

Corporate Measurement & Evaluation
Community of Practice

Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security

CORPORATE M&E CASE STUDY

Overview

Established as a separate charity by Maple Leaf Foods in 2016, the Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security (the Centre) **works to reduce food insecurity across Canada by 50% by 2030**. Staff employed by Maple Leaf Foods manage the Centre's activities, including grantmaking, as well as employee engagement for the company.

The Centre invests approximately \$2 million CAD annually in grants focused on testing innovative ideas and scaling impact. The Centre has a strong focus on shifting systems by raising public awareness and advocating for policy changes, and building capacity through knowledge sharing, investments in research and evaluation, and cross-sectoral collaboration.



AT-A-GLANCE

GRANTMAKING

Annual Grantmaking	\$2 million CAD
Average Grant Size	~\$525,000, usually granted over 3 years
# of Grantees	14-16
Geographical Focus Areas	Canada

MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION (M&E)

M&E Focus	Grants
# FTEs Devoted to M&E	0.25 FTE
Key M&E Audiences	Centre staff and board of directors, grant partners and the broader field working on food insecurity
Learn More:	https://www.feedopportunity.com/

Measurement & Evaluation Practices

The Centre has implemented the following measurement and evaluation practices that have helped them manage and better understand the impact of their work towards reducing food insecurity.

PRACTICES

1 Theory of Change (ToC)

VALUE

Illustrates the Centre's systems change orientation and strategy and highlights necessary investment

DESCRIPTION

Maple Leaf Centre uses a ToC to describe their overarching goal, what they believe must be true to achieve that goal, and how they collaborate with other actors towards systems level change (See Appendix 1 [↗](#)). The ToC includes hypotheses that guide their grantmaking in areas such as research and advocacy. The ToC also allows them to clearly explain the purpose of their work to other stakeholders.

The recent Corporate M&E Community of Practice Benchmarking Study [↗](#) found that 62 percent of companies surveyed regularly use a theory of change (ToC) or logic model in their social good work. ToCs have been widely used by evaluation practitioners for many years.

2 Shared Outcomes Framework with a Bounded Flexibility & Capacity-Building Approach

VALUE

Co-creates impact indicators with grantees, supports grant decision-making, and establishes realistic measurement expectations

DESCRIPTION

Working alongside an external evaluation consultant, the Maple Leaf Centre developed a set of common indicators and tested these out with their grantees over the course of a year. This shared outcomes framework (See Appendix 2 [↗](#)) clarified the two outcome areas that were most important for the Centre to understand from its grant-funded work: a clear articulation of what it would look like for food insecurity to be reduced and the barriers that would need to be overcome to achieve food security. Grantee partner feedback was essential to identify meaningful indicators and to form realistic expectations of what data could be reasonably collected. The Centre has also taken a "bounded flexibility" approach to their framework by asking grantees to select which indicators from the framework fit their work rather than requiring all grantees to fit into the same indicator set. Outcome data shared from grantees has enabled the Centre to make strategic decisions about which types of food insecurity interventions to invest in to scale impact.

The Benchmarking Study [↗](#) found that only 36 percent of companies regularly involve their grantee partners in deciding which indicators to collect and only 10 percent of companies regularly invest in evaluation capacity building.

3 Allocate Funding to Build Grantee's Evaluation Capacity

VALUE

Provides quality evaluation data to better understand programs, strengthens partnership between grantees and funders

DESCRIPTION

The Centre allocates funding for grantees to build their evaluation capacity. This approach has allowed the Centre to build strong and trusting relationships with their grantee partners and to get quality data from which they can make strategic decisions.

The Benchmarking Study [↗](#) found that only 21 percent of companies regularly provide funding to build grantee capacity in evaluation.

PRACTICES

4 Learning Agenda That is Shared Internally and Externally

VALUE

Helps prioritize funding decisions; promotes learning and collaboration within the broader field

DESCRIPTION

The Maple Leaf Centre takes a deliberate approach to learning by **centering a learning agenda with big, strategic questions** that they prioritize annually (See [Appendix 3](#)). They use this agenda to determine what research and evaluation projects they may need to fund. They also **intentionally share their learning questions** with other organizations working in the food insecurity field and in some cases, partner with these groups to answer strategic questions. This **has helped excite others in the field and prompts them to think differently** about how food insecurity can be addressed.

