LFS 350 Community-Based Experiential Learning Final Report

Vancouver Food Asset Map: Kitchen Access

December 4, 2016

Group 8

Introduction

An asset map is a tool that recognizes and provides a visual of the valuable resources available for public use to raise awareness and support access for community members (Silas et al.). The first food asset map in Canada was introduced to Toronto in 2009, with the intent of mapping resources to help individuals in low economic areas (Mcintyre, 2016). Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), the local health authority, is working to develop a similar version for Metro Vancouver. Their goal is to support healthy lives and healthy communities, recognizing food insecurity is a barrier to achieving this. It is recognized that individuals with poorly equipped kitchen facilities have three times the rate of food insecurity in comparison to those with suitable food preparation resources (Broughton et al., 2006). Our goal is to strengthen the knowledge of kitchen access programs in Vancouver and assess the usability of the Vancouver Food Asset Map amongst community members.

One way a food asset map can be created is by compiling key information through reaching out to stakeholders in the community. This includes key information such as the locations and operating hours of community kitchens, grocery stores, neighbourhood houses, and low cost or free food. We are working together with VCH to bridge the gap between food assets, community members, and agencies, by providing an updated, dynamic, and easy to use tool. Ultimately, our project aims to answer the question: Is the Vancouver Food Asset Map a solution to help meet the needs of food insecure individuals?

Methods

Using websites, phone-calls, and emails, we built on an existing database of assets provided to us by VCH. Contact information, location, services provided, cost, and other key details of each organization was input into an excel document (see appendix A). Upon completion, this will be integrated into the map by VCH. Additionally, we also performed community based research by working directly with our community partner, Little Mountain Neighbourhood House, to trial the map.

All members of our group completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) certification, and acted in compliance with these standards at all times. We used a standardized informed consent document supplied by our professor, Will Valley. To respect the privacy of our survey participants, information was kept private and participants were informed that their information would only be accessible by individuals involved in the project.

Results

Over the course of two months, we contacted over 100 assets. The process was more difficult than expected, as we did not get replies from some emails, and multiple attempts by phone were unsuccessful. As a result, not all assets were completed. In conversations over the phone, some assets were happy to provide information about their resource and were curious to see how they may benefit from it. Inevitably, we had a few of the assets on our list ask to not to be included in the map as they felt they did not want to be "advertised." We were however able to collect several additional kitchen access assets that were not previously on the map.

Initially we were asked by our community partner to trial the map at Nat Bailey farmers market in Mt. Pleasant. Alternatively, we set up a booth inside Riley Park Community Center in order to access Wi-Fi. Trialing the map with the public was a positive experience. Participants were receptive and quite interested. We successfully collected 18 evaluations and informed consent forms. The most significant results showed 89% found the map easy to use, and 73% found the information about the assets easy to understand (see appendix B). The surveys also produced a wide variety of suggestions for what assets they would like to see in the community. This included more community gardens, access to affordable and local food, and food recovery initiatives. Results also provided suggestions for improvement of the map such as including the distance between their location and the asset, more small retail groceries, and green school programs for kids. We had hoped to run the trial twice at different locations but finding a time that worked with our community partner proved challenging. Unfortunately, our community partner was preoccupied during our trialing and as a result we did not obtain an evaluation - our point of contact at VCH assured us this was not a problem.
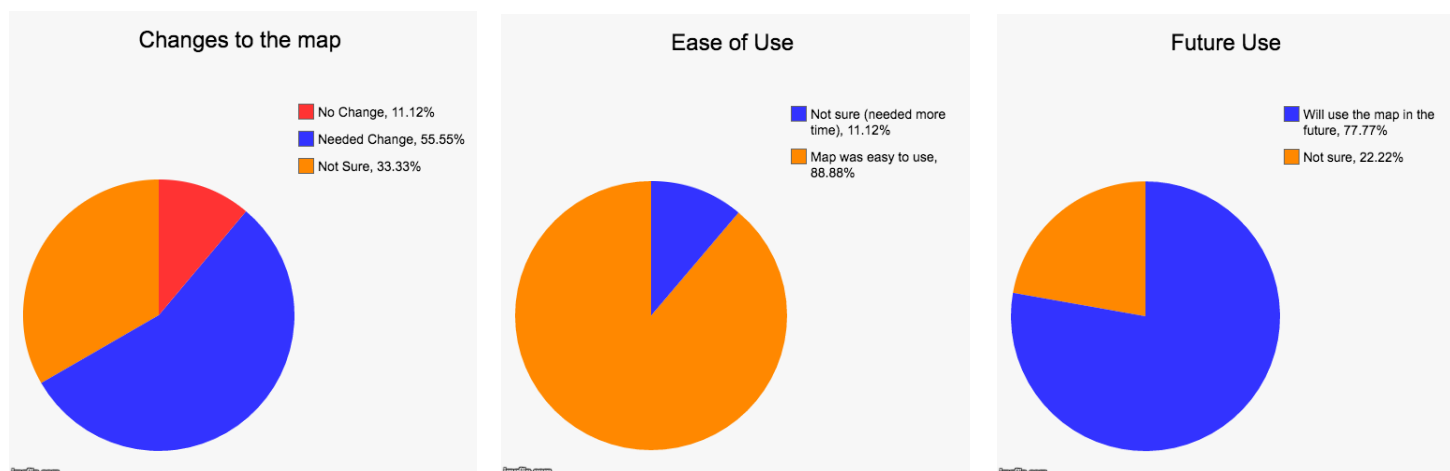
*Information represented here was produced from the results of 18 evaluations of the Vancouver Food Asset Map.

