

Evaluation of the Community Food Advisor Program

**Report Prepared for the
Nutrition Resource Centre
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Logic model for Community Food Advisor Program (generic)

**Logic Model for Management of Community Food Advisor
Program by the Nutrition Resource Centre**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Brief history: Modeled largely after the Master Food Advisor program in the US, the Ontario Community Food Advisor program aims to improve and promote safe and nutritious food selection, preparation, and storage practices. Original pilot sites included Guelph, London and Kingston; followed by provincial dissemination in 1992/3. There are currently 18 programs operating as of May 2002.

Program resources, direction, coordination and other support to the program have been provided through various support structures including, the (now) Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA); the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC); a Provincial Steering Committee; a Community Food Advisor Council; and local sponsoring organizations¹ with their local coordinating committees. Funding support from the program has come primarily from OMAFRA and the MOHLTC has also supported the CFA program since its inception in 1992. The administration of the CFA program was transferred to the Nutrition Resource Centre (NRC) in 2001. The centre is one of several resource centers in Ontario funded by the MOHLTC Community and Health Promotion Branch to support the development of local capacity for health promotion. The NRC, in turn, is part of the Ontario Public Health Association, which has a broad mandate for public health and health promotion generally, as well as a specific mandate to support nutrition promotion efforts in Ontario.

Previous Evaluations of the CFA:

The CFA program has undertaken several strategic planning processes (most recently covering 2000-2003) and has contracted from time to time for independent evaluations and information system development. A major evaluation was conducted in 1996-97 (Blidner & Weinstein, 1997) and it focused on four broad issues: program relevance, impacts to date, viability of the program and efficiency. Recommendations emerged at both the provincial level (e.g., reconfiguring some of the provincial advisory and accountability structures), and the local level with respect to program content and

¹ The sponsoring organization is often referred to as the CFA “sponsor” in this report. Similarly, the person responding to the evaluation questionnaire on behalf of the sponsoring organization is often referred to as the “sponsor rep.”.

processes (e.g., the need to address high levels of volunteer attrition; the need to increase community networking and partnerships). The evaluation also confirmed that key aspects of the underlying rationale behind the program (e.g., community need; peer education; the volunteer model) are consistent across the province and remained relevant four years after program inception. Other recommendations concerning the need for better tracking data led to work contracted out in 1999 to develop standardized recording forms, report formats and a database application. These were seen as necessary for ongoing evaluation of the program and information sharing across sites. This process has had its starts and stops with sites finding it difficult to maintain the database and common reporting protocols.

In the Fall of 2001 it was decided to initiate a new evaluation process to collect information about selected program operations and short-term outcomes in order to help transition the program when the OMAFRA connection ends. It was seen as particularly important that the evaluation help identify critical elements of program design and delivery to be preserved in the transition and provide guidance with respect to any changes needed to support sustainability. An evaluation planning process was followed which identified the most critical evaluation questions and issues that should be addressed at this critical juncture in the history of the program.

Evaluation Approach: The general approach to the development of the evaluation plan was consultative, stakeholder-based and objectives-oriented. To keep the work grounded in the needs of key stakeholders, an Evaluation Advisory Committee was established, including the MOHLTC, the Manager of the Nutrition Resource Centre and CFA Coordinator who works out of the NRC, local CFA representatives and an evaluation consultant (Brian Rush from VIRGO Planning and Evaluation). The group process included a strong commitment to good communication between the advisory committee and the evaluation consultant in all phases of the work. In addition, it should be emphasized that the plan was focused on the evaluation on the collective CFA program across the province and not the evaluation of any one particular site, or comparisons of one site to another.

The steps in developing the evaluation plan included:

- developing two program logic models to help achieve a common understanding of program operations and objectives. One logic model was a generic model of a local CFA program while the other was from the provincial perspective of the NRC (i.e., a provincial model concerned with overall program management and administration). These logic models are included here in Appendix A;
- brainstorming, and then prioritizing, a set of evaluation questions/issues working from the various program components of the generic CFA logic model and the associated activities and outcomes;
- developing a data collection plan and cost estimates based on the shorter, prioritized list of evaluation questions.

From the committee discussion of these priority areas for evaluation, four issues areas emerged: program support; training; recruitment and retention of volunteers and program evaluation and feedback. Some of the more relevant questions and issues are noted below. The questionnaires used in data collection (see Appendix B) reflect these issue areas in considerably more detail.

Program support:

How much and what types of support are now being provided to the local CFAs by their sponsoring organization?

What are the commonly identified support needs with respect to: (a) perceived needs of CFAs with respect to their sponsor; and (b) perceived needs of CFAs and the sponsor with respect to the Nutrition Resource Centre.

Training:

In general, is the current training model still viable in its entirety or can it be trimmed in content, intensity sequencing and/or duration?

Recognizing that some sites have begun making modifications to the training program: Is this widespread practice? What elements are being modified and for what reasons? What feedback has been obtained about satisfaction with or effectiveness of the changes?

Recruitment and retention of volunteers:

In general, is this still a viable program model based on volunteers?

What is the expectation of CFAs and the sponsoring organization regarding an appropriate length of time for the volunteer commitment?

What strategies are associated with volunteer retention and are different strategies used at different stages?

What is the perceived impact of volunteer attrition?

Program evaluation and monitoring:

Recognizing the need for further investigation of program impacts in the future, what is the current status of local evaluation activities in the areas of process evaluation, participant and CFA satisfaction, and outcomes?

What is the local perspective on the forms required for provincial monitoring of the CFA program (e.g., rationale behind the forms; barriers to completion; suggestions and support needed)?

2.0 METHOD

To adequately assess these questions and issues within the available resources for program evaluation it was decided that information was needed from both the CFAs themselves and a representative of their local sponsor. Thus, two questionnaires were developed.

Survey of Community Food Advisors:

The questionnaire was targeted at those CFAs who had completed all training requirements. The number of qualified CFAs was estimated at 330. To accommodate concerns from CFAs about providing their names and addresses for purposes of the evaluation, the questionnaires were sent to the local CFA Coordinator to then be distributed to the CFAs themselves. The questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter signed by both the evaluation consultant and the Manager of the Nutrition Resource Centre. The cover letter outlined the purpose of the evaluation survey and the responsibilities of the CFA Coordinator for facilitating local participation. Each CFA was asked to send back the completed questionnaire directly to the evaluation consultant by prepaid, return mail. Participants were given three weeks for survey completion, with an email reminder going out from the NRC to each local coordinator at the beginning of week three asking them to remind the CFAs to complete the questionnaire. Included in the survey package was a postage-paid return envelope that was subsequently used in a random draw for a prize. In this way a small incentive was provided for participation, while maintaining anonymity in the questionnaire itself. Overall, a return rate of 54.2% was achieved through these survey procedures; 179 out of an expected 330.

To investigate whether respondents differed from non-respondents it is possible only to compare by region (Table 1). Other comparisons are not possible as no other information is available for the non-responders (e.g., length of time in the program). We return to this issue of potential response bias at the conclusion of the report under study limitations.

The regional distribution of the CFAs who responded to the questionnaire was compared to the total distribution of CFAs across the province. There was no response bias in terms of region in which the program is located (Table 1).