The Benchmarking Study

found that only 38% of companies regularly hold structured learning sessions with their stakeholders.

Lessons Learned

1 Show up with an open mind recognizing the things you don't know and need to learn. The Centre has learned that companies have many skills to offer their nonprofit partners but they must also show up willing to recognize their own knowledge gaps and to see where they can learn from their partners. This approach acknowledges the respective expertise of each side of the partnership and allows for those doing the day-to-day work on food insecurity to bring their best thinking to the Centre's social impact strategy. One way that the Centre has helped facilitate this knowledge sharing is by inviting representatives from their partner organizations to attend their Board meetings and talk about the day-to-day of food insecurity work.

2 To get good quality evaluation data, you need to invest in evaluation. If obtaining high quality evaluation data is important to you, you need to invest in building the evaluation capacity of your partner organizations when needed. This includes allocating additional funding separate from program implementation dollars.

Maple Leaf Centre's:

Evaluation Superpower

The ability to balance rigor and flexibility in the measurement framework, navigating both business and nonprofit data needs and expectations.

Notable Evaluation Challenge

The ability to tell the story of progress, inclusive of grant and non-grant efforts, on a complex social challenge within the structure of an ESG report.

[Explore the complete Case Study series here www.tccgrp.com/resource/csr-case-studies/](https://www.tccgrp.com/resource/csr-case-studies/)

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Over 7 million Canadians live with moderate to severe food insecurity and are unable to access the food they need to support a healthy life.



Our goal is to work collaboratively to reduce food insecurity in Canada by 50% by 2030.



This will happen by 2030 if...

Poverty is reduced by 50%.

Prevalence of food insecurity above the poverty line is decreased.

Scale community food programs are delivered with dignity, inclusivity & connect clients with wrap-around supports.

People living in Canada have ready physical access to sufficient healthy food and supports that overcome barriers to food security.

Food insecurity among Indigenous and Black peoples is at or below the national level.



Levers of Change



SHIFT SYSTEMS

Increase public engagement & influence policy, programs & investment to advance sustainable change.



SCALE IMPACT

Support projects that reduce barriers to food security & enable more people to access food with dignity & agency.



BUILD CAPACITY

Invest in knowledge sharing to increase cross-sectoral action & collaborative impact.



Who We Collaborate With

With our partners, we collaborate across sectors to address barriers to food security.



Get support

Do ourselves

Funded project

Relevant ToC assumption	Powerful question & 'so what?'	Strategy/Research questions	Data inputs	Time
All	<p>Which policy and program interventions work to reduce food insecurity for different segments of the moderate & severely food insecure population?</p> <p>If we can break down the food insecure population into smaller 'buckets', we can add detail to our ToC on what we should be doing to target and scale food insecurity interventions to reach them (and inform the field about what interventions are needed, in general).</p>	1. What 'archetypes' can we identify within the FI population? What's working for those archetypes? Where are there knowledge gaps?	<p>'Archetypes' project (lit review, secondary data analysis, in-depth interviews) with different segments of the urban food-insecure population</p> <p>Evaluation from funded projects (all)</p>	Q1-Q3
Food insecurity cannot be solved sustainably through food charity. Canada must establish an adequate and accessible social safety net so that people can meet their basic needs.	<p>How might we reduce food insecurity among people above the poverty line?</p> <p>If we can determine why people are food insecure at above the poverty line, we can identify which policies or programs can help reduce those barriers and best support them to be food secure.</p>	<p>1. What are the characteristics of people living below the poverty line who are food secure/above the poverty line who are food insecure?</p> <p>2. For how many people is the economic barrier the only barrier standing in the way of food security (people who are \$10-20 short?)</p>	<p>Analysis of Canada Income Survey data with a population health or economics researcher</p> <p>Funded research project with Food Banks Canada on a Material Deprivation Index</p>	<p>Q1</p> <p>?</p>

