



MILWAUKEE FOOD COUNCIL

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the start of the Spring 2020 semester, three first-year students from the Masters of Sustainable Peacebuilding (MSP) graduate degree program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) were paired with the Milwaukee Food Council (MFC) to conduct an evaluation as part of a semester long assignment of required coursework. Throughout the course of the semester, the evaluation team worked with the client to conduct a valuable evaluation to help improve the MFC.

The MFC was interested in this evaluation partnership to gain assistance on working through a period of feeling stagnant. This evaluation team named this as an “identity crisis” that consists of the following: a desire for more connection between the MFC and relevant stakeholders, a set of organizational goals with a lack of unity among members, a confusion in articulating the council’s purpose as an organization, a desire for more community voices to be heard, a challenge of staff capacity and people power, and knowledge obtained from previously distributed surveys but a challenge in applying the findings.

The goals of the evaluation were to:

- Assist the MFC in re-affirming their identity as an organization
- Help develop an understanding of coalition infrastructure and how this knowledge is relevant to the goals of the MFC;
- Understand what makes (or does not make) the MFC representative of the food system within the city of Milwaukee;
- Understand the roles of the board members and members; and
- Understand why past stakeholders or members are no longer active within the MFC.

It is important to note that about half-way through the evaluation process, a state of national emergency was declared as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. National social distancing guidelines went into place and Tony Evers, the governor of Wisconsin, gave the order for residents to practice “safer at home” guidelines. All non-essential work was moved to a virtual format and UWM also moved all classroom instruction to online only for the remainder of the spring 2020 semester.

As the necessary adjustments to a virtual evaluation were made, the evaluation team worked with the client to collect data in a safe and virtual way. The client helped to distribute a survey to the active board members of the MFC. This survey consisted of ten categories of rated statements whose results aimed to assist in diagnosing the overall health of the MFC as a coalition. The data gathered from these surveys was both qualitative and quantitative. The client also helped to connect evaluation team members to individual active members/stakeholders and passive or past members/stakeholders. These interviews provided the evaluation team with additional context.

The principal findings and conclusions of this evaluation include:

- An understanding of what the MFC does well:
 - The MFC has an overall effective structure
 - The MFC does an adequate job of gathering research and external sources
 - There appears to be a strong sense of community among the current board members
- Opportunities for improvement for the MFC:

- Ensure that all MFC stakeholders can clearly articulate the purpose and goal of the organization
- Understand needs of MFC members and establish clear benefits for member participation
- Develop strategies for outreach and communication
- Utilize evaluation methods to engage stakeholders, plan, and implement projects

To further help the MFC along with this evaluation process, the evaluation team also strongly recommends that the client facilitates a rich picture activity with current members. This will help the MFC obtain data that reflects how the members currently view the MFC and how members feel the MFC ought to be. Details about this activity are included later in this report.

To help improve the overall efficacy of the MFC, the evaluation team recommends that the MFC continue with their plans to hire a full-time staff member that will help plan and facilitate relevant projects. It is important that this staff member's roles are clearly articulated, and considerations should be made as to how onboarding this staff member will reflect any changes in current board member roles. The evaluation team also recommends that tasks be delegated to member subcommittees to help improve effectiveness in leadership and overall responsibility of members of the MFC.

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 2007, the Milwaukee Food Council (MFC) is a coalition of diverse stakeholders committed to building a food system that is healthy, ecologically sustainable, economically vibrant, culturally relevant and socially just. Through collaborative action and collective impact, MFC brings its' stakeholders together to increase the capacity to make real change.

MFC is a coalition of individuals and organizations concerned about the food system. It meets on a regular basis to develop intentional, positive strategies for a healthy, affordable, equitable food system that nourishes the Milwaukee community and respects the environment. The MFC incorporated as a 501(c)3 non-profit in 2014 and has since been an all-volunteer run organization. It is guided by an 8-member board of directors.

The food council is governed by its board members who meet once every month, to discuss key issues and plan for future projects. Generally, the board give direction to the activities of the food council, engage in decision-making processes, and ensure activities align with the mission and priorities of the MFC. The food council also consists of members representing the food system in Milwaukee. Membership is open to anyone who is 18 and above. Membership benefits come with opportunities to vote for board of directors, vote for amendment to the bye laws, run for elections to become a board member, serve on the board of directors and making donations to support the work of the food council. Membership dues are \$25 per year, and they are not tax deductible. At its bi-monthly meetings, members discuss various aspects of the food system, including access to healthy affordable food, land use planning, local food production, and procurement, public health and policy initiatives.

Other important stakeholders of the food council include government officials, policy makers, professors, health workers, food pantries and interested members of the community. Although membership is by registration, it is not required to participate in any of MFC activities. According to the MFC website, non-members are considered friends of the food council. Friends of Milwaukee Food Council is open to everyone and does not cost anything. For the purpose of this report, representatives of the food council include Board Members, Members categorized as Active and Inactive, and other important stakeholders in the food system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Food policy coalitions like the Milwaukee Food Council exist to address the root causes of hunger and ensure equity within the food system. They are known by other names including food policy councils, food system task forces, farm to school coalitions and much more. They advocate for resilient, healthy food systems and provide support and advice to governments and those interested in the food system on how to develop policies and programs that improve local food systems.

A literature review of the Milwaukee Food Council was conducted to gather best practices from scholarly research, articles and best practices of the food system in the United States. The evaluation team's research outlines best practices from other coalitions such as the Arizona Food Policy Coalition and the Senior Hunger Coalition in Athens, Georgia. Like the MFC, these coalitions have a shared goal of combating food hunger and bringing equity to food systems. Campus Kitchen is a project of the Senior Hunger Coalition project in Athens where University students volunteer their time to prepare meals for people living in senior homes. This approach encourages participation and addresses the problem of fundraising since students volunteer their time to support the administrative work of the coalition. The Arizona Food Policy Coalition identifies common challenges faced by food council systems and proposes examples of best practices from thriving coalitions. Such examples include creating a network of networks with a

shared vision, identifying a convener who can interact at both a state and local level, and developing diverse funding streams for sustainability. Examples of such initiatives are included as references.