Discussion

  Our results have indicated that many people were interested in the map and gave positive feedback regarding its usability. When asked whether participants in the trialing knew about food assets in their community, 83.3% said no (see appendix B). These numbers suggest that most community members aren't familiar with the resources in their community. This demonstrates that a food asset map may be useful to increase awareness about food assets. Moreover, it is possible that there was misunderstanding of the concept of a food asset, as this terminology can be hard to comprehend. Upon trialing the map, 77.7% of participants said they would use the map again in the future. This justifies the potential usability and success of the map in the future.

  As mentioned in the results, we were unable to collect feedback from our community partner. Although this may still happen in the future, we are limited in our ability to fully understand how effective this map will be. The knowledge our community partner has would have been of great value to further enhancing the map. Additionally, if we had been given the opportunity to trial the map and collect surveys a second time, it is likely that we would have had a more accurate representation of the food insecure population. Moreover, we were unable to gather all the information needed from the assets. As a result, not all the data is available or up-to-date.

  While the map has potential, it also has its limitations. Firstly, the map simply locates the food assets available in a region and doesn't account for the potential financial and physical limitations that the user may be experiencing. Secondly, the tool requires internet, an electronic device, and computer literacy. Given that the map is tailored towards low income and food insecure individuals, this may not always be possible. Moreover, we found several high-cost assets that would likely not be used by the targeted demographic. Nevertheless, this tool can be

beneficial for the assets who are trying to promote their services. Lastly, when collecting surveys, it would have been beneficial to include demographic information about the respondents to determine if in fact we surveyed food insecure individuals.

The food asset map was created by VCH, an institution, for community use. Instead of the assets contributing to the map themselves, VCH outsourced third party individuals, in this case LFS 350 students. This has contributed to the creation of a disconnect between the assets and the map. This resulted in a lack of awareness and ownership of the map amongst the assets. When contacting assets, we found that many of them had no knowledge of the map and were unclear of the purpose or how they have become involved. The absence of these voices, and a seemingly non-defined marketing strategy limits the chances of the map becoming widespread.

Conclusion

Our project has shown that a food asset map can be used by community members to locate food resources in their area. Physical and economic access to food are key requirements of achieving food security (FAO, 1996). "However, the map will not address food security directly. Only adequate income support will help with the root of this issue" (Romses, 2016). By establishing kitchen resources in our community, we are contributing to the increased awareness of food assets for those struggling to acquire food or cooking facilities. It's important to note that this map is a tool to support food security, and not a solution. Before food insecure individuals can be supported by these resources, we must know what resources exist which is what our project was intended to accomplish. Some questions that we came across at the end of our project was whether people would actually use the map to find resources in their community and to what extent this would contribute to achieving food security status in the community. We agree that recognizing assets is a small first step that could potentially lead to bigger and better projects in the future. While community partner participation and insight was integral and

valuable, we found there was inadequate input of community voices during planning. More community involvement and collaboration between food assets and VCH, along with frequent updates and evaluations would ensure a truly community-based and effective map. In the upcoming years, VCH must allocate a group of people to take responsibility and oversee the project as the constant evolution of the food assets could quickly lead to an outdated map. Moving forward, we would like to see it expand and become used frequently by individuals and to see communities unified by the goal of food security.

