

Building Food Security in Nova Scotia: Using a Participatory Process to Collect Evidence and Enhance the Capacity of Community Groups to Impact Policy

Food Security is "a condition in which all people at all times have access to safe, nutritionally adequate, and personally acceptable foods in a manner which maintains human dignity."

What is the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council?

- ❖ The Nova Scotia Nutrition Council is a non-profit group of volunteers concerned with the nutritional health of all Nova Scotians.

What does the project entail?

- ❖ The Nova Scotia Nutrition Council Food Security Research Working Group in partnership with Family Resource Centers across the province is completing a provincial survey of what it costs to eat a healthy diet in Nova Scotia.
- ❖ The project, incorporates principles of capacity building and social and economic inclusion by involving staff and participants from Family Resource Centers as partners to be involved in all aspects of the project including being trained to do the actual food costing in the grocery stores and learning to identify and implement strategies to build food security and affect policy in their communities.

What has happened so far?

- ❖ The partnership of the Family Resource Centers and the NSNC has been successful in obtaining \$24,992 over 12 months (Dec 01-Dec 02) from the Population Health Fund to complete the costing of a nutritious food basket.
- ❖ The partnership has been successful in receiving another 24,989.00 from the Population Health Fund to complete dissemination workshops to begin to look at how to use the data collected in the food costing.
- ❖ Using a train the trainer model, trainers were trained and then family resource center participants were trained in May 2002 to complete the costing of the nutritious food basket. The nutritious food basket is a list of foods that meets current nutrition recommendations and is based on what people in Nova Scotia eat.
- ❖ In June and October the food costing was completed throughout the Province.
- ❖ To build on our existing capacity to address food insecurity and to ensure we are able to use the results of the food-costing project to influence policy, the NSNC received a grant from the Canadian Diabetes Strategy. These funds have been used to conduct a national / international environmental scan of strategies that have been used by communities and professionals to impact policy. This information will be used during our efforts to influence policy to build food security in Nova Scotia.

Where to from here?

- ❖ Dissemination workshops will soon be scheduled to allow participants to discuss their experiences with the project and determine if their overall skills and specific knowledge related to influencing policy to build food security have been enhanced as a result of their participation in the project. This will evaluate the participatory process and capacity building that resulted from the food costing by using story-sharing workshops.
- ❖ The Research Working Group along with staff at Family Resource Centers have met with the Ministers of Community Services and Health Sept 2002 to discuss how we can work together to build food security. The results of this meeting were positive.

To learn more about the NSNC and the project you can visit the website at www.nsnrc.ca or contact Shelley Moran at 543-0854.