



Food  Share

Focus on Food

Pathways to Youth Employment



About the cover: The mural, called *Imaging Ourselves: From Field to Table*, was produced by a group of Focus on Food youth in 2002 at the former 200 Eastern Avenue warehouse led by artist Leah Burns and funded by the Toronto Arts Council. The project explored food security and art as a form of community mobilization.

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Food  Share



The Counselling
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CANADIAN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR COUNSELLING
INSTITUT CANADIEN D'ÉDUCATION ET DE RECHERCHE EN ORIENTATION

Focus on Food: Pathways to Youth Employment

Written By Katie German

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Foreword

On behalf of The Counselling Foundation of Canada, I am delighted to provide a foreword for FoodShare's *Focus on Food Manual*, which chronicles the steps they have taken to create an internship program around food.

The Foundation has had a long history of supporting initiatives around youth employment and ways in which we can support youth becoming more successful economic participants of our society. Persistent youth underemployment and unemployment is one of the great challenges our society faces, particularly in these challenging economic times.

Even young adults who graduate post-secondary institutions are having difficulty finding meaningful employment in their fields. For youth who are marginalized, may be living in precarious conditions and have not graduated from secondary school, the employment prospects are even more difficult and it's hard to even get a foot in the door; once through the door, it's then important to know what the next steps are in order to successfully land a job. That's where an internship program can help – both in terms of providing real work experience but also supporting youth in developing the necessary skills for longer-term success in the workplace.

Among the reasons the Foundation wanted to support the Focus on Food program was FoodShare's reputation for delivering innovative and relevant programming and the promise of delivering a manual on how FoodShare designed their program to meet the needs of their interns, so that they can go on to find meaningful employment in the community.

For those agencies considering creating a youth internship program, be it around food or another focus, I think you'll find there is a great deal of useful information here that can help get you started. Delivering a meaningful path to employment for those youth who need it most is a noble cause, and one we need more of.

To Debbie Field and the team at FoodShare, we salute you for the good work that you are doing. And, we thank you for this comprehensive and thoughtful manual.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce G. Lawson, Executive Director
The Counselling Foundation of Canada
October, 2012



The Counselling
Foundation of Canada

Introduction

By Debbie Field, Executive Director

The Focus on Food Youth internship program offers an opportunity for youth who face systemic barriers to employment to gain work experience and life skills coaching through a paid internship at FoodShare Toronto. Funded through Service Canada, the program employs 10 youth interns to work in either our Commercial Kitchen or Good Food Program Produce Warehouse full-time for six months.

All of the youth in the program have barriers in their life due to systemic discrimination. Previous participants have been immigrants to Canada from the global south, racialized, living in a marginalized neighbourhood, navigating mental health challenges, or living in the shelter system. Many of the youth who apply for this program are only able to find precarious and under-waged positions.

While at FoodShare, Focus on Food interns develop their employability skills in a team environment. The program allows interns to build their professional skills through on-the-job learning and mentoring, and through workshops and trainings.

Each week, interns participate in a day of programming designed to facilitate professional and personal growth. These sessions are informed by the interests and needs of each group and include valuable certifications such as Food Handling and First Aid, engaging workshops on topics of anti-racism and anti-oppression, food security, nutrition, budgeting, and community development.

A key component of the program is supporting interns to achieve their self-determined personal goals. The role of the Focus on Food staff team is to act as a support team for the interns and to help them navigate the various community resources that the youth need to achieve the goals they have set out for themselves.

Recently, we have begun to formally draw on our network to create work placements for our youth interns. Participants are able to spend time working in a partner business or community agency. This has helped them to gain additional work experience, step out of their comfort zone, practice networking skills and build a network of professional references and mentors. At the same time it has informed content in the program, allowing us to better understand how to prepare the interns with the skills and experience that are valued by businesses and agencies.

This manual was written by Katie German who was a coordinator of the Focus on Food Program in 2011, in collaboration with Luam Kidame, the current Focus on Food Coordinator and author of the chapter on *Anti-Oppression and Anti-Racism: Imperative Frameworks in Youth Programming*. Thanks to Alvin Rebick, the current Program Manager; Meredith Hayes and Zahra Parvinian, past Program Managers; Jesus Gomez, Leonard Abel, Alanna Santos-Mata, Moorthi Senaratne, Jackson Foster, Gloria Padilla, Zola Dyer, Asher Miller, so involved in the day to day delivery of the program and all the FoodShare staff who support the program, particularly the staff in the Good Food and Kitchen Programs.

Good Healthy Food for All!

This manual designed to share how our program works and how this placement model has become part of an effective, successful youth employment program. The first section includes information on the program as a whole and how the program and policies were designed. The second portion focuses on our placement model, including, how we set up our placement program, changes we have made to improve it and how successful it has been.

FoodShare Toronto is a multi-faceted food security organization, with many programs geared at helping communities and schools increase access to healthy, affordable food. We are not a youth training organization and few of our 60 staff members are trained social workers or youth counsellors. Yet integrating a youth training program has been incredibly successful for both the interns participating, and our organization as a whole.

Our job and school placement rates have ranged over the 12 years we have operated this program from 60-90%. Exit interviews have demonstrated that we have helped interns on a variety of levels in addition to job or school readiness, from reuniting with their family, to finding stable housing, to improving their diet. By inviting interns to get involved in the food movement, we have been able to encourage positive lifestyle changes in the areas of diet, cooking, gardening and household budgeting. By believing in the interns, we have provided needed stability to take next steps towards returning to school or finding employment.

We have made FoodShare a “counselling organization” that provides support through a mobilization of all staff to help interns. For instance, a youth intern who is a single parent and working as a driver’s helper may ask the driver a question about childrearing.

Having 10 interns join our staff has kept our hearts and minds open to the many barriers young people face in finding and keeping jobs in these complex times. They have also provided us an amazing “test kitchen” for our ideas about food and food policy. If the youth interns don’t like the healthy lunch we are serving and go out for fast food, we have to make sure the next day’s lunch is inviting and delicious as well as healthy.

Integrating interns with a variety of personal issues that need attention into our workplace has also made FoodShare staff more sensitive to social issues such as homelessness, police behaviour, homophobia and racism. We have been led to consider what is it like to sleep in a shelter and have no access to an alarm clock so you can arrive at work on time. How can a new immigrant to Canada support their whole family on a minimum wage job? What do we do when the police show up unannounced to arrest a 16 year old who has been unjustly suspected of violence? We have provided additional training to staff over the years to make sure they understand the underlying social problems that create so many problems for young people in Canadian society today.

This manual is intended to chronicle our own procedures, to help others operating youth programs, and also to encourage non-youth organizations to start youth programs.



Debbie Field,
FoodShare Toronto Executive Director





Anti-Oppression and Anti-Racism: Imperative Frameworks in Youth Programming

By Luam Kidane, Focus on Food Youth Program Coordinator

Oppression is a complex term which at its base can be understood as institutionalized power that is historically formed and perpetuated over time. It is rooted in the objective power differences between people based on, among other factors, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, differing abilities, income and religious practices.

It is impossible to operate a youth employment training program, such as the Focus on Food Youth program, in an accountable and transformative way without working to surface these issues. Governments talk about “barriers to employment”, but through the Focus on Food program, I think it is important to articulate that these barriers are rooted in systemic oppressions purposefully perpetuated by members of our society.

Differing power backgrounds allows certain groups of people to assume a dominant position over other groups and this dominance is maintained and perpetuated at an institutional level. In other words, oppression is embedded in institutions such as the government and education systems.¹ *(See Appendix C for works cited.)* When the term systems of oppressions is used in this section what is meant is that there are multiple forms of oppression, often intersectional, and it refers to the pervasiveness and systemic nature of oppressions. Systems of oppressions infuse our language and shape the way we act and do things on a daily basis. Because systems of oppressions have formed over time in specific political, economic and social contexts it is not possible to eliminate systems of oppressions over a short period of time. It will take strategic anti-oppressive and anti-racist organizing as well as understandings of histories of oppressions. Also, systems of oppressions are built around what are understood to be norms. A norm denotes what is normal, acceptable, and desirable. Norms are valued and supported in society. Norms are also given a position of dominance, privilege (an unearned advantage that works to systematically over empower certain groups in society), and power (the ability to exercise control), over what is defined as non-dominant, abnormal and thus invaluable or marginal. For instance the ‘mythical norm’ in present day society is based on being white, male bodied and male presenting, middle to upper class, heterosexual, able bodied and english speaking.

Anti-oppressive and anti-racist frameworks acknowledge systemic oppressions and work to dismantle the influence of these oppressions. These frameworks are imperative to creating, implementing, and successfully delivering youth programming. This is particularly important if there are Black youth, Youth of Colour and Indigenous youth participating in the programming. Placing issues around, to name a few, race, gender, class, ableism, sexuality and sexual orientation and colonization into an anti-racist and anti-oppressive framework will aid in better grounding the programming in the lived experience of the youth present and will allow the necessary work to begin in order to dismantle systems of domination and subjugation. This is important so that the programming is able to better equip youth with the ability to better navigate the barriers they are presently facing, and will continue to face, as a result of systems of oppressions created by governance upheld by ideals of white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism.

Good Healthy Food for All!

Oftentimes youth programming will fail to address the systemic inequalities that marginalized youth face by focusing only on skills-based programming that emphasizes certifications, work experience and/or education. Though these are all effective and useful tools they are not enough. They fall short as programming that only addresses these issues fails to interrogate why it is that a Black youth in Toronto can be up to 17 times more likely to be stopped and searched by police than a white counterpart² or why it is that women are paid on average only 83% of a male counterpart per hour.³ (See *Appendix C for works cited.*) The youth going through the programming need to be equipped with skill based experience as well as a theoretical and practical understanding of why it is they, especially if they are racialized, face multiple barriers to finding employment or accessing educational institutions that are not related to a lack of work experience, education, or skill set.

Marginalized youth are immersed in a society that erases their histories and diminishes their lived experiences. The long-term success of the youth and the environment that is created within the program will depend on the desire of the programmers to ensure that their programming actively works against replicating colonial and imperial modes of interaction that instill and uphold oppressive systems. There are many ways of working within an anti-oppressive and anti-racist framework and it should be noted that these processes will be dynamic and should reflect the input of the youth you are working with and community members and stakeholders who share lived experiences of the marginalized youth in the program.

The programming that is done should be relevant and accessible for the youth. In the current Focus on Food program workshops and skill shares that will provide space for the youth to achieve their self-determined goals are prioritized. The current Focus on Food program does this by ensuring the following: staff are continually receiving anti-oppression training; hiring facilitators that share the lived experiences of the youth; offering anti-oppression and anti-racist programming using a variety of approaches and methods; and making space for the youth to articulate what types of supports they need in order to self actualize.

The complexities of organizational dynamics and youth programs within organizations that do not primarily work with youth cannot be overlooked. In order for youth programming to effectively work under anti-oppression and anti-racist frameworks it is necessary that the larger organization also be doing this work.

FoodShare Toronto began youth programming in 1992, before the organization had developed any anti-racist and anti-oppression policies. In that first summer, several instances of racist behavior occurred between staff and the youth interns, and amongst the youth interns that alerted the organization that it needed system wide anti-discrimination policies. Those were implemented in the 1994 Personnel Policies of the organization. Though work is being done to amend and strengthen these policies FoodShare Toronto still has much work to do in these areas. Anti-oppressive and anti-racist programming cannot be relegated only to youth programs that have higher instances of marginalized youth but must be central to every aspect of the organization's work which includes, but is not exclusive to, hiring practices, staff roles, wages, board appointments and organizational structure.

Staffing Model

The Focus on Food Youth internship program is delivered by a dynamic team of staff who work together to provide programming that is flexible and fits the articulated needs of the youth. Each staff member has their own fluid set of responsibilities that help the program function as a whole. Here we share our own staffing model and a description of the tasks that are completed by each team member to keep the program running smoothly.

Program Manager

The Program Manager is ultimately accountable to the funder and the Executive Director, working with the Program Coordinator to ensure that programming decisions and intern supports are effective and up to date. They oversee the project and act as a sounding board for and supervisor of the Program Coordinator.

Program Coordinator

The Program Coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the program. This position is the point of contact for youth interns, FoodShare staff and community members that may have questions about the program. The Program Coordinator is responsible for:

- *Outreach, Intake and Hiring*
The Program Coordinator creates and distributes job postings, schedules orientation sessions and signs up applicants, facilitates the orientation sessions and schedules interviews, is part of the interview team and facilitates the hiring meeting.
- *Training and Introductions to Policies*
The Program Coordinator facilitates the introduction of all policies and program information to the new interns at the start of the program.
- *Administrative Tasks*
The Program Coordinator facilitates bi-weekly payroll which includes completing and tracking intern timesheets, submitting monthly financial and narrative reports to the funder and works with the Financial Manager to monitor program budgets and make any adjustments.
- *Programming*
The Program Coordinator schedules weekly programming sessions which may mean inviting community facilitators to FoodShare to run a workshop, scheduling trips to a local organization such as an urban farm or an artist's studio, or designing and facilitating their own workshops on-site.
- *Intern Support*
The Program Coordinator conducts monthly one-on-one check-ins with each intern and provides referrals to community services or programs that might be appropriate for an intern's needs. The Program Coordinator also provides on-going support in terms of

group dynamics within the overall complement of interns, which may include conflict mediation or facilitating team building activities. They also facilitate staff meetings when needed and document decisions made. The Program Coordinator plays an invaluable role around supervision. The interns work in FoodShare programs reporting to the FoodShare Manager in that team. However when disciplinary action is needed, the Program Coordinator discusses options with the Program Manager. They implement the disciplinary plan together. This can range from docking pay for missed days of work, to providing warning letters and, in some cases, terminating the youth intern's contract.

- *Networking with other Youth Agencies*
The Program Coordinator networks with other agencies that provide youth programs in the city on an on-going basis. This facilitates our own intake as other organizations know about our programs, and also allows us to effectively refer youth to other programs that may be suitable for them.
- *Networking with Employers*
The Program Coordinator is responsible for networking with employers who may be interested in hiring a youth intern from our program, or acting as a placement location for our youth.

Work Area Supervisors

Youth interns work in two separate work areas within the organization, either our Commercial Kitchen or Good Food Program Fresh Produce Warehouse. They are in these work areas fulltime for four days a week. The Work Area Supervisor is the manager in these workspaces. They act as the interns' daily workspace supervisor in addition to managing other programs within their department.

These supervisors provide specific job training relevant to their work area. In the kitchen, for example, this includes proper knife skills, safe equipment usage, and recipe adaptation. In the warehouse this may mean safely using the pump trucks and proper skid packing skills. As Work Area Supervisors their role is to assign tasks for the day, oversee punctuality and attendance and ensure that the interns are working well with their colleagues. They are also able to provide valuable input to the Program Coordinator regarding any areas of personal development that arise for an intern.

Financial Manager

At FoodShare, our Financial Manager assists with the bookkeeping for the Focus on Food program. This includes processing payroll once submitted, handling cheques that come from the funder and doing a monthly accounting reconciliation with the Program Coordinator. This time is considered "in-kind" in our budget as our Financial Manager does this work with all FoodShare programs. In your own program, this can be done by the Program Coordinator or Manager, but within our organization this model works well for us.