Appendix

A)

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	**Type**	**Name**	**Who is this for?**	**Cost**	**Key Information**	**Day and Time**
19	Category: Kitchens or Food Programs				Examples of key information to include: How to access, Room capacity, Equipment available, Licensed kitchen. For food skills workshops and programs include information such as course description, ages for activities and programs.	
20	Kitchen Access	XX Community Centre	Open to community programs and	Free	Sign-up required to book space. Kitchen includes oven, stove, refrigerator (no freezer). Sink (no dishwasher). Cuttlery and dishes are available. No cooking equipment available. 5 small tables and chairs available. Room can accommodate 30. Contact front desk to sign-up.	Friday - Sunday, 2 PM - 6 PM

B)

Vancouver Food Asset Map
Evaluation Questions for Community Members

Date (month and day):November 5th, 2016
Time:11:00am-1:00pm
Location: Riley Park Community Center
Evaluation Questions:
(For each question please check "√" yes, no, or not sure. Provide written response under comments.)

Yes √	No √	Not Sure √	Comments
1. Before attending this event did you know how to find food assets in your community? e.g., free or low cost meals or groceries, food banks, community gardens, and community kitchens? (If yes, what resources do you use to find food assets?)			
3 **16.6%**	**15** **83.33 %**		**Drive around, internet** **Newspaper**
2. Was the Food Asset Map tool easy to use? If not, why wasn't it easy to use?			
16 **88.88**		**2** **11.11**	**Need to spend more time**

%		%	
3. Were the instructions on how to use the Map easy to follow? If not, what was difficult to follow?			
18 100%			**Pretty intuitive for people who are used to using computers**
4. Was the information provided about the assets easy to understand? If not, what information was difficult to understand? (Please include the asset(s) in your response).			
13 72.22 %	1 5.55 %	4 22.22 %	**Icon Differentiation (different objects) feels a bit confusing with using colours** **Need more time to explore** **Did not have time to explore**
5. Is there anything that needs to be added or changed to make it easier for you to find food assets in Vancouver?			
10 55.55 %	2 11.11 %	6 33.33 %	**Dietary restriction related foods** **More small retail/grocery stores need to be accounted for** **Directions including time and distance** **Bigger-should also be available on paper** **School programs where kids are exposed to gre** **Make map available for people easily (ex. For those who don't have a computer)** **Easy to find the map itself** **Maybe an app?** **Pictures**
6. What food assets do you want to see in your community?			
			What food is in season. Farmer's Markets, locally, grown food (all year round) **More gluten free foods** **Community gardens, growing space for urban agriculture** **Local foods at more reasonable prices** **More green space, fruit trees for sharing that is wasted in people's gardens** **Free or low-cost meals, foods on sale** **Green programs in school** **Food waste programs, restaurants willing to get ride of day-olds, food recovery at grocery stores** **Organic food** **Free food**
7. Will you use the Food Asset Map in the future? (why or why not?)			
14 77.77 %		4 22.22 %	**Unlikely** **Doesn't seem entirely accurate (known assets do not appear on map)** **It is convenient** **I don't live in Vancouver** **I am keen to keep up to date on this project** **Likely to continue going to the same grocery store** **Curiosity**
Additional Feedback: How will we get access once it is online? Expanding to other cities like Richmond There are many children in schools who are not receiving nutritious meals, more educational resources as			

well
This seems to be a useful tool
Great project
Keep scope limited (eg. low cost/ accessible kitchens vs. everything)= easier to maintain

Our Partners

<u>Critical Reflections</u>

<u>Group member 1</u>

This entire project has been a wonderful experience. Alot has changed since beginning the project. Most of the project involved data collection by phone and email. This was tedious at times as sometimes even three attempts to make contact were unsuccessful. What I liked about the data collect though was talking to the people over the phone. It's nice to know there are so many great non-profits around Vancouver doing such good work. Trialling the map in the community was the most rewarding as it helped me gain deeper insight into how important it is to include the community in developing tools such as food asset maps. The maps have the potential to be of great benefit if they are developed alongside the people that will end up using them. There was a slight level of difficulty in working with our community partner at times. Communication in arranging opportunities for trialling was at the center of this. Slow responses to our emails and being asked last notice via email if we could trial the next day was at times frustrating. This is the reality of the world however. We adapted well and decided to let go of the idea of a second trial. As a result however we did not obtain an evaluation from them.

