

**Assessing the availability and use of kitchens for community food programming in
Vancouver**

**LFS 350
Final Report**

Group 6

7 December 2015

Executive Summary

Group 6 from UBC's LFS 350 class worked in conjunction with a social planner from the City of Vancouver's Social Policy Department in their mission to create a food system that is economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable by helping to improve publicly accessible kitchens in Vancouver.

This is done by compiling data that we and other groups have obtained through phone and in-person interviews and then created general recommendations that can be implemented in the kitchens. The community kitchens being interviewed were from many regions in Greater Vancouver such as Mt. Pleasant, Grandview, Fairview, Arbutus Ridge, Hastings-Sunrise, and Downtown. The questions that we used to obtain our data were designed to determine the productivity and condition of the kitchens. Some examples of the questions used in our surveys are: Who uses the kitchen and how often do they use it? What types of foods are prepared in the kitchen?

We compiled the data from all the groups in order to create graphs and compare the kitchens to one another in different categories with *Asset Based Community Development* (ABCD) approach. The categories were determined based off of our inquiry questions such as number of people that can be in the kitchen at one time and operation hours and maintenance needed for the kitchen per week.

Based on this, we can determine what adjustments can be made for the kitchens as a whole. Our results show that most of the community kitchens are maintained in good condition, can accommodate ten people or fewer, and are used for community purposes such as making food as a group. We also found, however, that a few of the kitchens did not have food-related programs for their community members and that many of the kitchens lack the funding to improve their equipment and kitchen space. We recommend the allocation of more

funding to community kitchens to operate more effectively since these kitchens are a valuable resource for people that want to meet others. We also recommend that there is a further study done on these kitchens in the future as we have a small sample size and our class is the first one to establish a data set that future groups can compare with.

With the findings and recommendations, there are possibilities to increase productivity of community kitchens to build the bond between community members in the future.

Introduction



To view the system diagram more clearly, you may visit the website provided below.

http://prezi.com/9noy0nc9dvcw/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy

Community kitchens have been a valuable asset in many neighbourhoods as it is a place for people to gather and prepare food together. During our community-based project, we worked with a social planner from the City of Vancouver to survey kitchens in our assigned neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant, but because we did not have much success securing community kitchens to survey in this neighbourhood, we were given additional

neighbourhoods including Hastings-Sunrise, Fairview, and Arbutus Ridge. Throughout this report, we will be discussing our class findings after surveying multiple kitchens with support from academic sources.

Research of this type is significant because it has never been done before so it will establish baseline research on existing kitchens by different institutions. Despite our best efforts, one of our biggest limitations was having to find community kitchens in additional neighbourhoods that wasn't the one originally assigned. Our group struggled with this as many kitchens refused to let us survey their kitchens. Another limitation would be the small sample size of data, as well as any design and procedural challenges that arose due to the fact that it was our first trial of a project of this type.

During the course of our project, an objective we kept in mind was to learn the conditions of the kitchen in order to make recommendations to improve the use and quality of existing programming. The inquiry questions we aim to answer through this report are: who uses the kitchen? how often are they used? what kinds of food are prepared in the kitchen? where do they get their food? what are the assets of their kitchen? and what would they like to improve on that we can help with? if they don't want help, why not?

Methods

Our group decided to take a qualitative and quantitative data collection approach. Our procedure included first finding a list of community kitchens in our assigned neighborhood and contacting them. Then we used a mixed method interview encompassing phone interviews, on-site visits, and drop-ins. After this, we conversed with the community practitioners following the survey questions provided and took photos of the kitchens with permission. Following data collection, we organized data based on results from the survey by discussing as a group what is significant to our research and making a chart for it. We then

proceeded to making analysis tables of the kitchens dependent on its uses, facilities, resources, and utilities, and analyzed the data based on the *Community Based Community Development* (ABCD) system approach. Some ethical considerations we kept in mind throughout the duration of our project was anonymity of information and community practitioners, which was facilitated through providing a consent form. As students from UBC, we were aware of the possibility of a power dynamic and in order to avoid this, we made sure to use simple language that was easy to understand to make our encounters as comfortable as possible. Lastly, out of mutual respect we were courteous of their time as well as our own.

Results

There are 28 kitchens with completed response on the survey, in which 20 of them have a commercial-type kitchen while 8 of them have a domestic-type kitchen. All kitchens have someone responsible for the management. In the surveyed community places, 10 of them are religious organization, 11 of them are non-profit agency and rest of the 6 are cultural or community service center (i.e. elderly house).