Findings on maintaining a strong coalition show that the mission, objectives, basic governance and operating rules, leadership and sense of community need to be properly aligned in order to maintain a healthy coalition. Northwood Coalitions, a partnership between the Marshfield Clinic Health System and several community coalitions, established seven habits of highly sustainable coalitions. They include:

- Capacity building
- Track progress
- Focus on the goal at hand
- Seek local support first
- Always add value
- Tell a story that connects with community
- Keep learning

A Coalition Sustainability Checklist also serves as a good example for a healthy coalition. It comprises of the following:

- Leaders take responsibility for the coalition's success
- Involve community leaders, partner organizations and a variety of community members
- Diversify funding from the start
- Solid infrastructure
- Clear focus on the coalition's goals
- Address problems the community cares about
- Demonstrate results through comprehensive coalition planning and adaptability to community's changing needs

These guiding principles, when applied, can help improve the administration of a coalition such as the MFC.

EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, RATIONALE

The purpose of the MFC's involvement in this evaluative process was for the organization to gain insight and assistance as to how they could work through a current period of organizational stagnation. The evaluation team named this as an "identity crisis" that consists of the following: a desire for more connection between the MFC and relevant stakeholders, a set of organizational goals with a lack of unity among members, a confusion in articulating the council's purpose as an organization, a desire for more community voices to be heard, a challenge of staff capacity and people power, and knowledge obtained from previously distributed surveys but a challenge in applying the findings.

The overarching goals of the evaluation were to:

- Assist the MFC in re-affirming their identity as an organization
- Help develop an understanding of coalition infrastructure and how this knowledge is relevant to the goals of the MFC
- Understand what makes (or does not make) the MFC representative of the food system within the city of Milwaukee
- Understand the roles of the board members and members; and

- Understand why past stakeholders or members are no longer active within the MFC.

The MFC connects with a vast number of stakeholders at bi-monthly member meetings. The member meetings tend to be a gathering of professionals working within the food system. These include local elected officials, healthcare professionals, philanthropists, grocery store owners or representatives, gardeners, food pantries, food banks, food and community centers, nutrition educators, and dieticians, among others. Community members affected by injustices in the food system are also considered stakeholders in this evaluation even though these individuals have not recently been a part of these member meetings.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Metrics, Data sources, Data collection, Ethics

Three principal sources were used to collect data:

- Documents provided by the MFC containing an overview of the coalition’s work and past evaluation reports. Data were collected through information gathered from the focal person at the MFC, Danielle Nabak. Danielle provided us with background information of the MFC, reports on previous evaluation and current issues.
- Survey questions for board members to fill out to determine the health of the food council.
- In-depth interviews with active and passive members of the food council.

The initial plan for data collection was to:

- Attend a member meeting on March 19 to conduct small focus group activity.
- Administer surveys to MFC board members. When surveys were returned, evaluation team to analyze data and lead a board member focus group working through themes and analyzed data (tentatively March 26 or April 16)
- Conduct hopefully six personal interviews with 'external' MFC stakeholders, three for active and three for past members.

REVISED PLAN

The evaluation team had to revise and improvise our plan due to the COVID-19 outbreak. As in person meetings were no longer allowed, the original data collection plan needed to be altered.

SURVEYS

Survey questions were designed using the ‘Diagnosing the Health of a Coalition’ survey from the [Community Toolbox](#) resource. This evaluation approach gives life to the idiom “the end justifies the means”, except that the goal is not only to focus on the end but to combine the means and end as subjects of inquiry. For example, if the goal is to increase accessibility within the MFC, how is that achieved by refocusing the current mission and priorities of the food council to include the voices and interests of those who are likely to be excluded? The goal of this evaluation method is to share current perspectives of the MFC to promote mutual understanding and reduce the likelihood of stakeholders 'talking past' each other.

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

Interviews with three active members of the MFC were conducted virtually over Zoom, lasting approximately 20 minutes in length. Each evaluation team member conducted one interview.

Interviewees were selected and contacted by MFC representative Danielle Nabak. Interview data was informally coded, themes were found and was incorporated into the key findings' results section.

A remote focus group activity was conducted at the MFC board member meeting on April 23rd, 2020, through a guided facilitation led by the evaluative team. Board members were asked to reflect on their experience with the food council, suggest areas to strengthen the objectives of the council and make recommendations on ways to ensure a more inclusive and equitable food system in Milwaukee through the MFC.

RESEARCH ETHICS

Participants of the focus group gave their explicit consent for their responses to be recorded. Prior to the activity, they were informed of the context of the evaluation and the use that would be made of their data. This data has been anonymized to ensure that participants cannot be identified. The meeting transcripts contain no information linking the interview data to the survey responses of the board members who participated in the evaluation activity. To further preserve the anonymity of the participants, the list with the full demographic characteristics of participants (such as place of residence, name of course providers, employment status, etc.) is not integrated in the present report.

RESULTS/ INSIGHTS

Quantitative Survey Data

The MFC representative helped to distribute “Diagnosing the Health of Your Coalition” surveys to eight board members. Seven out of eight responded. One individual expressed discomfort in responding to the survey, as this person is new to their role as MFC board member.

There were ten categories, or separate components that make up a coalition, that each had five sub-questions within them, for a total of 50 questions. Participants would score each of the five questions with a score between 1, meaning ‘weak or never’ and 5, meaning ‘always’. Each of the ten categories’ questions were totaled, and the score for the category determined the health of the coalition in that area.