		3. What is the trajectory of moderately food insecure households? How often do they 'move' in and out of food insecurity? (chronic/episodic)	Shallow literature scan on chronic vs. episodic food insecurity	Q1	<p>Other potential evaluation questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are we planning to measure progress against our goal? • What 'targets' make sense for our 'what needs to be true by 2030'? • What impact are our partners having on food insecurity and barriers to food security? • How will we know we're successful at 'building capacity' with our
		4. What role do government benefits clawbacks play in keeping people food insecure above the poverty line?	Work with an economist to develop a cost analysis	Q1-Q2	
		5. What is the economic cost of food insecurity to society?	Shallow literature scan on how claw backs influence benefits recipients	Q2	
	<p>Which (provincial or federal) policy levers reduce food insecurity?</p> <p>If we can learn about the conditions for success from provinces who are addressing food insecurity, we will have a better sense of which policies/programs we (and others) should be advocating for.</p>	<p>1. What can we learn from what provinces are doing to address food insecurity? What levers can they 'pull' to address the issue?</p>	Informal conversations with provincial policymakers and/or bureaucrats in BC, QC, PEI (?)	Q1-Q2	
			Watch for analysis on provincial factors in Quebec	Q1-Q4	
<p>Increasing physical access to affordable food, social support, mental and physical health, and food/financial literacy will increase food security for people and may result in a (short-term) decrease in food insecurity.</p>	<p>How might we involve the private sector in the scaling of interventions (like food prescription & food subsidy models) to reach a greater proportion of moderately food-insecure people?</p> <p>If we can build a scaling strategy that incorporates the private sector, we can reach more people (compared to what the nonprofit sector could do alone).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the features of a 'successful' food prescription/subsidy program? (i.e. how much \$, implementation, etc.) • How do we get the food industry involved? How do we get the private sector involved, beyond the food industry? • What role do non-profits/charities play in scaling food prescriptions? 	Evaluation of funded projects that are developing food prescription and/or food benefits programs	Q1-Q4	
			Conversations with insurance companies, food companies in the U.S. involved with food prescriptions	Q1/Q2	

partners/the food security sector? What role do they play when scaling across sectors?

A photograph of two young children sitting at a table, eating. The child on the left is holding a green vegetable stick to their mouth. The child on the right is reaching into a white bowl filled with green peas. There is another empty white bowl and a glass of water on the table. The background is dark and out of focus.

Project evaluation

2022 Partner Information
Package

Our journey to shared outcomes and measures

We are interested in:

1. Better understanding and aligning on intended project outcomes and objectives
2. Capturing the impact of partners on the barriers to food security and food insecurity
3. Supporting identification of interventions that can be scaled
4. Informing our understanding of food security, insecurity and our Theory of Change!

Our process:

To develop this framework, we collaborated with six Partners leading diverse learning and project grants in the summer/fall of 2020.

We tested ideas and drafts with Partners for usability and learning.

We anticipate this process will shift and iterate over time.

Our design principles:

1. The rigour of the evaluation should be proportional to the size of the project
2. Be agile and flexible in our approach to evaluation
3. Evaluation should build our sense-making skills and those of and our partners
4. Be aware of and monitor evaluation constraints and challenges

The definitions we go by

At the Centre, we are interested in learning about the impact of the projects we fund on both food insecurity and food security.

Food insecurity:

Food insecurity refers to the inability to access a sufficient quantity or variety of food because of financial constraints ¹

People who are food insecure worry about running out of food, compromise on food quality or skip meals because of lack of access and money for food.

Food security:

Food security is a broader concept than food insecurity. It refers to the ability to access enough food for an active, healthy life ¹.

People are food secure when they have stable access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food.