CFAs were also grouped by type of community and length of time their program has been in operation in order to explore potential differences among subgroups of respondents. For sample size considerations, in these subgroup comparisons community type was recoded into three groups – largely urban (n=35), mixed urban/rural (n=119), and largely rural/remote community (n=25). In terms of program duration, respondents were recoded into three groups – 0-2 years (n=50), between 3-4 years (n=39) and 5 years and over (n=82). Statistically significant subgroup differences are reported as such. When statistical comparisons are not valid due to small cell sizes then major trends are reported.

Table 1. Comparison of regional distribution CFA respondents to actual regional CFA distribution

<u>Region</u>	<u>Respondents</u>		<u>Total</u>		<u>Rate per 100,000 pop.</u>
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	
Central East	9	5.1	21	6.4	1.25
Central South	30	17.1	65	19.7	5.96
Central West	19	10.9	32	9.7	1.76
South West	54	30.9	101	30.6	7.01
East	42	24.0	72	21.8	4.86
North	21	12.0	39	11.8	4.58
Toronto	0	--	0	--	--
(missing)	4	--	--	--	--
<u>Total</u>	179	100.0	330	100.0	3.07

Survey of Representatives in Sponsoring Organizations:

In addition to the survey of the CFAs, the second data collection strategy was a survey of representatives within sponsoring organizations. Some questions were similar to those directed to the CFAs, albeit from an organizational perspective. Most questions, however, were unique to these respondents. The questionnaire was sent to the local

site Coordinator, using a different colour to distinguish it from the CFA questionnaire. While one questionnaire was to be completed by each organization, some questions were most appropriate for the local CFA coordinator (e.g., opinions concerning the training materials) and others were more appropriate for someone in a decision-making/funding capacity with respect to the local CFA program (e.g., questions about funding and in-kind resources). The Coordinator was advised to seek the support of others in the organization to assist in questionnaire completion. Nine of the 18 sponsor reps reported engaging others in the process, for example, a Dietitian assigned as a primary resource to CFA volunteers; other Health Unit Nutrition Staff; internal Volunteer Coordinator and the CFA Program Manager and CFA Trainer.

As with the CFA survey the questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter. Three weeks were given for questionnaire completion with a reminder email sent by the provincial CFA coordinator at the beginning of week three. As the deadline for completion passed the provincial CFA coordinator called non-respondents to request their participation. With these survey methods, a return rate of 100% was achieved for the sponsor representatives; 18 out of 18.

Sponsor reps were sub-categorized on the bases of the years of program operation. Giving consideration to balancing the groups in terms of size, the reps were coded as 1-4 years (n=8) and 5 years and over (n=10). The low number of people in each group precluded tests of statistical significance. Only major trends are noted below and the percentages given when appropriate.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Selected CFA and program characteristics

Tables 2 and 3 provide descriptive information about the CFAs and sponsoring programs, respectively. With respect to the CFAs, the majority have been certified for between 1-2 years (38.8%) or 3-4 years (22.5%). It is noteworthy, that about 20% have been with the program five years or more. In terms of program operation almost half

(48%) have been with programs in operation for 5 years or more. The large majority of CFA's live in mixed urban/rural areas (66.9%), and about 20% in largely urban areas. Regional distribution of the CFA sample was noted earlier in Table 1. In terms of actual distribution in relation to population size, the South West Region has the most CFAs per 100,000 population (7.01); over twice the provincial average of 3.07. The Central East Region has the lowest (1.25 per 100,000), with the exception of Toronto which currently has no CFA program operating.

Table 2. Descriptive characteristics of CFAs.

		n	%
Length of time certified CFA	Less than one year	33	18.5
	Between 1-2 years	69	38.8
	Between 3-4 years	40	22.5
	Over 5 years	36	20.2
	Missing	1	-
	Total	179	100.0
Length of time program operating	Less than one year	8	4.7
	Between 1-2 years	42	24.6
	Between 3-4 years	39	22.8
	Over 5 years	82	48.0
	Missing	8	-
	Total	179	100.0
Urban/rural community	Less than one year	35	19.7
	Between 1-2 years	119	66.9
	Between 3-4 years	21	11.8
	Over 5 years	3	1.7
	Missing	1	-
	Total	179	100.0
Region	Central East	9	5.1
	Central South	30	17.1
	Central West	19	10.9
	South West	54	30.9
	East	42	24.0
	North	21	12.0
	Missing	4	-
	Total	179	100.0

Table 3. Descriptive characteristics of CFA programs.

		n	%
Length of time operating	less than one year	0	0.0
	between 1-2 years	3	16.7
	between 3-4 years	5	27.8
	over 5 years	10	55.6
	missing	-	-
	Total	18	100.0
Urban/rural community	largely urban	2	11.1
	mixed urban/rural	14	77.8
	largely rural	2	11.1
	Remote	-	-
	Total	18	100.0
Community size	Less than 10,000	0	-
	10,000 – 25,000	1	5.6
	25,000 – 50,000	2	11.1
	50,000 – 100,000	4	22.2
	100,000 – 500,000	9	50.0
	Over 500,000	2	11.1
	Can't really say	-	-
	Total	18	100.0

When we look at the characteristics of the CFA programs (as opposed to the CFAs themselves) we see a fairly high level of site maturity – 10 of 18 (55.6%) being in operation for five years or more and another five (27.8%) between 3-4 years. When we consider this information in relation to the CFA reports about their own programs (Table 1) it suggests that there were fewer respondents from the more long-standing programs than may be the case in actual distribution (e.g. about 20% of responding CFA's are from programs in operation for five years or more; while about 55% of programs have been in operation for five years or more. As with the CFA reports, however, the large majority of programs are in mixed urban/rural areas (14 of 18 or 77.8%) and most serve populations between either 50-100K (4 programs or 22.2%) or 100-500K (9 programs or 50.0%).

3.2 Support and Support Needs

The survey of sponsoring organizations inquired about the sources and amount of funding available to the CFA program this year (Table 4). By “funding”, respondents were instructed that this meant through a dedicated budget or budget line. Across the province as a whole this dedicated funding amounted to \$82,805, of which almost one third came from some form of provincial funding (33.6%) and about two thirds from the local sponsor (63.1%). The small amount of provincial funding is not for staffing but rather program enhancement and volunteer recognition.

This dedicated funding, however, reflects only a small portion of the support provided to the CFA programs by the sponsoring organization since other in-kind resources are also made available (Figure 1). Almost all sponsors provided some personnel support (88.9%) which ranged from .1 to 1.5 (average .5 FTE per program with some in kind personnel support). Thus, there is high variability across the sponsoring sites. The total in-kind FTE’s for the province as a whole was 7.9 for a total value of \$286,167 (range was \$2,520 - \$50,462).

Beyond these personnel supports, all the sponsoring organizations also provided administrative support (e.g. phone, fax); office/meeting space (17 programs or 94.4%); Internet access/computer services (10 programs or 55.6%) and a variety of things falling into the “other” category (5 programs or 27.8%). These items included, for example, voicemail, resource materials, gifts for volunteer recognition, snacks for meetings and storage.

Table 4. Dedicated CFA funding in the past year by source of funding¹.

	Amount	%
Local funding from sponsor	\$52,272	63.1
Other local funding	\$2,723	3.3
Provincial funding	\$27,800	33.6
Total	\$82,805	100.0

¹ excludes personnel, admin and other in-kind contributions.

When asked to consider the importance of provincial CFA funding for various aspects of their program, the sponsor representatives reported placing a particularly high value on this funding to support volunteer recognition, travel for the CFAs, and resource materials (Figure 2). A third of the sponsors (33.3%) cited the funding as being very much needed for “other” items, most often educational updates and other training costs.