Current situations of the surveyed community kitchens:

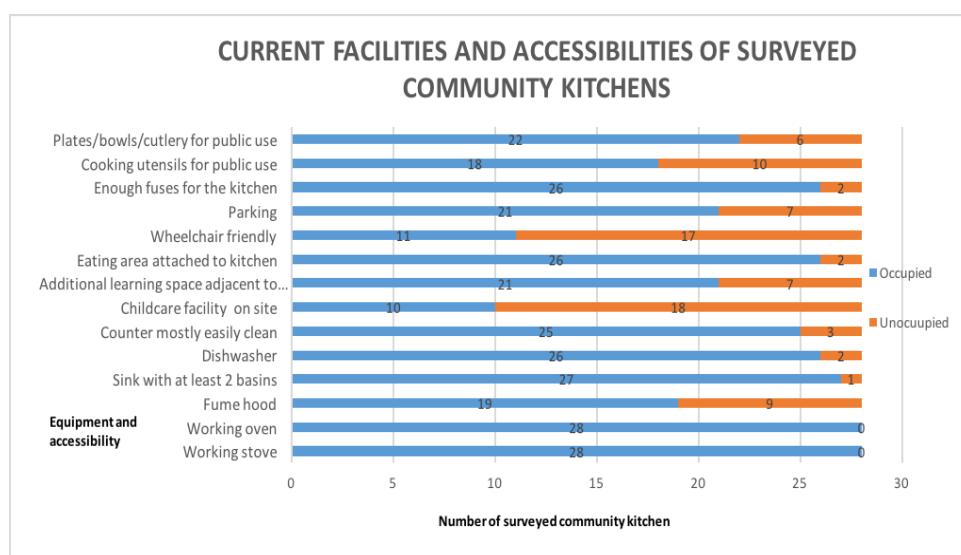


Figure 1. Current Facilities and accessibilities of surveyed community kitchens

From Figure 1, we can see that most of surveyed community kitchens is equipped with facilities that provided a convenience environment for a group of people to access cooking (i.e. dishwasher to deal with lots of dirty utensils after usage), while more than half of the surveyed community kitchens does not have a wheelchair friendly or childcare facility on site.

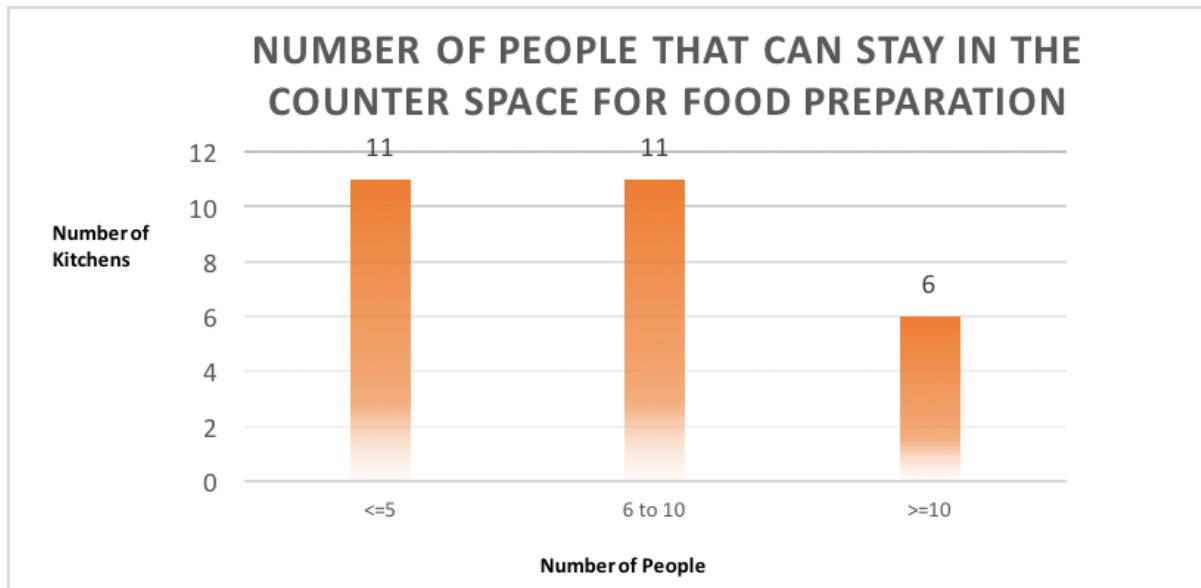


Figure 2. The kitchen capacity for food preparation crew

From Figure 2, we realized that most of the surveyed community kitchens cannot hold more than 10 people at a time, which might indicate that usually there were a small group of people making food for all of the people meeting on site, as it is the most frequent usage of community kitchens in Vancouver currently from our survey (Figure 3). Moreover, even though some kitchens did allow squads to cook in the kitchen during cooking classes (i.e. kitchen programming), the number of people allowed to participate at once were limited owing to space restriction of the kitchen