Confidentiality Model used within our Staff Team

With a large staff team working in several departments, it is important to touch upon the confidentiality model within the staff team.

The Program Coordinator and Program Manager share information about youth interns that is confidential between them only. The youth interns are made aware at the outset of the program that the Program Manager and the Program Coordinator will be sharing information about them. A disclosure shared with the Program Coordinator during a conversation will be shared with the Program Manager so that there are two staff that are aware of the situation and are able to work together to find appropriate supports, be it within the organization or in the community.

Work Area Supervisors are informed as needed – but this is *always* done with the consent of the youth intern.

A key part of this model is the fact that the interns understand it from day one and are made aware of this staff dynamic. Throughout the program, if a youth intern sounds like they are going to disclose something (i.e. “I have something I need to tell you”) the Program Coordinator will say “I am happy to listen, but please remember that I will share it with the Program Manager, and this will help us support you better.”

Although our program is funded for youth aged 15-30, most of our youth are over 18. However, if they are a minor we will discuss with them who FoodShare has a duty to share information with so that they can make an informed decision before they disclose anything to staff.

In this model, we have made an important and deliberate choice to ensure that the power lies with the youth intern. Autonomy and self-determination drive this confidentiality policy. Our youth interns are able to make an informed decision about sharing information about themselves, and can ask questions about what might happen with their information before they decide to share it. We recognize that often youth, particularly those that face systemic barriers, are disenfranchised in many ways and have their power taken away. With this model they are able to make choices for themselves.

“Working with the youth interns that are part of the Focus on Food program is always a most rewarding challenge. Despite the many systemic barriers that these young people face, they bring energy, enthusiasm, wisdom and honesty to the kitchen and our lives. I believe I learn as much or more from them as they learn from me and believe that our organization would be greatly diminished if they weren’t here.”

- Alvin Rebick, Focus on Food and Kitchen Senior Manager

Outreach, Intake and Hiring

The Program Coordinator networks on an ongoing basis with other agencies that provide youth programs that may be able to make referrals to the program. When a job for a similar youth employment program is posted, the Program Coordinator will often call the organization in order to have a conversation about our two intern programs. We note and begin tracking when their intake times are and confirm a direct contact. This is important as we often get calls from eligible youth who are looking for an employment program after we have already done our intake; having contacts with multiple programs in the city allows us to connect the interested youth with other programs that may be hiring at that time.

Maintaining a list of programs that you can refer to means that when it comes time to do intake for your next session, you have a team of people you can contact directly that work with eligible youth. We often send out our job description and hiring posting four weeks prior to our first round of orientation sessions. This provides time for the posting to circulate through e-mail listservs and show up on community bulletin boards.

It is also important to look for networks established in your community for frontline community workers. In Toronto, the Frontline Partners for Youth Network reaches many youth workers in the city through a website and a condensed newsletter. The youth workers are then able to circulate the posting to eligible youth.

Job Posting

We create a job posting that gets sent by e-mail in both a .doc and .pdf format. An important part of recruitment for the program is inclusion of the job posting in all the Good Food Boxes we pack, and posting the job at our Field to Table Community Food Hub where there are many visitors. We also feature the posting on our website so that others can link to it directly in an online location, share it on social media sites or forward it as a link. We know that many of the interns selected hear about the program through a word of mouth process amongst those connected to FoodShare's food programs and through youth agencies in Toronto. We've included a sample of our posting, see Appendix D.

Here is a list of some important information to include on your posting:

- Dates of the Internship
- Application deadline
- Information on how to apply, and on the application and intake process
- Eligibility criteria and qualifications (Be sure to emphasize and explain as necessary, i.e. we are required by the funder to hire youth who have not received employment insurance in the previous two years)
- A description of the position itself, including work hours, pay rate and type of work
- Contact information to request more information if needed
- A link to a website or facebook page for more information about the organization and how the position fits into their programs
- A map to your location & information about the organization
- If it is double-sided, make a note on the front to flip it over

Intake Process

Make sure that you are ready to start your intake before sending out your posting. In our experience, people will start calling with questions and to register shortly after the posting is publicized. We create a spreadsheet that acts as our registration for orientation sessions and contains all of the questions that you will need to ask an applicant over the phone.

For our program the youth must be:

- Between the ages of 15-30
- Eligible to work in Canada (have a Social Insurance Number)
- Face systemic barriers to accessing employment
- Have not received Employment Insurance in the past two years
- Have not completed high school

If they qualify for all of these criteria then we record their name and contact information and sign them up for an orientation date.

Orientation Model

Before the start of the six-month program, we host four orientation days at FoodShare. Applicants arrive in the morning and fill out an application form (see Appendix E). They get an introduction to FoodShare, the Focus on Food Program and the hiring process. They then spend half the day working in either our warehouse or kitchen space. At the end of the session, if they are still interested in the position, they sign up for an interview time.

We have found hosting orientation days for applicants to be a great way to begin hiring for several reasons:

- Potential interns are able to experience the work and get a sense of what their day-to-day job would be like. Many youth come for the day and decide that the job is not for them.
- Many of the youth have never had a job interview or training around giving a good interview, so being able to come in and showcase their work ethic and personality in a more informal setting gives them a chance to communicate about themselves and open up without the pressure of a sit-down interview.
- Our staff members in each work area are able to spend some time working side-by-side with a team of potential applicants. This gives them great insight into how each youth might work in a team environment
- Youth often do better when they return for an interview because they are familiar with the building, know a bit about the organization and see some friendly, familiar faces. This takes some of the pressure off the youth who perhaps haven't done well in interviews in the past.

Intern Perspective: Haseeb

"I liked coming for an orientation day – I got to try the work and I knew what it was going to be like. It made my interview and my first day of work a lot better."

Interviews

Our interviews are scheduled to be 20 minutes long. Applicants can decide on the day of their orientation if they wish to interview for the kitchen or the warehouse. Each interview team is made up of two staff – one program staff member, such as the Program Coordinator or the Program Manager, and one work area staff member, such as the Work Area Manager for the warehouse or the kitchen.

For many of the youth applicants, this may be their first formal job interview, so we always take some time to welcome them and let them know what to expect in the interview process. We advise them that to be fair we will use the same interview script with each candidate and that we will be taking notes during the interview because it will help the staff remember all the details they share and will help when it comes time to decide who to hire.

It is also important to note that this interview may be different from other professional job interviews they may have had, or will have in the future. We are often told to put our best foot forward in an interview and highlight only our strengths. As the program is designed for youth who face systemic barriers, we do ask them to identify some of their challenges in finding and maintaining work. This may seem odd for those who have been told not to discuss barriers in an interview. We find it is helpful when questions come up to acknowledge this and let them know that sharing some information about challenges in their life will not hurt them in applying for this program.

We have created a double-sided script in which there is room for the interviewer to take notes. We've included a sample of our interview questions here as an example (See Appendix F). We include a variety of questions that are designed to draw out information about the applicant's work experience, the barriers they face and to get a sense of whether or not they are ready to commit to a full-time position.



Alannah preparing a catering order in the kitchen.

Intern Perspective: Alannah

"I really enjoyed my interview and coming in for an orientation. I felt calm and relaxed in the interview – I didn't really feel nervous. It helped me to open up and talk more about myself."

Hiring Meeting

After all of the interviews are done we hold a meeting that includes the Program Coordinator, the Program Manager, the Work Area Managers, and the Executive Director. This group is responsible for selecting 10 youth that are both in need of the program and also at a point in their lives at which they are ready to commit to full-time hours.

Having the orientation sessions as well as interviews helps greatly with this process. Someone may have not given a lot of detail in their interview questions but may have had a great conversation working alongside a staff member in the kitchen, or someone may have not made a strong impression during their orientation day but really opened up during the interview. The staff team, because they were a part of the intake, orientations and interviews, are able to share this knowledge together to inform the hiring decision.

When selecting the group, it is important to select youth interns that face systemic barriers to finding employment, seem ready for the commitment, and can be successful in a team environment

It is also important to evaluate the capacity of your staff team and program to support the barriers that an intern faces. There will be a few youth who really need the program, but who may face personal and systemic barriers that your staff team is not well equipped to handle. There have been several times that we did not hire an intern who really needed the position, but instead were able to connect them to a program that was a better fit for the type of support they needed.

Intern Perspective: Haseeb

There are so many things I have learned from working at FoodShare. Before I was struggling to get a job, looking for work for 2 years. I worked for a temp agency, sometimes just one day of work for a whole month. I tried to get help from community organizations like PTP. Looking for work was too stressful. I don't have any high school credits, in Canada or back home. And I didn't have any Canadian work experience. I had to tell everyone no I am not a student and I have no Canadian experience. So they would not hire me.

I learned about life skills like learning about taxes. I learned about RRSP's, forklift skills and certifications. This was also the first time I had discussions about same sex couples and same sex relationships. I learned a lot of respect for other people and for people that are being themselves. I liked working in teams and learning how to trust other people. We did some blindfolded activities where we had to trust someone that we barely knew, but we really trusted them.

Now I feel confident when applying for a job. I know I can do it. This opportunity gave me so many things. Everyone here, including the other interns, they pushed me to go for it and work harder, all day long. I got a lot of help with my English. The interns helped me with pronunciation and understanding new words.

I work full time in the warehouse now and I really love my job. FoodShare is like a family for me.

Beginning of Program

On the first day of work, we spend the morning introducing the 10 new youth interns to the Focus on Food youth internship program. Prior to their arrival, we prep binders for them that include reviewed copies of our Youth Intern Handbook, Progressive Discipline Chart and Employment Letter. Here is an overview of what the interns will find in each document:

The **Youth Intern Handbook** clearly sets out all of the intern expectations and includes policies on attendance and time-off requests, sick days and lieu time, accessing transit tokens, mobile phone use, smoking on the property and work mobile phone numbers for key people on staff.

The **Progressive Discipline Chart** outlines expectations and consequences for any inappropriate behaviour. We make sure that all interns are aware of the expectations we have of them on the first day they arrive at FoodShare, and also that they understand the consequences and processes involved with not meeting those expectations. We also open up space for discussion around the expectations and consequences to ensure that everyone understands the logic behind expectations and how the consequences relate to any inappropriate behaviour.

Further details about the Youth Intern Handbook and Progressive Discipline Chart are included in the next section .

We also use the initial morning session to complete all relevant paperwork. This includes:

- A new employee information form for our payroll system
- A health form to make staff aware of any accommodations that need to be made including an emergency contact number
- A Federal Tax form and Provincial Tax form
- Any forms required by the funder

Once all expectations are clear and questions are answered, we have each youth intern sign two copies of an employment letter and an attendance contract. We provide one copy to the intern, which they keep in their binder, and we keep one copy in our employment files.

The **Employment Letter** is written and signed by our Executive Director and includes the start date, pay rate and work hours. Interns may need additional copies of this letter if they are receiving certain benefits (such as social assistance or child care subsidies.) This letter also helps an intern that is looking for stable housing as it acts as proof of employment. (See Appendix G)

The **Attendance Contract** states that the intern is aware of the attendance expectations and consequences associated with poor attendance. We find that keeping a signed copy of this helps as a tool for review if you need to work with an intern that is struggling with attendance or punctuality. (See Appendix H)

Program Policies

Youth Intern Handbook

The Youth Intern Handbook clearly sets out all of the intern expectations and includes policies on attendance and time-off requests, sick days and lieu time, accessing transit tokens, mobile phone use, smoking on the property and work mobile phone numbers for key people on staff. We review and edit the handbook at the end of each six-month program. We make copies of the handbook and go over each policy as a group during the morning session of the first day of work. Below are the policies that are included in this document:

Attendance Policy

Focus on Food youth interns are expected to:

- Be at work everyday
- Arrive on time everyday
- Sign an attendance contract at the start of their employment

Hours

Each intern is expected to be at work for eight hours per day (commonly 8:30am – 4:30pm or 9:00am – 5:00pm). As an employee, you are entitled to:

- Two paid 15 minute breaks (one in the morning and one in the afternoon).
- A 30 minute break for lunch which is unpaid.

This means you work 7.5 paid hours per day.

Sign In - Sign Out Sheet

Each work area has a sign in/out sheet to keep track of intern work hours. It is each intern's responsibility to sign in when they arrive and sign out when they leave. These hours will be submitted by each Work Area Manager for payroll. The Program Coordinator will keep track of Life Skills hours.

Time Off Request Policy

For any time off required for appointments, youth interns are expected to fill out a Time Off Request form at least three days prior to the time off required. Interns can get a Time Off Request form from their Work Area Manager.

Interns are entitled to half a paid day per month for appointments that are scheduled three days in advance. Interns are encouraged to schedule appointments for the beginning or end of their shifts. If interns have an appointment scheduled to meet with the Program Coordinator they are encouraged to use the time off sheets to communicate their appointments to the Work Area Manager.

Sick Days and Lieu Time Policy

Sick Days

Focus on Food interns are entitled to 1.5 paid sick days per month (nine days total). To use a paid sick day, youth interns must phone their Work Area Manager at least 15 minutes prior to the start of their shift. Without this communication, their missed time is unpaid. If the Work Area Manager is not available, interns must leave a message. Calling a Program Coordinator or another staff member other than the Work Area Manager is not a substitute for calling in and will be counted as a missed day.

Lieu Time

Any work that is done beyond the 37.5 hours a week (ie. staying late or arriving early) will be counted as Lieu Time, rather than additional paid time. Lieu Time is to be used within the pay period it is accumulated in, unless otherwise communicated with their Work Area Manager. Lieu time should only occur if interns are requested by their Work Area Manager to work additional hours.

TTC Token Policy

Tokens are available during the first two weeks of the program for those that need them to get to and from work. After an intern's first pay cheque, they are expected to purchase their own tokens or Metropass. If interns are not sure if you should buy tokens or a Metropass, they are asked to refer to the TTC cost chart provided to see which is best for them.

Cell Phone Use Policy

It is expected that all cell phone use (calls, texting, internet use) occurs during your breaks and lunch time. Mobile phones may be kept on for emergencies but should be on silent or vibrate mode. If an intern needs to take a call, they are asked to inform their Work Area Manager/Program Coordinator to make sure that it is good time to step out of the work area. This should be for important/time sensitive calls only.

Smoking on Property Policy

FoodShare rents space in a Toronto District School Board building and it is illegal to smoke on school board property. Fines of \$150.00 have been issued as of March 1, 2011.



Additional Policies Related to the Program

Following are policies that are documented within FoodShare's overall policies. They are drawn on to guide programming and decisions, and are shared with interns when needed, rather than being discussed on their first day.

Accommodating Additional Sick Days Policy

Every intern is allowed 1 ½ paid sick days a month as well as ½ paid day to use for appointments when necessary.

Occasionally an intern may have a chronic illness or condition that requires extra time off to manage their health, and this may include time for doctor's appointments, specialist appointments, or time to recuperate at home.

