



# THE HALIFAX FOOD POLICY ALLIANCE

A Social Return On Investment (SROI) Study

August 2016

# Contributors

This study is a collaboration between the Our Food Project of the Ecology Action Centre, NEF Consulting, and the Halifax Food Policy Alliance.

This study was commissioned and carried out by the Our Food Project of the Ecology Action Centre:

Miranda Cobb  
Research and Evaluation Coordinator

Stephanie Johnstone-Laurette  
Research Consultant

**THE OUR  
FOODPROJECT**



This study was advised by experts at NEF Consulting. NEF Consulting is the consultancy arm of the UK think tank, New Economics Foundation (NEF). They put NEF's ideas into practice by placing people and the planet at the heart of decision making.

Samrawit Mariam  
Consultant

Michael Weatherhead  
International Director



Thank you to all members of the Halifax Food Policy Alliance for their participation, particularly:  
Aimee Carson, Our Food Project Senior Coordinator & HFGA Co-chair  
Satya Ramen, Our Food Project Senior Coordinator & HFGA member  
Leticia Smillie, Cultural Planner, Halifax Regional Municipality

Thank you to Jen Organ, Our Food Project, for the beautiful report layout

The study was completed from January to August 2016

Funding for this study has been provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of PHAC.

Front Cover Photo Credit: Sydney MacLennan (Mobile Food Market)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
Context	6
Scope and Stakeholders	7
Outcomes and Evidence	10
Calculating Impact	18
Program Inputs	21
Social Return On Investment	22
Conclusions	24
Appendix 1: Example survey questions	26
Appendix 2: Policy quality rubric	27
Appendix 3: Domains of well-being	28
Appendix 4: Example willingness-to-pay exercise	29
References & Notes	30

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“The HFPA offers a credible body that government and other organizations can look to for support and advice on food policy development... more groups are recognizing this and making use of this to advance work.” - HFPA member

The Halifax Food Policy Alliance (HFPA), co-chaired by the Our Food Project and the Nova Scotia Health Authority, is a network of cross-sectoral organizations working to build a healthy, just and sustainable food system in the Halifax region, through public awareness, innovative programs, and policy change.

Findings from our Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis of the HFPA show that **the Alliance produces positive benefits for members/their organizations, and the residents of Halifax**, including food insecure individuals. It also demonstrates the significant reach that policy-influencing work can have.

## HFPA members experience:

- Increased knowledge and awareness of food security
- More coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments
- Increased trust and belonging
- Increased competence to create positive food environments
- Increased meaning and purpose

**Halifax residents benefit** from better food policies which help support positive food environments and community food security. Namely, we have focused on the HFPA's role in the implementation/improvement of the following policies:

- Downtown Plan
- Green Network Submission
- 2014 Regional Plan
- Food Planning Toolkit
- TryDo Healthy Eating Strategy

The resulting SROI ratio for the HFPA is \$5.53 : \$1. For every \$1 invested in the HFPA, there is \$5.53 gained in benefit to stakeholders. In other words, **the HFPA generates more than 5 times the amount of value that it costs.**

These results validate the continuation of the HFPA to uphold the partnerships, relationships and policies that have been created and allow them to develop further.

# INTRODUCTION

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a stakeholder-driven cost-benefit analysis methodology, which is recognized and endorsed internationally as a means of assessing full value for money. The method helps organizations manage the intangible, hard to measure economic, social, and environmental value they create. Rather than simply focusing on cost savings or outputs, the methodology takes into account the full range of **impacts that matter to key stakeholders**.

While the SROI ratio that is obtained from these studies is an important finding, the greater advantage is that it creates **a story of change that weaves qualitative and quantitative conclusions together**. Through this, SROIs can allow for organizations to better understand their impact and maximize their outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

## The Purpose of this study: Why do an SROI of the HFGPA?

The Our Food Project (OFP) plays a leading role in the facilitation of cross-sectoral regional and provincial networks. Although observation and anecdotal evidence tells us that this work plays a direct role in advancing sectoral-level work across regions, specific outcomes are often challenging to measure using traditional evaluation approaches.

The **goal** of this SROI study is to map, measure, and monetize elements of the Our Food Project's **sectoral-level impact** by focusing on one of our major **network-facilitation roles**: the Halifax Food Policy Alliance.<sup>a</sup>

OFP co-chairs the Alliance with the Nova Scotia Health Authority and played a leading role in its creation in early 2014. The HFGPA is a unique and powerful constellation of champions and decision-makers that represent different sectors of the food system in Halifax, including municipal

staff (Mayor's office, planning staff), Feed Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture. Through deepening relationships, raising awareness, and enhancing alignment across sectors, the collaborative work of the HFGPA has led to important outputs that are paving the way for new food work in Halifax (e.g., 1st comprehensive Food Assessment for Halifax;<sup>2</sup> Mobile Food Market pilot project; Policy Assessment Toolkit).

The HFGPA is a key case study for this SROI analysis because with our leadership, it has grown into a strong regional network and model for other municipalities, and has laid important groundwork for scaling our network-facilitation role to the provincial level. In addition, it is a platform through which we mobilize significant resources for the food sector (e.g., organizational staff hours, intern and volunteer hours, communications support, and funding).

## This report

Through this SROI study, the Our Food Project analyzes the outcomes of the Halifax Food Policy Alliance, based on feedback from key stakeholder groups. The following sections outline the process used to gather and analyze data; the methodology used to calculate project impact; and details of how an SROI ratio is established, while sharing the quantitative and qualitative story of the HFGPA.



Photo Cred: Sydney MacLennan

<sup>a</sup> See our second SROI report on our network-facilitation role in Cape Breton.