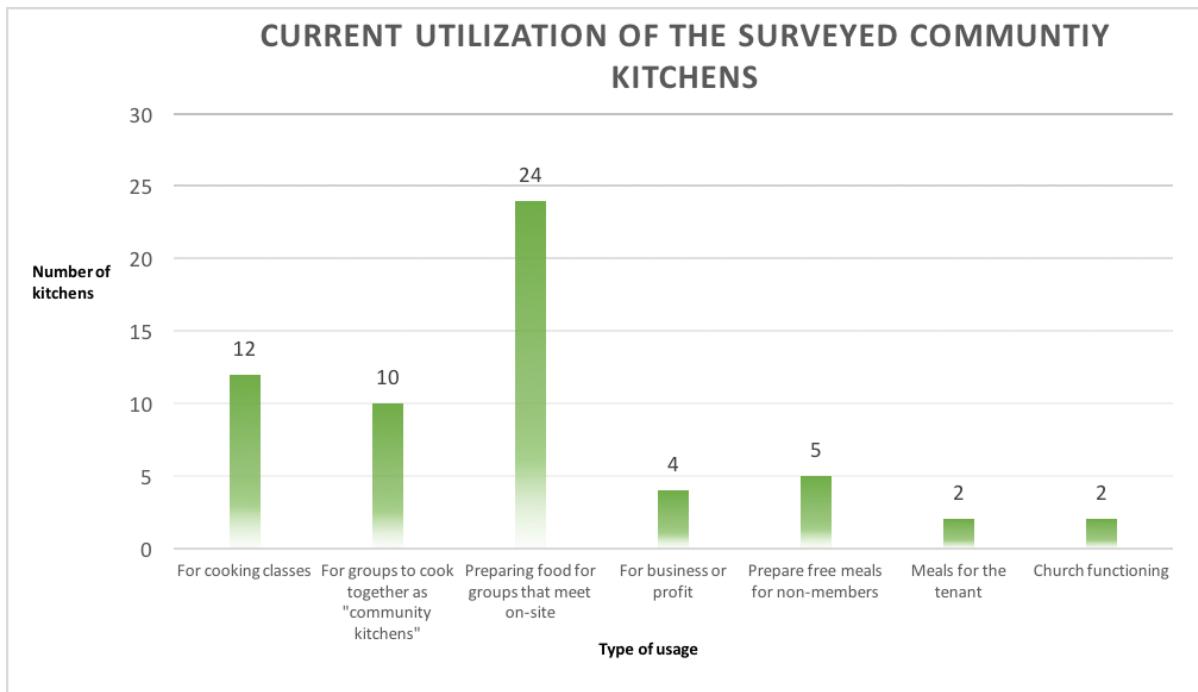


Figure 3. Current usage of surveyed community kitchens

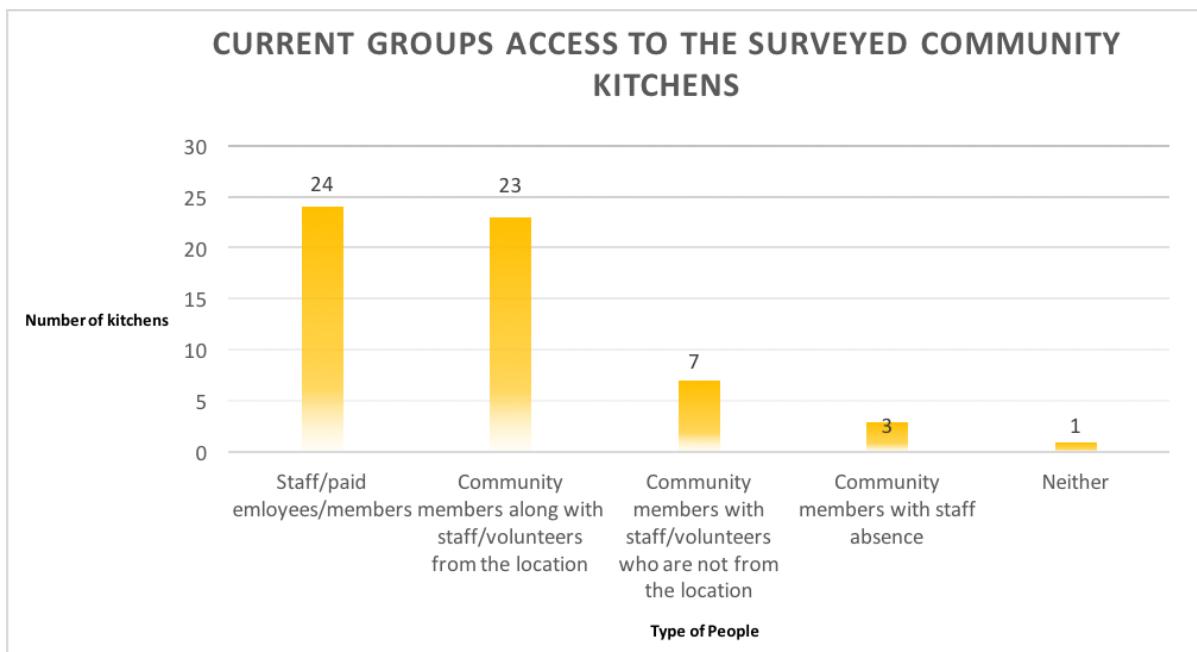


Figure 4. Personnel that are permitted to use the surveyed community kitchens

On the other hand, even though the community kitchens were well-equipped, we could observe that most surveyed community kitchens only allow internal personnel (i.e. staff

and members on-site) to get access of it while less likely for organizations that were not related to the community site (Figure 4).