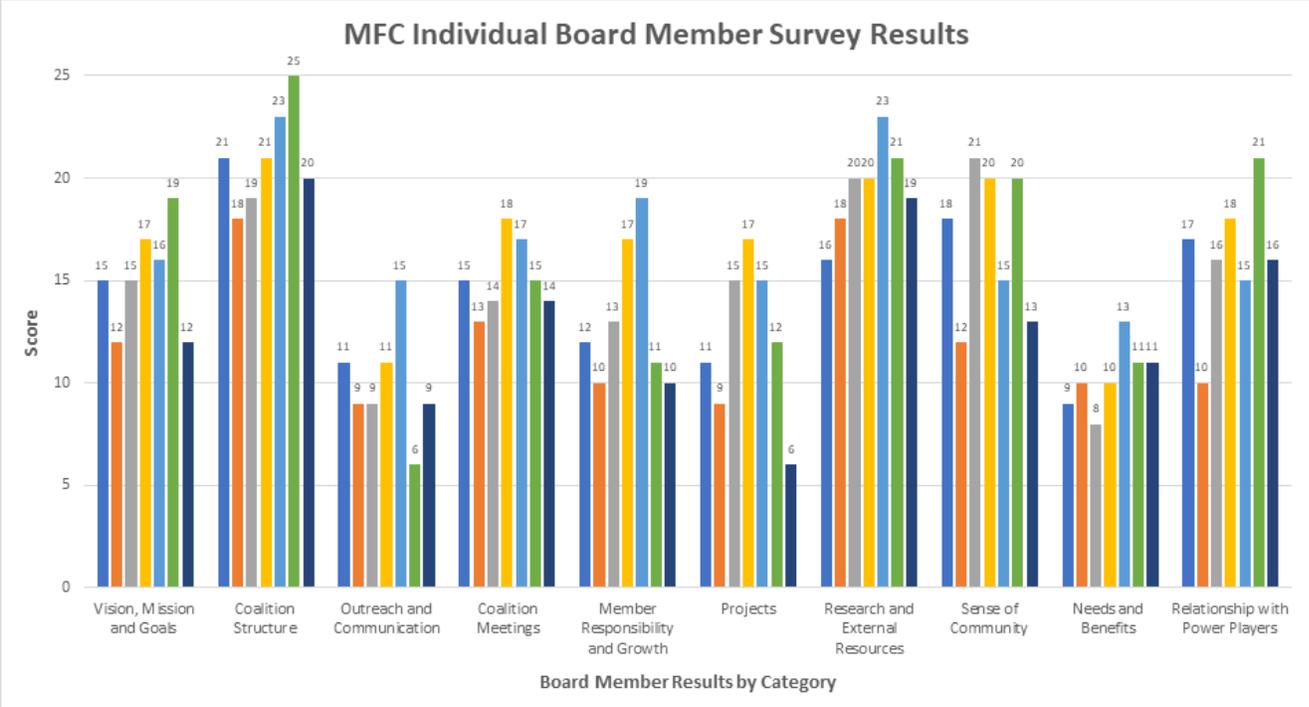
The scoring system for the survey consisted of:

5-15: this area needs a significant amount of change

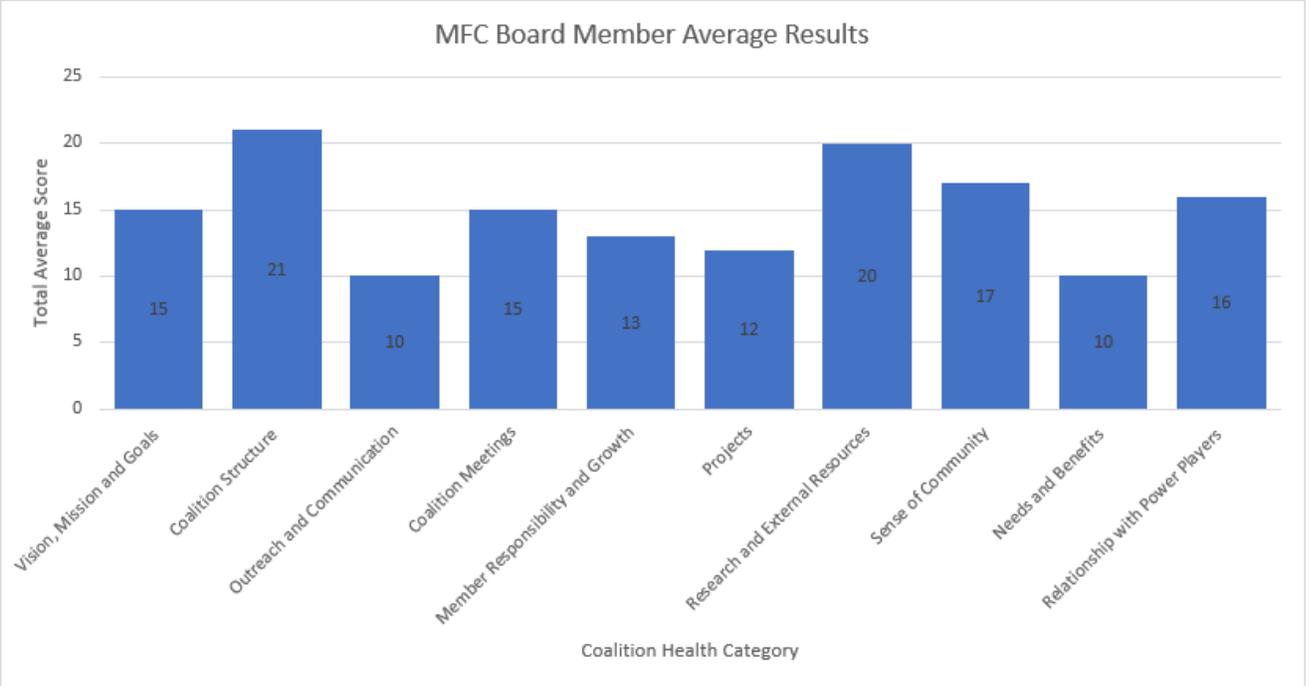
15-20: this area needs a check-up to ensure things are in better working order

20-25: this area is doing well, continue the work

Survey data represented in graph below. Individual board members are represented by a different color score in each category. This graph shows cohesiveness or discrepancies of responses among board members:



Average or mean score for MFC board members by category:



(this graph’s data was used to inform the board member presentation and recommendations)

*Survey data results are listed in the ‘key findings’ section. Similar questions were asked between the board member surveys and the active member interviews, so results and themes found are grouped into the following section for concision.

Qualitative Data

They survey data results helped the evaluation team formulate and plan a focus group discussion with board members of the Milwaukee Food Council at its general board meeting held on April 23, 2020. The board discussion data illustrates and compliment results and findings from prior 'Diagnosing the Health of your Coalition' surveys sent out to MFC board members a month before. The goal was to analyze data from the survey to develop in-depth questions for the focus group discussion. Also, additional data was gathered from interviews conducted with active members prior to the focus group discussion. Themes strongly overlapped between each component of data. Team found that quantitative and qualitative data reinforced one another. Data collection was used to diagnose the health of the food council as a coalition and analyze current situation within the council from leadership structure and management to participation of stakeholders. Qualitative informed most of the key findings, which are discussed in more depth in the section below.

