

Case-in-Point 2018



Linking community and governance: How stakeholder engagement helped shape the Winnipeg Food Council

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Abstract

Increasingly, food policy councils have been recognized as an effective way to address complex food security issues in the policy making process. Community groups have long recognized the ability of food policy councils to bring together diverse food system voices to the policy discussion, yet only relatively recently has a food systems approach to policy been taken in municipal governance. When the City of Winnipeg began investigating the formation of a Winnipeg Food Council in 2015, they partnered with the community organization, Food Matters Manitoba. The expertise and experience that Food Matters provided helped shape stakeholder engagement that went on to inform the Winnipeg Food Council's Terms of Reference. In partnership with Food Matters, the Public Service was able to capture various food system voices in the policy making process. In collaboration with Karin Kliwer, this case-in-point investigates the approach taken to form the Winnipeg Food Council, and focuses on role stakeholder engagement had in the process. Finally, it discusses outcomes and offers some lessons learned.

Introduction

Since the 1930s, food security has been addressed by agricultural policies that have focused on supporting agricultural production and capacity to ensure an adequate quantity of food (Muller, Tagtow, Roberts, & MacDougall, 2009). Increasingly, this policy approach is being challenged by changing perspectives on social, environmental and health implications associated with food supply. New ideas have emerged in support of a systems approach that better considers the food supply chain and the societal and environmental impacts of agricultural production (Lang & Barling, 2012). Incorporating this broader definition of food systems into food security conversations allows policy to better reflect the diverse issues impacting the system, and to reduce food insecurity. A systems approach can provide a complete assessment of the elements that drive the food system by integrating food production, land use, agricultural development, livestock management, and food distribution and retail (Muller, Tagtow, Roberts, & MacDougall, 2009). Such an approach helps clarify the interdependent relationships between sectors like transportation, energy, taxes, commodities, procurement, and public health (Lang & Barling, 2012). An effective municipal or community-

based strategy to achieve these goals has been to form food policy councils.

By bringing together various sectors, food policy councils reflect a range of stakeholder perspectives in the policy making process and gives members an opportunity to have their interests represented in the broader food system. They encourage collaboration and bridge public and private interests on food issues (Burgan, & Winne, 2012). They also provide an opportunity to create networks and build relationships across the food system, increasing the capacity of members to expand and implement their interests (Schiff, 2008). As a result, food policy councils have the potential to influence a wide-range of policy. Therefore, determining how to include various food system perspectives in the formation, role and governance structure of a food policy council is key to its success. Feedback from local food system stakeholders can help clarify these issues.

This case-in-point investigates how stakeholder engagement informed the planning process used to establish the Winnipeg Food Council, a citizen committee for the City of Winnipeg. It evaluates the successes and the challenges of the process, and suggests lessons for future practice.

Background

Food Policy Councils

In general, food policy councils are born out of a need to improve the local food system. Often, they serve as a catalyst for change in municipal policy by creating opportunities to identify gaps and develop solutions to address food issues (Deloitte, n.d.). Each food policy council has a different structure, composition, and objective, because each reflects the relationship it has with policy. A council's governance structure is influenced by the degree of formal relationship it has to municipal policy. The type of relationship determines whether a council