The sponsor reps were unanimous in their view that a paid coordinator was “very important” for the sustainability of their CFA program. However, not all felt that provincial funding was needed for a paid coordinator (52.9% very much needed; 47.1% not needed). Programs in operation between 1-4 years tended to cite the provincial funding as “very much needed” more than their counterparts in programs 5 years or more in duration (6 out of 8 compared to 3 out of 9).

The sponsor representatives also rated the importance of various supports provided to them through the Nutrition Resource Centre (Figure 3). Funding and dissemination of resources were viewed as the most valued contribution (rated “very important” by 94.4% and 83.3% respectively). Consultation on site issues and networking were also seen as important (both 50.0% of respondents). A few other things were also mentioned (about 20% of respondents) as being highly valued including, for example, the listserv, continuing education, and “maintaining consistency” among all sites.

Support for the CFA program was also examined from the perspective of the CFAs themselves and the support they perceived from the sponsoring organization. Firstly, it is clear that the CFAs as a group felt that the coordinator was important to the success of the program (98.3%). In Figure 4 we see the high value also placed on resource materials (89.3% very important), coordination of placements (75.6% very important) and access to equipment (65.5% very important). A wide range of other types of support were also cited as very important by many CFAs (91.3%) including, for example, opportunities for education, professional advice, from various resource people and general support through sponsorship.

Figure 1. Percentage of CFA programs receiving various in-kind resources from sponsoring organization.

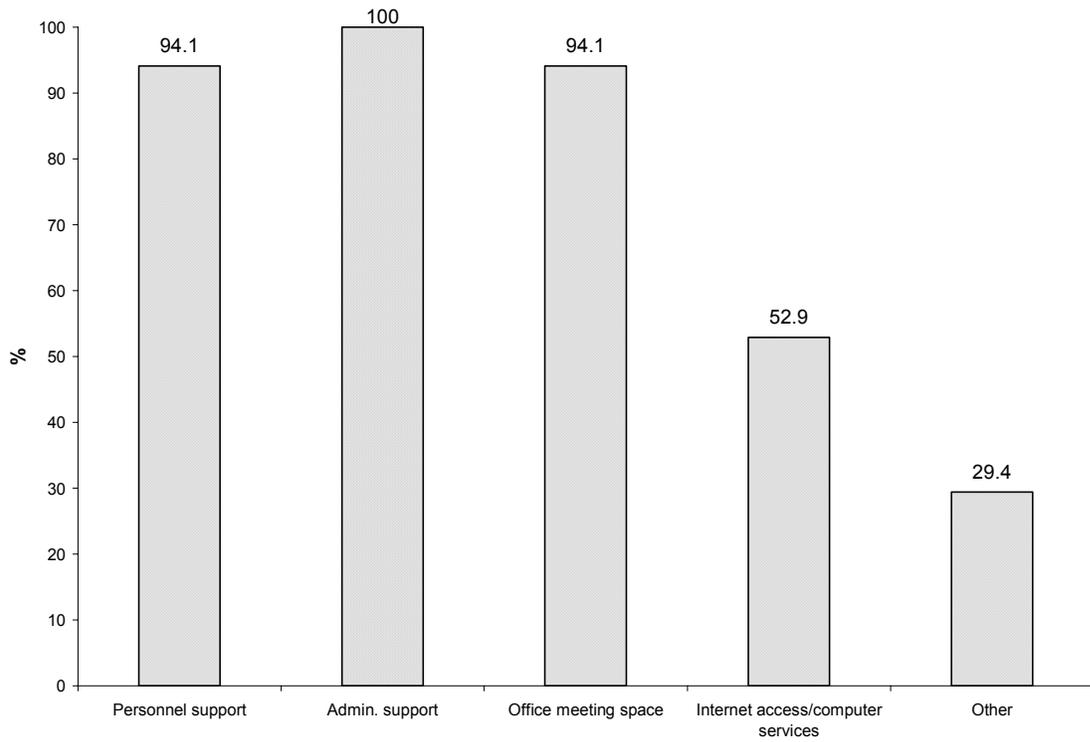


Figure 2. Sponsor ratings of various needs for provincial CFA funding

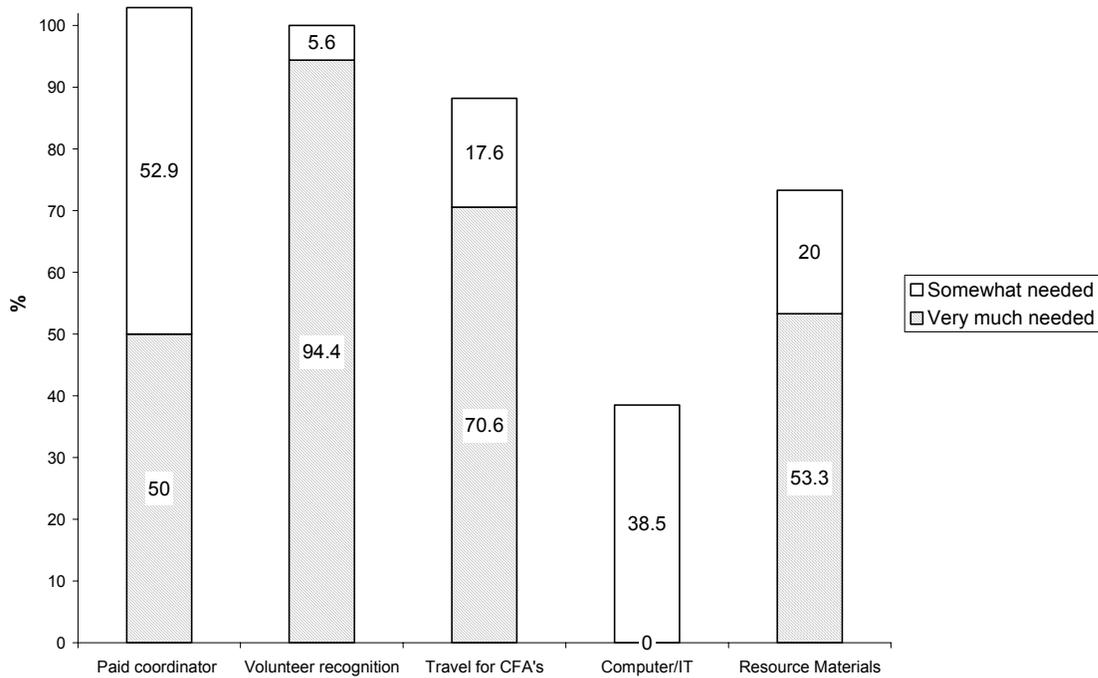


Figure 3. Sponsor ratings of importance of various supports of the Nutrition Resource Centre