KEY FINDINGS

Results from data analysis of board members' survey are represented in the average scores shown below:

- **Effectiveness of the Milwaukee Food Council's structure scored 21/25**
- **Use of research and external resources scored 20/25**
- **Sense of community scored 17/25**; all three being the highest in the scale of data analysis.
- Within the category of Vision, Mission and Goals results show an **overall cohesive sense of the Milwaukee Food Council's vision and mission**
- There also appears to be a **strong sense of community among board members.**

Categories that could use some improvement are as follows:

- **How well the MFC meets needs and benefits scored 10/25**
- **Effectiveness of MFC Outreach and Communication scored 10/25**
- **Effectiveness of planning and implementing and evaluation of projects scored 12/25**

The above results were presented to the board members by the evaluation team at the April 23, 2020 member meeting. This was then followed by the questions below to spark reflection during for the focus group discussion:

- How can the MFC be more accessible to community members who are affected by food injustices?
- How are resources made available to members and affected communities?
- Do the MFC board members and active members reflect true diversity?
- How is the MFC's web presence?
- What is the current newsletter situation like?
- How does the MFC help connect individuals and organizations working within the food system?

The following themes were identified from interview and focus group data collected by the evaluators:

1. Active Participation

- Participants stressed the need to take into consideration the accessibility of meeting locations so that current and prospective members can easily access the food council.

- Having an attendance policy informs the food council of what's preventing members from attending meetings.

“We’ve spent a lot of time talking about the location and time of the meetings. I agree that those are important, and we do need to take into consideration the accessibility of these locations to the individuals we want to recruit. We need to show up at actual community events and have real in-depth relationship building one-on-one conversations with community members about food and using that as a starting point. This needs to get prioritized in the projects that we do.” – MFC Board Member

2. Agenda Setting

- Frustrations arise with lack of proactivity and action-oriented time spent in meetings. There is need to set clear goals for gathering at meetings.
- Sub-Committees exist to bring these goals to life.

“Sometimes the meetings were not as proactive as they could have been. Lots of reporting out and updates but not feeling as if the actual meetings spoke to that larger purpose.” - MFC Board Member

3. Strengthening Sub-Committees and Outreach Programs

- Meeting people where they are encourages active participation. An actual step to meet people where they are begins with having members of the food council visit a local farmers market and food events happening around the city to introduce the vision and mission of the MFC.

“Developing outreach programs that could go out to different neighborhood groups like churches, to introduce who we are in a short presentation. Having a sub-committee champion this would be a very good step.” – MFC Board Member

4. Resource Sharing

- Resource sharing is helpful and should be maintained within the MFC. However, this should not be the only goal of meetings.
- While resource sharing only helps individuals or their organizations, meeting times should be utilized for collaboration.
- Utilize online platforms and newsletters for dissemination of resources.
- For more effective resource sharing, focus should be on planning and coordination.

“Meetings are often about networking rather than collective action. Sharing of resources and collaboration should be focus of MFC meetings.” - MFC Board Member

5. Planning and Coordination

- Planning and coordination towards collective action is not happening currently at meetings or externally in the community.
- The desire is for the wider community to engage.
- Currently planning efforts are all internal: fundraising, elections, etc.

“We need to be able to articulate who we are, what we’re doing and present it to the community. Having a sub-committee champion this would be a very good step. We

need to see if our mission match how people see us. Having unity in this aspect is our starting point.” – MFC Board Member

6. Technical Assistance and Training

- This is a challenge, but also presents an opportunity. If many organizations are working with small gardening projects for example, have an MFC member manage them all and increase resources and collaboration.
- There are experts in this field currently in the MFC but no capacity to undertake.

“The MFC is in a really good place with the food coordination position it’s going to be obtaining (through UW extension). That is going to be a big deal having someone that’s going to be a go-to person to assist with these one offs that are coming up. Meeting other people at their table. Taking more active role in finding out what’s being discussed about the food system and that what we’re thinking about the mission/vision of the MFC is accurate too.” - MFC Board Member

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

At the April 23, 2020 board member meeting, the evaluation team named some categories that determine the health of the MFC as a coalition. Between these categories, we asked participants to name two areas where MFC have been successful at and two that could use the most improvement. The following is a list of stated responses from board members and active stakeholders.

Strengths:

- Current leadership are passionate and knowledgeable
- Board is connected
- There is visibility with elected officials
- Policy change is a great strength as a result of this

Desire for improvement:

- Grassroots connection and visibility
- Communication of mission and vision to the public, identify the MFC before marketing it to the wider community
- Do not assume people know who the MFC is
- Diversity of membership
- Gap of knowledge of real community needs because the MFC is comprised of more professionals
- Change meeting times and locations
- Fliers and social media are insufficient to bring people to the table
- Diversity of members, particularly people of color
- Diversity of leadership has improved and has room to grow
- Successful movement toward wanting identity that makes change
- Increasing representation of Milwaukee food leaders
- Ensuring cohesion between what MFC says (collective action) and what it does (currently resource sharing and networking)
- Improve strategic planning to bring it to life

- Welcoming people who want to create change and impact in the food system

The final question of the facilitated board member meeting asked participants to give further recommendations for the MFC.

- Participants gave further concrete suggestions on what needs improvement and what it would take to bring the suggestions listed above to life:

Success breeds success

- Completing a project will incite excitement in members and fuel further projects
- Leaders need understanding and a strong navigational sense of the direction of the work

Grassroots involvement

- Brainstorm with food leaders who are not present, sit down and build relationships with them. 'What can the MFC do for you and for this city?'
- Including important stakeholders of the food system: farmers, restaurant owners, chefs, MPS food system coordinators and non-profit leaders
- Leverage on leadership to repair relationship with past stakeholders.

Staffing

- Need a staff member who understands larger food system and needs to achieve collective action.