# CONTEXT

Halifax has the highest rate of food insecurity of 33 Canadian cities and higher rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity than the national average. Only 38% of Halifax adult residents report adequate fruit and vegetable consumption and 1 in 5 households in Halifax are food insecure.<sup>3</sup>

There are a number of contributing socio-economic conditions, such as the high number of low income households with a high proportion of children; relatively high costs of housing; poor physical access to stores offering affordable, healthy foods; and financial barriers for people living on low wages or on income assistance to afford or access healthy nutritious food.<sup>4</sup>

## The Our Food Project (OFP)

OFP began in 2013, built upon 10 years of food systems initiatives at the Ecology Action Centre. The overarching goal is to strengthen communities' relationships to food by building **positive food environments**: the physical and social spaces that help to normalize healthy eating by making it easier to grow, sell, and eat good food. The project works at the individual, community and systemic level to increase the availability of nutritious food as well as access to it. By supporting local producers, educating eaters, and influencing food policy change, the intent of the project is to **actively involve people in creating a more equitable and sustainable food system.**

## The Halifax Food Policy Alliance (HFPA)

The HFPA is a partnership of individuals and organizations that represent different sectors related to the food system. It was established in early 2014 with leadership from the Ecology Action Centre's Our Food Project, Nova Scotia Health Authority (Public Health), and planning staff from the Halifax Regional Municipality. Together they are working to advance program and policy

initiatives that build positive food environments and community food security across the Halifax Region.

HFPA's vision is a **just and sustainable food system** in the Halifax region that is rooted in healthy and resilient communities, where no one is hungry and everyone can access nutritious and culturally preferred food; an economically viable, diverse, and ecologically sustainable system to grow, harvest, process, distribute, and prepare food.<sup>5</sup>



# SCOPE AND STAKEHOLDERS

## Scope of the Analysis

The intention of this SROI is to evaluate and measure the total value produced by the HFGA over a two year period from its inception in early 2014, including the value experienced through being a member of the HFGA and the impact of the HFGA policy outcomes on Halifax residents.

To this aim, we used the SROI methodology to:

- Gather qualitative information from stakeholders on the changes they experience (outcomes) as a result of their involvement with the HFGA or the result of HFGA-influenced policy changes
- Quantify these outcomes, measuring the *amount* of change ('distance traveled') experienced by different stakeholders
- Place a monetary value on these outcomes, using market values or financial proxies where relevant
- Account for impact, determining the share of credit that HFGA can claim (i.e., accounting for amount of change attributable to HFGA and taking into account what would have happened anyway in the absence of HFGA)

## Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholders are considered those who are directly or indirectly affected, positively or negatively, due to the outcomes of the activity being analyzed. Stakeholders involved in the HFGA study were divided into two key groups: HFGA members and Halifax residents.

**1. HFGA Members** are those who are directly involved with the HFGA, attending monthly meetings and working group sessions, as well as contributing to policy-influencing activities and policy change. At the time of this report the HFGA membership represented public health, city planning, agriculture, municipal policy, business, and non-governmental organizations. Specifically this includes: the Nova Scotia Health Authority, United Way, the Office of the Mayor, Halifax Regional Municipality, FEED NS, the NS Federation of Agriculture, the Halifax Seaport Farmer's Market and the Ecology Action Centre.

**2. Halifax Residents<sup>b</sup>** are those directly and indirectly impacted by the policy change instigated by the HFGA. For example, the HFGA influenced a policy supporting more liveable communities in terms of green spaces and active transportation infrastructure which can, in turn, positively impact all residents of Halifax.

<sup>b</sup> For this study 'Halifax' refers to the Halifax Regional Municipality with a population of over 400,000 people, which includes Dartmouth and many other communities.



## Stakeholder Engagement

In order to understand the outcomes experienced by these stakeholder groups, various methods of stakeholder engagement were used including a Theory of Change (ToC) workshop, as well as interviews and email correspondence.

**Table 1. Stakeholder Engagement**

Stakeholder	Engagement Method	Number of Stakeholders Engaged	Total number of Stakeholders Available
HFPA Members	Theory of Change Workshop	10	13
	Phone Interview/Email review	2	

The stakeholder engagement process involved a ToC workshop with HFPA members as well as 1:1 phone interviews and email correspondence with members that weren't able to make the workshop and selected food policy/network experts. This ToC process helped to provide a connection between the inputs, outputs and outcomes of the HFPA and gain some understanding of how change is created through the HFPA's work. During the workshop, stakeholders mapped key outcomes that they experience as being a part of the HFPA, as well as the

policy outcomes that impact residents of Halifax. The results of this stakeholder-driven ToC process are presented in the impact map below, Table 3.

Select **academic content experts** were also consulted in this study regarding the impacts and challenges of municipal food policy work and networks. They were provided with a draft impact map, including stakeholder-defined outcomes, and asked for comments. Their input was then integrated into the final impact map. Table 2 provides details on the experts consulted in this process.

**Table 2. Academic Content Experts**

Name	Role	Method	Expertise
Rod MacRae	Assistant Professor, Centre for Studies in Food Security, York University	Phone interview	Co-author of <i>Municipal Food Policy Entrepreneurs: A preliminary analysis of how Canadian cities and regional districts are involved in food system change</i> , June 2013
Charles Levkoe	Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Food Systems, Lakehead University	Email review	Author of <i>Propagating the Food Movement: Provincial Networks and Social Mobilization in Canada</i> , November 2012

**Table 3. HFPA Impact Map**

Stakeholders	Inputs	Outputs	Outcome Area	Outcome
HFPA Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Time spent attending HFPA meetings (HFPA members)</li> <li>* In-kind meeting spaces (OFP and organisations that members are part of)</li> <li>* Report production costs: designing and printing; catering for launch event; event organizer cost (HFPA members and their organisations; OFP)</li> <li>* In-kind office support: printing, teleconference, phone etc. (HFPA members and their organisations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Halifax Food Assessment Report</li> <li>* Food Planning Toolkit</li> <li>* No. of attendees at report launch</li> <li>* No. of members of Facebook page</li> <li>* No. of website/Facebook page visits</li> <li>* No. of presentations by HFPA members to other city planners, schools, mayor/council, etc.</li> <li>* No. of participants at presentations</li> <li>* No. of participants at events</li> <li>* No. of policy recommendations made by HFPA (Downtown plan, Zero Waste, Green Network, 2014 Regional Plan, Food planning toolkit)</li> <li>* No. of HFPA-influenced policies including food security (policy, by-law, plans, etc.)</li> <li>* No. of HFPA food initiatives/collaborations (e.g., Green Network Submission, Zero Waste Submission, Mobile Food Market, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>Knowledge/awareness</p> <p>Efficiency</p> <p>Well-being</p>	<p>Increased knowledge and awareness of food security</p> <p>More coordinated and strategic action to create supportive food environments</p> <p>Increased trust and belonging</p> <p>Increased competence to create positive food environments</p> <p>Increased meaning and purpose</p>
	Halifax Residents			<p>Quality of food policy</p> <p>Improved policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown Plan</li> <li>• Green Network Submission</li> <li>• 2014 Regional Plan</li> <li>• Food Planning Toolkit</li> <li>• TryDo Healthy Eating Strategy</li> </ul>