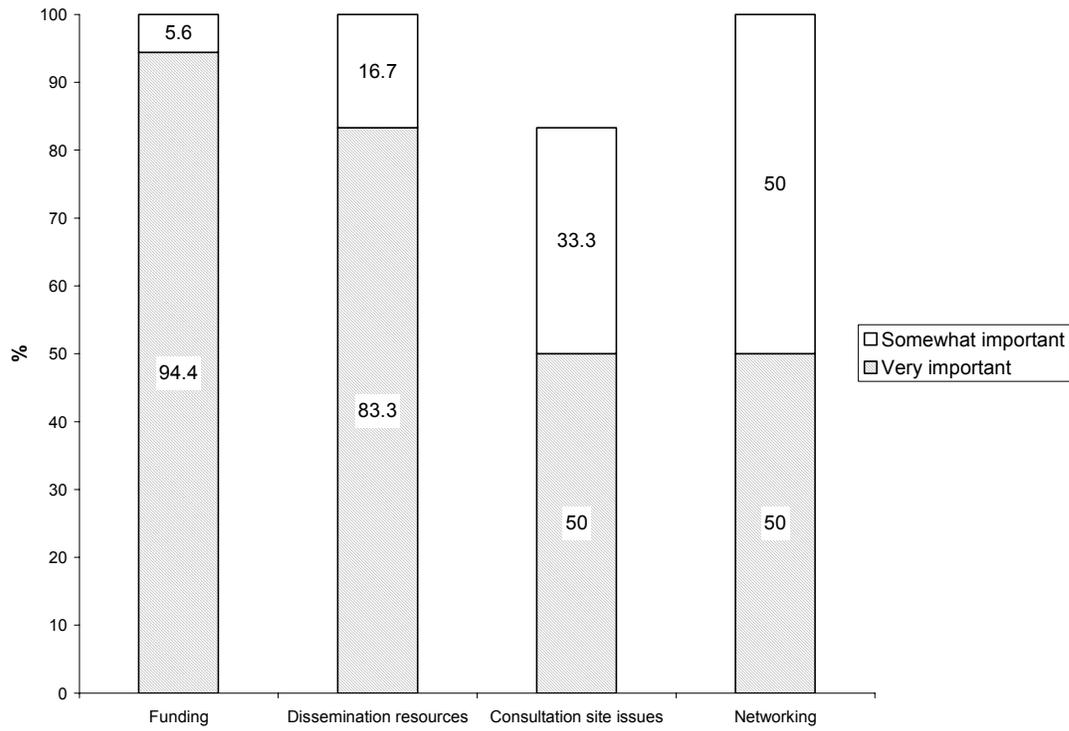


Figure 4 CFA ratings of the importance of various organization supports.

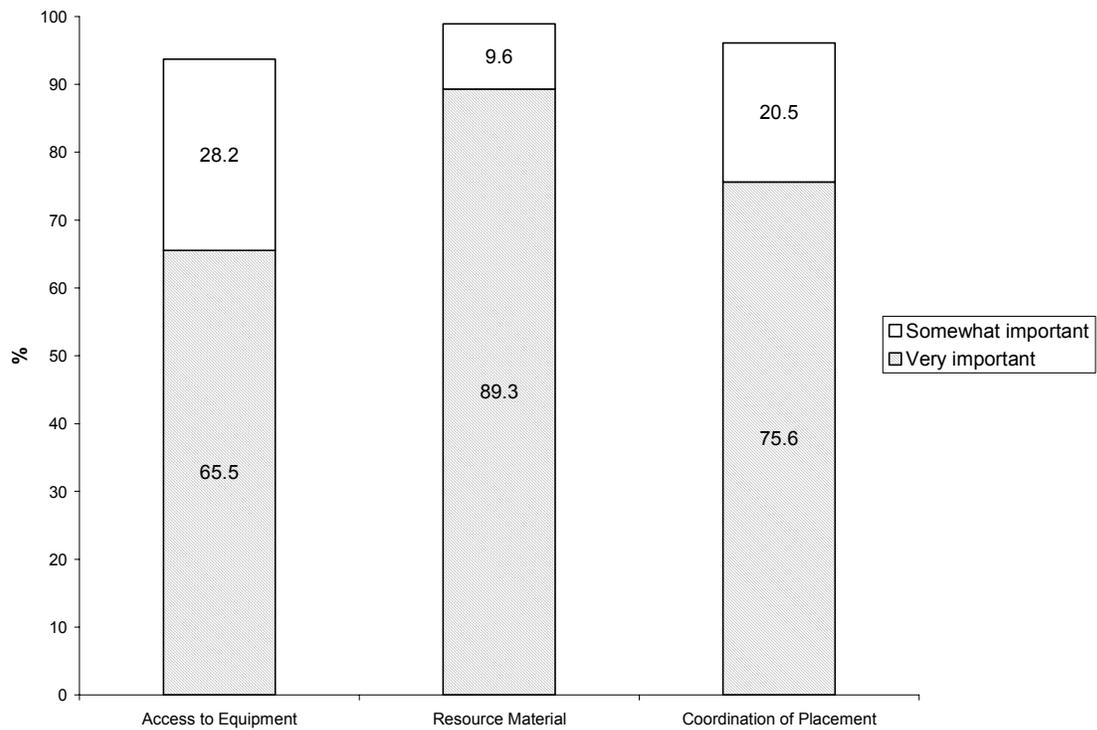
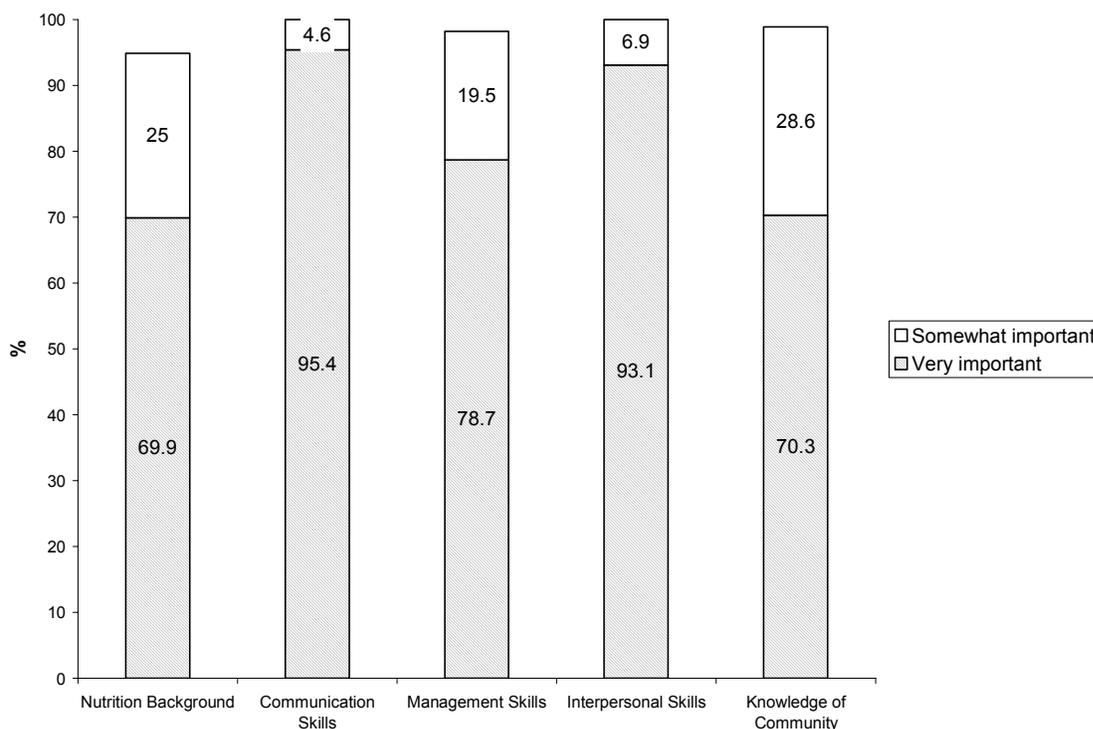


Figure 5 CFA ratings of the importance of various Coordinator characteristics.