INACTIVE STAKEHOLDER DATA ANALYSIS STATEMENT

The evaluation team worked with the client to develop a set of questions for interviewing inactive stakeholders, or past members, of the MFC. Together, a set of six questions was constructed to gather data around these individuals or organizations no longer actively participating in the MFC meetings and events. Each member of the evaluation team was to be assigned one inactive stakeholder to interview. Ideally, these interviews were planned to be conducted in person, but with the onset of COVID-19, these too needed to move to a virtual format.

The representative, Danielle Nabak, from the MFC assigned each evaluation team member to one inactive member to interview. The representative sent out emails to the interviewees explaining the nature of the MFC's evaluation and the role of the evaluation team. The evaluation team was copied on each of these emails. The evaluation team members then sent out an email to the interviewee with some options for meeting, as well as an attachment with information about the tentative structure of the interview. At this point, zero out of three inactive stakeholders have responded to the evaluation team.

The evaluation team considers the lack of response from these inactive or past stakeholders as part of the data collection for this report. Certainly, the COVID-19 pandemic could be a part of the reason why no responses have been received. However, it is also important to acknowledge that the lack of response to the emails requesting evaluative interviews could be an active choice not to respond. The assigned interviewees were specifically chosen by the client to be interviewed by the evaluation team to inquire about inactivity in MFC meetings and events. It may be beneficial for the client to revisit and review the history of the relationships between these inactive individuals or organizations with the MFC, to help figure out why said individuals or organizations are no longer active. Data that was collected from some

active member interviews suggests that there are relationships between food system stakeholders in the Milwaukee community and the MFC that could serve to be re-established or repaired.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

To understand the outcomes of this evaluation, it is important to acknowledge the unprecedented onset of COVID-19. About midway through the semester, a state of national emergency was declared at the COVID-19 situation became a global pandemic. Social distancing orders went into place and eventually the governor of Wisconsin, Tony Evers, gave the order for residents to practice “safer at home” guidelines. Even prior to the onset of these orders, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee made the decision to move all classroom instruction to online only for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester.

Prior to these changes, this evaluation team had planned to facilitate two in person events that were scheduled for late March and mid-April of 2020. With the onset of COVID-19, these events were either cancelled or rescheduled to virtual meetings. At that point, the evaluation team needed to make necessary adjustments to the evaluation plan. Instead of attending these events in person, the evaluation team worked with the representative from the MFC to continue the evaluation despite the virtual limitations. It is important to note that under ideal circumstances, data would have been collected at a larger scale and in person. Due to the public health crisis, necessary adjustments were made.

It is also important to note that the evaluation representative for the MFC also works full time in food systems and food security. This individual found themselves with a different workload than ever before, sometimes making communications with the evaluation team more time consuming or less of a priority. With the virtual limitations, more networking and facilitation work was put on the point of contact’s shoulders. Interactions that would have been ideally done in person or in a formal presentation way were instead conducted via email.

Though this evaluation team still feels that there is great value for the client in the data that has been collected and analyzed, we feel it is important to acknowledge that a large portion of our project work was done virtually instead of in person. In person would have been preferable and perhaps removed some communication barriers. The fact that data was collected virtually likely influences the overall outcome of this evaluation.

DISCUSSION

The evaluation team was able to uncover limited yet valuable findings and recommendations for the MFC through the evaluation process. As previously mentioned, the MFC has been undergoing a challenging time in its membership, leadership, purpose, and work. Even though the MFC representative, Danielle, named a few categories of struggle, it was still unclear as to exactly where the difficulties were, for various levels of stakeholders to unite themselves, and how to pinpoint and execute positive change at leverage points. An asset to bringing clarity and identifying leverage points for change was in the use of the ‘Diagnosing the Health of your Coalition’ survey. The categories in the survey gave a framework and boundaries to what a thriving coalition should be composed of, as well as a model to look to in diagnosing the MFC comprehensively.

When all board member surveys were analyzed, among some inconsistencies in a few categories, there was a greater consensus that emerged naming the strengths and challenge areas of the council. Findings

reinforced what board members may have been thinking, but unsure of in clarity and in overall agreement. This clarity and structural knowledge will help address leverage points for change in an orderly and organized manner, while limited the blind spots for MFC leadership.

Another point of interest is that the much larger category of active stakeholders was not represented in this evaluation contrary to original planning. Only a handful of them spoke to the total findings. Active stakeholder interviewees represented diverse disciplines of the food system, yet still had a strong consensus among their responses, which adds a confidence to proposed recommendations. The ability to engage only a few stakeholders at this time may be a limitation, but also a strength. As the governing core of the MFC, it is important that board members be united and clear before reaching out to large bodies of stakeholders. Without unity and clarity, hearing from many stakeholder voices could cause greater confusion and an inability to listen and act on what was heard. As the MFC leadership tried to conduct many evaluations and learn feedback from vast groups of stakeholders in the past, this may have contributed to that confusion, lack of confidence and decision-making from the board previously, leaving all parties unsatisfied from the great efforts that were taken.

The evaluation team feels further evaluation with active and past stakeholders is valuable. Evaluation can happen around a tighter and more well-organized action plan, which will either reinforce or continue to guide and vary the proposed action plan of the board. Active members already reinforced this message, as was stated in interviews that it would be good to see more clarity and effectiveness come from leadership decision making.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Accept, acknowledge and fully use identified strengths of the MFC and continue to cultivate these areas in places of growth. Implicitly, and taken from the active stakeholder interviews, the evaluation team has found the MFC to be perseverant, determined and possessing good will. There have been a few years of difficulty and trial within the MFC in which the council could have collapsed, exerted less effort or shrunk in leadership. On the contrary, active members responded that the MFC has grown over the years in leadership, unity and in the effectiveness of its policy and action committee to achieve tangible impact in Milwaukee's food policies. They achieved this through effective committee designation and strategic planning in meetings, as well as their networking and visibility to elected officials.