It is the policy of the Focus on Food program that an intern may be granted more paid sick days in a month at the discretion of the staff team. The amount should correspond with the time needed by the intern, but also take into consideration the needs of the work area and providing a realistic work experience for the youth.

In the case of an extended hospital visit, or illness that takes more than 1 ½ days to recover, the intern may be granted more paid time as compassion pay with the approval of the Focus on Food staff team.

Hiring Interns out of the Program for Internal Positions

Interns are selected for the program because they face barriers to accessing full-time employment. It is in the best interest of the interns to complete the program to get the full benefits of the Life Skills components, trainings and professional work experience made available to them, as a means of reducing these barriers. It is therefore the policy of FoodShare that if an internal position opens up within the organization, we do not hire interns until they have completed and graduated from the Focus on Food program. This also eliminates any concerns of equitability in hiring only one intern out of the group to work a new, often higher-paid position.

Rehiring an Intern for a Second Program

An intern may leave the program due to events in their personal life. This often means that the intern does not complete the program and is interested in applying for the next Focus on Food session when they find themselves in a better place. Our experience with this practice is that it is challenging for the youth to be successful in this new group as the group dynamics, and often policies, are different. It is therefore the policy of FoodShare that interns who do not successfully complete the program are not hired in the next Focus on Food intake but rather are supported to find an alternative program or employment through referrals to appropriate agencies.

Missing Time Policy

Much of the value that interns gain from participating in the Focus on Food program comes from daily participation and attendance. Relationship building and community development take place not only in facilitated Life Skills sessions but in the daily activities of work spaces as well; for example, prepping food and packing orders leads to a sense of interdependence within the staff team, which is an important component of the program.

Therefore, when an intern has to spend a substantial amount of time away from work, such as being incarcerated, it often creates a chaotic situation for both the individual and the group upon their return. It is the policy of the Focus on Food program that if any intern misses more than one month of program time, they are asked to leave the program.

Additionally, all interns who complete the program receive a certificate of completion upon graduation. It is important for us to consider that the certificate holds a minimum expectation of the work and effort that intern put into receiving that certification.

Supporting the Cost of Trainings and Courses for an Intern's Personal and Professional Development

As interns identify their professional and personal goals in the program they also identify necessary next steps to meet these goals – this could mean further education, accessing further training, workshops or skills development. Many of these opportunities are cost prohibitive – application fees or course fees often make it a challenge for a youth intern to take a course or apply for a program that may help them reach their education or professional goals.

To accommodate this barrier, we are happy to provide funding for the cost of training or courses that will support our youth. The money for this comes from our 10% operating budget in our grant. We set aside \$300 for each youth to use towards the cost of a program or course.

To get the funding, the intern must identify their interest in receiving training funding. They will work with the Program Coordinator to find the financial details of their training or course. They will complete an application form identifying what the funding will pay for, the total cost and why this course is relevant for their professional or personal goals. If the course is more than \$300, the intern is expected to pay the balance. This is not a loan, FoodShare will pay the fee directly using a FoodShare credit card or through a cheque request.

TTC Token Policy for Focus on Food

TTC tokens are available in the first two weeks of the program for those that need them to get to and from work. After two weeks, interns are expected to purchase their own tokens or a Metropass. In the event that an intern requires tokens throughout the internship interns see the Program Coordinator. They can receive two tokens for each work day left until their next pay. Both the Intern and Program Coordinator sign for the number of tokens, the amount that will be deducted and when. The amount is deducted from their next pay cheque. The Program Coordinator keeps a tracking sheet to ensure tokens are accounted for.

Disciplinary Policy for Focus on Food Program

The purpose of the Disciplinary Policy is to clearly outline expectations and consequences for interns in the Focus on Food Program, while providing the Focus on Food Staff Team with a framework for addressing disciplinary issues. Expectations and consequences are designed to support the Interns in their professional and personal development.

All expectations and consequences are clearly discussed with the Interns at the start of the program and clearly communicated throughout their six months at FoodShare. All Interns and Focus on Food Staff will have a written copy of the Disciplinary Policy. The disciplinary policy will be reviewed with interns during their first week of work.

Expectations:

- To contribute to a safe environment for the FoodShare community.
- To attend the program daily and on time.
- To complete all duties outlined in their particular work area's job description.
- To participate fully in fostering individual and community growth.

Consequences:

Action	Reasons	Process
Verbal Warning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor attendance • Chronic lateness • Inappropriate language • Behaviour that detracts from the safety of the FoodShare community • Leaving without communicating with Focus on Food staff team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on Food Program Coordinator and Work Area Manager will discuss the need for a verbal warning. • Interns will be provided with a clear explanation of reason for the warning and consequences if behaviour is not altered. • Interns, in collaboration with the Focus on Food staff, will develop strategies for improving behaviour, which are documented and revisited one week later to provide feedback. • Warning is documented.
First Written Warning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of behaviour that resulted in the Intern's verbal warning • Verbal aggression directed at others • Vandalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on Food Program Coordinator and Work Area Manager will discuss the need for, and draft, a written warning. • Meeting between Intern, Focus on Food Program Coordinator and Work Area Manager is held to provide a clear explanation of reason for the warning. • Clearly outline consequences if behaviour continues. • Re-visit or develop new strategies for improvement. These are documented and revisited one week later to provide feedback. • A contract that will be drafted through a collaborative

<p>First Written Warning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of behaviour that resulted in the Intern’s verbal warning Verbal aggression directed at others Vandalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on Food Program Coordinator and Work Area Manager will discuss the need for, and draft, a written warning. Meeting between Intern, Focus on Food Program Coordinator and Work Area Manager is held to provide a clear explanation of reason for the warning. Clearly outline consequences if behaviour continues. Re-visit or develop new strategies for improvement. These are documented and revisited one week later to provide feedback. A contract that will be drafted through a collaborative effort by the Intern, Manager and Coordinator detailing; (1) the support that will be given to the Intern and; (2) the behaviour change the Intern will undertake.
<p>Second Written Warning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued behaviour that resulted in the verbal and first written warning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on Food Program Coordinators and Work Area Manager will discuss the need for, and draft, a second written warning. Meeting between Intern, Focus on Food Program Coordinator and Work Area Manager is held to provide a clear explanation of reason for the second warning. Clearly outline consequences if behaviour continues. Re-visit or develop new strategies for improvement. These will be documented and revisited one week later to provide feedback. A contract that will be drafted through a collaborative effort by the Intern, manager and coordinator detailing; (1) the support that will be given to the Intern and; (2) the behaviour change the Intern will

The following behaviors may lead to sending Interns home without pay or relocating them to another work space

- Hostility or aggression
- Intoxication
- Theft
- Possession of a weapon
- Violence
- Vandalism or mistreatment of property

Process

- Focus on Food Program Coordinator, Work Area Manager or Focus on Food Manager to tell the Intern to leave FoodShare for the remainder of the day
- To be followed by a written warning or removal from program.

Work Space Specific Training

Youth interns work mainly in one of two workspaces: our Commercial Kitchen or our Good Food Program Fresh Produce Warehouse.

Our Commercial Kitchen runs several programs. They provide a fresh, healthy lunch daily for all FoodShare staff and volunteers, as well as a cafeteria lunch for a school that shares our building through the Good Food Café program. The Kitchen also runs a catering program, Field to Table Catering, that offers delicious food for both small and large-scale events. Our Power Soups Program also prepares nutrient-dense soups for community agencies that work with street involved populations.

In the Good Food Program Fresh Produce Warehouse, we offer an alternative food distribution program through purchasing produce directly from local farmers, as well as through the Ontario Food Terminal. This produce becomes part of our Good Food Box program, supplies fresh food for programs in school and community agencies in the city, and supplies our Good Food Market program.

Each workspace provides both general and specific training and skills development for our youth interns. We have included a list of the specific training and skills development that takes place in both the Kitchen and the warehouse to give you a sense of what our interns learn from the work experience here, and to give you some ideas for training and skills development that you may want to include in your own program.

Kitchen

Personal Safety

- Safe use of sanitizers and cleaning products
- Safe lifting techniques

Safe Equipment Use

- Safe knife skills
- Safe use of commercial stoves, ovens, grills, salamanders, commercial kettles, buffalo choppers, industrial dishwashers, stand mixers, etc.

Food Safety

- Preventing cross-contamination in the kitchen
- Proper storage and labeling of produce, dairy, meats and raw vs. cooked food in the walk-in fridge
- Keeping a work station sanitized and clean
- How to properly freeze foods
- Preparing and maintaining the cleanliness of the dining area for multiple services each day

Workplace Safety

Each work area provides personal safety equipment for each intern on the first day of the program.

Kitchen interns receive a chef's jacket, non-slip footwear and a hair net.

Warehouse interns receive safety boots and work gloves.

Using Recipes

- Having *mise en place* ready before starting to cook a dish
- Following the sequential steps of a recipe
- Understanding how to make ingredient substitutions if needed

Culturally Appropriate Diets

- Preparing vegetarian and vegan dishes
- Preparing kosher and halal dishes
- Preparing culturally appropriate produce
- Understanding and respecting the reasons individuals have for following certain diets (e.g., cultural, religious, political, allergies, and/or sensitivities)

Kitchen Terminology

- Knowing the names of kitchen tools and equipment
- Knowing cooking terms: i.e. *slice, dice, mince, brunoise, deglaze, demi-glaze*
- Knowing different cooking methods and different applications of heat

Customer Service

- Friendly customer service when serving lunch or assisting with catering events
- Portion control when serving large groups of people
- Informing guests of menu options and ingredients used

Plating

- Creative garnishes and plating for catering events, including edible garnishes

Math and Literacy

- Following recipe instructions
- Multiplying recipes and converting measurements for multiple or half batches

Time Management

- Coordinating all aspects of a meal in order to ensure everything is ready for service on time

Waste Management

- Sorting compost, recycling and garbage
- Informing guests of where to dispose of their food waste
- Reducing food waste through effective cooking and menu planning
- Understanding the role of composting food scraps in the sustainability of our food system



**Remington and Omar catering
Recipe for Change, 2010**

"The interns are a burst of new energy in our kitchen. They are very helpful – having 5 workers who are willing to put their energy and heart into each day. They help sustain our production. Sometimes there are headaches, but it's worth it. Having them in the kitchen, it's a gift. "

- Jesus Gomez, Kitchen Coordinator

Warehouse

Personal Safety

- Safe lifting techniques
- Safe use of sanitization chemicals and cleaners

Safe use of Equipment:

- Forklift training and certification
- Safe use of pump trucks and dollies

Shipping & Receiving

- Properly loading and unloading delivery trucks

Data Entry

- Use of the *Access Database* computer program

Storage and Handling

- Proper food storage to keep produce fresher for longer
- Proper food handling when packing orders to be transported

Order Picking

- Safely packing, wrapping and labeling a balanced skid according to detailed order forms

Inventory control

- Keeping inventory of produce
- Effectively organizing the walk-in cooler
- Identifying a wide variety of produce, as well as whether it is organic or conventional

Math and Literacy

- Basic math skills when filling orders and converting measurements and quantities
- Basic literacy skills when reading detailed orders and communicating what produce an order still needs to be completed

Assisting with Deliveries and Markets

- Customer service when assisting with deliveries to community drop-off points in the city
- Distribution and route planning for efficient produce delivery
- Merchandising produce and handling money at Good Food Markets

Pricing

- Understanding and comparing prices of wholesale and retail produce, as well as benefits of purchasing directly from local producers



Paola, Intern in the Good Food Program Warehouse

"Without the help of the Focus on Food interns we would be unable to serve our 250 schools and 220 food box clients. They make the difference in effective and timely service delivery, providing assistance with order packing, shipping and receiving, and quality control. "

- Asher Miller, Good Food Program Coordinator

Life Skills

Focus on Food interns participate in Life Skills sessions – a full, paid day of skill shares, workshops and trainings – each week. Our programming days are on Thursdays as we have found that day works best in terms of the weekly work flow of the warehouse and kitchen. In this section we will share our experience in scheduling and facilitating these sessions.

Use Community Partners

It is very useful to ask around in your community to see what workshops may be offered by other organizations. We have had outside facilitators from community agencies come in to do workshops on tenant rights, income taxes, and anti-homophobia. Often these workshops are engaging and provide more information than we can offer as the facilitator specializes in this topic. It provides chances for interns to learn more about other community agencies in the area and the services they provide. It is also important to ensure you bring in facilitators that share the lived experiences of the youth.

Ask for Non-Profit Discounts

When booking certifications and trainings, many organizations provide a discounted non-profit rate if asked. We have also saved money by asking about group rates and then opening up those certifications for other staff as well. This method allowed us to get a great group rate on Emergency First Aid training because we were able to open up the sessions to include staff from other departments at FoodShare.

Ask for Youth Input

Our programming sessions will be informed by what the youth are interested in, and what is relevant to them at that time. We have visited a local tattoo shop to talk to a reputable artist and learn what to look for in terms of safety because that was relevant at the time. During a federal election when interns had questions about voting, we did a workshop on how the federal government works and analyzed agency and power in the political system. We try to keep our sessions relevant, ensuring they meet the articulated needs of the youth interns.



Interns on a camping trip, 2010

See What your Staff Team Can Offer

We have a wide variety of skill sets in our staff team, including both our Focus on Food program staff and staff in other departments. We have had great workshops facilitated by the staff in our Community Food and Urban Agriculture programs as well as our Field to Table Schools program at no cost to the youth program. Debbie Field, our Executive Director, always does an introduction to food policy with the youth interns. These sessions are two way conversations in which the youth interns hear about FoodShare's work, and FoodShare's Executive Director gets to hear the youth interns' views on FoodShare's food policy recommendations. (See attached food security curriculum in Appendix I-K)

Scheduling and Timing

We often try to schedule our certifications near the beginning of the program. This allows interns to use the skills they learned in these certifications while they work, practice the skills and get them onto their résumé right away.

We have also found it helpful to try to have a balance of field trips, outside presenters and facilitating our own workshop sessions. We try not to have a long stretch of just us facilitating, but rather break up the month with a trip or course.