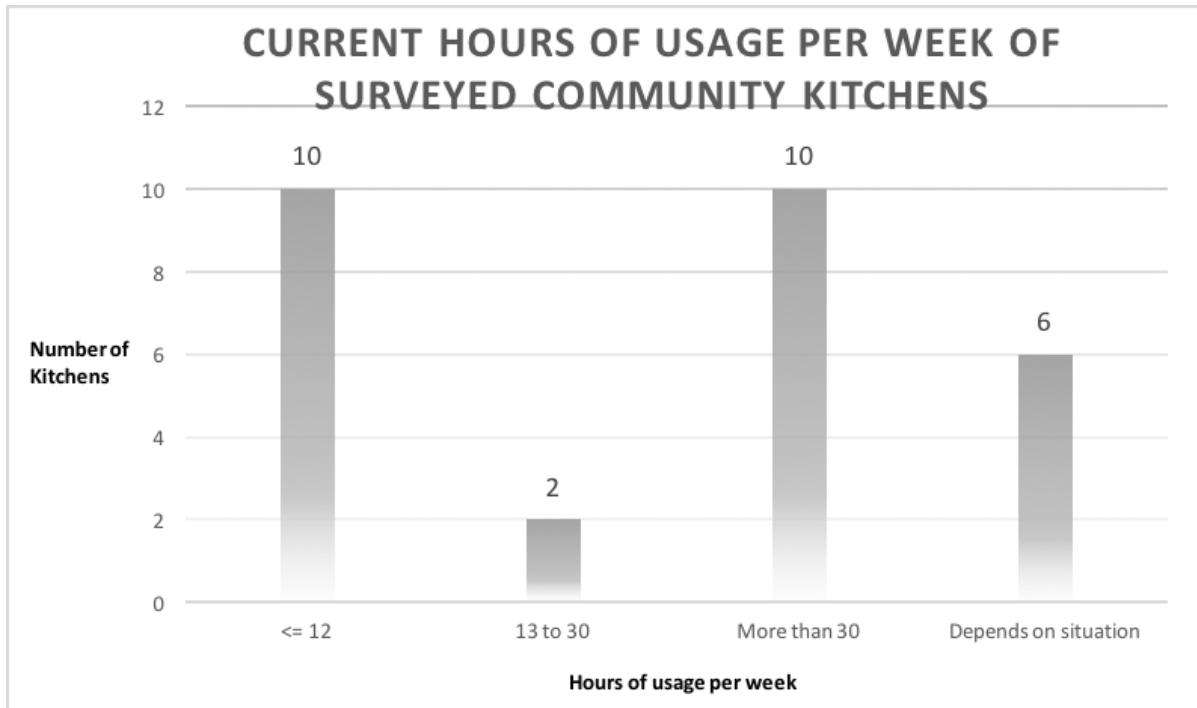


Figure 5. Utilization frequency of surveyed community kitchens

From Figure 5 results, we found that surveyed community sites were likely to use their kitchens either very rarely (less than 12 hours per week) or very frequently (more than 12 hours per week). Moreover, we realized that there were a significant number of kitchens that had usage time dependent on the season of the year and therefore it could generate an idea that the usage of kitchens was pretty flexible in the city of Vancouver.