What we know: Barriers to food security

Most critical



Economic

Income is insufficient to cover basic costs of living:

- **Income is too low**; rely on minimum wage, precarious work or social assistance

Nutritious food costs too much

- Expensive relative to unhealthy options

Non-food costs are too high;

- High housing, childcare, medication costs

Financial instability

- Income and cost-of-living fluctuate, inability to withstand shocks



Geographic

Nutritious food is not consistently available due to:

- **Geographic location**; e.g. North, remote, food swamps

Healthy or nutritious food is **not accessible** due to:

- Lack of **access to land** for growing, harvesting, or hunting
- Non-existent, costly, unreliable, or inconvenient **transportation**



Social

Nutritious food is available and accessible, but not consumed due to:

- **Time required** to shop and cook
- **Social stigma** around turning to food assistance
- Foods are not available that **fit cultural needs**
- **Social isolation** due to a lack of social support or community connection



Health

Nutritious food is available, but not consumed due to:

- **Physical disability** that inhibits physical accessibility

Deep-rooted issues that impact access to food:

- **Mental health** conditions
- **Addiction**



Knowledge

Lack of awareness of **support programs** available:

- **Food assistance programs** and other social/economic programs
- **Government financial benefits**; e.g. tax credits

Knowledge to help resources go further

- **Food knowledge** or cooking skills that help cultivate a healthy relationship with food
- **Financial capability** and the ability to influence financial wellbeing

We recognize that structural racism impacts how barriers are experienced and must also be addressed.



What we're hoping to learn from Project Grants

Learning and evaluation in project grants

Project Grants go beyond emergency food relief to provide programs or interventions that reduce barriers to food security for food-insecure individuals and households.

The Centre looks for Project Grantees to track progress towards outcomes in the following two areas:

1. Changes in household or individual food insecurity (see slide 7)
2. Changes in the barriers to food security for individuals and households (see slide 8)

1. Changes in household food insecurity

- We recommend the 6-item short-form of the Household Food Security Survey Module to track changes in food insecurity.
- You are welcome to modify the timeframe referenced in the tool as needed for your program/project, and the tool can be included in a larger evaluation plan that explores other outcomes or evaluation questions
- If there is a different tool and/or method you'd rather use to assess food insecurity, please discuss with us! We are looking to understand change over time in access to money or resources for food, and between levels of severity.

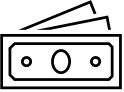




I'm going to read you several statements that people have made about their food situation. For these statements, please tell me whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true for (you/your household) in the last (time frame)—that is, since last (name of current month)?

1. The food that (I/we) bought just didn't last, and (I/we) didn't have money to get more.
2. (I/we) couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.
3. In the last 12 months, since last (name of current month), did (you/you or other adults in your household) ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?
4. [IF YES ABOVE, ASK] How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?
5. In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?
6. In the last 12 months, were you every hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?

2. Changes in barriers to food security

There so are many positive outcomes resulting from the work you do.

There are certain food security-related outcomes that we are particularly interested in, and anticipate that projects we support will seek to track progress on some of the following:

Barrier	Anticipated Outcomes
 Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Increased affordability of nutritious foods▪ Increased access to financial benefits
 Geographic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Consistent availability of nutritious foods▪ Increased physical access to nutritious foods
 Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Increased dignity associated with food assistance▪ Increased social support and/or community connection
 Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Improved mental health and wellbeing▪ Improved physical health and wellbeing
 Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Increased food and nutritional knowledge▪ Increased financial capability and financial wellbeing



What we're hoping to learn from Learning Grants

Learning and evaluation in learning grants

Learning grants focus on the generation and sharing of knowledge through partnerships, collaboratives, or networks to address individual and/or structural barriers to food security.

As a result, the Centre looks for Learning Grantees to track progress towards outcomes in the following two areas:

1. Changes in knowledge, skills, and behavior of collaborative/network members (see slide 11)
2. Changes in the barriers to food security at the individual, household, or structural level (see slide 8)

1. Changes in knowledge, skills, and/or behavior of participants

The type of impact that **partnerships, collaboratives, or networks have on participants** will depend on the project goals and timeline.