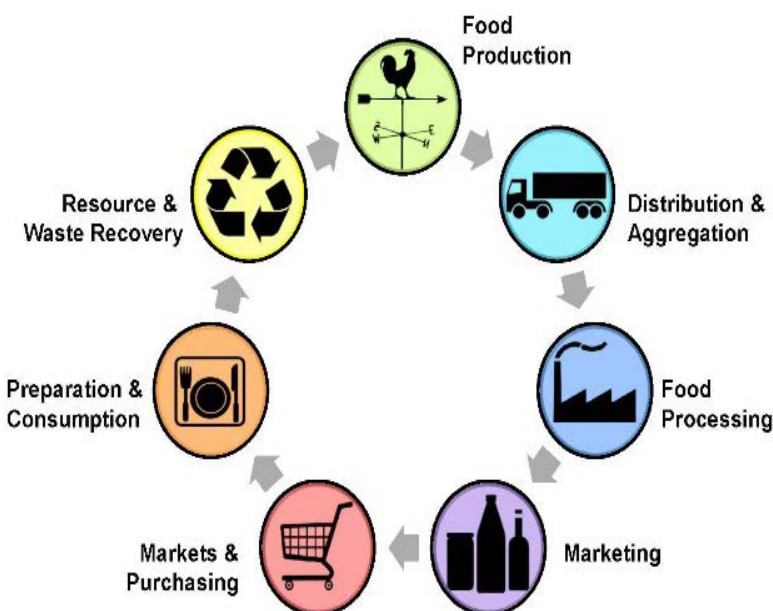


Image 1. Food system elements
Source: www.socratic.org



Image 2. Food systems initiatives like community gardens bring people together and create opportunities for collaboration between public and private interests.

Source: www.facebook.com/FoodMattersManitoba

has a direct affiliation with government or is housed in a grassroots level organization (Salemi & Fitzgerald, 2011). This structure influences what members are included in the council, and determines what sectors, people or organizations are represented. Successful food policy councils tend to represent all sectors of the food system, as they attempt to facilitate collaboration across the system. As a result, their objectives reflect a mix of sectors and perspectives.

Stakeholder engagement can assist in determining which sectors should be represented in the food council, how it should be composed, and what its roles and priorities should be. By bringing together stakeholders from all aspects of the food system, connections between food and policy become visible and help develop a common purpose for the food policy council (Burgan & Winne, 2012).

Developing the Winnipeg Food Council

In 2014, the City of Winnipeg's Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development directed the City's Public Service to determine the interests of the agricultural community as it relates to growth. As a result, the Public Service delivered a report in June 2015 detailing how

to protect interests of those living on agriculturally zoned land - *Accommodating the Interests of Winnipeg's Agricultural Community*. The report provided insight into the agricultural landscape both in Winnipeg and in a broader context, discussed threats to agriculture and the potential of urban agriculture in mitigating them, and provided direction on how agriculture can be supported in Winnipeg. The report provided three recommendations including "that the Public Service engage with key stakeholders to investigate and provide recommendations related to the formation, role and governance structure of a Winnipeg Food Council" (City of Winnipeg, 2015, p.15).

As a response, The Urban Planning Division was directed to research food policy council formation, role, and governance structure. The group completed an extensive literature review and conducted discussions with food policy council experts from across Canada to determine current and best practice. A report, *Towards a Winnipeg Food Policy Council: Background, Research Scan and Local Context*, was generated in 2016. The report detailed food council role, formation, and governance structure, and was provided to City Councilors and used to inform stakeholders.

Project Background

Following the completion of the *Towards a Winnipeg Food Policy Council* report, two stakeholder events obtained feedback related to food policy council formation, role, and governance structure issues. In 2016, the City of Winnipeg partnered with Food Matters Manitoba to co-host the two engagement sessions. Food Matters Manitoba is a not-for-profit organization that works with communities across Manitoba to create opportunities to access food, and build communities that have capacity and the skills necessary to address complex food system issues. During engagement sessions, City staff provided participants with their research findings on other food policy councils and Food Matters facilitated group discussions on what a potential Winnipeg food policy council would look like and what type of work it would complete.



Image 4. Public perspectives on a Winnipeg Food Council were collected at the Ciclovía festival.
Source: www.facebook.com/ManyFestWinnipeg

In total, 74 stakeholders from various sectors were invited to the event, 56 registered for the event, and 42 participated in it. Following the engagement sessions, participants were sent a follow up email that included a link to an online questionnaire, which included similar questions as those discussed during the engagement sessions. Email recipients were encouraged to circulate the questionnaire to their networks; an additional 33 people responded. The greater public was consulted following these focused engagement sessions via the online questionnaire and at the annual Ciclovía festival.

Towards a Winnipeg Food Council



The City of Winnipeg is exploring the potential formation of a Food Council. So far, we have:

1. Researched other food councils
2. Hosted conversations with key stakeholders about a potential food council in Winnipeg
3. Posted information online for other interested people.

We're now getting ready to bring recommendations to City Council.



Get involved!

Look for us at ManyFest! The Urban Planning Division will have a table set up along Broadway Avenue during Ciclovía on September 11, 2016.

