CHAPTER 3:
ANALYZING FOOD SECURITY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

PURPOSE: The "Analyzing Food Security in Your Community" chapter is designed to guide you in analyzing what you have learned about your community through your conversations, community feedback (The Questionnaires) and food mapping efforts.

Activities:
3. Learn how to identify what food security barriers your community may be experiencing and consider the possible causes of these barriers.
4. Use the **Analysis Worksheet - Strengths & Weaknesses Tool** to inventory and analyze your findings and identify **Key Issues** that your community is facing in accessing food and achieving food security.

3.0 Introduction

TOOLKIT STAGE

Learning about Community Food Security

Gathering Information

Analyzing your Community

Choosing Tools & Taking Action

This chapter will help you to identify and consider some of the barriers and issues that are challenging your local food system and limiting the ability of residents to be food secure. Through analysis, the needs of your community must be clearly assessed before you can strategize on how to improve the situation and take action (Chapter 4).

The Analyzing Strengths and Weaknesses Worksheet (pg43) introduced in this chapter can be used to summarize your findings on what food resources are available in your community, gather feedback from community members, service providers, and food outlets, and to guide you in identifying issues and barriers in your local food system. These questionnaires can be used as is, or can be modified to suit your needs.

3.1 Barriers to the Six A's

The **Worksheet** uses the Six A's of food security as a framework and asks you if any or all of the **Six A's of Food Security** are being met for members of your community (*See Chapter 1 the Six A's*). The following are some examples of common barriers relating to the **Six A's**:

Availability and Accessibility

Food and Food Services/Programs are not present - A lack of food outlets and services within reasonable travel distance in your community can be a serious barrier to community members being able to access food and also make healthy food choices. The following are some examples of these physical barriers related to availability and accessibility.

- *Service/outlet does not exist*: it is possible that there is a lack of healthy and affordable food outlets in the community.
- *Long distances to food outlets or food services*: Ideally food outlets and services should be within walking distance or a short transit distance away. Longer walking and transit distances can mean that residents have to buy smaller quantities or not get what they need to be able to carry the groceries, while expensive cab rides or transit can lead to a significant financial burden in choosing transport versus food.
- *Emergency food services or food delivery services are not present in vulnerable communities*: Although fresh food sources may be present in the community, there may be no services providing emergency food to all communities. However it is especially important that services such as food banks and meal programs are located within or near to low socio-economic communities. Those with mobility challenges may rely on food delivery services. Ideally these services would be available to all areas of a community.

Affordability

Food and food services are too expensive -The cost of food in a community can lead to residents being unable to afford enough food or can limit their ability to choose healthier options. The following are some factors that act as a barrier of food affordability in your community.

- *A significant proportion of residents are living at or below the poverty line:* Affordability issues can mean that residents have to choose between necessities such as food versus shelter versus utilities, etc.
- *Too reliant on imports*: Food importation can mean a greater variety of food in stores and can result in lower food costs; however a heavy reliance on imported food leaves a community vulnerable to outside forces such as import costs (weak dollar, rising production cost, etc.) or issues such as decreasing marginal profit for businesses.
- *Food delivery programs are too expensive*: Vulnerable populations such as the elderly or ill may rely on food delivery services access their food. Often these programs can be overly expensive.
- *Too little competition:* A reduction in competition and subsequent increase in food pricing may occur if there are too few food outlets in a community.

Adequacy and Appropriateness

Not-for-profit food sources do not carry sufficient food

- *Food donations are not enough*: The demand for emergency food can outstrip the charitable donations that come in from the community. Furthermore, community donators may not understand what food is needed or wanted.
- *Donations do not cover cultural or health restrictive food*: Often food donations do not include culturally specific food requirements or foods that are required by those with dietary restrictions.

Limited access to healthier options- Food Security requires access to nutritious foods (Chapter 5 for more information)

- *Outlets may be present but do not focus on healthier options:* Convenience stores, fast food outlets and some discount food outlets that provide processed and packaged food increase the availability of food, however this form of food is not as healthy as fresh food options and home cooking.

> **Imported food often has to travel long distances.**
>
> This leads to:
>
> Reduced nutrient content: produce is picked prior to ripening to avoid spoilage, face changing nutrient levels[8], and contain generally lower nutrient content than fresh[9]
>
> The inclusion of various preservatives to preserve freshness. These fillers and preservatives may take the form of high levels of sodium

- *Reliance on imported food*: Relying on imported/processed food can exchange fresh, locally grown food with food that is picked unripe to avoid spoilage, packaged and processed, or mixed with preservatives [12], and may decrease food safety[29].
- *Meal programs in schools may not serve enough or healthier food options:* Meal programs in school such as lunches and breakfast programs may not provide healthier options.