Considering the characteristics of a person or people coordinating their program, the CFAs gave the highest ratings to interpersonal skills and management skills (rated as “very important” by 95.4% and 93.1% respectively) (Figure 5). However, other characteristics were also highly valued including nutrition background and knowledge of the local community. A small number of CFAs (about 13%) also mentioned other things such as accessibility, enthusiasm, advocating for and valuing volunteers and knowledge of the sponsoring organization.

The large majority of sponsor representatives (17 programs or 94.4%) felt there were few barriers to CFA access to materials, and the one remaining program (5.6%) thought there were many barriers. This positive perspective, notwithstanding, all the sponsors (100%) felt distance for copying or pick-up were important for at least some CFA’s; about two-thirds (61.1%) considered building office hours a barrier for some and just over a third (38.9%) cited not enough materials on hand. Other barriers mentioned by only five sponsor representatives included the fact that CFAs work full-time, ready accessibility of materials and support availability.

From the perspective of the CFAs, 6.8% cited “a lot of difficulty” and 42.4% reported “difficulty from time to time” in accessing materials for displays, presentations and other activities. For this group of CFAs (about half the respondents), the distance to travel for photocopying or picking things up (59.8%); the office hours of the building (44.8%) and not enough materials on hand (27.6%) were rated as barriers. When these percentages are calculated on the basis of the total sample of CFAs, they are 29.1% for travel, 21.8% for office hours and 13.4% for not enough materials. Other difficulties cited by a small number of CFAs (n=14) included, for example, difficulty knowing what was available; length of time to get materials; difficulty finding materials at the office; uncooperative staff and lack of training. While the issue of access and other barriers are very important for many CFAs it is also noteworthy that about half of respondents reported no difficulties. Thus, the experience in this regard is highly variable.

Figure 6. CFA and sponsor reports of Internet access.

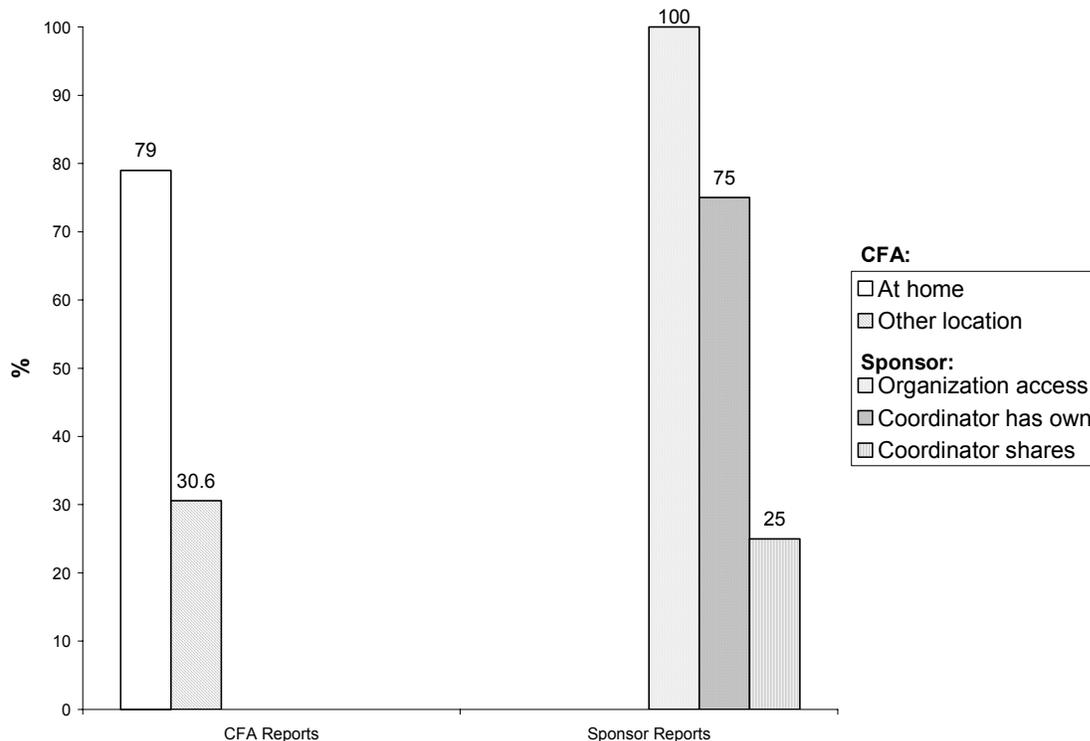
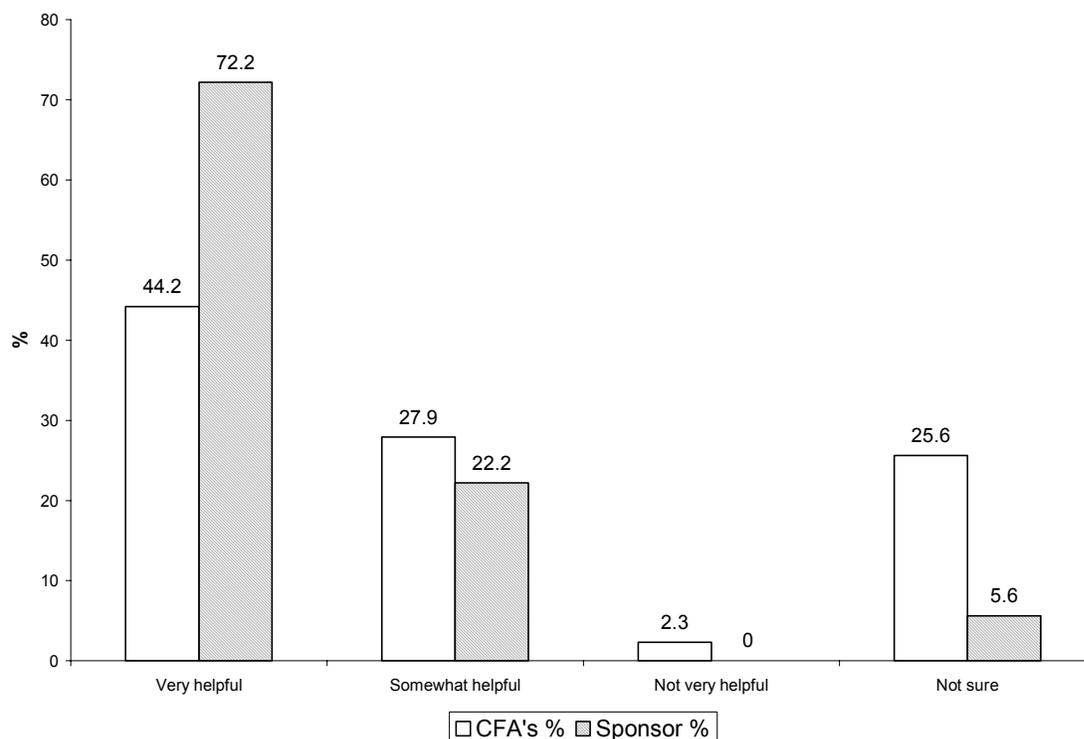


Figure 7. CFA and sponsor opinions on provincial presentation kits.



When considering the issue of Internet access, 79% of CFAs reported access from home and about a third (30.6%) reported access from another location (Figure 6). Almost all (94.4%) of the sponsor reps reported Internet access through their organization; the CFA coordinator either having their own (75%) or sharing access with others (25%). Interestingly, the CFA coordinator having access to their own computer was more likely in programs in existence for 5 years or more compared to those with a shorter history (9 out of 10 compared to 3 out of 6). Over half of the sponsor reps (55.6%) cited “no concerns” about having the binder updated in the future with materials sent electronically. Seven programs or 38.9% cited minor concerns (e.g. time and cost of printing and collating; prefer that CFAs use locally adapted material; not sufficient Internet access for their CFAs).

