

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:	<a href="https://www.feedopportunity.com/">https://www.feedopportunity.com/</a>

# 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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