Options are not available for culturally appropriate or restrictive diets

- *Poor selection of food outlets*: Having few outlets can lead to a limit on the variety of food types that are available. Also, larger retail operations do not usually offer as broad a range of culturally or diet specific foods as specialized outlets.
- *Food outlets do not understand demand*: A lack of communication between food outlets and the population can lead to poor representation of culturally diverse food options, or foods that cater to health restricted diets such as heart disease or diabetes.

Awareness

Food Education is lacking in the community- Community members may not be aware of what is needed for a healthy diet, where they can access healthier option or how to prepare healthier food.

- *Food education is lacking in schools*: A lack of education for children and adolescents in school leads to poor eating habits and a lack of understanding of the link between diet and health. Schools may not have cooking programs or teach food skills such as budgeting, choosing purchasing and preparing healthier food.
- *Food education is lacking in the wider community*: Adults and the wider community may not have access to reliable healthy eating education. Reliance on internet sources or word of mouth can promote misinformation on what constitutes a healthy diet, and what to look for in healthy food. Programs that teach cooking skills to those without food mentors may not be available, approachable or affordable for community members.

Low food literacy, cooking skills, or inadequate cooking materials/tools

- *A lack of healthy or nutritious food literacy:* A lack of food literacy in schools in the wider community can lead to unhealthy food choices.
- *Community members do not have cooking skills*: Cooking is something that has to be learned, and learning how to cook healthy food can be a significant barrier. Those lacking cooking skills may resort to fast food or pre-prepared meals.
- *There may be a lack of proper food preparation equipment*: Some community members may not have the proper equipment needed to prepare fresh healthy food. For example, students or those living in shared housing may not have adequate access to food preparation equipment.

Analyzing Strengths & Weaknesses Worksheet

Purpose: The purpose of this worksheet is to summarize your findings from the **Community Food Mapping** exercise and the **Community Food** and **Food Outlet Questionnaires**. Questions about the food resources in your community will help you identify some Key Issues and challenges in your food system.

Worksheet Process:

Inventory Food Assets ❯ Identify Challenges from the Questionnaires ❯ Consider the 6A's ❯ Key Issues
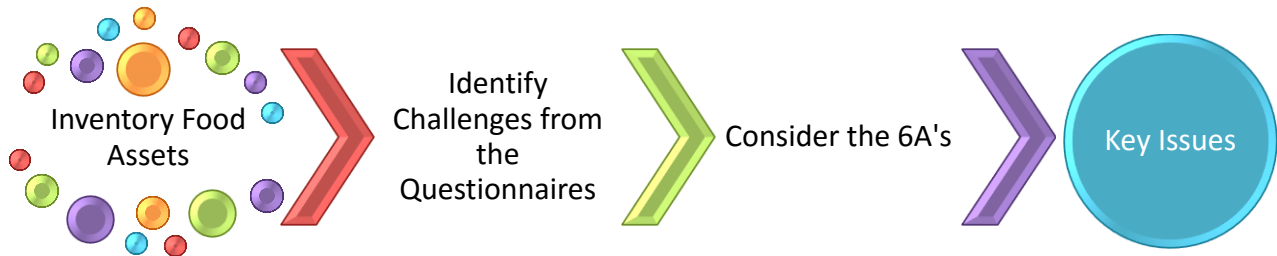
Use this worksheet to summarize your findings on the food services and food programs in your community, gained from food mapping and the dialogue with community members and service providers. Discuss these findings and consider any challenges identified from your questionnaires and conversations, then answer the questions to identify the barriers to accessing and learning about food (**Six A's**). This analysis will uncover some of the key issues that are challenging food security in your community.

The following are the lists of food related services and programs that may be available in your community:

FOOD SERVICES (Commercial and Not-For Profit)

Based on your mapping and community dialogues, what **Food Services** are available in your community? Please list them by name and use your findings from the **Community** and **Food Service Providers Questionnaires** to describe the services they offer:

☐ Grocery – Primarily Packaged/Frozen _____

_____

☐ Grocery – Primarily fresh/produce _____

_____

☐ Cooked food (from scratch) _____

_____

☐ Cooked food (from pre-prepared ingredients) _____

_____

☐ Farmer/Farmers Market _____

_____

☐ Food Delivery (Meal/Grocery Delivery, etc.) _____

_____

☐ Emergency food (foodbank, meal program, etc.) _____

_____

☐ Food in schools (breakfast, lunch, after school programs) _____

_____

☐ Alternative Food Sources (Community Garden, Food Box, Food Sharing, Rooftop Agriculture, etc.) _____

_____

☐ Other (please describe) _____

_____

FOOD AWARENESS Programs

Based on your mapping and **Community** and **Food Service Provider Questionnaires**, could a lack of food skills, food preparation facilities and/or awareness of food service providers be contributing to food insecurity in your community? Please name the services and resources in your community and use your findings from the **Questionnaires** to describe the services they offer:

☐ Food Map, food directory or other resource for locating food_____

☐ Community Kitchens _____

☐ Menu preparation or grocery shopping training _____

☐ Cooking Classes _____

☐ Nutritional Education _____

☐ Gardening Classes/Training_____

☐ Other (please describe) _____

Review the results from your **Community Food Mapping*** and **Not-For-Profit Food Providers Questionnaires*** and make note of the **challenges** relating to the food services and programs identified by community members and service providers.