# OUTCOMES AND EVIDENCE

## Outcomes and Indicators

**Outcomes are the changes stakeholders experience** based on their participation in an intervention. In this case there were two distinct types of outcomes experienced by HFPA stakeholders: (1) the well-being changes arising for members of the HFPA and (2) the policy-improvement changes for Halifax residents. As discussed above, outcomes are determined through the stakeholder engagement process, but require assigning indicators to and collecting data from stakeholders in order to verify whether the outcomes have actually occurred and to what extent.

**Indicators are specific, observable, and measurable characteristics** that demonstrate whether or not a particular outcome has occurred. We therefore assigned indicators to each of our qualitative outcomes in order to quantify the changes experienced by stakeholders. Table 4 below outlines the HFPA outcomes and the indicators used for each of them, broken down by stakeholder group.

**Table 4. Stakeholder Groups, Outcomes and Indicators**

Stakeholder Group	Outcomes for HFPA Members	Outcome Indicator Definition
HFPA Members	Increased knowledge and awareness of food security	Self-reported increase in knowledge/ awareness of food security
	More coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments	Self-reported increase in time savings due to an increase in coordinated and strategic action to create healthy/positive food environments in Halifax
	Increased trust and belonging	Self-reported increase in feeling close to people in local area
	Increased competence to create positive food environments	Self-reported increase in having a chance to show capability in daily life
	Increased meaning and purpose	Self-reported increase in feeling that what one does in life is worthwhile
Halifax Residents	Improved policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Downtown Plan</li> <li>● Green Network Submission</li> <li>● 2014 Regional Plan</li> <li>● Food Planning Toolkit</li> <li>● TryDo Healthy Eating Strategy</li> </ul>	Quality of food policy; measured on a 1-5 Likert scale where a certain level of quality on the scale is achieved if it meets a list of necessary components

## Data Collection: Questionnaire

The indicator questions detailed in Table 4 above were used to construct a questionnaire distributed to all HFGA members. The questionnaire asked them to consider each indicator question and rate their level on an appropriate scale at two different points in time: (1) now, after having been involved with HFGA and (2) before their involvement with HFGA. Comparing responses for these two time periods thus allowed us to measure the magnitude of change or, 'distance traveled' for each outcome.<sup>c</sup> The questionnaire response rate was 77% (10/13).

For the outcome related to food policy quality improvement experienced by Halifax residents, we determined the distance traveled for each HFGA-influenced policy via a workshop with 6 HFGA members. In order to do this, we first needed a set of criteria defining what made a good vs. a bad policy. Through research and key expert advice, we created the Policy Quality Rubric, shown in Appendix 2. We then asked HFGA members to estimate a numerical grade for the policies before their intervention and after their intervention, allowing us to calculate a quantitative change over time for each policy.



<sup>c</sup> See Appendix 1, questions 1 and 2 for an example.

## Financial Proxies: Valuing the SROI Outcomes

One of the challenges faced in SROI is placing a monetary value on outcomes that are not connected to a particular market. Financial proxies, or substitutes, are therefore used to value these outcomes.

Our approach to valuing well-being is based on the value of the mental health component of a quality-adjusted life year (QALY). This total well-being value is then divided between different domains of well-being based on the framework in NEF's National Accounts of Well-being,<sup>6</sup> as shown in Appendix 3.

We employed a stated preference technique to value improved food policy outcomes for Halifax residents. In order to determine financial proxies for each policy change, a willingness-to-pay exercise was created. This involved asking stakeholders what they would personally be willing-to-pay and why for a particular change associated with a given HFWA-influenced outcome, such as more urban gardens available.<sup>d</sup> This was conducted with both main stakeholder groups: HFWA members<sup>7</sup> and Halifax residents.<sup>8</sup> The answers of both groups were then averaged to create final financial proxies per policy.<sup>9</sup>

Tables 5 and 6 outline the outcomes and related financial proxies for HFWA members and Halifax residents.

**Table 5. Financial Proxies by Outcome for HFWA Members**

Outcomes for HFWA Members	Financial Proxy Description	Proxy
Increased Knowledge and Awareness about Food Security	Cost of Ryerson University course in food security concepts and principles	\$589.48
More coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments	Time savings: minimum wage in Nova Scotia for experienced employees	\$10.70
Increased trust and belonging	Our estimated value for total well-being is based on the value of the mental health component of a QALY. This total well-being value is then divided between domains of well-being based on the well-being framework in NEF's <i>National Accounts of Well-being</i> . <sup>10</sup>	\$5280
Increased competence to create positive food environments		\$528
Increased meaning and purpose		\$528

**Table 6. Financial Proxies by Outcome for HFWA Residents**

Outcomes for Halifax Residents	Financial Proxy Description	Proxy
Improved policy: Downtown Plan	Average WTP among focus group participants for FGs with HFWA and general public	\$169
Improved policy: Green Network Submission		\$249
Improved policy: 2014 Regional Plan		\$200
Improved policy: Food Planning Toolkit		\$157
Improved policy: TryDo Healthy Eating Strategy		\$134

<sup>d</sup> See Appendix 4 for an example.

# FOOD COUNTS HALIFAX FOOD ASSESSMENT



One of HFPA's major successes has been the *Food Counts: Halifax Food Assessment*.<sup>11</sup> The first report of its kind for Halifax, it presents a scan of the current situation relating food in the region, serving as a benchmark. Since its release in June 2015 it has already informed numerous policies, such as those listed in the table above, and actions in building a healthy, just and sustainable food system for Halifax, such as the Mobile Food Market. It has legitimized and brought credibility to food security policy-influencing efforts, and HFPA members name this an "invaluable piece of work". This key outcome has not been included for the reason that it has been a catalyst for the policy changes listed above. According to SROI methodology, which strives to produce an accurate and conservative accounting of social benefit, including the report as an outcome would double count the impact.