Results from the 'Diagnosing the Health of your Coalition' survey and active member interviews show that the MFC is most effective in its structure, its resource and external research gathering, and in its strong sense of community among current board members. The board could expand the strengths of its structure to its members by sharing member responsibility, creating more sub-committees that reflect the effective work done in the policy and action committee, and in reaching its past stakeholders or new stakeholders. An active member reported that Danielle Nabak is knowledgeable about the overarching food system and has insight into the direction the MFC can take in addressing projects. Additionally, it was reported that it would be beneficial to continue to learn more fully the Milwaukee food system. Use the resource and researching strengths to cultivate that knowledge. Use board member unity to be decisive and confident in its decision-making to stakeholders and in project implementation and design. Cultivation of strengths will overflow into challenging areas and more naturally build them up as well. The MFC should consider concretely how to use its strengths in any action plans created.

2. Bring the mission and vision of the MFC to life by appropriately communicating it to outside stakeholders. Engage outside stakeholders on their terms at their ‘tables’. Amid a few inconsistencies, the MFC is perceived to have a relatively strong mission and vision that has been worked on extensively. The board and MFC members can develop a concise and simple way to articulate mission and vision and bring them to Milwaukee community members not yet within the Milwaukee Food Council, especially grassroots individuals and communities who have a stake in the food system. Results ask that the MFC take seriously the call to go to its stakeholders and not put minimal effort into this by emails or continued word of mouth, which often attracts people of similar backgrounds.

An effective way to do this is to consider the holistic scope of the Milwaukee food system, the diverse leaders within, as well as the communities most strongly affected by the food system and its injustices. The data recommends finding a way to communicate to these stakeholders, be it creation of committees to reach them, focus groups to learn feedback, going out to food events around the city and establishing a presence, improving marketing, etc. to meet these stakeholders ‘at their tables’. The MFC will benefit from finding ways to represent the diversity in the food system in its membership and continue to do so in its leadership, although there were stated improvements in leadership stated in the active member interviews.

3. Engaging a truer representative population of the Milwaukee food system will help with better meeting member needs and benefits. This may include but is not limited to granting easier access into the MFC by communication and outreach, by changing the time of day, location, and frequency of meetings, providing accommodations such as translation and childcare where needed, and by ensuring that the grassroots members of communities are heard and made to feel welcome.

4. Repair lost or damaged relationships. Provide a greater welcome to those who may feel unwelcome. As there is a known population of stakeholders who have stopped participating in the MFC, two reasons have emerged from results and insights on why this may be. One is that the people of color and diverse or minority stakeholders have not felt welcomed or listened to at the MFC table. In the active interviews, it was noted that trust and relationship-building take time and are crucial to welcoming marginalized individuals or groups and restoring justice. If there is capacity for this, one on one meetings could be established between past stakeholders and board members to heal wounds and ask what the stakeholder would want to feel welcome and valued at the MFC table.

The second reason is that meeting agendas have seemed vague and unworthy of the two hours spent there. Recommendations throughout will aide with this. As to the second lesson learned, how to make meetings more effective and valuable, the following paragraph will address this.

5. Perform more action-oriented strategic planning at meetings among members and within committees to ‘make a difference in Milwaukee’s food system’. Currently, it is perceived that the MFC does not adequately plan, implement or evaluate projects that reflect the organization’s mission, vision and goals. As stated above, the mission and vision deserve to be brought to life by accomplishing projects that are tangible and impact the Milwaukee food system. A great leverage point is to use two-hour stakeholder meeting times, board meetings, as well as committee meeting times to vote on project ideas, to hear project ideas that grassroots community members have, and to collaborate on smaller-scale projects as opposed to individual resource sharing and networking.

6. There is no perfect, all-encompassing project. Maintain realistic project scope and confidently choose one or two projects within volunteer capacity and needed resources. To quote from the interviews, ‘success breeds success’. If there is indecision on which project to move forward with, there is no perfect project or one that encompasses the whole food system. After including diverse and grassroots stakeholders in the brainstorming process and possibly allowing a vote to take place, it is good to choose one or two projects that are realistic and adequately assess the time, resources, and volunteer time needed to complete and evaluate. Once one project has been completed and evaluated, this practice will incite excitement into MFC stakeholders and lead to improved project planning in the future.

7. Continue with plans to hire a full-time staff member that will help plan and facilitate relevant projects. Continue to be realistic with volunteer roles and responsibilities in carrying out projects. The ability to have one full-time member committed to grassroots outreach and project planning, implementation and evaluation will be a great asset and will improve various challenge areas. We recognize that all challenge areas and recommendations listed above need capacity and time to cultivate well. As well as the MFC has been working to accomplish its mission and vision, it has been volunteer run by mostly professionals who already have full or part-time commitments, which makes it a challenge to effectively advance the MFC. The MFC leadership could consider how to articulate future staff member’s roles, as well as documenting any changes to current board or other member roles. The evaluation team also recommends delegating tasks to member subcommittees to help improve effectiveness in leadership and overall responsibility of members of the MFC.

8. The overall recommendation of this evaluation is for the MFC board to create appropriate and efficacious action plans from findings. Now that strengths and challenges are more clearly articulated, and the board has united around reflections through survey and discussion, the action plan creations should be smoother and clearer.

FURTHER STEPS FOR EVALUATION

Due to COVID-19, the evaluation team was unable to complete most of the initially planned data gathering for the active stakeholders who participate in the Milwaukee Food Council. This includes the members of the MFC as well as those who are active but do not hold a membership. The same was true for the inactive stakeholders, or those who participated in the past. After gathering data from the board and a few active stakeholders, it would be beneficial moving forward to conduct a more thorough data gathering and analysis for these two stakeholder groups. Surveys and the rich picture activity were created for the MFC to use and facilitate at a future time. Activities will help the board understand how its active stakeholders view the MFC currently as well as in its desired state. These activities are presented in ready to use format in the following pages.

GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE ACTIVE AND PAST STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS

Administering both the active and past stakeholder surveys well is important, and considerations are mentioned here as a guide for the comprehensive process.