With respect to centrally distributed presentation kits, they were viewed as “very helpful” by 44.2% of CFAs and “somewhat helpful” by another 27.9% (Figure 7). Almost a quarter of CFA respondents (25.6%) were “not sure” suggesting a lack of familiarity with the kits among many CFAs. A considerably higher percentage of CFA sponsor reps

found the material “very helpful” (13 programs or 72.2%). Furthermore, over half (52.9%) agreed that additional, centrally developed resources were needed for other aspects of their work. About one-third (35.3%) was unsure if they were needed or not. Some offered general suggestions such as “ongoing development of pertinent education resources”, while others offered specific suggestions such as smaller display boards/posters, table top displays/props to go with presentation kits; more material on specific sub-groups (e.g. multicultural, school age, teens, people with developmental disabilities); and policies and procedures for the CFA committees.

When asked to identify or comment on successful strategies used to overcome barriers to accessing materials, 82 CFAs and all 18 of the sponsor reps provided a response. In general, the responses reflect the level of organization and commitment required to overcome difficulties experienced by some in accessing materials. For example, the CFAs often cited factors which might best be called “creative solutions”, for example, using lunch breaks; storing enough material at home; photocopying their own; coordinating pick ups and/or storage with other CFAs, the coordinator, health unit staff, or another local organization;(n=53); preparing their own materials, using materials from other local agency; or the Internet (n=8); preparing and phoning well in advance for materials (n=8) or giving CFA’s an office key (n=1).

“leaving work early isn’t always feasible but it does get the CFA work done”

“use my own or that of the group to which I am speaking. By being resourceful; pay for photocopying (cheaper than to drive to source)”

“being able to contact associations etc. for required materials. Internet useful in researching”

“our coordinator will usually bring resources to our monthly meeting”

A few respondents (n=14) just reiterated the difficulties in more detail or said plainly that everything is up to them to work it out.

“I just have to plan, that’s all, causes some problems but I usually get it worked out”

“Our host is “maxed” out, should not be a sponsor hinders professional approach and credibility”

Others spoke about the tremendous support they received.

“Great support from paid staff (sponsors). Our sponsors are excellent! Top rate!”

Suggestions offered by the CFA sponsor representatives followed the same general themes, with somewhat more emphasis on the coordinator role and availability; and on the sponsor role in handling orders, finding alternatives such as creating a resource library, and using community partners for storage and pick up.

3.3 CFA Training

Questions to the CFAs and the sponsor reps about training covered many aspects of the training program: opinions about length, sequencing and content; suggestions for improvements; revisions already made; and opportunities for knowledge and skill enhancement beyond initial training.

Duration of Training:

The majority of sponsor representatives endorsed the view that the two aspects of Phase 1 (Nutrition and Food Safety) were “just about right” in duration; in contrast to Phase 2 (Classroom Training: Presentation Skills) where opinions were much more divided (Table 5). Half the respondents (52.0%) felt Phase 2 was too long; three programs or 17.6% felt it was too short and just under 30% felt it was just about right in length. Interestingly, sponsor reps found it more difficult to express an opinion concerning the duration of the overall program, preferring instead to rate the individual phases. Of the 13 sponsor reps prepared to give an overall rating, opinions were divided. Five or 38.5% felt the overall program was long; eight or 61.5% felt it was just about right.

The CFAs themselves were also generally satisfied with the duration of the two components of Phase 1. However, a significant proportion felt both Phase 2 (Presentation Skills) and Phase 3 (Community Training) were too short (26.7% and 34.5%, respectively). About 80% of the CFA respondents gave a rating on the overall length of the training program, with 88.9% feeling that it was “just about right”.

A large number of CFA's (n=100), and 15 of the 18 sponsor representatives offered comments about either shortening or adding to the training program. About 25% of the CFA respondents offered the opinion that, while some things could be condensed, nothing should be deleted. Others suggested that group cooking and food preparation were not so critical as most were thought to be experienced good cooks. Others did, however, also attest to the social and team building aspect of the cooking classes.

“Reducing, not removing the food preparation and cooking part of the program would shorten it without impacting essential training”

“Preferably nothing but, if absolutely necessary, group food preparation. Although it did present a chance to get to know one another”

Table 5. Opinion of CFAs and sponsor representatives concerning the duration of the CFA training program.

	Too long (%)	Too short (%)	Just about right (%)
Sponsors			
Phase #1: Classroom Training, Nutrition	18.8	12.5	68.8
Phase #1: Classroom Training, Food Safety	6.3	6.3	87.5
Phase #2: Classroom Training, Presentation Skills	52.9	17.6	29.4
Phase #3: Community Training	6.3	-	93.8
Overall Program	38.5	-	61.5
CFAs			
Phase #1: Classroom Training, Nutrition	3.4	13.2	83.3
Phase #1: Classroom Training, Food Safety	5.1	9.7	85.2
Phase #2: Classroom Training, Presentation Skills	14.2	26.7	59.1
Phase #3: Community Training	5.3	34.5	60.2
Overall Program	6.9	4.2	88.9

Table 6. Opinion of sponsor representatives concerning the sequencing and content of the training sessions from the binder.

	Appropriate (%)	Not Appropriate (%)	Not Sure (%)
<i>Sequencing of the sessions</i>			
Phase #1: Classroom Training, Nutrition	68.8	18.8	12.5
Phase #1: Classroom Training, Food Safety	60.0	20.0	20.0
Phase #2: Classroom Training, Presentation Skills	62.5	25.0	12.5
Phase #3: Community Training	81.3	6.3	12.5
Overall Program	50.0	41.7	8.3
<i>Content of sessions</i>			
Phase #1: Classroom Training, Nutrition	88.2	11.8	-
Phase #1: Classroom Training, Food Safety	82.4	11.8	5.9
Phase #2: Classroom Training, Presentation Skills	58.8	35.3	5.9
Phase #3: Community Training	82.4	-	17.6
Overall Program	100.0	-	-

Two other clusters of responses stood out – those suggesting that the canning and preserving component be deleted as it was rarely called for (16%), and the amount of material on presentation skills (17%).

“canning and preserving, during the last five years - we’ve never been asked about it”

“less time on training presentations - seemed repetitive and group is into food”

The suggestions to delete or seriously reduce the cooking and the canning sessions was echoed in the sponsor comments (about 33%). Other comments touched on the basic nature of some of the material and some aspects of Phase 2 (e.g., learning cycle concept; tour of the homework; orientation on office support).

When the CFAs were asked if anything could usefully be added to the training program (n=83), a frequent theme that emerged was to complement the presentation component (38.5% of the responders).

“more emphasis on presentation – interesting and informative not dull and boring presentation of facts -- using skits, props – not just fact sheets and overheads”

“more community learning and shadowing a trained CFA until we feel comfortable making presentations”

“do more practical things that will be expected (i.e., do a presentation that we will be using”

“professional video information on presentation skills. Videotaping and critiquing presentations of CFAs”

Beyond these suggestions regarding the training, a wide range of comments was provided that did not easily cluster into categories or themes. Some commented on the need for more with respect to working in the community (n=5); vegetarian food (n=4); more on multicultural diets and customs (n=3); liability (n=3); and a host of other individual comments and ideas. To the same questions, nine of the sponsor reps also offered some suggestions. Three noted that more should be added on food security and two specifically suggested that CFAs take the Food Handlers Certificate course. Individual comments included the need to bolster the presentation training; adding more on cooking with a budget and more information on food allergies.