## A more detailed look at outcomes

Through the stakeholder engagement workshops and questionnaires, we gathered a great deal of qualitative evidence to support the outcomes included in the SROI calculation. Detailed descriptions of the outcomes along with some of the thoughts shared by stakeholders, are outlined below.

### Outcomes for HFPA Members

#### **Outcome 1: Increased knowledge and awareness of food security**

The forming and functioning of the Halifax Food Policy Alliance has brought a focus to food security at the municipal level that was previously limited. The diversity of HFPA membership, crossing sectors, has created a fertile ground for awareness building and knowledge sharing. It has brought together practitioners with policy-makers who now both have a deeper understanding of food security.

#### **Outcome 2: More coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments**

The HFPA bridges policy and practice because of its cross-sectoral membership. For example, when a city planner is asked for a submission about urban food infrastructure they are now connected with a practitioner, ready with context-specific expertise. Not only does the HFPA act as a channel to enhance the impact of policy by grounding it in practice, it also enables practitioners to enhance their impact by influencing policy. As windows of opportunity arise, the relationships, lines of communication, and meeting structure now allows for ease of coordinated and strategic actions.

#### **Outcome 3: Increased trust and belonging**

HFPA members feel a sense of trust, of being treated fairly and respectfully, and feeling a sense of belonging with and support from other HFPA members. Though there are diverse views and competing priorities in HFPA membership, there is a personal passion that members brings to the table for building a healthier Halifax. Through a dedicated effort of strong facilitation and process management, the HFPA has built trust and mutual support within its membership, allowing for open channels of communication and a sense of collaboration, towards a common vision.

#### **Outcome 4: Increased competence to create positive food environments**

HFPA members feel accomplishment from their work and feel they are able to make use of their skill and abilities. Through participating in the HFPA, members have developed increased capacity to develop food security policy, bridge policy and practice, build cross-sectoral relationships, and deepen others' understanding of food security. Their competence has increased to create positive food environments and a stronger food system at the municipal level.

#### **Outcome 5: Increased meaning and purpose**

HFPA members feel that what they do is worthwhile and valued by others. Facing and solving complex challenges such as food security is a daunting task. When organizations and sectors work in isolation of one another, large-scale problems cannot be effectively solved. Through the HFPA, individuals working on these problems see real changes happening in the short-term, like the new and improved policies. This tangible movement builds personal meaning and purpose in the work we do everyday, leading to increased confidence and motivation, ultimately fuelling the momentum forward.

## Quotes

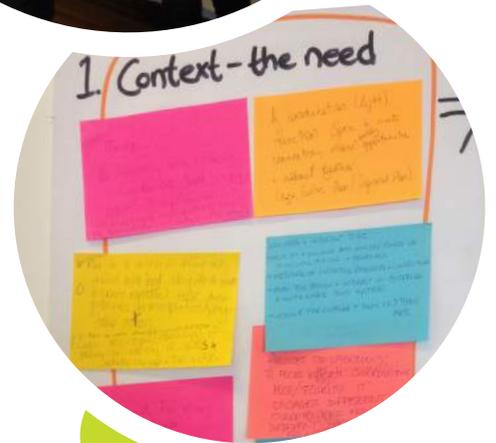
---

“HFPA has become an excellent resource for learning more about local issues, for expertise on food planning and as a sounding board for new ideas and policies.”

“I think an interesting result from the work of the HFPA is that many more people and organizations are framing their work within ‘healthy, just, sustainable’ food systems. It’s helpful and impactful to have various players singing from the same song book.”

“We see the HFPA as a way to work more efficiently and strategically.”

“[Without the HFPA] we would not have the relationships at the regional level, which are so valuable. I can just send off an email with a question and get an answer, imagine that! It has made my job much easier and feel like we’ve moved the needle on food work so much further in the past few years versus the years prior.”



## Outcomes for Halifax Residents

### Outcome 1: Improved Downtown Plan

HFPA successfully influenced changes in the Downtown Halifax Land Use Bylaw and Municipal Planning Strategy to promote urban agriculture. This represents the first policy response to the Regional Plan directive to promote food security and could result in policy changes that will increase opportunity for urban agriculture. For example rooftop gardens and apiaries in the Downtown of Halifax. This intervention also established HFPA as an authority on food security, a resource, and an ally in planning processes.

### Outcome 2: Improved Green Network Plan<sup>12</sup>

HFPA was successful in promoting food security through the preservation of agricultural lands as an important component of the Halifax Green Network Plan. Regional Council endorsed the Phase 1 “State of the Landscape” which included the importance of food and food security in 2 of its 5 themes (Environment and Working Landscapes). As a result, food security will be integral in the following phases of the project and will be reflected in the open space plan for the Halifax Region. The HFPA is mentioned in the report (including findings from Halifax Food Counts) and is now considered a key stakeholder, due to involvement in the Green Network engagements, as well as a source for research and advice.

### Outcome 3: Improved 2014 Regional Plan<sup>13</sup>

HFPA members alongside the Chief Medical Officer of Health championed the inclusion of a robust definition of food security in the 2014 update to the Regional Plan. This policy means that new and amended planning strategies and land use bylaws must consider how to promote food security. These planning documents influence the built environment, meaning that new policies could consider increasing access to food retail, opportunities for food production, food processing/

warehousing and other land use policies that can either enable or constrain the food system.

### Outcome 4: Improved Food Planning Toolkit

The Community Food Toolkit was created by HFPA members in collaboration with the Dalhousie School of Planning, in response to the Regional Plan's direction to “promote food security”. The purpose of the toolkit is to inform planning and community initiatives by guiding policy makers and community groups in hosting dialogues about food in their community; inventorying their resources and challenges; and developing actions to address issues in the community food landscape.