_____

_____

Consider the following questions (combines the two sets):

1. **Accessibility**- Are there food services and programs available in your community? Are these programs offered in the right locations to allow residents to access them without requiring a vehicle, a lengthy transit trip or a very long walk? Are there other barriers to access?

2. **Affordability**- Based on your community's demographics and community feedback, do you think the food services and programs are affordable for all residents?

3. **Availability and Adequacy**- Are there enough food services and programs offered and are there any other barriers to attending such as lack of advertising, scheduling, attendance caps, etc.? Are community members getting enough healthy food year round?

4. **Appropriateness**- Are there food services and programs that address culturally diverse and health related diets?

5. **Awareness**- Are there programs or information offered in your community to improve food awareness and skills?

Based on your findings, what do you think are the **Key Issues** in your community relating to **Food Services and Food Awareness Programs**? Please identify these below.

_____
_____

Identification of Zoning and Policy Barriers

Your local zoning regulations may be creating a barrier to accessing food in your community. Refer to Chapter 5 (pg. 65) for more resources on Zoning. Planning policy regulates activity and development of the built environment; this regulation of the use and design of the built environment can create significant barriers to accessing necessary food services and products. As these policy documents can be very technical, it is recommended that you work with your local planner to identify what is permitted or restricted in your community. Visit www.halifax.ca or your municipalities' webpage where you can search for how to connect with planning and development departments. The following steps can help guide this process:

1. **Identify** the Planning Strategy (ies) and Land Use Bylaw(s) that apply to your community with your local planner, using the community boundaries identified in Chapter 2.

2. **Obtain** maps from your local planner showing the applicable planning designations and land use zones for your community (either physical or online mapping).

3. **Review** planning Strategy (ies) with your local planner looking for language that enables or constrains. Scan for policies relating to food, agriculture (food production & animals), retail/commercial activities (food retail & outlets), and industrial (food processing). Make note on your maps of the designations that these activities are permitted in.

4. **Review** together with your local planner the general provisions of the Land Use Bylaw(s) for restrictions that may enable or constrain your local food system. Search the individual zones for where food uses, agricultural activities (food production & animals), retail/commercial activities (food retail & services), and industrial uses (food processing & warehousing) are permitted. Make note of where these zones are located and roughly what activities they permit.

5. **Analyze** these policies to identify planning and zoning opportunities and barriers. Examples of this might be:

    a. A blanket of residential zoning which does not permit food retail, production or processing. This essentially creates a food desert by prohibiting new food uses.

    b. Lack of zones which specifically mention or encourage urban agriculture and food production. Uncertainty about what is or is not permitted can create a barrier to introducing these unrecognized uses into your community.

    c. Large distances between residential areas and zones which permit the sale of food and provision of food services. The distance between where you live and where you access food has been linked to dietary health; having to travel a long distance to access food can involve additional costs (transit & vehicular), and compromises in quality and quantity of food.

6. **Review** your findings with your local planner to see if these are correct and if there are any other planning or policy considerations which could be creating invisible barriers.

7. **Summarize** your findings in the **Analyzing Strengths and Weaknesses Worksheet** (pg43).

ZONING AND PLANNING BARRIERS (AN EXAMPLE):

The table below shows an example of how to organize your findings to identify possible opportunities or constraints resulting from planning and zoning policy in your community. A local

General Provision/ Designation/ Zone/ Policy Identify specific policies or zones which relate to food.	Summary of Issue/Opportunity How does this policy potentially impact food in your community?	Enabling/Constraining Could this policy make it easier or harder to change the situation and improve access to food?
Example: R-1 Residential	Does not permit food outlets, processing or distribution; limits food retail in home based businesses (must be accessory to another use).	Constraining
Example: C-3 Commercial	Permits food outlets, small scale production and warehousing.	Enabling
Example: Policy S-2	Requires edible landscaping for new buildings	Enabling

planner can help identify policies that may affect the ability to set up different services, programs, or businesses based on the current zoning or policy restrictions of a specific area.

OTHER ISSUES:

Please use the following section to make note of any other considerations or issues that arose from the inventory, community feedback and your food conversations. Based on your findings, what do you think are the Key Issues relating to these Considerations? Please identify below (You can use these notes to help inform the **Action Plan Worksheet** in Chapter 4):

_____
_____
_____
_____