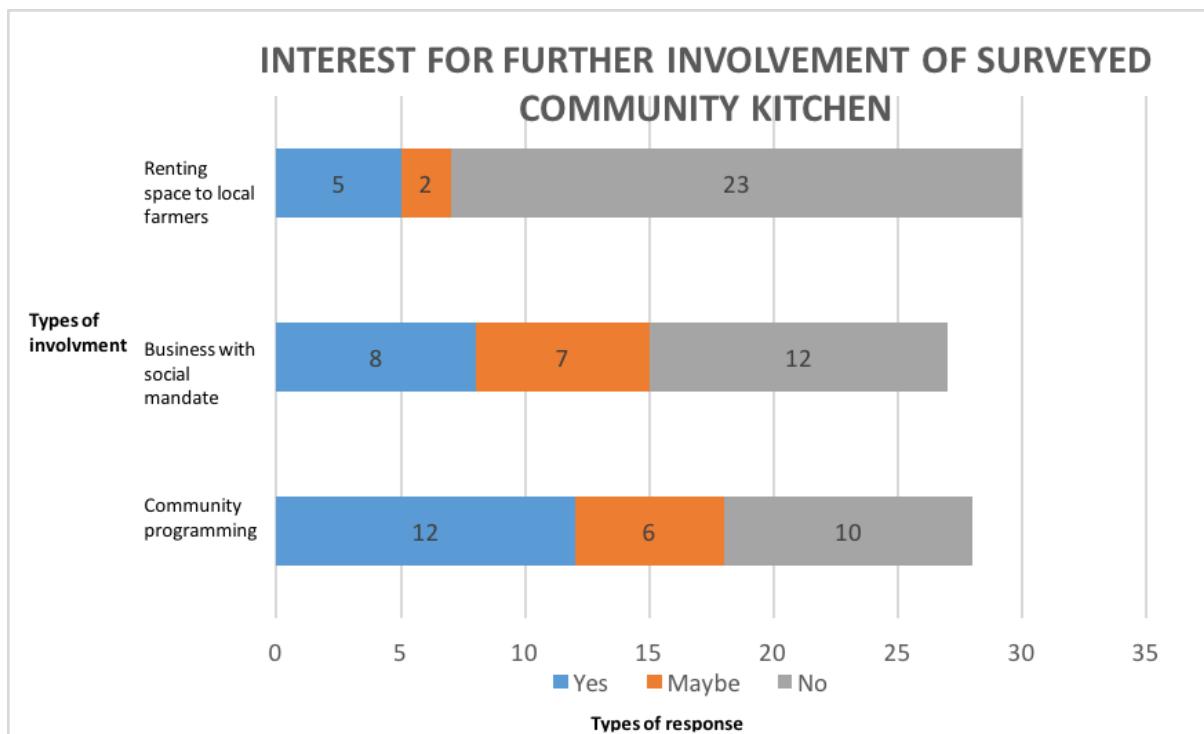


Figure 6. Community involvement that are interested by surveyed community kitchens

Distant view from the surveyed community kitchen:

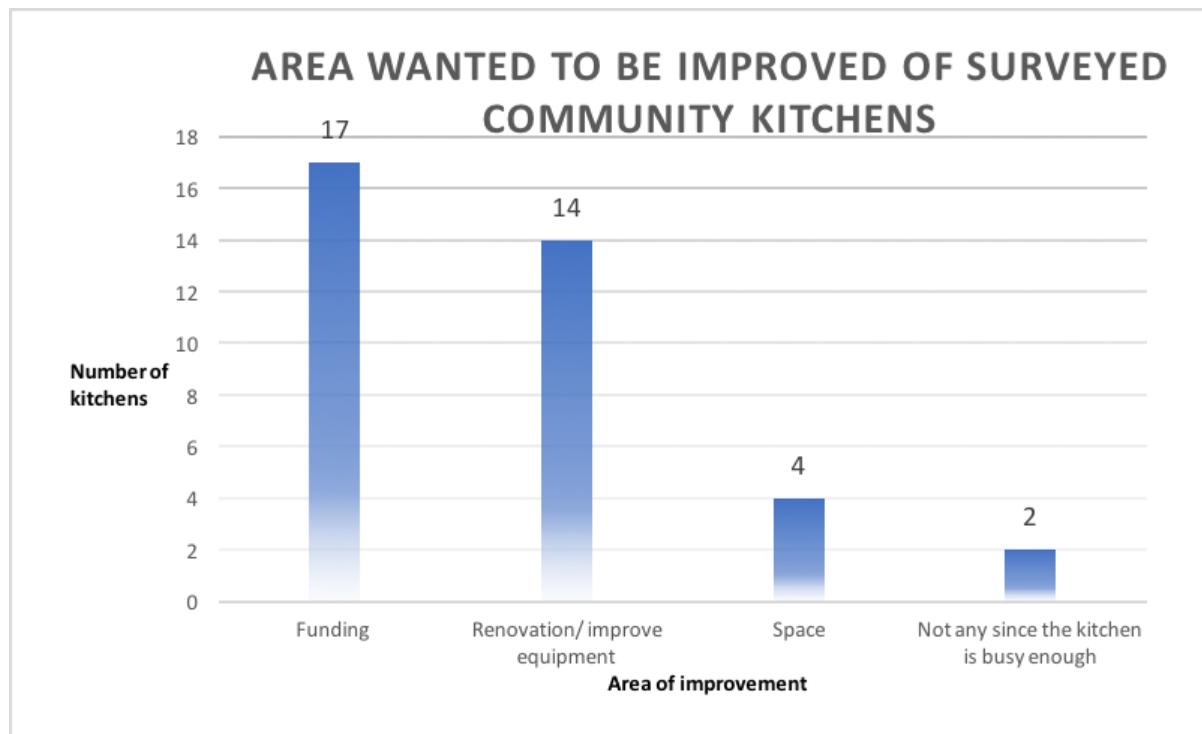


Figure 7. Improvements that is willing to obtain by surveyed community kitchens

From Figure 6 and 7, we might realize if the community site are hoping to get more involved in the neighborhood, they would rather hold community programming, such as cooking class, instead of business with social mandate or renting spaces to local farmers. Most of the surveyed sites reasoned that as they were non-profit associations, they hope that nothing related to profit would be holding on-site to oppose with their values. Moreover, plenty of them rationalized that there were not enough spaces even for themselves and therefore it would not be possible to store local farmers' product in their site. With community locations that were not interested in community programming in the future, they proposed that the kitchens were busy enough for their internal use and thus no more time can be spared for holding other events. Simply from the observations in Figure 7, we could also see that most community kitchens thought that funding is the most practical support to the kitchens, with renovations of equipment came into next. We could rationalize that there might be development that were willing to be done by the kitchens while they considered that they currently might not have the capacities to achieve it. Also, only a few of them thought that there is not enough space in the kitchens and this might reflect that most surveyed community kitchens were satisfied with having a small group of people to use the kitchens at once.



Figure 8. Photo depicting a kitchen found in search of group's assigned neighbourhoods

Discussion

Overall it was found that the kitchens are well fitted to support a community kitchen program by having a greater amount of assets in the facilities than deficits (Figure 1). For the most part kitchens were well functioning with stovetops and other equipment. The findings of the assets available are one of the main points we want to communicate to our community partner, the city of Vancouver. The city's food strategy hopes to increase food assets by 50% by 2020 (City of Vancouver, 2015). Community kitchens do not encompass the whole picture of food assets but they can be a key part in helping people connect with one another and reduce social isolation (Iacovou *et al.* 2013), learn healthier eating habits and promote use of local food inputs to the food system. These available assets also help us work more easily with the framework of ABCD.

Because of the group's small sample size of three kitchens surveyed, we decided to use the compiled data from all the groups for our analysis. A common problem in community kitchens is size limitations (Lee *et al.*, 2010) and this can be hard to rectify without renovations or building new spaces for kitchens. Out of the 28 surveyed kitchens only 6 had enough room for more than 10 people to be actively preparing food at the same time given the amount of counter space (Figure 2) and majority of them are accessed by on-site staff only (Figure 4) Even though fewer people at a time would reduce the amount of food produced, increasing quantity of food made in a kitchen is not the only goal. A smaller group in such a space could help to promote teamwork and building community. When using the spaces for education, teaching with a smaller student to teacher ratio may be preferred because participants in classes can get more attention from their instructor. Therefore, kitchen programming would need to be assessed before being allocated appropriately to the spaces they would work in.

It was seen that kitchens were either busy with usage of more than 30 hours a week or usage of less than 12 hours a week, and a number of them were dependent seasonally which might be owing to lots of surveyed kitchens were located in churches (Figure 5). Unfortunately the survey did go deeper into how or why the hours of kitchen usage varied, this could be due to seasonal pressures on the kitchens such as holidays, especially since many of the kitchens were in churches. As for the kitchens that are currently less busy, there could be opportunities to move towards more complete utilization of the kitchens. For instance, if the spaces currently have large time gaps with no kitchen usage, this may allow for programs that require bigger consecutive blocks of time (i.e. cooking classes).

The main use of community kitchens was for preparing food for on-site meetings (Figure 3). This data points to the concept of *faith-based community development* (FBCD), which has similar characteristics to other forms of community development (crisis relief, counselling, economic/social advocacy, and market intervention) but looks at assets coming from religious institutions that already have social justice mandates (DeFilippis & Saegert, 2013). The fact that most of the kitchen usage was for groups meeting on-site suggests that the "faith sector" (consisting of churches) has assets that are not fully integrated into Vancouver communities and that their current activities mostly cater to parishioners or emergency aid for in-need individuals. However, less than half the community kitchens surveyed (12) reported having cooking classes and 10 kitchens claimed to be open to group cooking in a community kitchen context, allowing for future interaction and social network integration. It is also important to note that tensions may arise when engaging the faith sector and implementing FBCD since religious intuitions, such as the Catholic Church, encourage conversion as part of their mandate which may lead to a difference in ideologies and beliefs. Also, churches may not have the expertise or experience needed to deal with policy or market

interventions and may require internal connections or outside assistance (parishioners, consultants, government) to enter the non-profit market (Wuthnow, 2004).