Programming Areas

Our sessions are largely grouped in five categories:

1. Employability Skills

- Résumés and Cover Letters
- Job Searching and Networking
- Interview Skills
- Computer Skills

2. Anti-Oppression and Rights Education

- Systemic Oppression
- Know Your Rights
- Collective/Community Resistance
- Anti-Oppression
- Ontario Human Rights Code

3. Personal and Interpersonal Skills

- Conflict Resolution and Mediation Skills
- Effective Communication
- Finances and Budgeting
- Team Building & Community Development

4. Food Security

- Food Security
- Film Screenings: Food Inc, The Garden, Dirt
- Cooking Sessions (\$5 dinners, freezer meals, power soups, green smoothies)
- Nutrition and Health
- Trip to a local farm
- On-site urban agriculture and composting work

5. Certifications

- Emergency First Aid and CPR
- WHMIS
- Food Handler Safety
- Forklift



Team building at the Toronto Island Ropes Course



Asad visiting Everdale Organic Farm, 2010

Intern Support

Monthly Check-Ins

To best support program participants, the Program Coordinator schedules monthly check-ins with each intern throughout the program. The check-in acts as a space for each intern to meet individually with the Program Coordinator and discuss how they are doing at work and how the program is working for them. The intention behind these meetings is to ensure that the youth have designated space and time for feedback so the questions and conversations will likely vary from youth to youth and month to month. Below is a list of sample questions that could be used to guide the discussion:

- *What are you doing well in the Focus on Food program/at FoodShare?*
Each intern has the opportunity to assess their own work and identify something positive that they have been contributing to FoodShare.
- *What would you like to improve about your work at FoodShare?*
They then self-identify what they would like to improve. This could be arriving on time, opening up and speaking to more staff throughout the day or sitting with new people at lunch.
- *What are two steps you can take to achieve this?*
Together the intern and the Program Coordinator brainstorm some effective strategies for accomplishing their work goals. It helps to have a dialogue about this: what would be involved in their steps?
- *What is your long-term goal? What steps need to be taken? How can we support you?*
For some this goal is focused on employment, others it is centered around education, for others it is focused more on personal development. The idea is for each intern to reflect on and articulate what is important to them and then to help them identify the steps needed to get to where they want to be. Throughout the check-ins these goals may shift and change. They may at first be more immediate, such as finding stable housing, and then shift to finding a General Education Development (GED) program and then learning how to enter a trades program.
- *Do you have feedback for us?*
It is important that interns have the opportunity throughout the internship to share their feedback about the staff, the work and the program in general, not just at the end of the program. Some of our best programming ideas have come from intern feedback about what would make the program more engaging for them.

We will often change the questions as the program continues. At the start of the program, check-ins are a great time to see if interns have stable housing, a bank account and two pieces of identification. Later in the program, directing the questions to be more focused on future employment, or identifying who their own support system is can help them think about how to continue their success after Focus on Food.

Payroll

On the first day of the program, we will go over with the interns how the payroll schedule works for their new position. We hand out the payroll schedule for the program and highlight any exceptions (for example, a moved pay date due to a Statutory Holiday.) We explain how the payroll works, what their responsibilities are in the process and what to expect on pay day.

Since this may be the first pay cheque for several of them, we also have a Payroll Breakdown Sheet that lays out an example of a pay cheque and explains all of the information: the taxes, CPP, EI, gross pay and net pay lines. This helps to ensure they understand their cheque, but it also helps them to advocate for themselves at their next job, to inquire about payroll schedules and to look closely at their statements to ensure that hours paid and deductions made are correct.

How it works

Youth interns receive an hourly wage while in the program. We pay minimum wage (currently \$10.25) for their work in the kitchen, warehouse and on programming days. They do not receive pay for hours that they have not worked. If they show up late, leave early without having communicated an appointment or do not phone in when they are absent, they are not paid for missed hours. This helps to develop accountability around their communication, helps with punctuality and attendance, and most importantly, gives a realistic workplace experience that sets them up for success in their next job. However, it is important to note that there may be situations, at the discretion of the staff team, that may deviate from this standard.

In our program, hours worked in the kitchen and warehouse are considered insurable and eligible for employment insurance benefits, hours from programming days are uninsurable and therefore those hours do not get taxed on their pay cheque. Check with your local Employment Regulations office to see how this would work for your program if you are including paid programming days.

Particularly at the start of the program, many interns will be working on developing their punctuality and communication around attendance. Often, a youth intern will have a few late arrivals or an absence during the week. We strive to make the interns accountable by having them track and document their own hours worked throughout each week.

We have Sign In and Sign Out sheets set up in both the kitchen and the warehouse in a central location. Interns are responsible for signing in when they arrive and signing out when they leave work each day. They initial beside each day to confirm the times are correct. All of the interns are on one sheet for the week. We find that this makes it easy for them to keep track of their hours. Staff members are also able to quickly scan and see if people are using the sheet properly.

Often an intern's hours may be a bit complex. They may have had something come up in their home life and addressed it with the Program Coordinator, but maybe not with the Work Area Manager. Perhaps they helped with a catering event one evening off-site but their overtime wasn't included on their time sheet. To account for these irregularities, our payroll submission is delayed by one week. This gives us plenty of time to ensure that pay cheques are correct.

After a two-week pay period, on the following Monday, the Work Area Manager will look through the time sheets for the prior two weeks and ensure that the hours worked are clear. They will go over the time sheet together with the intern so that there are no surprises once the cheques are printed. The Work Area Manager submits the completed time sheets to the Program Coordinator who keeps track of hours worked in the kitchen, warehouse and Life Skills days, as well as keeping track of any lieu hours gained or used, paid sick days used, or paid appointment times used. This is usually done in a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel. Having all of an intern's hours, sick days, appointment times and absences in one spreadsheet is helpful when working with an intern who is struggling with arriving on time. Seeing it all together can help identify patterns in their behaviour. It is also a great tool for quickly adding up what their pay cheques could look like if they arrived on time more often, etc. Finally, this approach also helps with our financial audit, as time sheets and payroll can be quickly checked to make sure they match up.

Once all of these hours are complete, the Program Coordinator submits the payroll information to our Financial Manager who creates the pay cheques in time for the Friday pay date.

Working with Your Bank

Many of our youth interns do not have a bank account at the start of the program, or in many cases, their first pay cheque will be held by their bank for up to a week before they can access their money. Since this is their first pay cheque, and many have financial responsibilities awaiting them, they will often try to avoid the delay in accessing their money by getting a payday loan to get an advance on their cheque, but this will cause them to lose a significant amount of money in fees. Also, these businesses historically profit from racialized, poor and underpaid people. We do not want to contribute to this cycle of exploitation.

To help with this, we have worked with our credit union to set up a system in which youth interns can go to one of our credit union's locations to cash their cheque without having to pay any fees associated with not being a member of that credit union. We have a written agreement with the credit union and when the interns get their first pay cheque we provide them with a copy of the letter confirming that they are employees on FoodShare letterhead and signed by the Program Manager and/or the Program Coordinator. This solution helps our interns keep their full pay cheque, access their income quickly, and gives them time to set up a bank account or submit their next cheque to be held after they have already bought groceries or paid rent.



Similarly, if FoodShare is ever closed on a pay date (e.g., for a Statutory Holiday) and we have to hand out the pay cheques earlier in the week, we will often change the pay date to the date that the cheque is handed out. This way youth interns can deposit their cheque at their bank immediately without waiting for banks to open after the holiday.

Completion Bonus

We provide a \$500 completion bonus for youth interns who successfully complete the program. This is paid out with their last pay cheque on graduation day. It works as a great motivator for some, and also helps with the transition at the end of the program for those that may still be interviewing for jobs when they finish or waiting for a school program to begin.

In certain cases an intern may receive their completion bonus even though they leave the program early. For example, two youth interns were offered full-time positions at a local catering company as a result of a successful job placement and left the Focus on Food program a few weeks early to start these new jobs. As a staff team, we decided that this was successful completion of the program and each intern was awarded their completion bonus and invited to attend our graduation ceremony.

Vacation Pay

Interns are also entitled to four percent Vacation Pay, which we pay out in a cheque upon completion of the program.

Consider your Payroll Schedule

Since our payroll is submitted a week behind the actual hours worked, sometimes the start of our program means that the intern's first pay cheque after two weeks of work only has pay for one week of hours. At the end of the program, they would finish their work at FoodShare and then a week later get a pay cheque for a week's worth of hours. This could work fine, but we find that having youth interns get a full two week pay cheque at the start of the program is important in assisting them to get some financial stability right away.

We often arrange it so that youth interns get an advance on their very last week of work and have that week paid on their very first pay cheque. To do this, all interns sign a letter that includes the information and notes that, if they are to leave the program early for any reason, the hours they were paid in advance will be deducted from the hours they are owed. Since they get a completion bonus and vacation pay at the end of the program, they often don't miss that last week paid out at the start of the program.

Staff Team Meetings

Once a month the Program Coordinator, Program Manager and Work Area Managers meet as a staff team to discuss the following:

- *Intern Supports:* How are interns doing in their work areas and how can staff continue to support success and to problem solve any issues that may arise such as any interpersonal conflict among interns or a programming concern? Work Area Managers can give great insight into something that is going on in an intern's life by working alongside them on a daily basis in the kitchen or warehouse. The Program Coordinator can also communicate any details from Check-Ins that are important for the staff team to be aware of, such as short-term goals for the interns in their work area.
- *Program Planning:* Communicate and discuss upcoming programming sessions, events at FoodShare that interns may wish to be involved in and upcoming plans for employability skills development.
- *Policy Development:* Program policies often emerge as we encounter new situations that don't yet have a policy. For example, our policy around accommodating paid sick days for a youth intern with a chronic illness came from group discussion and brainstorming at our staff team meetings. These regular meetings are a great way to continually document decisions made by the staff team and formalize them in writing to ensure they become part of a successful program. Over the years some of the program policies have evolved and changed over time as we have learned better ways of implementing the program. Keeping a record of these changes is important so that future coordinators learn from the thinking of past staff teams in developing new policies.

The Program Coordinator and Program Manager meet more regularly to discuss how participants are doing, strategize around intern supports or discuss administrative details such as reporting or meeting with the funder. These meetings will often vary in frequency and length depending on what is going on in the Focus on Food program.

Connecting with Academic Programs

Many of the youth interns identify furthering their education as a personal goal. Pursuing this goal will look different for each intern and may include returning to high school, taking a General Educational Development (GED) course or applying for a bridging program for post-secondary education among other possibilities. The specifics depend on their age, level of schooling completed and goals for future employment.

There are several ways that the Focus on Food Program Coordinator makes sure that the program stays connected with educational programming in the city:

Build Connections with a Guidance Department at a Local High School

A Guidance Department in your local school board will be familiar with alternative options for completing the high school courses needed for a diploma. By working with a Guidance Counselor in our local high school we are able to keep track of alternative day and evening programs, credit recovery programs, paid co-op placements, skills training programs and for-credit work options.

Connect with Academic Bridging Programs at Colleges and Universities

Many Universities and Colleges offer an academic upgrading program for students who have not completed their high school diploma but are interested in attending a post-secondary program. Many of these programs at colleges are free of tuition costs, while at universities they may charge tuition but are able to help support students through student loans, bursaries and scholarships. We keep an updated list of upgrading and transition year programs in the city, including details around the intake process, orientation dates, applications, costs and program expectations.

As part of our Life Skills sessions we often invite the coordinator of a transition year program to speak with our youth interns about their own program. These presentations usually include: what are the admission criteria, what can be expected once they are in the program and what are other options for being ready for a college or university program. We have also visited orientation sessions as a group at local colleges to see a school campus and ask questions about the application process for post-secondary education. Doing this together gave many of the youth interns the confidence to contact schools on their own, to ask questions about program options or visit a school for a tour or orientation session.

Connect with Trades Programs

Many building trades have youth training programs that are free for youth who want to learn a skilled trade. For example in Toronto, the Central Ontario Building Trades (COBT) Hammer Heads Program provides a 12-week training program for youth interested in working in skilled trades. Many colleges or high schools with a technical specialization will offer trades specific training. For similar local programming, see what is available in your area.

Connect with GED and Literacy Based Skill (LBS) Programs in your Area

Once a year the Program Coordinator updates our list of GED and LBS programs in the city. GED programs prepare students for the GED test which acts as an equivalency to a high school diploma. In Toronto, there are several options, including programs led by an instructor, one-on-one tutoring sessions, or student directed options. Most GED programs are fee based and require the purchase of a textbook. Depending on the circumstances, there may be city-funded opportunities to lower or eliminate the cost associated with attaining a GED.

LBS programs are best suited for students that are missing a significant portion of their high school credits. LBS programs can be a good option for students looking to eventually complete a GED program or return to a secondary school program. These programs are often offered free of charge by non-profit education centres or through a local public school board.

Explore Workplace Co-operative Work Options

In our most recent intakes, two youth interns were able to receive high school elective credits needed for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma through doing a workplace co-op placement with us. As we move forward we are looking for ways to provide more credit options for youth interns.

Intern Perspective: Dylan

"With the help of FoodShare not only am I getting experience in the work field, I'm also working towards a high school diploma with continuous intake co-op through the Toronto District School Board. And they are also helping me get into a culinary arts college program."

Securing Employment



Former interns Tyrone and Liz representing their employer Pegasus Hospitality Group at Recipe For Change 2012

Over the years we have tried several successful strategies for supporting youth interns in securing both full-time and part-time employment. Here we will share some of those strategies and tips, and in the next section, we will share the work placement model that we have developed along the way.

Interns are Building a Professional Reference from the Beginning of the Program

On day one of the program we make sure interns know that they are cultivating a professional reference from FoodShare throughout their entire internship. Instead of focusing just on future employment at the end of the program, we discuss at the beginning how interns can use this time to network with fellow staff, build positive relationships and a successful workplace performance record for themselves. As they cultivate their professional reference, they are consistently using their time at FoodShare to explore what they would like to do for future employment and drawing on the support and mentorship of their colleagues at FoodShare.

This perspective also acts as a motivator for a youth intern who may be slipping in terms of their attendance or punctuality. We find that the incentive of building a strong workplace reference also helps an intern who is doing well but is frustrated with other group members; if they can keep in mind that they are building a strong professional reference they can focus on their own positive development, rather than frustrations they may have with others.

Success Story: Liz

After working in our kitchen, Liz was hired by Steffan Howard who is the Executive Chef for Palais Royale, Casa Loma and Pegasus Hospitality Group. She has a full time position working days in the kitchen at Casa Loma that she really enjoys!

Network with Staff in Your Organization

Once interns have identified the type of work they are looking for, such as full-time work in a kitchen or part-time work in a warehouse, we email our entire FoodShare staff (including staff that do not work directly with the youth program) to pass on this information and source employment leads. We also make sure our Board of Directors know what types of jobs our youth are seeking. Often a job lead will come from a staff member who has a friend that owns a business, or who noticed a “Help Wanted” sign in a restaurant in their neighbourhood. Networking through community members is often one of the most successful ways of finding employment.

Use Your Community Networks

At FoodShare we have a monthly Enewsletter that goes out to over 5,000 people. The people on the mailing list have signed themselves up for updates from our organization. When interns are starting their search for work we will often send out a list of what they are looking for on our Enews, as well as through social media channels such as our Facebook group or Twitter account. Again, this helps us tap into the hidden job market and cultivates a situation in which interns could be a step ahead, applying for a position that they have already had a positive referral for.

Look for Wage Subsidy Funding

There are several provincial and municipal funding sources designed to subsidize the cost of wages and training for an employer that would like to hire a youth. If you can find this funding first, you can then approach a local business or employer that may be willing to hire a youth intern if they have some financial assistance. Check with your local youth employment agencies or city government to see what type of funding is available.

Watch for Job Fairs or Group Interviews

Near the end of the program, our Program Coordinator will make a habit of checking for job fairs or group interviews taking place in the community. These are often posted on Job Boards, Craigslist or through local youth employment agencies. If a job fair is taking place during work hours, we allow interns to use their work time to attend the job fair or go for an interview.