Image 3. The City of Winnipeg used various approaches to engage with food system stakeholders to try and capture as many voices in the policy making process.
Source: Karin Kliewer

Facts & Outcomes

The Winnipeg Food Council was formed in 2017. Its formation, role, and governance structure were directly informed by stakeholder perspectives gathered during engagement sessions, online, and at Ciclovía. Stakeholder input was used to generate a draft Terms of Reference, helping to ensure the perspectives of diverse food system sectors were considered in policy decisions involving agriculture and food security in the City of Winnipeg. In February 2017, Winnipeg City Council agreed on the recommendation to form the Winnipeg Food Council, adopted the drafted Terms of Reference, and directed the Public Service to



Image 5. Food assessments completed by Food Matters supported research on Food Councils completed by the City. Source: www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca

issue an open call for membership and return with a list of recommended Food Council members.

The stakeholder engagement sessions were led by the City of Winnipeg, but offered partnership with Food Matters Manitoba to capture representative food system sectors in the engagement sessions. For several years, Food Matters had supported the creation of a food policy council. Also, Food Matters is a member of Manitoba’s Canadian Community Economic Development (CED) Network chapter, and its policy resolutions directing this member-led network to advocate for a municipal food council have been ratified by the network through its annual policy resolution process. Prior to the engagement workshops, Food Matters conducted extensive background research, completed various neighbourhood food assessments, and established an extensive network within the food system community.

To ensure a range of perspectives were included, Food Matters provided recommendations on which stakeholders should be included in discussions. Stakeholder sectors represented at the focused engagement sessions included: community organizations, food entrepreneurs, producers, processors,

distributors, food advocates, service agencies, dieticians, health organizations, provincial representatives, and agribusiness. The expertise, role and influence in the food/agriculture community of Manitoba that Food Matters brought was an asset to the planning process, as it provided the City with access to the wider food/agriculture community that they may not have otherwise had.

Stakeholder engagement workshops were designed by City staff in partnership with Food Matters, and focused on food policy council formation, governance, role and priorities. Prior to the event, participants were provided the *Towards a Winnipeg Food Policy Council* report and other supporting materials to help broaden their understanding of food policy councils. Providing these materials in advance of the engagement sessions helped facilitate discussions on how a food policy council could be formed, what its governance structure might look like, and what its role and priorities could be. At the engagement sessions, participants were presented with precedent and background research findings by City staff, and Food Matters facilitated discussion and interactive exercises, like a dotmocracy. By working together closely, both the City and Food Matters were able to gain capacity, as Food Matters provided community outreach and engagement on behalf of both organizations, and the City was able to provide policy support (Salemi & Fitzgerald, 2011).



Image 6. Food Matters had established a network within the food system community through past community consultation like this *Future of Food in Winnipeg* visioning workshop. Source: www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca



Image 7. Food Matters has worked extensively with various sectors in the food system like farmers, chefs, and retailers, as well as people of different origins, genders, and ages. Source: www.facebook.com/FoodMattersManitoba

After input was analyzed, Urban Planning Division staff created a report summarizing stakeholder input, and outlining how this input would be reflected in the proposed Terms of Reference. This report was circulated to stakeholders and posted on the project website. The Urban Planning Division then worked with the City Clerks and Legal Services Departments to develop the draft Terms of Reference.

Stakeholder input was directly reflected in the Winnipeg Food Council's Terms of Reference and guided its formation (City of Winnipeg, 2016). The multi-sector focused engagement sessions presented an opportunity to make the relationships between food system stakeholders more explicit (Salemi & Fitzgerald, 2011), and facilitated the identification of major themes and priorities of Winnipeg's food system stakeholders. The additional public engagement through the online questionnaire and at Ciclovía helped reach voices that were missed in the focused workshops and ensured their perspectives were included in the discussion.

Stakeholders were again notified when it came time to select the Food Council's membership in March 2017. Participants of the focused engagement workshops were contacted to help the City communicate the call for membership to their networks. Using community outreach

to assist in membership selection brought together a diversity of viewpoints, expertise, and experience. By doing so, stakeholder priorities were clarified and members were evaluated for their ability to unite different perspectives, connect to diverse networks, and lead the development of innovative strategies to address complex issues (Schiff, 2008).