Kitchens reported being most interested in implementing community programs but the least interested in participating in the local food system (renting space to local farmers) (Figure 6). This programming is essential when empowering individuals with nutritional and food preparation knowledge which is a source of power for communities and increases community cohesion (Campbell, 2004). However, being connected to producers is key for increasing capacity and lowering costs with economies of scale (Hild, 2009). Also from an *asset-based community development* (ABCD) approach, being involved in the food system allows for the mapping of social capital in networks that are used to mobilize change (Mathie & Cunningham, 2002). By engaging with farmers, kitchens not only promote local food production but also integrate themselves in a network that can be called up later to create systemic change.

Most community kitchens cited funding and renovation/equipment as the main types of support requested, which would require integrating these kitchens into existing asset-maps of Vancouver and examine current streams of funding such as the Neighbourhood Food Networks (Mansfield & Kelly, 2013). There are several alternate streams of funding in Vancouver, such as the City of Vancouver and other funders including foundations and United Way (Carr & Fodor, 2012).

Our limitations initially include the lack of access to kitchens in our initial and subsequently larger search area once we felt the Mount Pleasant area was exhausted in regards to community kitchens. Limitations of methods include using the compiled survey results from the website. Often the data was overlapping but it did not specify where this overlap occurred. For example, in the chart of the current use of surveyed community kitchens, it didn't tell us how many programs each specific kitchen had (Figure 3), so it is

difficult to recommend programs to those kitchens. Demographics of participants were also not included in our survey and subsequently the results. The survey used by all groups also contributed to limitations in that it didn't go in depth, many of the questions can be answered Yes/No. A survey with more short answer or open ended question could be more enlightening as to what the kitchens can offer and what type of programs they're interested in expanding or implementing, if any.

Conclusion

This project based on the data obtained from twenty-eight different community kitchens has shown that most of the community kitchens in the city of Vancouver are well equipped. Although most of the community kitchens were used by community members to gather and prepare food together, less than half of them offered community programs (i.e. cooking classes) and they are mostly accessed and attended by onsite community members. Thus, according to our results, the community kitchens in Vancouver were not always a place to provide community members to come and cook foods but rather the members were considered as receivers of foods. This shows that the community kitchens in Vancouver do not necessarily follow the definition of community kitchen. Also, there were a number of unanswered questions. For instance, having no demographics of participants, a lack of in depth information on survey questions and receiving no responses and rejections from community kitchens made it difficult to determine what the kitchens can offer and need. For recommendations, it is critical for community kitchens to have the basic understandings of ABCD approach and be able to apply it for their kitchen usage. In addition to getting more funding, they can also focus on employing the resources they already have by seeking what skills the community members can contribute and how the practitioners can help train the members. In this way, they can increase the use of human resources by discovering what

skills and gifts individuals have and this can lead to creating a more sustainable community environment. Moreover, conducting future programming and gathering more data from different groups in the community such as community participant/residents will be helpful to obtain a wide range of perspectives. Simply collecting data from community practitioners can give the biased results on how the kitchens are used and what is needed. Overall, the project gave us the general picture of how the kitchens are used and what recommendation can be offered. However, having a few limitations such as not knowing what other community members beside practitioners (such as residents) think of the kitchens or not knowing how willingly the practitioners will accept our recommendations, it is difficult to assume how effective our recommendations will be for the community kitchens to utilize in the future.

To sum up we hope that our recommendations on use of ABCD system and gathering data from other groups of population other than practitioners can give positive impacts on creating a sustainable kitchen environment and eventually forming a strong bond between the individual and the community in the future.

APPENDIX

Critical Reflection

“A”: At first I thought that this project would have been relatively easy to do. The project description told us everything we needed to do which were to go to kitchens, interview the staff, and then compile the data and present it. I didn’t realize how difficult it would be to actually interview a kitchen. Our group had a plan when we got our project and we knew what we had to do. Within a couple weeks, however, the plan changed drastically and we found ourselves very demotivated. During the significant change tutorial, I was able to look back at all the things we tried and failed to do. It made me feel calmer to acknowledge that we needed help and that we didn’t know how to continue with our project. Since our group wasn’t able to visit any kitchens during the flexible learnings, I found it valuable to have a time when we could communicate as a group. After revising our strategy to obtain data and expanding our region, we were finally successful in getting a kitchen interview. I think it was a much more rewarding experience since we had to struggle so much just to get some data whereas the project might not have been such an interesting way of learning about gratification if we had been able to obtain our data so easily. I’m happy with the experience we were able to have with this project since we were able to work with a community in a real life setting.