<u>Group member 2:</u>

I really enjoyed working alongside my group members on this project. It was a lot more challenging than I thought it would be, especially the data collection part. It was a difficult process to contact many of the food assets as email was not very viable. I am not good at cold calls so that part was especially nerve-wracking for me. We had many communication problems with our community partner that I think if we addressed in the very beginning our project would've ran a lot smoother. Because of this experience I know that next time a similar problem

comes up I will know how to better adapt to the changes. I think overall this project was very beneficial to my learning as this style of flexible learning is not an opportunity you can always get. I wish we had a chance to visit all the different community kitchens in person to see how they all operate. It was disappointing to find out that many of the kitchens on the list were not actually accessible to the public. I had initially thought the map was to make it easier for community members who did not have access to a cooking space to find such cooking spaces to cook and for free as well.

Group member 3:

  I appreciate having the opportunity to work with community members and talk to people in the community. It's nice to be able to apply my knowledge and skills to something outside of class. I thoroughly enjoyed working with a diverse group of individuals and came to value teamwork and individual skills and ideas. I quite enjoyed the process of updating our progress on the blog and having it made public for other LFS 350 students, faculty members, and potential stakeholders to view. I found that updating our progress was a good way to review achievements and to focus on upcoming objectives and goals. In addition, the flexible learning sessions were put to good use as our group would often meet up and work on our project together. The project itself wasn't what I expected as it was less exciting than I thought it would be and I found the data collection to be tedious and dull. It was frustrating at times with people's lack of response to giving us information, thus our data collection took longer than expected. At times there were also communication issues with our community partner with lack of timely response and different expectations between our group and our community partner. I found the most valuable part was getting the opportunity to talk to community members about the map and get their

feedback. This opportunity reminded me of the project's purpose which is to help community members recognize and utilize the food assets around them in their community.

Group member 4:

This course provided a special opportunity for me to work on a community project in real life. At the beginning of this course, I was confused about what Food Asset Map truly means. I was impressed once I saw the Vancouver Food Asset Map. There is an overwhelming amount of pin drops, which represent different categories of food assets. The pins on the map included detail information as well. I had an incredible working experience with our community partners although we had a little communication problem. For data collection, it took us a long time to wait for the email responses from the organizations. At the end, we found out contacting them by phone is much more efficient. Despite finding an efficient way to contact the community centres, some of them do not have a kitchen available. This disappoints me as I felt like users will have one less place to go to if they need to use the asset. I also felt disappointed that some of them are not interested to be involved, and they did not know about the Food Assets Map project. After this project, I have a better awareness of the local community's food security, and also a better understanding of the way how communities assist deal with food insecurity. In this semester, I met my awesome group members. I enjoyed the time working together because everyone was active and willing to share ideas and opinions. We always had well communication, clear goals and missions.

Group member 5:

This project consisted of a combination of success and barriers to overcome. I thoroughly enjoyed working alongside a team of skilled individuals who helped invest time in collecting information for the food asset map. Our wide selection of skills resulted in effective and efficient

work throughout the term. We maintained clear communication and were efficient in completing our assignments in time. I learned that working with community partners can be a long and frustrating experience and that as students, we must be prepared to accommodate the needs of the community partner. Contacting all of the food assets was time consuming and was more difficult than I anticipated. I also learned that food security can't always be confounded by increasing the amount of food or providing the food insecure with the location of food resources; instead, food security can only be attained if individuals are also given the means to access and afford the foods that are nutritious and culturally appropriate. I found that VCH's map lacked this component. Nonetheless, I appreciated the mission of the project and I found it to be a major learning experience.

Group member 6:

   As someone who has participated in a few community based projects in the past, I appreciated the opportunity to further my knowledge in the intensive processes that come with community project development. When the intricacies of our project were initially explained at our meeting with Vancouver Coastal Health, I believed that our role would be more simple, and require less time than what proved to be the reality. What I did not anticipate were the complications and setbacks we had when contacting community partners. It was an important lesson to learn about compromise, patience and the amount of work that goes into community projects that scale all of Vancouver.

   While my overall opinion of the map fluctuated over time in regards to its actual efficacy, it is good to know that people in our community are actively working and thinking about methods to improve food security. A tool to connect, and bring attention to the great programs already

available in Vancouver is a benefit of the map. It was great to work with our LFS team as well - we maintained efficient communication throughout the course of our project, and personal deadlines were usually met. Everyone seemed to care deeply about food security issues in Vancouver, and each member brought a different aspect to the team. As well, having the opportunity to share our work at the end of term presentation was a very valuable experience.

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