The tools to use

- Use a survey tool such as SurveyMonkey, which will allow you the ability to send surveys via email or preferred virtual communication

- In the survey database used, ensure that the data to be collected is connected to an excel document for easy data entry, recording and analysis. Try a test survey on yourself to check that the excel sheet is properly formatted so each response falls under the correct question

The timing, who, when and how

- Be mindful of COVID-19 and when it is an appropriate time to return to surveying large numbers of people
- It is perceived that the feedback on this survey is important and therefore the MFC would like large numbers of participants. This may be fine for the active stakeholders
- Consider past stakeholders. Trust-building with past stakeholders is crucial. If there have been breaks in relationship, quality over quantity is more valuable here. It will be important to offer follow-up when administering surveys to past stakeholders.
- Consider staff capacity. Is it feasible to designate board members to meet one on one with past stakeholders who respond? If not, this is not the right option to address past stakeholders.
 - Board members need to be informed and agree if this step will be feasible or not, and reassess if not
 - If there is staff capacity, but limited, consider only reaching out to five to ten past stakeholders, assuming a low response rate as was witnessed in this evaluation team's attempt
- To avoid exploitation, sending a personalized email that addresses the stakeholders' name and addresses needs and benefits clearly and simply would be a good option
 - This is especially important to have a separate personalized email for past stakeholders, ensuring that results will be completely anonymous but allowing the option to share results and meet 1 on 1 to address concerns and repair relationships

Follow-up

To continue to build trust, think of how the MFC wants to share results and when. Stakeholders, especially those who chose to participate, deserve to know what action will be taken to address majority responses.

- Designate a few engaged volunteers to analyze data, and be clear on expectations and methodology for analysis once responses come in
- Be transparent with stakeholders. All responses will never be addressed. The MFC will answer from the response majority within volunteer capacity
- Perhaps reach out to active stakeholders with an approximate range of time, the results should be analyzed and then either:
 - Designate a bi-monthly meeting or other meeting time to go through results
 - Create and send a clear, concise and accessible report back to stakeholders for buy-in, inclusion and follow up feedback
- As stated above, the past stakeholder surveys will be more time-consuming and will require extra care to avoid further relationship damage and as well for relationship repair
 - One on one option is recommended
 - Allow for choice on how the past stakeholder wants to proceed, if interested

- If there is sufficient data, a separate meeting could be hosted to go through results after one on one meetings have happened, but this would be very time consuming. Avoid if above volunteer capacity

ACTIVE STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

Please take this survey to help the Milwaukee Food Council gain pertinent input into its identity and purpose as a council. This information will directly guide the board members to harness the efforts of the MFC members to align the council with the priorities of the community.

1. The Milwaukee food council strives to support positive change for a healthy, affordable, and equitable food system. How do we support this goal when we gather in meetings? What do you perceive the purpose and value of gathering at meetings to be?
2. Between these four tasks, what do you believe the main functions of the MFC currently are?
 - a. Information and Resource Sharing
 - b. Planning and Coordination
 - c. Technical Assistance and Training
 - d. Advocacy and Community ChangeWhy?
3. What do you believe the main functions of the MFC ought to be?
 - e. Information and Resource Sharing
 - f. Planning and Coordination
 - g. Technical Assistance and Training
 - h. Advocacy and Community ChangeWhy?
4. Here are five categories that are used to determine the health of a council. Between these categories, name two that you believe the MFC is successful at and two that could use the most improvement.
 - o MFC's reason for being-its vision, mission and objectives
 - o MFC's leadership
 - o MFC's membership (diversity, accommodations, accessibility)
 - o The coalition's strategic plans related actions, and accomplishments, both short-and longer-term,
 - o The coalition's visibility and public support in the larger community

Strengths:

Places for Improvement:

5. Why did you choose the strengths you did? Why did you choose the desired improvements you did? Please give tangible examples within your responses.

Strengths:

Improvements:

6. Do you have any insight or idea for how these challenges could be improved? What would it take to improve them?

7. What recommendations would you like to pass along to the MFC?

PAST STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

Though you have not participated in the food council in recent past, we recognize this and know you have valuable insight into how the Milwaukee Food Council could be a more valuable organization in to you, your organization and the larger Milwaukee food system.

1. What brought you to food council meetings in the past; what were you looking to gain in gathering?

A:

2. What priorities do you or your organization have related to food systems? Does your organization (or you personally) still support food systems work?

A:

3. Why did you or someone from your organization choose to stop attending meetings or staying connected?

A:

4. What value would you be looking for in order to justify coming back to the meetings, or connecting with the MFC?

A:

5. What recommendations would you like to pass onto MFC to increase engagement of members?

A:

6. Would you be interested in meeting one on one with one of our board members to talk about reconnecting or sharing your knowledge and experiences?

A:

Thank you for your value and unique insight. This information will directly assist the MFC in adjusting to better serve you and other stakeholders like yourself!

COMPLETING A RICH PICTURE ACTIVITY

<http://pragmatica.nz/wp-content/uploads/pragmatica-nz/sites/326/150716-Rich-pictures-in-evaluation-vxx.pdf> *

*Any text in quotations in this section taken from the 'Better Evaluation' resource on completing a rich picture.



(Example photo 1 taken from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Example-of-a-Rich-Picture-Diagram_fig1_237327754)

“Rich pictures are a time-efficient way of generating a lot of understanding about a situation when the right people are involved in developing them.

- The evaluator does not have to have a lot of subject knowledge to facilitate the development of a rich picture.
- Rich pictures can be used to show complicated situations and relationships between a range of stakeholders. They help attempt to capture the real situation using a no-holds barred, cartoon representation of all the ideas, connections, relationships, influences, cause-and-effect ideas.
- Rich pictures are also a way for us to collectively learn not only about the obvious facts of a situation, but also about abstract or emotional things like the social atmosphere among the different actors or stakeholders.”

Group Dynamics to Consider

“Consider the group dynamics - groups working together need to go through forming, norming, storming stages. People are more likely to be able to do an effective rich picture once the group has formed. This means a rich picture is not a good starting exercise.” (In getting to know the group)

- Consider this if you have various new members
- Would there be a better meeting for this? Smaller? Stakeholders who know the MFC well? Committees?

- Consider the confidentiality piece-ask participants to respect each other and to honor privacy by not sharing what other groups said
- Consider power dynamics. It is often better to allow someone objective to facilitate the rich picture for you as this could affect responses shared and written.

Instructions for completing a rich picture:

Supplies:

- To do this you need to be in groups of five or six people using the large A3 pieces of paper and felt tip pens.
- Large, printed examples of rich pictures are printed and placed in the room.
- The main question of the activity is written on either large A3 paper or on a white/chalk board.