### Outcome 5: Improved TryDo Healthy Eating Strategy

HFPA members bring a food security and health equity perspective to the TryDo Council and their work to develop a Healthy Living Strategy for Halifax, which includes a healthy eating component. Guided by their collective vision to build a culture of healthy living across the Halifax Region, this cross-sectoral Council, is working towards a set of mutually reinforcing activities to create population level change (using collective impact principles). While the development of shared measures is still in progress, it is expected that these will include outcomes related to improved access to healthy food, increased intake of fruits and vegetables, and shifts towards more positive food environments.

## Quotes

---

“Over the past few years, a number of incremental changes/additions have occurred to food related policies in Halifax, and I definitely believe that the HFPA has a role in advising and shaping this work.”

“The HFPA offers a credible body that government and other orgs can look to for support and advice on food policy development- and I think that more groups are recognizing this making use of this to advance work.”

“Food security may not have been named in the regional plan had the HFPA and its precursor, HRM Food Strategy Group, not existed.”

“[Without the HFPA] there would be less focus on food issues within the city and city staff. We wouldn’t have the kind of language in the Master Plan we do—and that’s really important. We wouldn’t have the mobile food market pilot.”

“Without the authority and expertise of the HFPA to draw on, the municipality would have relied on best practices from other regions and would have required staff to spend precious time advocating for and learning about food policies. Considering how busy staff are and competing interests, it is unlikely that food policies would have been given serious consideration and development.”



# CALCULATING IMPACT

The HFPA actively works to build a healthy, just and sustainable food system for all, but they do not work in isolation of other forces. The SROI methodology takes this into account to ensure that an analysis does not overclaim the value of a given intervention. This SROI analysis of HFPA therefore considers the following concepts in order to calculate true impact: deadweight, displacement, attribution and drop-off of values over time.

**Deadweight** is the extent to which the outcomes studied would have occurred anyway in the absence of the intervention. We asked questionnaire respondents to self-estimate deadweight for all outcomes.<sup>e</sup> For example after rating the quality of policies before their interventions and afterwards, HFPA members were then asked to rate what the policy quality<sup>f</sup> would be at present if the HFPA had not existed.

**Displacement** is the means by which one accounts for how much of the value generated by a program is simply the result of a shift in value from one place to another, rather than a true creation of new value. For instance, by improving one stakeholder's situation with respect to a particular outcome, has the program inadvertently worsened another stakeholder's situation? Given that the outcomes of the HFPA do not take away from or conflict with any other program's/stakeholder's ability to achieve positive outcomes, the displacement value was set at 0% for each outcome.

**Attribution** assesses how much of the outcome is due to the work of the HFPA versus how much was caused by the contribution of other organizations or people. HFPA members' outcomes have been assigned an attribution value by directly asking stakeholders to estimate

this in the questionnaire. For example, HFPA members said (on average) "67% of my increased knowledge and awareness of food security is because I was involved with the HFPA" (therefore 33% is because of other factors, such as personal interest or other professional roles/associations).<sup>g</sup>

The attribution rates for policy outcomes were determined by two processes:

1. A focus group where HFPA members reached consensus on HFPA's attributed contribution to each policy change. For example, focus group participants estimated that 75% of the changes made to the Downtown Plan are attributed to the HFPA, as there might have been small (albeit less robust) inclusion of food security in the plan without their influence.
2. An estimate of the ability of a policy improvement to practically change individual residents' outcomes. To avoid overclaiming, we assume, in the absence of existing data, that a policy's ability to affect an individual is 20% in the building of the policy (during which the HFPA has the most influence) and 80% in the policy's implementation/effectiveness on the ground. We therefore take 20% of the HFPA-attributed figure in the first process to calculate a more conservative attribution (e.g., 75% \* 20% = 15% attribution).

Table 7 and 8 present the attribution rates for this SROI.

**Benefit period and drop-off** note that while many outcomes often last into the future, their magnitude and the amount of credit the HFPA may take for them is likely to diminish over time. We therefore also consider in the SROI analysis how long the outcomes are likely to last into the future (**benefit period**) and the rate at which

<sup>e</sup> See Appendix 1, question 4 for an example.

<sup>f</sup> See Appendix 2 for Policy Quality Rubric created and used for this study.

<sup>g</sup> See Appendix 1, question 3 for an example.

the outcomes decrease over time (**drop-off**). For this SROI analysis, we assume the benefit period for HFGA members to be four years in total (in other words, the benefits last for two additional years beyond the investment period). We assumed a steady value during the two-year investment period, with a steep drop-off of 80% in year 3 and 95% in year 4. This is because we assume that most of the benefits for stakeholders come from continued involvement with the HFGA, and while some well-being benefits may last beyond this involvement, they are likely to drop off rather quickly in the absence of continued interaction with the network.

For Halifax residents, we assume the benefit period to be seven years in total (in other words, the benefits last for five additional years beyond the investment period). We assumed a steady value during the two-year investment period, with a gradual drop-off in later years. This is because policy implementation is influenced by many complex factors determining whether it is effective or not (see the policy rubric in Appendix 2). At the time of this study the HFGA members are acting collectively as policy champions, however if the HFGA stopped its work there are many factors that could determine whether a policy succeeded or failed—a policy may increase in reach in the long-term or cease to exist altogether.

### Population impact: food insecure residents

To avoid overclaiming, we also reduce our initial estimate for the population of Halifax to focus only on (1) food insecure residents of Halifax and (2) the estimated share of these individuals who are effectively reached by a given policy. We therefore make the following assumptions with respect to the population of affected Haligonians.

1. We assume that benefit is reaching the portion of food insecure residents of Halifax rather than all residents, as they are the ones most likely to be significantly affected by the

policy changes. We therefore multiply the total population of HRM by the average proportion of food insecure individuals in Nova Scotia ( $417,800 \times 11.9\%^{14} = 49,718$ ).

2. We also focus on only the share of individuals likely to be reached by a given policy improvement. Not all individuals targeted by a policy will be reached as there may be other aspects of their physical/mental health, finances, etc. that could prevent them from being able to reap the benefits of a policy. In the absence of existing data on policy reach, we have employed a conservative estimate that 10% of the individuals targeted by each policy are effectively reached (and therefore receive the positive value) of the policy. We therefore further reduced our affected population of Halifax residents ( $49,718 \times 10\% = 4,972$ ).