Connect with Employment Counsellors and Job Developers in Your Area

We work with youth employment agencies in our neighbourhood to make use of their services. Many offer workshops on job search skills, networking, interview skills, job maintenance and résumé writing. We were able to form a partnership with one agency to have our youth interns meet with an Employment Counsellor when there were two months left in the program. They then were assigned to a Job Developer for the last month of the program. This meant they had more people on their team looking for open positions and networking with employers to help each youth secure employment.



Tyrone and Executive Chef Steffan Howard at Recipe for Change 2011

**Feedback from an Employer:
Steffan Howard,
Executive Chef, Pegasus Hospitality Group**

Liz and Tyrone came to the Pegasus Hospitality Group through the Focus on Food employment program at FoodShare Toronto. Both Liz and Tyrone have become incredibly productive, respected and important members of our team. These wonderful cooks came out of the FoodShare program with very realistic expectations for the industry and above average culinary skills based on their experience. They also had a confidence level which was very exciting throughout the interview process. FoodShare obviously motivated these folks to be excited about their chosen path. We look forward to an ongoing long lasting relationship with FoodShare.

Success Story: Tyrone

I work within the kitchen of the majestic Casa Loma. I work from 10am to 6pm on an average day, about 5 days a week. I mostly help prepare for the meals cutting vegetables, but also assist in cooking and participating in the whole operation of our meals. FoodShare got me back on track with working and helped me understand the importance of punctuality!

I like the environment I work in and the people I work with, very down to earth and very funny people. I enjoy working in the kitchen, I always tell people, "I don't get up one day and not feel like going to work."

Placement Model

Over the past two years we have developed a work placement program for the youth interns. Each intern, while still employed with FoodShare, completes a paid work placement with a local business. In this section we share how we set up our placement locations, what to consider when selecting and preparing a placement host and lessons we learned to make these placements effective for both the youth intern and the placement host.

We've had great success with our placement model. Placements vary from two to four weeks. The interns do not receive pay from the placement employer as they are still being paid by the grant to FoodShare. In our first placement program we had three interns gain employment as a direct result of their placement and in our second round we had eight interns offered employment at their placement location. They were able to transition from their job at FoodShare directly into a paid position at their host location.

Why a placement model?

- Youth interns are able to expand their network of professional references.
- Each intern brings a copy of their current résumé and is able to get feedback from a potential employer.
- Interns get to practice their employability skills while still having a job including needing to show up on time, being ready to work and meeting job expectations.
- Placement hosts are strategically chosen as businesses that may be able to hire an intern upon completion of the Focus on Food program.
- Any feedback an intern gets on their résumé or work performance can be worked on while they are still in the program. They still have access to the Focus on Food team to help them alter their résumé or practice their interviewing skills if needed so that they are ready for the job search after the program.



Nikki-Jo serving a fresh salad for our FoodShare staff lunch

How to pick a placement location:

Is the work feasible?

We made sure to pick work placements where the tasks that needed to be done matched the skill level of the intern. For example with restaurant placements, interns were helping with prep and dishes, but were not expected to execute complex plates. In a warehouse environment, interns were not expected to use machinery they were unfamiliar with but rather completed tasks that used the skills they had developed at FoodShare.

Is the work real and relevant?

We found that the most successful placements were ones in which the interns were doing real work. We had the option to place interns with community partners that were willing to “make work” for them, but this often led to the youth intern feeling as though they did not need to take the placement seriously as their tasks were not important to the workplace.

Is the location accessible by public transit?

We made sure that all work placements were accessible by public transit. If an employer wished to take part in the project but was only accessible by car, we would offer to have them participate in another way such as reviewing intern résumés or coming in to offer advice on job search and interview strategies.

Do the placement hours work for the intern?

Most of our placements are between 9:00am and 5:00pm, however if a placement could only use interns at a time outside these hours, for instance a restaurant that is busy during dinner service, interns could do the work so long as those hours worked for them. Some of the interns had commitments that only allowed them to work from 9:00am to 5:00pm, so we always made sure to have placements that were available during those hours.

Is the placement able to offer support?

In order to be successful, a placement needed to be able to offer some time to support the youth intern. We wanted to make sure that youth were not put into a high-stress environment where they were not able to get feedback on their skills and résumé. It is important to provide a balance of a realistically busy work environment that can still take time to offer feedback and guidance.

Placement Success Story: Kieran and Real Food for Real Kids

Kieran worked as an intern in our Warehouse program. He completed a placement with Real Food for Real Kids and was offered an interview for a packing position before the job was posted externally. He gave an excellent interview and was hired out our program right into a full-time position at RFRK:

I work a full time job at Real Food for Real Kids. I work from 12:00 – 8:00pm most days and my tasks include packing and filling orders of healthy meals that go out to schools and day cares. I do lots of organizing in my day. I did a work placement at Real Food when I was working at FoodShare. This was helpful because it gave me a chance to meet people and I had a really comfortable interview for a job there. It really helped me with the transition out of the program. FoodShare really prepared me. I use lots of the same skills that I learned from working in the warehouse. Honestly, the reason I am where I am at, feeling motivated, confident and knowing how to get and keep a job is due to FoodShare. I loved it there.

How to Find Placement Locations

Look Around Your Community

Network with local businesses who may be able to work with you. A local grocery store, café or restaurant may be willing to participate. Keeping it local also helps build a network of potential employers for future programs.

Ask Your Fellow Staff and Board Members

We send out emails to FoodShare staff seeking placement locations and also email or speak at one of our Board meetings to source placement opportunities. We share what types of placements would be best suited for the interns and find that many staff are able to connect us with a friend who owns or manages a suitable business.

Reach Out to Your Community Partners

Contact any organizations that you partner with on other projects. Remember that even if they may not be able to provide a placement themselves, they might be able to put you in touch with someone in their office who can. These word of mouth referrals can be invaluable to finding a great placement host.

Contact a Youth Employment Agency

Job Developers at youth employment agencies work closely with employers and businesses that are already interested in hiring youth. They will have contacts for restaurants and businesses that have hired youth in the past and might be interested in hosting a youth intern as they get a chance to meet potential employees.



Kieran, Good Food Program Warehouse Intern 2011

Placement Success Story: Kieran and Real Food for Real Kids

Feedback From Kieran's Employer Shawn Campbell, Pack Team Leader, RFRK

"Kieran is a hard worker. Willing to step up when needed. He quickly adapted to how RFRK works and is eager to learn more."



How to Reach Out to Potential Placement Hosts

At the start of our project we drafted a letter of invitation that we personalize and send out to potential placement hosts. We initially wanted to offer several ways they could get involved, either as a placement host or as an Employment Mentor for the interns. In this letter we included:

- A brief description of our employment program.
- An invitation for the business to become involved as a Placement Host or Employment Mentor for our youth.
- An invitation to come to an orientation meeting.
- A way to get in contact with our Project Coordinator to RSVP or ask any further questions.

The Focus on Food program has the Executive Director sign the letters because we felt that would be the most recognizable name for businesses that we were contacting. We've included a copy of the letter as a template (See Appendix L).

Orientation Meeting for Potential Placement Hosts/Employment Mentors

We held a lunchtime meeting at FoodShare to introduce all of our potential Employment Mentors to our programming. We found this was a good timing for the majority of our invited employers to be able to attend, rather than an evening meeting. The lunchtime meeting was also strategic in that attendees would be able to see the youth interns working at FoodShare while they visited. We have included a copy of our agenda for the meeting to give you a sense of what we covered and how (Appendix M). Here is a short overview:

Info on Focus on Food and Short Film

We started with a short introduction of our youth employment program and how it fits into FoodShare as an organization. In our previous intake, we did a video production workshop and our group of interns produced a short film about the program and their experience with Focus on Food. We used this film as an introduction to the program for our Employment Mentors.

Tour of the Facility

After introductions, we provided a tour of our facility, which included seeing the current youth interns working in both the warehouse and kitchen. This was helpful as potential Employment Mentors were able to see the interns in action and were able to get a sense of their skill set and experience. A local catering company was able to see our youth working comfortably and safely with the industrial dishwasher and the large stand mixer, while a warehouse supervisor was able to see our youth packing and labeling produce orders onto skids. This gave the Employment Mentors a strong sense of the transferrable skills the youth interns could bring to a placement at their workplace. They got to see how they could benefit from having these skilled youth helping their business.

Discussing Partnership Options

We all sat down for lunch that was prepared by the current youth interns in the kitchen. We used this time to go over options in terms of level of participation in our Employment Mentorship program.

We presented four ways an employer could support the youth interns, all with a different level of involvement:

1. **FoodShare Visits:** An Employment Mentor could come to FoodShare to speak with the youth interns during a Life Skills day. They could talk about their own work experience and industry insight as well as give tips about their own hiring practices and what they look for in a solid employee.
2. **On-Site Visits:** We provided the option of having the youth interns come to visit a workplace. This allowed the youth interns to experience a variety of work environments and work cultures, maybe see something they haven't tried before and gain some inspiration. In this option, the host employer also takes time to share tips on securing employment in their industry.
3. **Hosting Youth for a Work Placement:** Employment Mentors could host a youth intern in their workplace providing valuable work experience and feedback for our interns. This provides added opportunity for employer to train the intern in their own context and then try out and evaluate the intern, which can sometimes lead to 'hit the ground running' later employment.
4. **Hiring a Youth Intern:** We were able to connect potential employers with provincial funding for hiring a youth at their company if interested. Through this established relationship we would also learn of upcoming available positions before they were posted externally.

At our meeting, we were able to gather helpful feedback from our potential placement hosts. Initially we thought they would prefer a shorter placement but they overwhelmingly suggested a longer placement time.

We also used this time to do some valuable networking: many attendees suggested companies or organizations that they work with that might be interested in the project. We were able to approach people using this connection, which was more successful than a simple cold call.

Several attendees noted that the placement model would not work for them, but they could still help. One, for example, was not accessible by public transit, but they were able to commit to being an Employment Mentor by coming in to do mock interviews with each of youth interns and providing feedback on their résumés. Others were not able to host a placement but started to send us upcoming job openings or were interested in getting set up with the wage subsidy funding.

Getting Hosts Ready for Placement

Once an employer has agreed to participate as a host it is important to make sure they are ready to host an intern. Following are the actions to undertake to make sure everyone is on the same page about the expectations of the placement:

Visit the placement location

Prior to interns participating in a work placement it is important to visit their location to meet with the host. This provides an opportunity to check out the work environment to ensure it is safe while also being able to chat in person about the type of work each intern will be expected to perform and ensure that it is suitable for their skill level. Some of the hosts may be partners that you have worked with before, and have seen their work environment several times, so a chat over the phone is suitable.

Clarify what work interns will be doing

Ask specific questions about what work interns will be expected to do at their work placement and clarify the skill level of the youth. Make sure work expectations match the intern's skill level. You can also share this information with the interns so that they know what to expect.

Go over any policies around communication and confidentiality

The youth we work with often have a lot going on in their personal lives that require some flexibility and support on behalf of our staff team. We inform the hosts that we will always inform them, with the consent of the youth intern, of anything that may affect an intern's ability to work or arrive on time.

In our first run of the placement program, we didn't discuss our policies around confidentiality within our staffing model with our hosts. During the placement, we found that some hosts were frustrated that an intern had something personal come up in their life that required some flexibility on their end and they weren't sure how to handle it. Clarifying our policies around communication and confidentiality gave them something to work with and helped them to understand our processes around communication.

Getting Interns Ready for Placement

Give them information

Before attending their placement, provide each intern with a half sheet of paper that includes details about their host. This should include:

- The name of the company or organization
- The name of the person they should ask for when they arrive
- The times for their shift
- The address of the placement
- The website of the company or organization
- Information about the work they will be doing and what they should wear or bring (i.e. their chef's clothes, work boots, work gloves)

Print out their résumé

Each intern was asked to bring a copy of their résumé to their placement. Hosts knew to expect this from each intern. Interns typically receive valuable feedback from the host about their résumé, including any industry-specific changes that should be made.

Evaluation After the Placement

At the end of the placement it is important to perform an evaluation with both the intern and the host. The intern's feedback is captured informally when they return from their placement, and also more formally as part of our end-of-program evaluation. They are given the opportunity to give us feedback about the success of their placement, what they appreciated about it and what they would change.

With our hosts, we perform a follow-up phone call to see how the experience was for them. We ask the following questions and document their responses:

- How was the experience from your perspective?
- Would you make changes in how the placement works?
- How prepared were the youth interns for the work you had them do?
- Did you encounter any challenges working as a host?

The feedback was very valuable, it helped to shape our placement models for future intakes as well as tweak how we prepare organizations and businesses that come on board as new placement hosts.

Expanding Your Network of Employment Mentors

We network with potential hosts on an on-going basis in our program. We are lucky that local business owners may visit or collaborate with us in a number of ways – they may be at FoodShare for a tour, help with one of our fundraising events, or partner with a different program within FoodShare – and we are always keeping an eye out for potential hosts and drawing connections with Employment Mentors.

In the second year of the project we also started working closely with a Job Developer from a local youth employment agency that was able to connect us with some placement locations through their network of employers. This has proven to be a very valuable resource as their network is focused on employers that have already contacted a youth employment agency expressing an interest in hiring youth. We found that the rate of youth getting hired as a result of their placement was much higher in the second intake, and most likely because of this connection.

Feedback From the Perspective of an Employment Mentor

**Teresa Rosa,
Human Resources Manager, Backerhaus Veit Ltd.**

Teresa attended our Employment Mentor meeting and signed on to use her 20 years of HR experience to assist Focus on Food youth interns with their interview skills and résumés. Here's what she has to share about her experience:

Spending one-on-one time with the interns allows me to conduct “mock interviews” with them, preparing them for the interview portion of their job search. During our meeting, I review their résumés, pose typical interview questions to them, explain interviewer expectations and provide career counselling. I also give them an opportunity to ask me questions about the interview process and offer my support going forward in their job search. I believe that partnering my HR knowledge together with their passion for the Youth Employment Program is a recipe for success!

Program Evaluation

We use multiple strategies to evaluate the success of our youth employment program, capturing the voices and perspectives of the youth participants, our program staff, Placement Hosts and FoodShare community members.

The Benefits of Effective Program Evaluation

Provide a Meaningful Space for Youth to Offer Input

Many of our youth interns come from marginalized communities and experience systemic forms of oppression that limit their voice and agency in their daily lives. It is important for us to not only provide space for youth to share their voice with us, but also for us to value and respect their input. Some of our best programming changes and policy developments have resulted from the feedback and ideas provided by the youth interns. This helps us to ensure that our program is relevant while also modeling our beliefs around respecting and valuing the voices of youth.

Ensure That You are Delivering an Effective Program for Your Participants

We provide opportunities for program evaluation throughout the entire length of the six-month program. This helps us to check in with youth interns and ensure that we are delivering an effective and supportive program. Often we have found that we may have overlooked a key learning area half way through the internship and are able to modify our programming to accommodate these learning needs. We are continually improving our programming, not just at the end of the six-month program, to ensure that interns get the support that they need and can get the most out of the program.