Winnipeg Food Council membership applicants were evaluated according to a variety of factors, but the Terms of Reference guided the process. In this way, the initial multi-sector stakeholder input continued to guide the actions of the Food Council. In June 2017, City Council approved the recommended members.

Lessons Learned

Find a Champion

Successful food policy councils always benefit from a champion to spearhead initiatives and elevate the perception local food issues as an integral aspect of municipal governance (Deloitte, n.d.). From the outset, the process of forming a food policy council was driven by a City Councillor who was engaged and eager to see the Food Council form. The importance of having this champion to push forward projects and generate community support should not be underestimated.



Image 8. Winnipeg Councillor Brian Mayes has supported the Food Council since its inception, and continues to support food related initiatives. Source: www.winnipegfreepress.com/our-communities/lance

Partnerships are key

The City of Winnipeg's Development Plan, OurWinnipeg, directs the City to work with the community to address food needs: Section 03-2 Quality of Life: "Working through community partnerships, respond to food needs as identified by communities" (City of Winnipeg, 2011, p.82). The City would not have been as successful had it not partnered with Food Matters for the stakeholder conversations. Food Matters knew who to invite to stakeholder engagement sessions, as they had lists of participants from previous meetings and food-related forums they had hosted. The City made suggestions for additions, but the general stakeholder list was already prepared, and trust had already been established between stakeholders and Food Matters. In addition, Food Matters was able to help design the stakeholder consultation, adding capacity to the project and enabling the City staff to listen and engage with what participants were saying.

Community work takes time and patience

Community organizations like Food Matters and the Canadian CED Network have been working towards the formation of a Winnipeg Food Council since 2008. These groups did the background research, they completed food assessments, and they built relationships across sectors. When the time came they were organized, and ready with information and a

willing helping hand. An important message to community groups would be to keep saying the same things, to as many different people as possible (decision makers, civil servants, other sectors, and wider networks), and when the time comes, the hard work will hopefully be rewarded.

Look for the easy "win"

Formation of the Winnipeg Food Council was itself a "win". The Food Council has only had three meetings, but already the Public Service (through motions made at the Water and Waste Committee) is exploring the possibility of providing water to community gardens on City-owned land. In addition to the functions outlined in the Terms of Reference, the Food Council has also been tasked with reporting to the Executive Policy Committee about where to allow commercial agricultural uses in Winnipeg.

Cautions & Challenges

Be careful about volunteer burnout

The Winnipeg Food Council members were chosen because of their existing networks, involvements, and experience with the local food system. Committee members are already



Image 9. Partnering with community groups helps link their work with municipal governance, providing a way to better reflect the priorities and objectives of the community in policy.

Source: www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca

very busy and it is important to ensure that they do not become weary of contributing to the Food Council. Members are participating on a volunteer basis, so keeping them engaged and supported is especially important, as the council does not want to face issues with filling seats. This could hurt its perception to potential new members and to City administration (Salemi & Fitzgerald, 2011).

Financial support

Funding is essential to a food policy council to continue to work; without it hiring a staff member is unlikely and completing initiatives becomes a challenge. The Winnipeg Food Council reports to the City of Winnipeg's Executive Policy Committee (EPC). Other comparable committees that report to EPC (i.e. Access Advisory Committee, Winnipeg Committee for Safety, and Citizen Equity Committee) each receive an annual budget to cover communications, events, and the cost of a coordinator. This budget helps move forward the committee's priorities. Unfortunately, the Food Council was not awarded funding in the 2018 budget. The Winnipeg Food Council intends to continue to request annual funding equal to that received by other comparable City citizen committees.

Conclusion

By bringing together many sectors, food policy councils provide an opportunity for food system stakeholders to have their voices heard in the policy making process. Increasingly, they are being used by municipalities to integrate perspectives when addressing food-related issues. Key to this, is finding a way for municipalities to connect with food system stakeholders. This case-in-point emphasizes the importance of working with a community partner to capture stakeholder perspectives. When creating Winnipeg's Food Council, working with a community partner ensured the food system was adequately represented in the policy making process and was key to building relationships with stakeholders and community.

Resources

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