Though we take this approach with respect to the affected population, we know that the HFGA's policy influence has the potential to positively impact many larger groups in Halifax. However, without better available information on the extent of policy reach, we have taken this very conservative approach to ensure that we are not overclaiming value. Once the HFGA has become more established and more 'final' outcomes emanating from policy improvements begin to materialise for stakeholders (e.g., increases in healthy food consumption among Haligonians as a result of policy changes), the SROI analysis and these underlying assumptions can be revisited and potentially improved upon.

**Table 7. Outcomes, Indicators and Attribution for HFPA Members**

Outcomes for HFPA Members	Outcome Indicator Definition	Attribution
Increased knowledge and awareness about food security	Self-reported increase in knowledge/ awareness of food security	67%
More coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments	Self-reported increase in time savings due to an increase in coordinated and strategic action to create healthy/positive food environments in Halifax	n/a*
Increased trust and belonging	Self-reported increase in feeling close to people in local area	39%
Increased competence to create positive food environments	Self-reported increase in having a chance to show capability in daily life	39%
Increased meaning and purpose	Self-reported increase in feeling that what one does in life is worthwhile	39%

\*Attribution for this outcome is incorporated into the indicator question.

**Table 8. Outcomes, Indicators and Attribution for HFPA Residents**

Outcomes for Halifax Residents	Outcome Indicator Definition	Attribution
Improved policy: Downtown Plan	Quality of food policy; measured on a 1-5 Likert scale where a certain level of quality on the scale is achieved if it meets a list of necessary components	15%
Improved policy: Green Network Submission		15%
Improved policy: 2014 Regional Plan		10%
Improved policy: Food Planning Toolkit		20%
Improved policy: TryDo Healthy Eating Strategy		15%

# PROGRAM INPUTS

Inputs are the resources invested in an activity in order for it to take place. In this case the inputs include the costs associated with the time contribution of HFGA members (valued using salaries of these individuals) as well as expenses paid by the EAC, including travel and overhead office expenses. These various costs were then combined to create a total investment cost (total inputs) for the HFGA's social return on investment. Table 9 summarizes these inputs.

**Table 9. Inputs for the HFGA**

HFGA	Costs 2014-15	Costs 2015-16	Expenses
Costs of OFP HFGA members	\$9,608.68	\$11,185.92	EAC staff salary, staff training, travel, office expenses (phone/internet), support staff (EAC financial manager), in kind meeting space and office support
Costs of non-OFP HFGA members	\$22,266.00	\$20,745.00	Staff salary time*
Total Annual Costs	\$31,874.68	\$31,930.92	
<b>Total Inputs 2014-16</b>	<b>\$63,805.61</b>		

\*Using current industry standard salaries based on staff position (e.g., senior manager) and organization/institution (e.g., government).

The combined total costs for the two-year period of this study are \$63,805.61.



# SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The SROI Ratio, based on the data acquired, shows the social value gained for every dollar invested and is determined by dividing the total value of benefits generated by HFPAs (after accounting for impact) by the value of investment in the HFPAs, as shown in the formula below. We calculate the total net present value (NPV) of benefits by adding together the benefits in each year, applying a discount rate to those which are projected to be generated in the future (i.e., beyond the investment period). This is to reflect the fact that people 'discount the present'—the value of benefits occurring now are worth more to them than the value of those occurring in the future. We therefore discount any value generated after the investment period using a commonly used discount rate of 3.5%.

$$\text{SROI Ratio} = \frac{\text{Total Net Present Value (NPV)}}{\text{Total Inputs Value}}$$

$$\text{SROI Ratio} = \frac{\$352,601}{\$63,806}$$

The **SROI ratio for the HFPAs is \$5.53 : \$1.00**. For every \$1 invested in the HFPAs, there is \$5.53 gained in benefit to stakeholders. In other words, **this project generates more than 5 times the amount of value that it costs**.

## Sensitivity Analysis

Sensitivity checks are a means of testing the robustness of our SROI analysis. In this SROI analysis, we do this by altering various assumptions to consider alternative scenarios and seeing what the impact is on our SROI ratio. Applying sensitivity checks also allows insight into which assumptions may have the greatest impact on our overall conclusions. Table 10 outlines the sensitivity checks conducted for the HFPA SROI.

**Table 10. Sensitivity of the HFPA SROI Ratio**

ASSUMPTION	SROI RATIO
<b>Baseline SROI ratio</b>	<b>\$5.53 : \$1.00</b>
Calculated weighted rather than simple average of proxies for policy improvement outcomes - valuations of general public are assigned 60% weighting and valuations of HFPA members are assigned 40% weighting	\$5.09 : \$1.00
Calculated weighted rather than simple average of proxies for policy improvement outcomes - valuations of general public are assigned 70% weighting and valuations of HFPA members are assigned 30% weighting	\$4.64 : \$1.00
Adjusting proxies for policy outcomes to use only proxy valuations of general public	\$3.32 : \$1.00
Alter attribution of policy quality change to individual outcomes from 20% to 10%	\$3.52 : \$1.00
Alter attribution of policy quality change to individual outcomes from 20% to 5%	\$2.51 : \$1.00
Alter estimate of share of individuals effectively reached by policy from 10% to 1%	\$1.91 : \$1.00
Adjusted discount rate from 3.5% (baseline) to 8%	\$5.14 : \$1.00
Adjusted discount rate from 3.5% (baseline) to 5%	\$5.39 : \$1.00
100% drop-off after investment period	\$5.08 : \$1.00

As the table shows, while the SROI ratio does not appear to be particularly sensitive to changing proxy values or discount rates, it is more sensitive to large changes in the underlying assumptions around attribution and policy reach. However, even under such extreme tests of our assumptions, the return is always significantly higher than the investment, indicating that the models' general finding of a positive return on investment is reasonably robust.

# CONCLUSION

Findings from this SROI analysis show that the HFGA produces positive benefits for both alliance members and the wider residents of Halifax, such as individuals living with food insecurity. It also demonstrates the significant reach that policy-influencing work can have.