Introduction of the Activity

To help contextualize the activity, it can be explained in your own words as something like this:

We are trying to gauge from you as diverse stakeholders what you feel should be the purpose and goals, outputs, and outcomes of the Milwaukee Food Council. We will be doing this by use of a Rich Picture activity, where we gather you into groups of 5-6 to perform in teams.

“What does a rich picture look like?”

“Here is an example of a rich picture. As you can see it is a rough drawing of the way key people involved with a situation see that situation. It allows you all as stakeholders to quickly convey not only the facts of a situation, but your feelings about that situation.”

Present the following example in picture form to the group to have models to look at:

rich picture - example

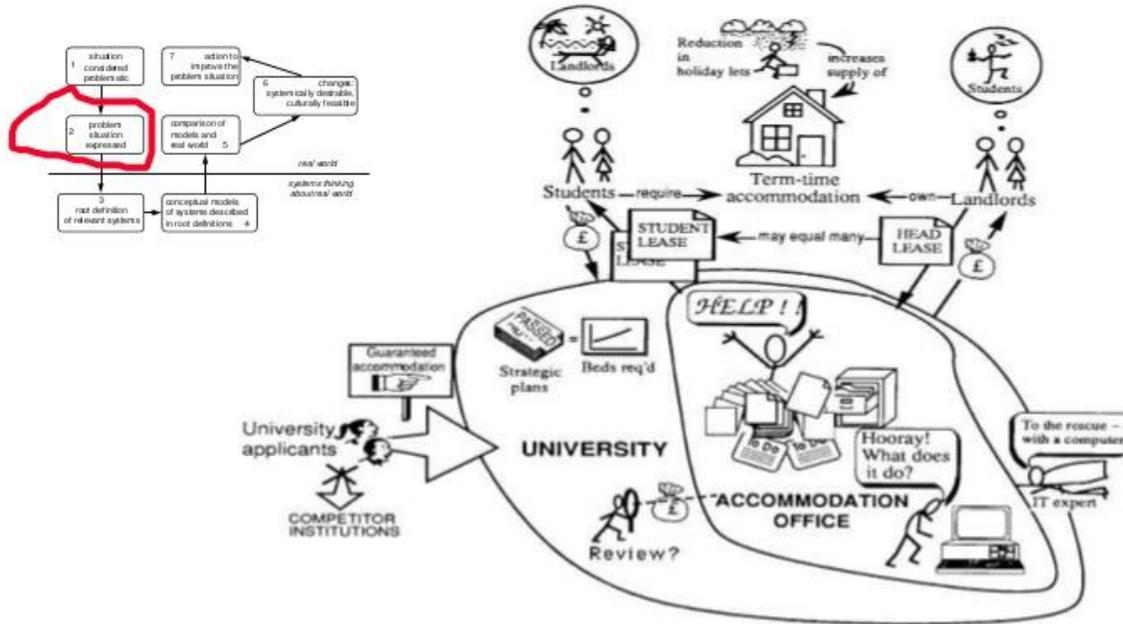


Figure 1 Example of a rich picture diagram.

(Example photo 2 is taken from: <https://www.slideshare.net/tatdy13/mcki-lect3smcatrd-roseusund>)

Suggested Question for Rich Picture Activity:

In general, what do you perceive are the current main functions of the MFC (Check as many as apply). What would you like to see the main functions of the MFC be?

- Information and Resource Sharing
- Planning and Coordination
- Technical Assistance and Training
- Advocacy and Community Change

Facilitator says this: “The question I would like you to think about regards the purpose, outputs, and outcomes of the Milwaukee Food Council. How do you see the MFC as functioning now and how do you see the MFC ought to function in the future?”

Explain these for ‘guidelines’ of the activity:

- Everyone can draw as they see fit on the paper. Sharing paper space will work or coordinating about how you want to collaborate will work as well. One A3 paper can be used for the current situation and another for the desired.
- “I want you to draw the challenges and opportunities you experienced within the MFC in this domain.

- Draw all that you perceive as significant or problematic. Include emotions and relationships as well as groupings and connections of various sorts, using symbols and metaphors to represent the situation as you perceive it.
- Include yourself in the picture if that helps you
- Rich pictures are MESSY! This is fine; we are not looking for good drawings but ideas to emerge
- Only fall back on words when ideas fail you about how to represent your ideas in another way.
- When you are finished, we will put your drawings up on the wall and discuss them”

Rich Pictures create ambiguity and could leave participants feeling overwhelmed upon completion of them. Reassure them that we need to ‘trust the process’ and that these two things are completely normal, and it is okay to experience them!

Timing of the activity/logistics:

The drawing portion of the activity will take 20 minutes. Give people time to express their thoughts and draw out both current and future situations.

If there are 5 groups who participate, this could take from 25- 40 minutes in addition to the 20 minutes of drawing and the 5 minutes of explanation + gathering into groups.

This should be considered for an hour-long activity if the MFC wants it to be accomplished thoroughly.

Sharing of Rich Pictures for Data Analysis:

Analyze rich pictures with care. The best way to capture data is to have participants tell their story once picture is completed. This takes between 5-8 minutes. It may be beneficial to digitally capture each story too. Great learning comes from each member hearing each other’s story.

What to do when short on time?

If you have only 40 minutes. You can introduce the activity for 3 minutes, break out into 4/5 groups of 5-6, give groups 10 minutes to draw current state and 10 to draw future state rich picture with a timer set. Then, come back as a whole group for remainder of time to share two themes with one rep from each group

- It is recommended to be strict about boundaries, I.e. time limits, group productivity, reiterate the prompted question and make sure participants are clear you want only two themes. This avoids wasted evaluation time.
- Name two themes you saw from current to desired RP
- Could be hard to do a bigger group rich picture
- Smaller groups might be helpful (25-30 participants max)
- Have participants write down a fuller narrative and digitally record these stories, pull out themes in emotion, motivation, challenges or struggles perceived, ideas for MFC purpose and function, etc.

Data Analysis

As stated in the bullet point above, for either the full-length or shorter version of Rich Picture, digitally record what is said. Use the narratives to find themes throughout. Condense themes into take-aways for strategic planning and guidance in the MFC.

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