Provide an Avenue for Self-reflection for both Youth Interns and Program Staff

We also use program evaluation tools as a way of facilitating self-reflection in both our youth interns and program staff. Our evaluation tools and activities provide valuable feedback and data for us, but they also provide the valuable opportunity for youth and staff to personally reflect inwards on their own growth, development, goals and success. We recognize that self-reflection, in itself, is valuable for our program.

Help to Secure Future Funding

Collecting both measurable quantitative and qualitative data on the success of your program helps you to build a case for the strength and value of your program when applying for future funding sources or speaking with community members. Being able to share our high graduation rate, employment rate, number of youth who have returned to school and number of youth who report improved employability skills, self-confidence, and life skills as a result of the program helps us to advocate for funding and program supports when needed.

Our Approach

Baseline Self Assessment

At the start of each program we have each youth intern complete a baseline self-assessment. The assessment is a series of statements about the intern's current ability and skill set in five key areas: food, work, education, relationships and wellness. (See Appendix N)

To create the assessment, we identified all of the skills we would like each intern to have at the end of the program. For example, in the area of work, we would like each intern to know their ideal job, be confident in their computer skills and feel good about their résumé when they graduate from the program. Each statement is accompanied by a 1-5 rating scale and the intern gives each statement a value that reflects their current feeling on the statement, 5 being total agreement, 1 being total disagreement.



The assessments are collected and this data provides a great framework for what needs to be covered throughout the program. One group of youth may be entirely confident with their computer skills, all providing a high score for that statement, while the next group may feel that their computer skills need improvement. This difference is accounted for in our Life Skills programming. We may provide some computer use workshops, for example, or build in more time on the computer during their work day to practice their skills.

At the end of the program, this exact same assessment is completed again. The hope is that each intern provides higher rankings for statements that may have been ranked low at the start of the program. This is where you can collect some measurable data about the development and growth of your youth interns. The improvements should be documented and included in future funding applications. Areas that did not improve from the beginning should be considered and accounted for in your next program: how can you address this skill through Life Skills sessions or in their daily work?

Monthly Check-Ins

Interns participate in monthly check-ins with the Program Coordinator. We have included more detailed information about how these are structured in the *Intern Support* section. We also wanted to mention them here as these check-ins provide on-going opportunities for youth to provide feedback on the programming, the skills they are learning, what may be missing and what changes could be made to make the program more relevant and effective. These are a valuable part of our ongoing approach to program evaluation.

Rating Scales and Exit Questionnaire

At the end of the program we provide a feedback form and rating scale that is tailored to the events of that six-month program. This form includes a listing of all of the Life Skills sessions where interns can rate on a 1-5 rating scale how beneficial and useful they found each session. We provide space for interns to write feedback about their favourite sessions, least favourite sessions and what they may suggest for future intakes. We also ask interns to differentiate between content and facilitation style. For example, many interns noted that the content covered in an income tax workshop facilitated by a community partner was very relevant, but the facilitation style was not very engaging.

We also provide an exit questionnaire to ask for key feedback on the program (See Appendix O). We use these forms to shape our program policies and to help us decide which Life Skills sessions are worth repeating, which need improvement and which may be missing from our program.

Facilitated Activities

During our last week of the program we will often include a few facilitated self-reflection activities as part of our closing programming. We have tried a variety of these, and often tweak them so that they will suit the group we are working with. These often provide feedback that is not documented, but rather act as a tool for self-reflection, group sharing and openness for each member of the group. Often noting that the feedback the youth create in these activities isn't being documented can free them to try some activities that they may not have tried in the past. Here are some of the activities we have used:

1) Planting and Harvesting

In this activity we ask each participant to think about what they are taking with them and what they are leaving for the next group of interns. Drawing on a gardening analogy, interns think of something they are harvesting; something they are bringing with them as they graduate the program. They also plant a "seed" for the next group, sharing what they see as valuable for the next group of interns to remember or keep with them to be successful in the program. Intern suggestions often range from "be on time" to "keep a sense of humour and get to know others."

2) Forced Connections

Provide a selection of items for interns to choose from. These can be kitchen utensils, craft supplies, office tools, etc. Ask each participant to select an item from the table and consider how their experience is like that item. For example, we've had interns share that their experience is like a pair of scissors because they learned to cut out a negative habit, or like a newspaper because they learned to listen to the opinions of others. Some really creative and thoughtful answers can come from this exercise.

3) I am Valuable Because

Each participant, including staff, gets a piece of paper that says "I am valuable because..." which is taped to their back. We provide time for everyone to move around the room and comment on each other's sheets, providing reasons why we value that person. This provides a great time for interns to reflect on what they have

drawn and learned from their peers and what these relationships have meant to them.

4) *Media Projects*

We have included various arts-based projects at the end of our program that allow for creative reflection. Over the years this has included creating large murals for our delivery trucks, producing short films about the program with the help of a videographer, creating a group letter to be read at graduation and working with a local artist to create a table setting display representing the growth of each group member.



Art on the Move

In 2009, artist Beata Kruszynski worked with the Focus on Food youth interns to create a vibrant canvas on the side of an 18 ft FoodShare delivery truck. Using the theme *field to table*, the interns developed a design that reflects how food is grown, transported and distributed in Toronto. Youth interns participated in the process from conception to execution, facilitating feedback sessions where they discussed and critiqued their design.

Six Month and One Year Follow-Ups

We follow up with each intern both six months and one year after they have completed the program. This is usually a phone call from the Program Coordinator to check in about where they are at and if they need any referrals or employment supports from us. We also use this time to gather feedback on their experience in the Focus on Food program after some time away from the program and greater self-reflection.



**Brenna, Good Food Program
Warehouse Intern 2011**

Success Story: Brenna

FoodShare opened a lot of possibilities for me and gave me the support and confidence I needed to move forward. I learned new knowledge, skills, and was able to network myself.

I was able to get my Food Handlers Certificate, interact with volunteers, and be responsible for inventory of the Good Food Box program. All of these things helped me gain experience, confidence, passion, and skills that I apply today.

I felt there was a very balanced and realistic mix of doing the job we were interning for (in my case it was the Warehouse Assistant) and doing other program-related activities (certifications, workshops, etc.) to build on the aspects of ourselves that the job might not have provided. The ongoing support they offer is amazing, they constantly encourage your feedback, you can clearly tell that the program is designed to benefit you as an individual.

I work two part time jobs now; one as an after school cooking instructor in a school and one as a Student Nutrition Program Coordinator running a Breakfast Program. A normal week for me is planning out what dishes I'll be teaching, planning out what materials and groceries we will need for the week, going grocery shopping, teaching the kids about food and how to cook, sitting down together to eat what we have made, and then we all clean up. I have a lot of creative control on what I can teach the kids; besides general teaching about food and cooking related skills, the main focus is on making yummy healthy foods from scratch.

End of Program

Graduation Celebration

At the end of the six-month internship we have a graduation ceremony to celebrate the success of the youth interns. We usually hold this ceremony at lunchtime so that all FoodShare staff can attend. Interns are welcome to invite family and friends to attend the ceremony and eat lunch with us. We often have our Work Area Managers congratulate each group of youth, share a bit about their experience working with them and invite them up, one at a time, to be recognized and receive a Certificate of Completion. Often we will share something the interns have created, such as videos they produced during Life Skills sessions.



Living gifts at the Focus on Food graduation celebration

End of Program Administrative Details:

There are also a few administrative details that we get ready for graduation day:

Reference Letters

We prepare a professional letter of reference for each intern that comes from their Work Area Manager. The letter outlines the skills they have learned in either the kitchen or warehouse settings, and notes the professional development they have received from Life Skills sessions. We make sure they have a printed, signed copy on FoodShare letterhead that they can take with them on future job interviews.

Résumés and Cover Letters

We work on résumés and cover letters well in advance of the end of the program, but we do ensure that interns have both hard copies and digital copies of their updated résumé and sample cover letter before leaving the program. We provide digital copies by emailing them as an attachment, as well as putting their documents on a USB Key or CD. Digital copies are important, as they will be able to edit and update their résumé as they go.

Quotes from 2007 Graduating Interns:

“FoodShare is a safe place and we are respected here, so it makes me happier.”

“I’ve realized it’s not just cooking that I love - I need to use it to make a difference in the world.”

“This place brings a spark to me.”

“Our bus is full, there is no room for racism.”

“By nurturing plants, I am learning to nurture myself.”

Completion Bonus

We provide a \$500 completion bonus for interns that have successfully completed the six-month internship. This cheque is given out on graduation day.

Record of Employment and Vacation Pay

Interns are entitled to 4% vacation pay which we provide as a cheque on graduation day. We also prepare their Record of Employment (ROE) so that it can be handed out with their cheque and they do not have to return to pick it up or have it be mailed to them.

Staying in Touch

Youth interns will always be a part of the FoodShare community. Our program staff members are happy to help them look for work, provide appropriate referrals and check-in with them after they complete the program. We remain a resource for them and are happy to provide support.

We do formally check-in with graduates six months after the program to see where they are at and also to capture their feedback on the program once they've had some distance from their time here.



2011 Interns at our Graduation Celebration

Program Budget

Much of the funding for the Focus on Food youth internship program comes from the Skills Link program offered through Service Canada. They provide the full costs of the Participants Wages, which include hourly full time wages for interns' work in the Kitchen and Warehouse and Life Skills sessions, as well as \$500 completion bonus for each intern.

Service Canada also pays some of the Project Staff Wages, WSIB and Benefit Contributions including all of the salary costs and benefits of one fulltime Program Coordinator and one day a week for two Work Area Managers. We also receive some of the costs for the Life Skills Workshops, including the cost of First Aid, Food Handler's Safety and WHMIS training, as well as facilitation fees for outside workshop facilitators. Safety boots and work gloves for warehouse interns, non-slip footwear and chef jackets for kitchen interns, TTC tokens for the first two weeks of the program and travel for Life Skills field trips and some project costs such as insurance, program equipment, office supplies, staff training, are also reimbursed.

We seek additional funding each year to cover the cost of food for the youth interns, which includes free lunches as well as daily snacks, additional staff support and life skill training not covered by Service Canada. Organizations that cannot fundraise from other funders or cover some of the costs of the program should carefully consider starting a program, as all costs are not usually covered by the main funder.



Preserving and Canning Workshop with Not Far From the Tree

Profiles of Similar Programs

Across North America there are several projects that incorporate food security with a work-based youth employment program. Below are four descriptions of similar projects. We visited and interviewed staff at the Environmental Youth Alliance, Supa Fresh Youth Farm and Food Works. Information on The Food Project was drawn from their website and program manuals. A separate section that follows is a detailed look at Growing Power's Youth Corps programs, prepared by their staff.



Environmental Youth Alliance (Vancouver, British Columbia)

The Environmental Youth Alliance (EYA) runs a youth employment program focused upon work experience through community placements. The program hires 10 interns and sets them up with a work placement with a local community agency that has an environmental, social justice or food security focus.

Interns work a total of 22.5 hours per week. This includes three days per week in their community placement and one day per week of programming at EYA. Work hours are set by the host, some interns work during the week day, while others have schedules that include daytime and evening hours. There is a built-in four-week training time at the start of the program and a two-week wrap up where interns are working together at EYA.



Prior to the start of the program, EYA staff contact community agencies that may be interested in accepting a youth intern. They have found that neighbourhood houses, settlement community centres, are a great setting as many of them are well equipped and may already have hiring policies in place around hiring someone who faces systemic barriers to accessing employment. Urban agriculture projects in the city, as well as community oriented farms outside of Vancouver, have also made great placement locations.

Staff start one month prior to the intake to begin arranging host locations. One week prior to the intake they have a meeting with the potential host location to outline how the placement will work, ensure that the work being done by a youth intern will be meaningful for them and to outline expectations of both the host and the intern. They then draft up a contract that clarifies these expectations as well as articulates the roles of the EYA staff. They try to set up 12 placement options before starting their hiring process to ensure that they will have a secure placement for each of their 10 interns.

One day a week is used as a programming day where all of the interns come together to participate in workshops and training. EYA staff facilitate around 75% of these workshops themselves and invite other community agencies to facilitate the rest. There is a focus on employability skills and keeping a professional lens on their training. Currently this program is not funded.



For more information visit <http://www.eya.ca/skills-link.html>.

(EYA Photos Courtesy of Environmental Youth Alliance)

The Food Project (Massachusetts)

The Food Project engages young people in personal and social change through sustainable agriculture. Since 1991, the Food Project has worked to transform a generation of youth through giving teens real responsibility and meaningful work. Each year, over 150 teenagers farm 40 acres in the Massachusetts towns and cities of Beverly, Boston, Lincoln and Lynn. Youth participants follow a three-tier program:

Good Healthy Food for All!

1. **Summer Youth Program (SYP):** The Summer Youth Program is a six week session for youth aged 14-17. Over 100 youth are hired to farm both urban and suburban farmland. Mornings involve working in the fields followed by afternoon workshops on topics like sustainable agriculture, personal finances and diversity. SYP participants assist with all aspects of the farming operation (including weeding, harvesting, planting & washing,) help to sell their produce at reduced-priced farmers' markets and spend one day a week preparing and serving their produce at a local hunger relief organization. Youth are paid a weekly stipend of \$200 before taxes as well as collect community service hours from helping out at hunger relief agencies.
2. **Academic Year Program:** The Academic Year Program is the next step for youth who have completed SYP. Also called the D.I.R.T. crew (Dynamic, Intelligent, Responsible Teenagers,) youth spend Saturdays and after school sessions assisting with projects in the community such as building raised bed gardens for low income families, facilitating volunteer days at one of the farms and helping to recruit new youth for the upcoming summer session. In depth workshops on sustainable agriculture as well as a focus on food justice, job readiness and public speaking are part of the program. Each D.I.R.T. crew also designs and executes one long term, community based program such as building a school yard garden or researching barriers to fresh food sales at local corner stores. D.I.R.T. crew members receive an hourly stipend making approximately \$45 on a Saturday and \$15 on a weekday afternoon session.
3. **Internships:** The Internships see youth put their learning into practice through working alongside staff and community partners in hands-on projects. Offered to youth aged 15-18 who have completed the Summer Youth Program and/or Academic Year Program, the Internship provides a focus on developing teaching and facilitation skills. During the academic year, interns work to mobilize community members around issues of food justice, deliver workshops and lead volunteer groups. During the summer season, Interns act as peer mentors for SYP participants – running farmer's markets, farm share distribution drop-offs and working in the fields.

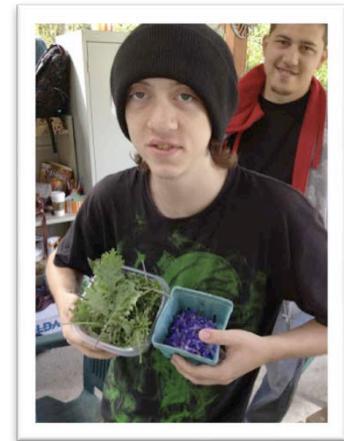
The Youth Project follows an intentional strategy of recruiting a diverse team of youth and staff that will build on personal experiences to cultivate understanding across socioeconomic, geographic, and racial boundaries. All youth are paid bi-weekly for the work they do – providing both economic support and a sense of responsibility for their work.