We anticipate that learning projects we support will seek to track progress or changes on some of the following:

- Participant attitudes and/or perceptions of an issue
- Participant knowledge and/or competence of an issue
- Participant skills, abilities, and/or capacities
- Participant behaviours and/or actions on an issue



**To get you
started:
Example
indicators**

A few notes about indicators

The indicators included in the following slide capture impact on outcomes of interest to the Centre and are offered as examples and inspiration to support evaluation planning. Indicators are categorized into two levels, **individual and structural**:

- **Individual indicators:** to be used when projects provide services, programs, or interventions that directly “reach” food-insecure individuals and households
- **Structural indicators:** to be used when a project is focused on addressing structural or systemic barriers to food security – such as changes in values, culture, relationships/networks, service delivery, practices, resource use or generation, policies, and regulations.

You are welcome to use indicators from the list that are appropriate for the outcomes your project is working towards. Alternatively, **use any indicators that are relevant and meaningful for your work** – but please let us know what indicators you plan to use before starting data collection so we can learn from you!

Quantitative vs. Qualitative Indicators

While most indicators we’ve shared are quantitative, qualitative methods are also useful and important to learn about project impact. Projects that combine multiple methods – such as surveys with interviews, focus groups, community forums, visual art and multi-media, and a range of testimonial feedback – often provide the richest information. We welcome qualitative indicators and methods alongside quantitative measures, so please share and discuss with us!

Example indicators list

Barriers	Expected Outcomes	Individual Indicators
Economic	Increased affordability of nutritious foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #/% of people who report that food is more affordable for them • Reduced cost of food items
	Increased access to financial benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #/% of people who receive support with tax filing/benefits applications • Per person and total amount of tax-related benefits claimed
Geographic	Increased physical access to nutritious foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #/% of people with improved physical access to nutritious foods • Change in amount of time taken to travel to buy food
	Consistent availability of nutritious foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #/% of people reporting the foods they want are available to them, including cultural foods • Improvements in the variety, diversity, or quality of foods available
Social	Increased dignity associated with food assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #/% of people who feel respected when accessing programs/services
	Increased social support and/or community connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #/% of people who have increased social connections and supports in their community, including with service providers, family, and friends • #/% of people who feel a greater sense of belonging in their community
Health	Improved mental health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #/% of people who feel there have been improvements to their mental health
	Improved physical health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #/% of people who feel there have been improvements to their physical health
Knowledge	Increased food and nutritional knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #/% of people with increased knowledge, capability, or confidence shopping for and preparing nutritious foods
	Increased financial literacy and well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #/% of people reporting increased knowledge, capability, or confidence managing their finances • Changes in peoples' feelings of financial stress
Structural Indicators		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in stakeholder perceptions of food insecurity/barriers to food security • # and type of new or different services or programs • # and type of new partnerships or relationships • Amount of new funding available for food security/insecurity initiatives • # and type of food security/insecurity-related policies or regulations drafted and/or adopted 		

Summary

Grant	Outcomes of Interest	Indicators	Suggested Methods
Project	Changes in food insecurity status	<u>6-item short-form</u> of the Household Food Security Survey Module (slide 7), or an acceptable alternative. Contact the Centre to discuss.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-post intervention survey (preferred where feasible) Post (retrospective) intervention survey <p>Complementary qualitative methods, like interviews, focus groups, etc. are encouraged alongside quantitative methods.</p>
	Changes in the barriers to food security	<p>See 'Example Indicators List' (slide 14)</p> <p>Partners are welcome to choose from these indicators or use others that make sense for their project.</p>	
Learning	Changes in knowledge, skills, and/or behavior of participants	<p>Project-specific indicators that track changes in the following for participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes and/or perceptions of an issue • Knowledge and/or competence of an issue • Skills, abilities, and/or capacities • Behaviors and/or actions on an issue <p>Partners are welcome to choose indicators that make sense for their project.</p>	
	Changes in the barriers to food security	<p>See 'Example Indicators List' (slide 14)</p> <p>Partners are welcome to choose from these indicators or use others that make sense for their project.</p>	