Order of Sequencing of Training:

Table 6 shows the feedback from the sponsor representatives about the sequencing of the training sessions from the binder. The data reflect quite a range of opinions with about 60-80% agreeing that each segment was sequenced properly; but also 20-25% in disagreement and around 15-20% unsure. The notable exception was Phase 3: Community Training which the vast majority felt was properly positioned (81.3%). In the open-ended comments, the sponsor reps tended to focus on the need to better integrate Phase I and II.

“Phase I and II should be combined. We found that volunteers drop out of training in Phase II because it may not be as interesting or even intimidating”

“CFAs should begin to practice presentation skills much earlier in training. Phase II should be integrated into Phase I throughout and there should be more emphasis on presentation skills”

Content of Training:

Table 6 also shows the feedback from sponsor representatives on the appropriateness of the content of the training sessions. With the notable exception of Phase 2: Presentation Skills, the large majority felt the content was appropriate (percentages ranging from around 82% - 88%). A significant percentage felt the content of Phase 2 was not appropriate (35.3%). Those making comments with respect to Phases I, II or III mentioned a range of things already noted above such as the need to add the Food Handlers Certificate course; beef up the presentation component with more hands on practice; *add vegetarian material*; and delete the canning material. With respect to Phase III (working in the community) two people spoke of the need to reduce or eliminate the section on working with the media and one person commented on more tips and experience being needed working with specific groups with special needs (i.e., low literacy, seniors, low income, mentally/physically challenged children).

General Training Issues and Suggestions:

Feedback from the CFAs shows the mixed response to the opportunity to make suggestions for improvements. About 45% indicated they did have suggestions; an equal number said they did not. The remaining 10% were unsure. While many of the suggestions echoed themes identified above, the suggestions were often quite specific and did not fall easily into categories. The following is a sample of quotes on general training issues and suggestions:

“Have the CFAs do demos in front of their classmates; a practical component”

“Current program covers every aspect but needs fine tuning in some instances. There is probably more room for student hands-on work”

“I would like to have attended a CFA presentation in order to see what is expected from us and to learn from experienced active CFAs”

“Perhaps a “deposit” should be charged and fully returned after one year of service. Prorated returns otherwise”

“Less cooking-preserving. More information on complimentary foods - balanced meals”

Almost all the sponsor reps reported either minor (56.3%) or major (31.3%) changes had already been made to the provincial training program. Only about half the sponsors had obtained feedback on satisfaction of CFAs or the effectiveness of the changes, on either a formal (23.1%) or informal basis (23.1%). Further, when asked to think beyond their local program, a majority had suggestions to offer for training across the province (61.5%) and just under a third (30.8% were unsure. Here again the sponsor reps reiterated ideas already discussed. Some attached the new material or training schedule and these have been forwarded to the Nutrition Resource Centre since this local experience will be helpful in making any changes to the provincial program.

“we have combined all of these components, CFAs in training are able to practice presentation skills throughout training and are encouraged to observe and assist throughout”

“we beefed up the presentation skills section and introduced it earlier. Community experts come in to work with CFAs so they would feel more comfortable using AV equipment”

“added Safe Food Handlers course and changed order of sessions”

“designed modular format to train volunteers over 1-2 year period (incorporated Phase I, II and III). Designed 15 week training program (incorporate Phase I and II), mentoring program”

Figure 8. Sponsor and CFA reports of other training beyond the initial training.

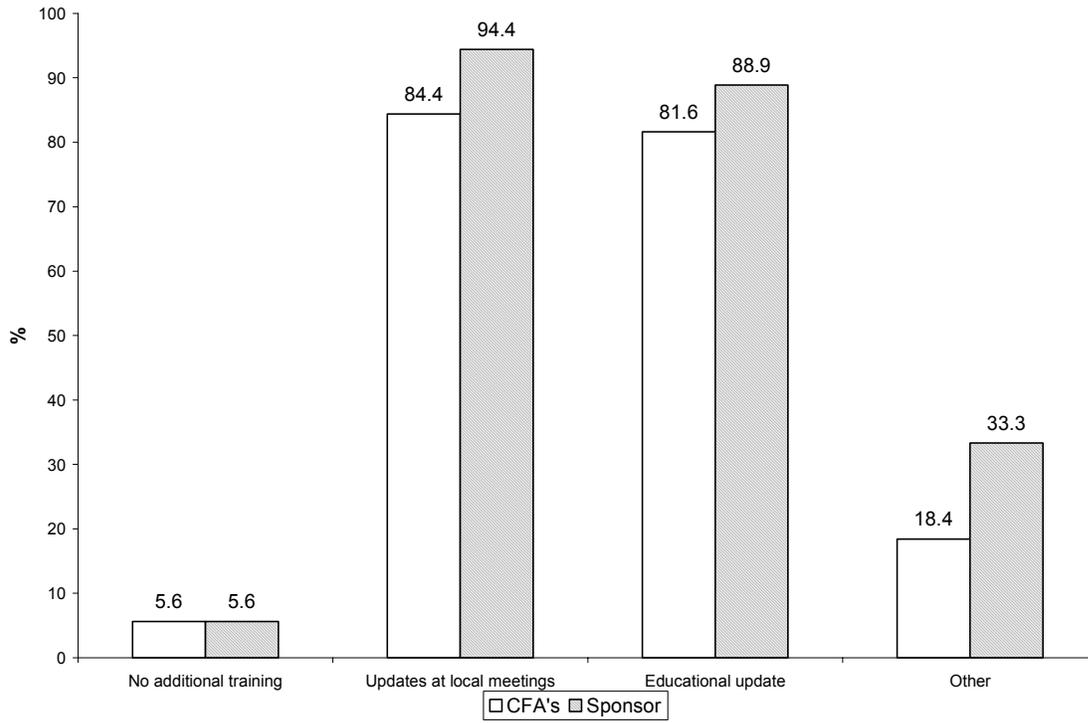
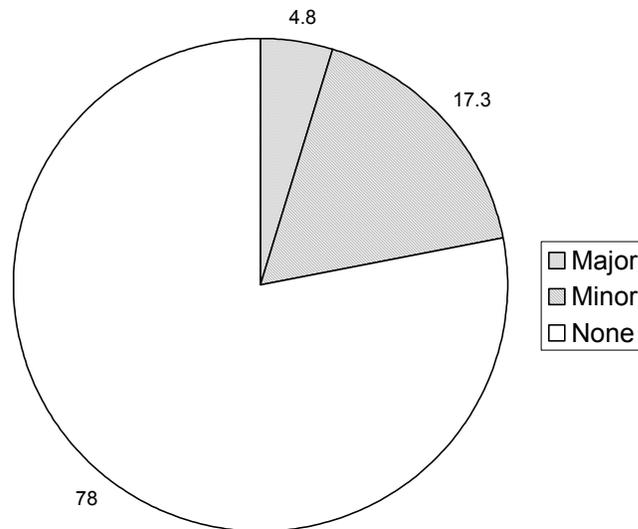
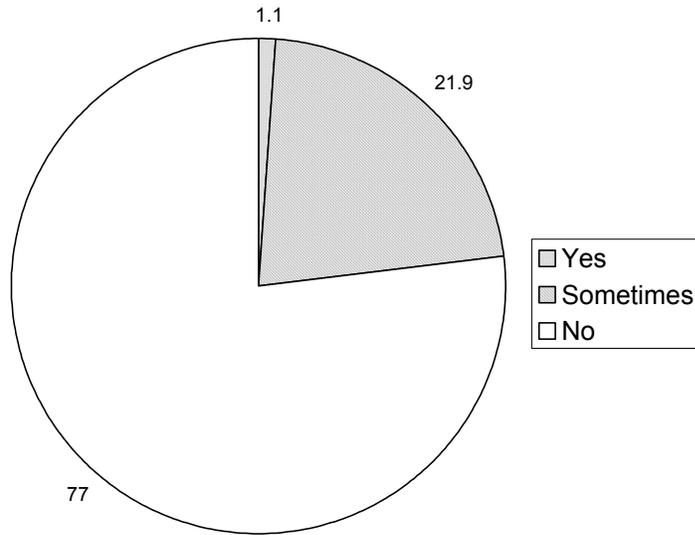


