



## Program Selection Criteria

Source: Community Food Centres Canada

*Programs at each community food centre are locally tailored, based on community needs and interests, within the categories of food access, food skills and education and engagement. However, we've also developed a series of questions to help lead to a balanced program calendar. These are some of the filters we use as we develop our new CFC program plans.*

1. **Strategic Objectives:** How many of our strategic objectives does this program address? The more the better!
  - To increase low income community members' access to healthy food.
  - To increase skills, knowledge and behaviours around healthy food.
  - To reduce social isolation and increase connection to a variety of supports.
  - To increase knowledge of poverty and other social justice issues.
  - To create opportunities for community members to take effective action on poverty and other social justice issues.
  - To increase knowledge of food system issues.
  - To create new market opportunities for sustainable local farms.
  
2. **Process Objectives:** Does this program address one or more of our process objectives?
  - To contribute to an environment that respects individual dignity and cultural and other forms of diversity.
  - To demonstrate leadership on food issues.
  - To be financially and organizationally sustainable (fundable, not over-extend staff).
  - To support a positive image of the organization.
  
3. **Key Impact Areas:** Does this program address one or more of our key impact areas?
  - Improved physical and social health
  - Increased social justice
  - More sustainable food systems

4. **Demonstrated Need:** Is there evidence of community need for this program? How will we know that people will come out? What do we know about this demographic and their needs?
5. **Agency Fit:** Are we the best group to offer this program? Are there other agencies or for-profit providers offering the service more efficiently (i.e. farmers, retail stores, caterers)?
6. **Cost:** Is this program a good investment?
  - How expensive is this program and how does it compare on a cost-benefit basis with other possible programs? Does it violate common sense? Would *you* think it was a good investment?
  - Have we fully accounted for all of the costs in our calculations? (staffing in particular)
  - If this is an intensive/expensive program, does it have deep impacts and can we prove those impacts? And is there a way to ensure that new people are brought in regularly to impact more people? (e.g. Offering skills-building programs in cycles that end after 6 months. To keep people connected, less intensive “graduate” programs can be developed).
  - Will this program be efficient in targeting audiences? (e.g. Developing educational materials or curricula that are targeted for a particular group and then offered many times over is much more efficient than developing new activities or materials for every group that approaches. All groups could doubtless be valid audiences but given that you can only serve a portion of the demand, it makes sense to focus).
  - Does this program come with opportunity costs? (i.e. things we won't be able to do because we're doing this)
7. **Spin-off Benefits:** Are there other spin-off benefits that represent another level of impact? (i.e. broader public education, creation of a new program model that can be exported, opportunities for community leadership)
8. **Program Mix / Breadth vs Depth**
  - How does this program complement our other programs in terms of impact and target demographic (i.e. it is nice to impact a range of people in a variety of ways) and logistics (use of space, staff, equipment, etc.).
  - Are there opportunities for cross-pollination and synergies with other programs?
  - Do you have a good range of programs that combine programs that reach high numbers with other programs with smaller numbers but deep impacts?
9. **Participant Diversity:** Are there opportunities to bring people together across barriers of culture, age, class, etc.?

10. **Evaluation:** How easy is this program to evaluate and what will that look like?

11. **Funding:** How will this program be funded?

- Does it tell a good story? Generate photo opportunities?
- Is there an obvious funding opportunity for this program? If so, what are the costs and strings attached (e.g. onerous reporting requirements)? Does the funding source contradict our mission? If you are forced to contort yourself too far off mission or invent new activities that must be added to existing ones without an increase in staffing to support them, then walking away may be the right answer.
- Is the funding sustainable? If it's project funding, how will this project continue when funding runs out?

12. **Partners:** Are there other partners who should be involved in this program?

- Can they offer in-kind resources?
- What are the costs and strings attached to the partnership (i.e. overlapping funding sources, long term commitments, reporting requirements, brand diminution, time spent in excessive meetings)?
- Can they deliver what they promise? Partnerships can be wonderful, but are not universally a good idea.