring back endangered species, stop climate change or clean up the ocean. We need people to take actions that actively help support our environment by reducing our impact on it."

— Cindy Qiu, Local Food Ambassador



Stories like this bring the reason why we do this work to life. They help the reader connect to the program in a way quantitative data cannot.





## SHARING IMPACT| **Critical Directions**

Part of sharing the impact of a program is reflecting on areas for improvement. Engaging an independent evaluator to assess your program can provide more critical feedback and help improve your programs in meaningful ways.

*Example recommendations made by the independent evaluator of our Urban Agriculture program and the actions taken by Ecosource:*

Recommendation	Ecosource Action
Create and install accessible signage and garden beds at the Iceland Teaching Garden	Successfully applied and received funding to design and install accessible signage and garden beds for food growing sites across Mississauga.
Add cooking workshops to complement urban agriculture activities and provide a wider range of activities for volunteers	Our new Peel Local Food Literacy in Action Project (funded by OTF) features an extensive field-to-table component.
Offer a diversity of volunteer times in order to accommodate the different schedules of youth participants	Added new volunteer opportunities to ensure a variety of volunteer timeslots. Our new Peel Local Food Literacy in Action project will provide even more volunteer opportunities for youth.



## SHARING IMPACT| **Multiple Benefits**

Farm to School programs are about more than fostering food literacy. They have the capacity to connect students to their communities, develop employable skills, and support their personal growth. Communicating these multiple benefits can be helpful to make your case to funders or partners.

Today's activities inspired me to make change in my community by...



- ...Learning where I can buy local fruits and vegetables.
- ...Starting to grow my own food.
- ...Buying local and in-season produce.
- ...Reducing my carbon footprint.
- ...Buying food from local farmers' markets.
- ...Supporting local farmers' markets.
- ...Buying locally grown foods.
- ...Continue to recycle and use organic disposal programs.
- ...Looking for urban agriculture opportunities in my neighbourhood.
- ...Participating in more volunteer opportunities at environmental organizations.
- ...Going out more because I liked being in the proximity (peaceful and serene) of growing things because it reminds me I am also growing as a person.
- ...Pursuing a career in the environmental field.
- ...Being more self-sufficient.



*Example of an open-ended evaluation question used by to explore the multiple benefits of  
Its local food programs.*



# What's missing?

Growing our capacity for evaluation

## Assessing Behavior Change



Utilizing evaluation tools to assess impact over time

## Staffing Up Evaluation



Resourcing the work required (and it can be a lot!)

## Sharing Best Practices



Connecting with other organizations to avoid re-inventing the wheel





## Stay Connected!

Contact [mnudelman@ecosource.ca](mailto:mnudelman@ecosource.ca) to learn more about Ecosource's local food programs.



**ecosource**  
Growing a Green Community