The SROI ratio for the HFGA is \$5.53 : \$1.00. For every \$1 invested in the HFGA, there is \$5.53 gained in benefit to stakeholders. In other words, **this project generates more than 5 times the amount of value that it costs.**

## Looking at the outcomes

**HFGA members** experience the following key outcomes:

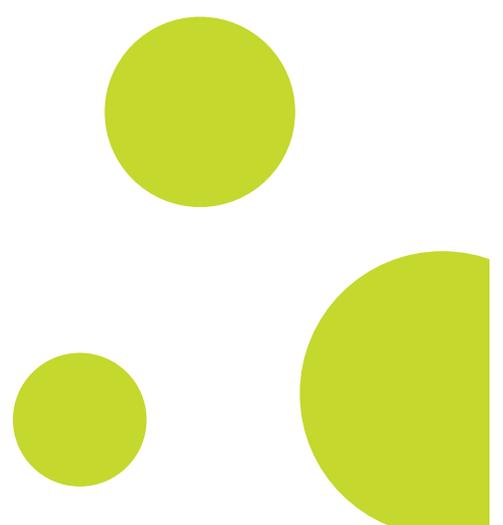
- Increased knowledge and awareness of food security
- More coordinated and strategic action to create positive food environments
- Increased trust and belonging
- Increased competence to create positive food environments
- Increased meaning and purpose

There is significant value in the HFGA to its members, ranging from personal to professional impacts. It has brought a focus to food security at the municipal level that was previously limited, and bridges practice and policy. These results are welcome as it has been argued by many people that working on large-scale problems in isolation is ineffective, and the results of this analysis help support this network model as positive in terms of improving coordination and strategy as well as in terms of well-being for network members.

**Halifax residents** have benefitted from the work of the HFGA through improvements in the following policies, which support positive food environments and community food security:

- Downtown Plan
- Green Network Submission
- 2014 Regional Plan
- Food Planning Toolkit
- TryDo Healthy Eating Strategy

This SROI illuminates the potential for increased population reach that can be achieved through policy-influence work. Policy interventions at a sectoral-level in Halifax have the potential to reach thousands of people in comparison to direct delivery interventions (e.g., healthy cooking classes), which may only be able to reach hundreds. However, once the HFGA is even more established, it would be useful for us to undertake future studies which dig further into longer-term outcomes for Halifax stemming from the policy improvements which we value in this study. Policy-work has great potential for longer-term sustainable change because of the ripple effects on other policies and because it works to change the food environment rather than simply changing individual behaviours.



## Further Questions

This SROI study is one of the first to explore the impacts of networks and policy-influence. Traditionally SROI has been applied to direct-delivery and individual impacts for which there may already exist measurement standards, for example in terms of financial proxy values. Given this new territory, there were a number of points where we navigated knowledge gaps such as:

1. Policy reach: how many people can you reasonably expect will or will not be impacted by municipal policies? We decided to take a very conservative estimate of 10% of food insecure individuals rather than all Halifax residents.
2. Attribution of policy quality change to individual outcomes: to what extent can improving a policy's language and content contribute to direct benefits for individuals (as opposed to other aspects, such as implementation of the policy in practice).
3. Benefit period and drop-off: What is the appropriate benefit period and drop-off period for such policies? Once a policy is in place it can theoretically create sustained benefit through effective implementation for decades. On the other hand, there are many factors that contribute to policy success or failure that are not in the control of HFGA members and it is difficult to estimate how long benefits may last. Again we decided to take a very conservative timeframe of 7 years with a steep drop off after the investment period and a gradual drop-off in later years.

Despite these research limitations, this SROI analysis is a helpful first step in understanding social value for such interventions and can provide a building block for such studies in the future.

## The Our Food Project's Network-Facilitation Role

The goal of this SROI study was to explore OFP's sectoral-level impact by focusing on the HFGA as one of our major network-facilitation roles. The results demonstrate that the investment of staff time and related resources by the OFP and other member organizations is worthwhile and should be continued. **As OFP transitions towards scaling-up its reach and impact, this study deepens the understanding of what this role is and why it's important, further honing our strategic directions.**



# APPENDIX 1:

## Example Survey Questions

Where question 1 implies “distanced traveled – after intervention”, question 2 implies “distanced traveled – before intervention”, question 3 implies “attribution”, and question 4 implies “deadweight”.

In this section, we are hoping to understand whether being a part of the HFPA has influenced your knowledge, well-being and other factors in your life.

### Knowledge and awareness

1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I have a comprehensive knowledge and awareness of food security issues and the policy landscape around food security						

2. Thinking about your knowledge just before you joined the Halifax Food Policy Alliance, how much would you agree or disagree with the following statement?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I had a comprehensive knowledge and awareness of food security issues and the policy landscape around food security						

3. To what extent do you think the changes, if any, in your answers above are due to the fact that you’re a Food Collaborator and worked with Georgia (as opposed to any other factors that might have changed your knowledge and awareness)?

Not at all 0%	A little 25%	Some 50%	Quite a lot 75%	A great deal 100%

Not applicable / no change

4. Imagine how your knowledge would be now if you had not been a member of the HFPA. How much would you have agreed or disagreed with the following statement?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I have a comprehensive knowledge and awareness of food security issues and the policy landscape around food security						

# APPENDIX 2:

## Policy quality rubric

This rubric was used to inform a 1-5 point Likert scale per policy, for which a poor quality policy was rated 1 and excellent was rated 5.