The Youth Project also offers both a Summer and Winter Institute – three day intensive seminars where they share their youth employment and engagement models. These are a great opportunity to see first hand the work they do and to share ideas with others interested in food justice and youth programming. The Youth Project also offers Manuals with step-by-step guides to recreating a project like theirs for your organization.

More information can be found at: <http://thefoodproject.org/>

Supa Fresh Youth Farm (Tigard, Oregon)

Located in Tigard, Oregon, the Supa Fresh Youth Farm has finished its third growing season. Originally a work-learning program that connected youth with paid work placements at local businesses, the farm project started when a staff member found a long forgotten garden space tucked in the back corner of the local elementary school. The program is funded through Worksystems Inc and the Department of Labor to hire youth participants who are between the ages of 16 and 21, currently in a school program and who face systemic barriers to accessing employment. Youth participants farm the garden space, growing fresh produce that they sell at the local Farmers' Market while working on their employability skills and gaining valuable work experience.



Participants have their own schedule for farm days, attending the program at a pace that suits them. They keep track of their hours and receive a stipend of \$600 for every 100 hours of work they put in. Supa Fresh has an informal partnership with an alternative school with which they share office space. The school is able to refer students that are looking for work, and Supa Fresh is able to connect their youth interns with credit recovery programs offered through the alternative school. Currently, their high school graduation rate is higher than the district average.

The program maintains a focus on entrepreneurship and employability skills development. Youth are responsible for growing and preparing the harvest for market, as well as actively selling their produce at the Farmers' Market. Each season they design and sell t-shirts as a way of fundraising for their program and raising awareness for their food security initiative. Programming includes cooking classes, team building exercises, a camping trip and opportunities to work alongside local farmers and chefs.

For more information, visit <http://supafreshyouthfarm.org/> (Supa Fresh Images Courtesy of Mia Bartlett)



Food Works (Portland, Oregon)

Starting as a small youth-led market garden in the St John's Woods community in 2001, Food Works was selling salad mix at a Portland Farmers' Market. In 2005, the youth themselves decided that they wanted to expand their project and youth participants, with the support of Janus Youth staff, began searching for farm space within the city. They eventually secured a quarter acre of land on Sauvie Island and broke ground on the Food Works Farm in 2006. They now farm two and a half acres of land – selling their produce at two Farmers' Markets, two grocery stores and a CSA.

From the beginning, the approach has been that Food Work is not a farm where youth come to work, but rather the farm belongs to the youth. Youth farmers are involved in, and responsible for, each aspect of farm management including creating the farm plan, sourcing materials and supplies, growing and caring for crops, advertising the Community Shared Agriculture program (CSA) and selling their produce.

The program initially started as a one-year program, but youth participants helped to develop the current three-tier structure, inspired by the work of The Food Project:

1. *Summer Program:* 20 youth are hired to participate in the 8-week leadership program. They spend two days a week at the farm, one day working in a community placement and one day a week in programming at St John's Woods. Youth are between the ages of 14-21 and are residents of the St John's Woods neighbourhood, or have close connections with the neighbourhood.
2. *School Year Program:* After completing the summer program, youth can apply for the School Year Program. 12-15 youth are hired and commit to participating in Thursday after-school sessions and full day Saturday sessions. Youth work on projects in 4 groups that represent Food Works' four frames: Growing the Farm, Growing the Business, Growing the Community and Growing the Self. For example, the Growing the Business group developed the CSA model during the school year program and the Growing the Community group wrote a grant for a nutritional literacy project in the community.
3. *Market Crew:* Youth can then apply to become a member of the market crew for the next season, running all aspects of the farm. Three returning youth are also hired on as crew leaders for each season and work an additional day each week. The crew farms every Saturday as well as sells at Farmers' Markets.

Since developing the tiered structure the retention rate for the program is much higher as youth are taking on more responsibility and continually meet high expectations.

There are two full time staff members working on the project - one Program Supervisor and one Farm Manager. Youth participate in quarterly check-ins around how they are doing in the program as well as exit interviews for each stage of the program. Staff continue to act as a resource for youth after the program, including those that leave early.

For more information visit <http://villagegardens.org/food-works/>.

Growing Power: Youth Corps Programs

Prepared By Lauralyn Clawson, Growing Power

Growing Power is a nonprofit organization and land trust that was established in Milwaukee, WI in 1996. This national organization is headquartered in Milwaukee's inner city and is the home of the city's last remaining farm. Organization founder and CEO, Will Allen, designed a program that offered teens an opportunity to renovate the greenhouses to grow food for their community. What started as a simple partnership to change the landscape of the north side of Milwaukee has blossomed into a national and global commitment to sustainable food systems. Thousands visit Growing Power each year to see first hand how local food centers can transform a community. In 2002, Growing Power established the Chicago Office.

The following descriptions highlight two of Growing Power Chicago's nine current urban farms.

Chicago Lights Urban Farm is an urban farm and community garden located in the Cabrini Green neighborhood in partnership with Fourth Presbyterian Church. What was once an unkempt basketball court, has transformed into an interactive green space in a rapidly changing area. As the neighborhood transitions from low-income "projects" to mixed-income housing, the overarching goal of the site is to help facilitate a thriving diverse community and ensuring that present residents are not cast aside in this process of transformation. This is the ninth year of the partnership and the second year of the site's transition from traditional community garden into a highly productive urban farm. New additions include hoop houses and a heated greenhouse for year-round production, and bike powered food delivery program and a new farm stand where our youth can sell the vegetables they grow right back to the community.



Iron Street Urban Farm will be the first of its kind in Chicago and will be a hub for community activism, local food production, education, and green job training as well as micro-enterprise development. This urban farm is in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood, located on a seven-acre old industrial warehouse that had been abandoned for nearly ten years. Within one year, Growing Power has already taken this property that was not a resource to the surrounding community and transformed it into highly productive community food center. The site already includes six hoop houses for year round food production, three 700-gallon aquaponic systems, oyster mushroom production, composting and vermicomposting, and a rooftop apiary with six beehives. The finished farm will include 20 hoop houses to grow fresh produce year-round; 10 large scale aquaponics systems (10,000 fish per system); green roof and vertical farming production; renewable energy systems including solar and anaerobic digestion; and continued training and employment of at-risk youth from surrounding public housing communities.

During the summer of 2012, 45 youth from the surrounding community including Wentworth Gardens (Chicago Housing Authority-CHA), Englewood, Bronzeville, and South Chicago were employed and trained at this site. An additional 15 students continued in our after school job training program this fall.



On October 25th, 2011, Growing Power youth and staff had the opportunity to meet Mayor Rahm Emanuel and First Lady, Michelle Obama, as they toured Iron Street Urban Farm in promotion of food security and ending childhood obesity in Chicago.

How the program operates and what it accomplishes:

Youth engagement has been the centerpiece of all the work we do at Growing Power Chicago for the past decade. Since the summer of 2006, Growing Power has worked with After School Matters to create an Advanced Apprenticeship program teaching youth the fundamentals of farming while also embarking on a Food Literacy Campaign to educate youth on the complexity of our food system. Advanced apprentices have an opportunity to learn about where their food comes from, how to build a community food system from the earth up, and the ecology of a garden. Through their work in urban gardens and greenhouses, they learn how to grow soil, vegetables, herbs, and flowers sustainably; creating a bounty of produce in the heart of the city that will consume it. Teens participate in dynamic group discussions on food system development, food policy, and dismantling racism through the food system. Also integral to this program, life skills acquisition in the form of work ethic and appropriate workplace socialization, follow through on instructions, and land and ecological stewardship. Our programs' success in developing these problem-solving skills helps prepare the participants for future employment, college, and other higher education opportunities.

In 2012, Growing Power continued the expansion of our youth programming and was able to employ and engage nearly 350 youth throughout Chicago! Youth were instrumental in the continued development of Growing Power Chicago's new sites at Iron Street Urban Farm and Altgeld Gardens Urban Farm. A continued partnership with Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), allowed for the development of a new one-acre urban farm in the Roosevelt Square public housing community. Over sixty employment opportunities were offered to local youth at this site in 2011. Teens assisted in visioning and garden design activities, compost production, hoop house construction, and the preparation of the farm's first growing beds.

These youth joined peers from other Growing Power youth programs at Iron Street Urban Farm to assist in the site's first honey harvest from its six rooftop beehives. Program participants learned about bees and their vital roles in the health of local ecosystems as well as how honey and beeswax can be used to create value-added products. Youth assisted in the harvesting of honey, the creation of lip balms and facial scrubs, and the design of product labels for such products. Each teen was encouraged to create a micro business and marketing plan and present it to the group.

A major focus in Growing Power's youth programming is to show students that there is a wide range of opportunities in overall food system development. Our staff is devoted to finding where our teens' interests lie. For instance, a former group of young men in our program loved compost production. Growing Power staff assisted these teens in the development of a business plan to pick up food scraps from local restaurants. Meetings with local chefs were arranged and these former youth corps members have now joined Growing Power as permanent staff to run our compost operation, which diverted nearly 500,000 pounds of food waste from landfills in 2011! Our program is not just about growing food. It's about growing community and our youth while helping teens develop skills in areas they are truly interested in.

With the incorporation of hoop houses at four of our urban farms, youth are able to participate in year-round food production and understand its importance in food security in their communities. Program participants see first hand that it is possible to grow hearty winter greens, such as kale and spinach, even in the coldest of months. A continued focus in 2012 will be youth's further understanding of year round food production, food preservation and storage, and food security and related policy.

Youth interns at Growing Power are paid for their work, some through partner employment programs and some through Growing Power's social enterprise funds.

(Images courtesy of Growing Power)

Appendices

Appendix A - About FoodShare Toronto: Our Approach and Our Impacts

FoodShare (www.foodshare.net) is a Toronto non-profit community organization whose vision is Good Healthy Food for All.

Founded in 1985 to address hunger in our communities, FoodShare takes a unique multi-faceted and long-term approach to hunger and food issues. We work to empower individuals, families and communities through food-based initiatives, while at the same time advocating for the broader public policies needed to ensure that everyone has adequate access to sustainably produced, good healthy food. Working "from field to table," we focus on the entire system that puts food on our tables: from the growing, processing and distribution of food to its purchasing, cooking and consumption.

FoodShare Toronto is Canada's largest community food security organization, recognized as an important innovator of effective programs that have been reproduced all across Canada. We facilitate empowerment and community development from the ground up, cultivating awareness, building citizenship and enhancing individual and community participation, all the while striving to improve access to good healthy food.

Since its earliest years, FoodShare has recognized that partnerships and advocacy make us stronger and amplify the effects of our work. We pioneer by illustrating what is possible, creating empowering tools and replicable, scalable solution models (our programs) to combat universal food problems, then we mentor communities in adapting and growing these solutions. We apply our program models to the direct needs of low-income communities in Toronto, implementing these solutions universally, to remove stigma. FoodShare's community development partnership model means that our work is leveraged exponentially, garnering impacts that reach far beyond Toronto and even Canada.

Our programs, which reach over 155,000 children and adults per month in Toronto, include Student Nutrition, Field to Table Schools, the Good Food Café, Focus on Food youth internships, the Good Food Box, Good Food Markets, Fresh Produce for Schools and Community Groups, Baby and Toddler Nutrition, Community Kitchens, Field to Table Catering, the FoodLink Hotline, Power Soups, Community Gardening, Composting, Beekeeping and Urban Agriculture.

A long-term multi-faceted approach through innovation and community development for maximum impact

FoodShare pioneers by creating empowering tools and scalable solutions, sharing freely these resources in an "open source" approach. Our staff work to support and mentor communities in drawing on their own strengths to adapt and grow solutions. This community development partnership model means that our work is leveraged exponentially, garnering impacts that grow as information and skills are adapted and passed along to others and ensuring that each dollar we invest in our programs multiplies, impacting the greatest number of people, providing tools and support that continue giving.

- ⇒ **Long-term Vision** to ending hunger from all angles, working ‘from field to table’ using food’s capacity as the great connector to empower people by creating Canada’s most successful non-profit food hub, connecting urban dwellers directly to fresh produce, to local farmers, to each other, and to the cooking and growing skills needed to choose healthy food for a healthy future. As Sarah Elton said in her book, *Locavore: From Farmers’ Fields To Rooftop Gardens - How Canadians Are Changing The Way We Eat*, FoodShare runs “... a program for every link in the food chain.”
- ⇒ **Universal Programs** help everyone overcome hurdles to “say yes to healthy food,” while removing stigma for those who will benefit most deeply. (As in a public library system or with the TTC, all can take part and the participation of all makes the system work. While some may have access to other options (ie. buy a book, drive a car), those who do not have access to other options will benefit most.)
- ⇒ **Community Development Partnership Model** supports communities with information and tools (so they don’t have to reinvent the wheel), honours neighbourhood leadership and strength to adapt and grow, and creates long-term solutions with ever-increasing impacts.
- ⇒ **Sustainable Social Enterprise Programs** pay farmers fairly while making quality produce and home cooked meals accessible to all through subsidized food distribution models, the Field to Table Community Food Hub and Field to Table Catering.

Appendix B – FoodShare Diversity Statement

Found in FoodShare Toronto’s Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual:

At FoodShare, we welcome, respect and celebrate diversity, and are nourished by new energy and experiences.

We embrace everyone, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, citizenship, creed, record of offences, marital status, same-sex partnership status, family status, disability, class, ethnic origin, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion or age.

Like a healthy garden -- which thrives when a wide variety of plants, and insects work together in harmony -- diversity makes us strong.

Welcome to FoodShare: polyculture everywhere!

Appendix C – Anti-Oppression & Anti-Racism Works Cited

¹ Green Justice Resource Kit. Youth Environmental Network. Available:
<http://www.youthactioncentre.ca/docs/Green%20Justice%20Guide%20Part%201.pdf>

² Black and white: A difference in documentation. Toronto Star Static Content. Available:
<http://www.thestar.com/staticcontent/760552>

³ Canada's working moms still earning less, doing more than dads. (2012, May 10). CBC News.
Available: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2012/05/10/f-mothers-day.html>

Appendix D - Two-Sided Job Posting

FoodShare Toronto is now hiring for 10 positions for a 24 week long, full time, paid internship in our Focus on Food Youth internship program

If you have had difficulty finding long-term employment we will train you to work, as a team, in either our food distribution warehouse or kitchen program.

This program also includes weekly life skills sessions providing valuable training and hands on experience with a range of interpersonal and professional skills from nutrition and how our food system works, first aid and health and safety training, financial management, employment counseling and more.

You must be eager to work and learn in a team environment and ready and committed to work a full day, everyday.

To qualify for the program you must be:

- Between the ages of 15-30
- Unemployed
- Have had difficulty finding long-term employment
- Have not received Employment Insurance (EI) in the past two years
- Have not completed high school

The positions pay minimum wage for a 37.5 hour work week beginning on **September, 2011** and ending on **February, 2012**.