“E”: I got an enjoyable experience in LFS 350 in terms of the flexible learning experience that was new to me. While I got a chance to listen to the online media repeatedly, I could make sure myself to interpret all important concepts before moving to the next, which effectively benefit on my learning. Moreover, I never realized that it would be challenging to make an appointment with community kitchens. Every time I got denied for interviews in community, I did feel frustrated and panic for the project. Still, as this project progressed, I

got used to accept rejections and I am thankful for having such a scope change in the project because I started to find alternative methods in order to achieve our goal, such as phone interviews as well as I got more chance to practice talking with different community practitioners, which it made me feel less stressed when I finally made an on-site visit. Also, I worked better in a team this year compared to LFS 250 as I had a hard time to concentrate in tutorial meetings. Without time-constrained boundaries, I found that I could contribute to the project in a better quality as I constantly obtained feedback from my teammates through an online platform. Overall, this class is valuable to me since now I feel more confident to start up a conversation with strangers and obtain a good team working pattern compared to the start of the semester, which both things can positively influence my working style and social interactions in the long lifetime.

“E”: Looking back on this course, what really stood out to me was the ABCD model of community development. Previously, I wasn’t aware of this concept, of looking at what a community, agency, kitchen and or the people themselves have to offer instead of going in and looking for all kinds of problems to “fix”. At times during this project I had to remind myself that this was not the goal, and even though we are making recommendations to where funding is to be directed by the City of Vancouver overall we’re reporting all of the food assets, community kitchen wise, to them. We were lucky in that our findings did reveal more assets than deficits and we hope that the City of Vancouver can explore these further and create some exciting, appropriate and well-needed programs. The asset-based part of ABCD can apply to working as a group as well, seeing what special skills each member has and allocating work appropriately in order to maximize our effectiveness. In the future I hope to keep this asset-based mindset when continuing projects at UBC and in the workplace. Also I want to keep this in mind when thinking about myself, I tend to have a negative mindset

when I think of what I can achieve, I think of all the things I don't know and get frustrated and discouraged. It would be better to remember what I know and what I can build on it if I put in the effort.

"E": This project was an eye opener when it came to the idea of community food security. I remember the distinct questions in lecture that went along the lines of, "What IS food security? How can everyone be food secure?" By engaging with community discourse and physical kitchens, I now know that food security (as seen by communities) is very much about sustainability and social justice and not solely about economic growth. The idea of a *pareto optimum* describes a point in which no individual can be made better off; perhaps with our limited amount of natural resources and disparities in food distribution, it is not technology but our humanity and stewardship that will bring us closer to aggregate community food security.

"E": Although our group has had up and downs with this project, I found it to be an enjoyable experience nonetheless. Through this project, I learned the importance of community kitchens within the system as well as its inputs and outputs. It became apparent to me how crucial each component of a food system is. Just from the systems diagram that our group put together alone, there were many intra- and inter-connections between factors that I would have never expected to see. All throughout LFS 250, we learned about systems thinking and I felt that LFS 350 built on that by introducing the ABCD approach. This experience was significant to my learning because I was able to see and apply concepts taught in class to real world situations. Initially, it was frustrating when we were unsuccessful with securing kitchens in our assigned neighbourhood because our group was so eager to finally execute the plan we had put hard work into. But although things did not unravel as

planned, we learned that there is always more than one way to get to a destination and the challenges we encountered as a group only pushed us to grow more as learners. The ABCD approach will be a valuable tool I'm taking away from this class that can be applied to other aspects of learning, whether it's inside the classroom or in real life encounters.

“E”: Throughout the course, there were four flexible learning sessions, and I liked the idea of having flexible learning. I could use them very effectively and efficiently to search and to make connections with the kitchens. And also since these sessions were provided with a few Ted-talks and podcasts, I thought those resources were very informative and useful which I could apply some of the insights when I was meeting the community practitioners. For instance, Sirollie’s speech, *shut up and listen* talks about how the best way to help others is simply by listening to others. From this speech, it was very insightful to see how significant it is to be a listener or the “servant of local passion” to become a true helper. Acknowledging this key strategy, I tried not to give suggestions but was there to listen simply to what they have to say to motivate them to seek their ways to meet their needs. This project gave us a bit of challenge such as getting unanswered responses and rejections, however, the project overall gave me the most hands-on experience of exploring to engage with the community so, I as of now can understand what it feels like to be an active citizen who cares about the community and is willing to participate to help the community to make it more sustainable.

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