Indicators of Policy Quality		Poor	Excellent
<b>Content</b>	<b>LANGUAGE</b> The way food security is defined: healthy, just, sustainable.	Poor food security language/ definition	Excellent food security language/ definition
	<b>GOALS</b> The food security goals and content of the policy.	Poor food security goals	Excellent food security goals
<b>Capacity to Implement</b>	<b>LEADERSHIP &amp; ACCOUNTABILITY</b> The quality of leadership and lines of accountability.	Poor leadership and lack of accountability	Excellent leadership and clear lines of accountability
	<b>BUY-IN &amp; SUPPORT</b> Connection to and support across relevant departments and stakeholders.	Lack of connectivity and support across departments/ stakeholders	Excellent support across departments/ stakeholders
	<b>RESOURCES</b> Adequate resources available and allocated to the policy.	Lack of adequate resources	Excellent resources available
	<b>MEASUREMENT &amp; AMENDING</b> Adequate systems for measurement and amending policy as needed.	Inability to measure and amend	Excellent ability to measure and amend

# APPENDIX 3:

## Domains of well-being

This table demonstrates the division of value for different domains of well-being.<sup>15</sup>

According to NEF's national accounts of wellbeing, overall well-being is divided between personal and social well-being which we have each assumed to take 50% of the total well-being value. Each of these are then divided evenly between their different components and sub-components. This of course assumes that personal and social well-being are of equal value and the components and sub-components of a given area are also of equal value. Further research could potentially recommend alternative distributions for this.

Well-being type	Components	Subcomponents	Subcomponent value	Component value
PERSONAL well-being	Emotional well-being	Positive feelings	5%	10%
		Absence of negative feelings	5%	
	Satisfying life		10%	10%
	Vitality		10%	10%
	Resilience and self-esteem	Self-esteem	3.33%	10%
		Optimism	3.33%	
		Resilience	3.33%	
	Positive functioning	Competence	2.5%	10%
		Autonomy	2.5%	
		Engagement	2.5%	
Meaning and purpose		2.5%		
SOCIAL well-being	Supportive relationships		25%	25%
	Trust and belonging		25%	25%
TOTAL Well-being			100%	100%

# APPENDIX 4:

## Willingness-to-pay example

This is an example from the willingness-to-pay focus group exercise

### Urban Agriculture in Halifax

A new policy has been proposed in the Halifax Regional Municipality which will allow for the provision of more urban agriculture spaces throughout Halifax. This policy is designed to ensure that there will be more rooftop gardens and apiaries around Downtown Halifax which leads to multiple benefits including increased access to and consumption of healthy foods; increased food literacy and physical activity; more social spaces for community building, empowerment, and upward mobility; increased food affordability and potential local economic stimulation; as well as a variety of environmental benefits such as increased biodiversity and air quality.

1) Assume that the local government would only be able to implement this policy if it was able to raise funds through a voluntary campaign. Would you be willing to pay a sum of money in order to cover the costs of implementing this proposed policy in Halifax?

*THIS IS NOT A SOLICITATION OF ANY KIND*

- (a) Yes, I would be willing to financially contribute to such a policy
- (b) No, I would not be willing to financially contribute to such a policy

*[If the answer is "yes", proceed with question 2.  
If the answer is "no", jump straight to question 4]*

2) If yes, and taking into account your yearly income and other expenses, how much would you be willing to pay? [Please note: this payment is a one-off payment]

*THIS IS NOT A SOLICITATION OF ANY KIND.*

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

3) Why are you willing to pay this amount?

4) If not, why would you be unwilling to financially contribute?

- (1) It is not my personal responsibility
- (2) I don't think the policy is a good idea
- (3) I do not have financial means
- (4) Other \_\_\_\_\_

# REFERENCES AND NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> UK Cabinet Office. 2009, 2012. A Guide to SROI. Available at: <http://www.socialvalueuk.org/resources/guide-to-sroi/>
- <sup>2</sup> Halifax Food Policy Alliance. June 2015. Food Counts: Halifax Food Assessment. Available at: <http://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/public-health/halifax-food-assessment>
- <sup>3</sup> Halifax Food Policy Alliance. June 2015. Food Counts: Halifax Food Assessment. Available at: <http://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/public-health/halifax-food-assessment>. Executive summary.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid
- <sup>5</sup> Halifax Food Policy Alliance. 2015. Available at: <https://halifaxfoodpolicy.wordpress.com>
- <sup>6</sup> We used a healthcare economics approach for valuing overall well-being by equating mental health with well-being and using data from various sources. An incremental cost effectiveness ratio threshold per quality adjusted life year (QALY) of \$20,000 to \$100,000 has been proposed in Canada. Taking a midpoint of this threshold (\$60,000) and multiplying it by the UK Centre for Mental Health's estimate of the loss of health status from a severe mental health problem (0.352 QALYs) allowed an estimate of overall well-being of \$60,000 x 0.352 = \$21,120. We then split this total well-being value across different domains of well-being according to the framework outlined in NEF's National Accounts of Well-being (<http://www.nationalaccountsofwellbeing.org/public-data/files/national-accounts-of-well-being-report.pdf>)
- <sup>7</sup> This included 6 members of the HFGA that were directly involved in policy-influencing activities and had a deep understanding of each policy.
- <sup>8</sup> We gathered 11 staff and volunteers of the Ecology Action Centre that are not involved in food policy work. Due to time and resource constraints, we were unable to consult more broadly with other members of the public, but this is a potential avenue for future work into valuation.
- <sup>9</sup> Results were very different between the two stakeholder groups. Values from HFGA members were much higher than the general public group. A few factors may explain this in part: first, there is a significant income difference between HFGA members (government salaries) and the group of general public (NGO salaries); second, many of the policies offer a lens through which to make city planning decisions and as such are not very specific - therefore it was easier for the HFGA members who are experts in the policy space to understand the potential value of a policy to individuals and communities, whereas the general public group had a harder time imagining the direct impact on their lives and therefore attributed weaker values.
- <sup>10</sup> See Endnote 6 for a breakdown of how these figures are established
- <sup>11</sup> Halifax Food Policy Alliance. June 2015. Food Counts: Halifax Food Assessment. Available at: <http://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/public-health/halifax-food-assessment>.
- <sup>12</sup> See: <http://www.halifax.ca/halifaxgreennetwork/>
- <sup>13</sup> See: <http://www.halifax.ca/regionalplanning/FinalRegPlan.php>
- <sup>14</sup> Statistics Canada. Population of census metropolitan areas: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo05a-eng.htm>; Food insecurity in Canada: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-624-x/2015001/article/14138-eng.htm>
- <sup>15</sup> Breakdown of domains on p.21 of NEF's report National Accounts of Well-being. Available at: <http://www.nationalaccountsofwellbeing.org/public-data/files/national-accounts-of-well-being-report.pdf>