To apply and register for an orientation session in either our Kitchen or Warehouse please call 416-363-6441 ext 279 by Friday August 26, 2011. We will be registering up to 80 applicants, and registration may close before the closing date depending on availability.

The Application Process includes:

Registering and attending an orientation session at FoodShare, 90 Croatia Street, where you will meet staff, spend the day working in our Good Food Program, receive an overview of our program and have your questions answered. You will also complete an application form and sign up for an interview.

Check out some videos about the program produced by our current interns at:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/FOFFoodShare>

(please turn over)



What's FoodShare All About?

FoodShare (www.foodshare.net) is a Toronto non-profit community organization whose vision is Good Healthy Food for All. Founded 25 years ago to address hunger in our communities, FoodShare takes a unique multi-faceted and long-term approach to hunger and food issues.

Working "from field to table," we focus on the entire system that puts food on our tables: from the growing, processing and distribution of food to its purchasing, cooking and consumption. FoodShare's programs reach over 145,000 children and adults every single month across the city of Toronto and countless others across Canada, bringing them fresh, nutritious, affordable food, and cultivating the knowledge and skills that build healthy communities.

FoodShare

90 Croatia Street
Toronto, ON M6H 1K9

Main entrance on Brock St.
one block west of Dufferin St.
and one block south of Bloor St.

phone: 416-363-6441
fax: 416-363-0474

Good and healthy food for all www.foodshare.net

all photos by Laura Berman - designed and produced by GreenFuseImages.com

United Way of Greater Toronto

The image contains a map of the FoodShare location in Toronto. The map shows the intersection of Bloor St. West and Dufferin St. The FoodShare location is marked with a red arrow and labeled 'Entrance on Brock' and 'FoodShare'. The map also shows other streets like Brock Ave., Croatia St., and Dufferin Mall Shopping Centre. There are two red circles with 'TTC' on Bloor St. West. The background of the map area is green with a leaf pattern.

Looking for more info? www.foodshare.net/train04.htm



Check out videos about the program made by our interns
@ [youtube.com/user/FOFFoodShare](https://www.youtube.com/user/FOFFoodShare)



Find us on Facebook @
[facebook.com/focusonfood](https://www.facebook.com/focusonfood)

Appendix E - Application Form Used at Intern Orientation Sessions:



Focus on Food Youth internship program Application

Date of Orientation _____

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Contact person (if unavailable by phone): _____

Living situation: _____

Children: No / Yes _____ (number) Childcare Plan: _____

* Social Insurance Number _____

* Birthdate: _____

** Used to process your application for eligibility with the Federal Government*

1. What are your first and second choices for the teams you would like to be on? (kitchen or warehouse)

1st _____ 2nd _____

2. What appeals to you most about your first choice?

3. What is going on in your life right now that has lead you to be attracted to this opportunity with the Focus on Food program?

Appendix F - Interview Questions:

Focus on Food Interview Questions

Name:		Kitchen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Date:		Good Food Team	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interviewer			

What excites you about working here?

This program is an employment readiness program where you'll be developing skills in one of two program areas, but we also want to make sure that we support you in preparing for your next steps through our weekly life skills sessions. Can you tell us about your short and long-term goals? (returning to school, apprenticeship, career, personal, etc.)

Part of this program is that we focus on food, and will be working on enhancing our understanding of healthy eating and the politics of food. What about food interests you and what would you like to learn if you were here?

We'd like to know if you have had any work experience before, and if so could you tell us a little bit about what you have done?

We've had a lot of interest in this position and will be hiring 10 positions in total. We want to ensure that we select people who are committed to working here for the full six months and being here on time everyday. Do you feel you are ready for this type of commitment and why?



This program is designed to support individuals with a range of barriers to full time employment, and will include a great deal of support to help you achieve your goals. What do you consider as your main barriers to full-time employment? (*May need to provide some examples – childcare, accommodating appointments (parole hearings, housing, medical appointments, etc.)*)

At FoodShare we work with volunteers, staff, and community members of all ages, racial backgrounds, sexual orientations, religions, etc. Are you comfortable working in this type of environment?

In your role you'll be asked to do a range of tasks, some of which are physically demanding, repetitive and within a tight schedule. Can you tell us about any experience you've had doing this type of work? And do you think you're prepared to take this on?

We've asked you a bunch of questions, but we realize that we don't always give the chance for you to share everything about yourself that you would like to. What do you feel you bring to this position and what makes you a great candidate?

Do you have any questions for us?

Appendix G – Employment Letter

Date

Dear _____,

Re: Employment Agreement

I am pleased to offer you an employment contract as a **Warehouse Assistant** as detailed in the attached job description, employed by FoodShare Toronto, effective immediately and continuing until Friday August 12, 2011 at which time your employment will be over as it will be the end of the Focus on Food program.

Your salary rate will be \$10.25 an hour for 37.5 hours per week and you will be paid biweekly, adjusted for any fewer hours worked in the two weeks before you are paid. In addition to your wages, you will be entitled to paid statutory holidays and 4% vacation pay which will be paid to you at the end of the contract. If you successfully complete this contract you will be entitled to a \$500 completion bonus.

You will have money deducted from your pay-cheque for Canada Pension Plan, and Employment Insurance, in addition to the standard income taxes. However, these deductions will not be taken off for the Life Skills day, as the Life Skills are not insurable hours.

FoodShare can terminate your employment without cause at any time. FoodShare wishes to emphasize that it does not intend to exercise its option to terminate employment without cause in cases involving concerns regarding poor performance (in the absence of wilful misconduct or wilful neglect or duty) without first advising you of its concerns and giving you an opportunity to address these concerns.

Would you please confirm your acceptance of these terms of employment by signing where indicated below? Thank you.

Yours truly,

Debbie Field
Executive Director

Name

Date



Appendix H – Attendance Contract

Date

Attendance Contract

As a Focus on Food intern, I understand that this position requires my full attendance.

By signing this contract I am committing to:

- Be at work Monday – Friday, 37.5 hours/week;
- Arrive on time each day;
- Communicate any time off requests to my Work Area Manager and Coordinator at least 3 days in advance and by using the Time Off Request Form;
- Use my paid ½ day a month for all necessary appointments;
- Communicate with my Work Area Manager at least 15 minutes before the start of my shift if I am sick, or else time missed will be unpaid;

I have read over, and understand, the policies and procedures regarding expectations and consequences.

Sincerely,

Name

Date

Appendix I – Food Security Curriculum, Debbie Field

Getting to know you, A FoodShare Exercise

Please turn to the person next to you and interview them and fill in this form about them.

After a few minutes, you will be asked to stand up and introduce them to the group.

Name of person filling out this form: _____

1. I am happy to introduce you to: _____
(Name of person being introduced)

2. They were born in: _____
(Name of city and country they were born in)

3. Their favorite comfort food under \$3 a serving is:

4. A food they really don't care for is:

5. One embarrassing food story they have is:

Appendix J – Food Security Curriculum, Debbie Field

Food Policy Ideas at the individual, community and social level

In small groups, please answer the following questions about the Current Food System:

1. Do you think there is hunger in Toronto, Canada, the world and if so why in such a rich city, country, world?
2. How do you think farmers are doing in Canada? Would you want to be a farmer?
3. Do you think that the mainstream food system promotes healthy food?
4. If chemical additives like pesticides cost more money, why do you think so many farmers use them?
5. Did you often eat together with relatives or family when you were growing up?

Rate these proposals:

Please rate these ideas:	Answer Yes or No. Then at the end go back and rate the ideas where a great idea gets a 10 and a lousy idea get a 1
1. Do you think we could eliminate hunger if governments provided people with adequate income?	
2. Do you think people are prepared to buy local or organic food?	
3. Do you think it makes any sense to grow food in the City?	
4. Should we start teaching cooking and gardening in schools?	
5. Should we make all hospitals serve healthy food?	
6. Should we ban junk food in schools?	
7. Should you have to be able to cook and grow food to graduate high school?	
8. Do you think we should ban advertising to kids of junk food on tv?	
9. Should workplaces give all employees free lunch at work?	
10. Do you think healthy food should be cheaper than junk food and should governments make that happen through subsidizing healthy food?	
TOTAL:	

Appendix K – Food Security Curriculum, Debbie Field

**Taking Personal Control over Your Own Food System
Ten Food Activities**

Food Activities:	Examples:
1. Put Food First	1. You only have \$6. You could take the TTC and not eat, or buy \$6 worth of food and walk.
2. Use your own labour power	2. \$6 if you buy your own ingredients and prepare it yourself will buy you so much more, and much better quality, than \$6 in a restaurant.
3. Spend more or less depending on your budget	3. Sometimes in the month, sometimes in your life you can afford steak; other times lentils will be a more affordable choice.
4. Eat low down the food chain for affordability & health	4. Grains, beans, vegetables, fruits when purchased in season are the least expensive and healthiest foods you can buy and eat.
5. Eat seasonally for better taste	5. Sweet juicy Ontario strawberries in June vs. imported strawberry rocks in January.
6. Prepare your own food to take control over your life	6. In a world in which we all control so little, choosing what we put in our mouths can be very powerful. A woman recovering from breast cancer describes controlling what she and her family eat makes her feel she had some control over her life.
7. Limit the chemicals you put inside yourself	7. Why put chemical that may prove unsafe into your body and into the ecosystem?
8. Grow some of your food for independence	8. Joy of watching food grow puts you in touch with the natural joy of life, as well as making you more independent.
9. Break bread together to build social cohesion	9. The joy of eating together bonds people, families, neighbours, communities, together.
10. Exercise and eat healthy food for fun	10. An active lifestyle in which you choose to be healthy empowers you to take control over your life and can be tremendous fun.



Appendix L – Invitation Letter for Placement Hosts

Date

Business Name

Street Address

Sent to: Email@address.com

Dear Contact Name,

As you know, here at FoodShare we have a Youth Employment Program called Focus on Food. We employ 10 youth in either our Commercial Kitchen or our Good Food Program Fresh Produce Warehouse. During their six months here, our youth interns gain real, full time work experience in their workspace, as well as valuable trainings and certifications that make them more employable.

Our goal is that each intern leaves this program with the connections and skills required to find and maintain meaningful employment. To facilitate this, we are hoping to connect with you as a potential employer and a local business mentor to share your valuable knowledge, experience and potential job opportunities with our youth interns.

We want to expose our interns to various work environments and industries – this could involve:

- You coming to FoodShare to speak to our interns about your own work experience and industry insight,
- Having us visit and tour your workplace,
- Hosting an intern in your workspace for a work placement,
- Sharing potential employment opportunities with our youth,
- Providing us with sector specific feedback on relevant skills our youth should have upon completing the program.

We'd like to invite you to visit FoodShare on **May 17th from 11:00am to 12:30pm** to meet our current youth interns and learn more about our program. We'd also like to use this time to hear your feedback on the types of skills and experiences our interns would need to excel in your industry, as well as explore which level of formal partnership you may wish to establish with our program. We hope you will also be able to stay and have lunch with us that day. If that day is not good, please let us know if there is another time in the near future when you would like to come for a visit.

Katie German, one of our Focus on Food Program Coordinators, will be organizing this meeting and will be in contact with you shortly to confirm your interest in this project. Please feel free to forward this information along to any other contacts who may have interest in supporting our program. Katie can be reached at katieg@foodshare.net or 416-363-6441 ext. 279.

Please let us know if we can provide you with any additional information.

Sincerely,

Debbie Field, Executive Director

Appendix M – Placement Host Orientation Meeting Agenda

Focus on Food Employment Mentor Meeting Agenda

Date:

11:00am – 12:30pm

1. Introductions of attendees (5 min)

- Coffee and tea served

2. Why are we here? (5 min)

3. Focus on Food Program Intro – (25 min)

Including short film by our previous interns

- How the program works
- Skills gained
- Life Skills component

4. Tour of FoodShare – Focus on Food Youth Program (25 min)

- Highlighting the work and skills gained by our Focus on Food Youth while here

Lunch is served! Prepared by our Focus on Food youth interns!

5. Partnership Options – How can we work together to support our youth interns in becoming more employable? (30 min)

- Levels of participation
- On-going support from FoodShare
- Employment incentives to hire our youth
- Any feedback or suggestions
- Any good contacts

Appendix N – Baseline Self Assessment

Focus on Food Participant Self Assessment

Please rate yourself from 1-5 on each of the following statements, by circling the appropriate number. A score of 5 indicates you totally agree with the statement, and a score of 1 indicates total disagreement with the statement.

Food

- 5 4 3 2 1 I am knowledgeable about nutrition
- 5 4 3 2 1 I eat lots of fruits and vegetables each day
- 5 4 3 2 1 I have the skills necessary to grow my own food
- 5 4 3 2 1 I am confident in my cooking skills
- 5 4 3 2 1 It is important to me to compost
- 5 4 3 2 1 It is important to me to eat locally grown foods
- 5 4 3 2 1 I eat home cooked meals with family & friends regularly

Work

- 5 4 3 2 1 I know what my ideal job is
- 5 4 3 2 1 I am confident that I will get my ideal job one day
- 5 4 3 2 1 I know the steps I need to take to reach my ideal job
- 5 4 3 2 1 I feel good about my ability to be a leader.
- 5 4 3 2 1 I am confident in my computer skills
- 5 4 3 2 1 I feel good about my résumé

Education

- 5 4 3 2 1 I am confident in my reading and writing skills
- 5 4 3 2 1 I would like to further my formal education
- 5 4 3 2 1 If I ever go to college/university, I know what I want to study
- 5 4 3 2 1 If I decide to return to school, I know where to get support to enroll

Relationships

- 5 4 3 2 1 I have positive relationships with my family
- 5 4 3 2 1 I have a lot of good friendships
- 5 4 3 2 1 I have a lot of people in my life I can trust
- 5 4 3 2 1 I feel confident in my ability to communicate clearly

Wellness

- 5 4 3 2 1 In general, I feel physically healthy
- 5 4 3 2 1 In general, I feel mentally and emotionally healthy
- 5 4 3 2 1 In general, I feel happy
- 5 4 3 2 1 I know what to do to make myself feel happier and healthier

Appendix O – Exit Questionnaire

Name:

1. What year did you work at FoodShare? _____

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

2. Employees have a voice in major decisions regarding changes in the work environment.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Comments:

3) I received the in-house training I needed to get my job done.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Comments:

4) The environment of the workplace was comfortable and safe.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Comments:

5) Employees were treated fairly and equally.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Comments:

6) Management listened to employees.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Comments:

7) I was treated with respect by management and fellow employees.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Comments:

8) The Focus on Food project operated under an Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppression Mandate

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Comments:

Please answer the following questions based on you experience at the Focus on Food Project:

What do you think was the most impactful aspect of the Focus on Food program?

What mistakes do you think were made in Focus on Food? What would you suggest we do differently? How can this project be improved?

Good Healthy Food for All!



FoodShare Toronto is an innovative non-profit community food organization whose programs include direct fresh produce access, childhood nutrition and education, community cooking, community growing, and urban agriculture. Each month, FoodShare reaches over 155,000 children and adults across the City of Toronto.

www.foodshare.net