Figure 9. CFA concerns and issues related to CFA role and training

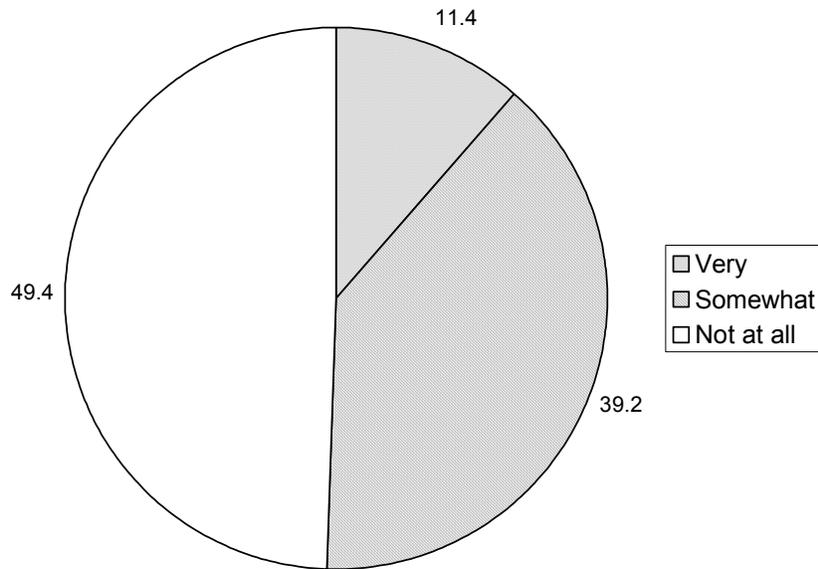
9a - Concerns about fit in community



9b - Asked to go beyond CFA role



9c - Familiar with liability issues



Despite the heavy focus in the program on initial training, there is clearly an additional emphasis on follow-up knowledge and skill enhancement opportunities (Figure 8). All but one sponsor reported providing some training beyond the initial training period, most often through updates at their local meetings (cited by 17 programs or 94.1%) or more formal educational updates (16 programs or 88.9%). These results were echoed by the CFAs themselves. One-third of sponsors and about one in five CFAs (18.4%) cited other strategies, for example, provincial conferences, courses and workshops or other Health Unit activities.

Also with respect to training issues and ongoing support the surveys of both CFAs and sponsor reps probed some issues related to their role in the community (Figures 9a - 9c). When asked about how their work fits in with other nutrition-related activities in their community, only about 5% cited any “major concerns” and a further 17.3% cited “minor concerns”. Thus, the large majority (78%) did not have concerns in this regard. Similarly, a large majority (77%) reported never being asked to do or say things that were beyond their understanding of the role. About one in five (21.9%) indicated that this happened “sometimes”. Examples included questions about diet for people with particular diseases or conditions such as diabetes, osteoporosis or menopause; or specific nutritional concerns, such as fat cholesterol or nutritional supplements. Some people also noted that the training emphasizes the need in these situations to recommend the person see a registered dietitian or physician.

The sponsor representatives tended to feel that the program manual and other CFA materials did a good job defining the CFA role, with eight reps (44.4%) saying the role was “very clearly” defined and six (33.3%) saying “clearly” defined. They did, however, acknowledge some concerns among staff in the organization (8 reps or 44.4%) and/or among community partners (6 reps or 35.3%). Examples of the concerns among staff included some sensitive issues around roles and responsibilities such as staff expecting too much of the volunteers and keeping CFAs focused on their specific role; that being healthy eating and safe food handling only. Other issues included the required staff time and, in one instance, how to manage without a CFA coordinator. Concerns

expressed by the community included lack of support from the local Health Unit or the sponsor itself, and concerns about limited numbers of CFAs or their availability.

The comments offered by several CFAs (n=45) concerning how their role fits or overlaps with other nutrition activities in the community provide considerable insight into the dynamics of the program at the local level. Firstly, the variability in the responses was noteworthy. About 10% of the group provided comments which reflected the fact that they had no idea how they fit it. A much larger group expressed well-informed opinions about complimentary or tension with other organizations, in particular the Health Unit. Eleven respondents (about 25%) commented on the lack of awareness in the community about their work or that they felt underutilized.

“CFAs seem to be isolated as a resource and need more publicity to make them more dynamic”

In a couple of these instances specific examples were given of how they could do more such as going beyond a strictly food-related role and better linking their work to fitness generally.

Another predominant, but complex, theme was the relationship to the Health Unit. This relationship tended to be described in one of two ways. On the one hand, there was a tension described whereby some felt they were being relied on too much as volunteers and sometimes were used to fill in for a shortage of health nurses.

“Is our group created to work with the Public Health and Health Coalition – to help cover their workload, or are we (CFAs) supposed to find own activities?”

“If we are working within an agency such as a health unit, we need to compliment their work. Do not ask us to do work that a paid staff usually does. Or ‘train’ people who are being paid to sit in on our presentations as part of their orientation or training.”

Others, however, felt their role complimented the more formal role of the dietitians and other professionals.

The Health Unit as a sponsor has a dietitian who has more credibility with groups needing information”

Finally, when asked about their familiarity with relevant liability issues about half reported some level of familiarity (11.4%, very familiar; 39.2% somewhat familiar) (Figure 9c). On the contrary, about half (49.4%) were not very familiar at all with these liability issues.

CFAs were also given the opportunity to comment on liability concerns they were aware of and 58 respondents made comments in this area. Eight of the 58 (about 14%) indicated they either has no idea about liability issues or that they needed an update in this area.

“not aware of them (liability issues) at all”

“should add a component to the training on liability”

“since I am not familiar with the liability issues I would very much like to know what they are”

About two-thirds of the respondents to this question, however, reiterated their understanding of the liability issues, most commonly the need to stay within the guidelines of the CFA training and manual. This was typically phrased as the requirement to avoid offering nutritional or other advice that went beyond their training (e.g., specific conditions such as diabetes).

“Always defer to a professional dietitian or RN. Do not hold myself up as an expert - just an advisor”

“We refer anything that is not in our binder to the Health Unit”

“Care is needed in what we say and do in our presentations. This was not stressed during our training”

Other comments concerned the protocols and back up insurance for health and safety issues, for example, if someone got burned during a presentation or unsafe food was being distributed.

3.4 Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

Plans and Policies:

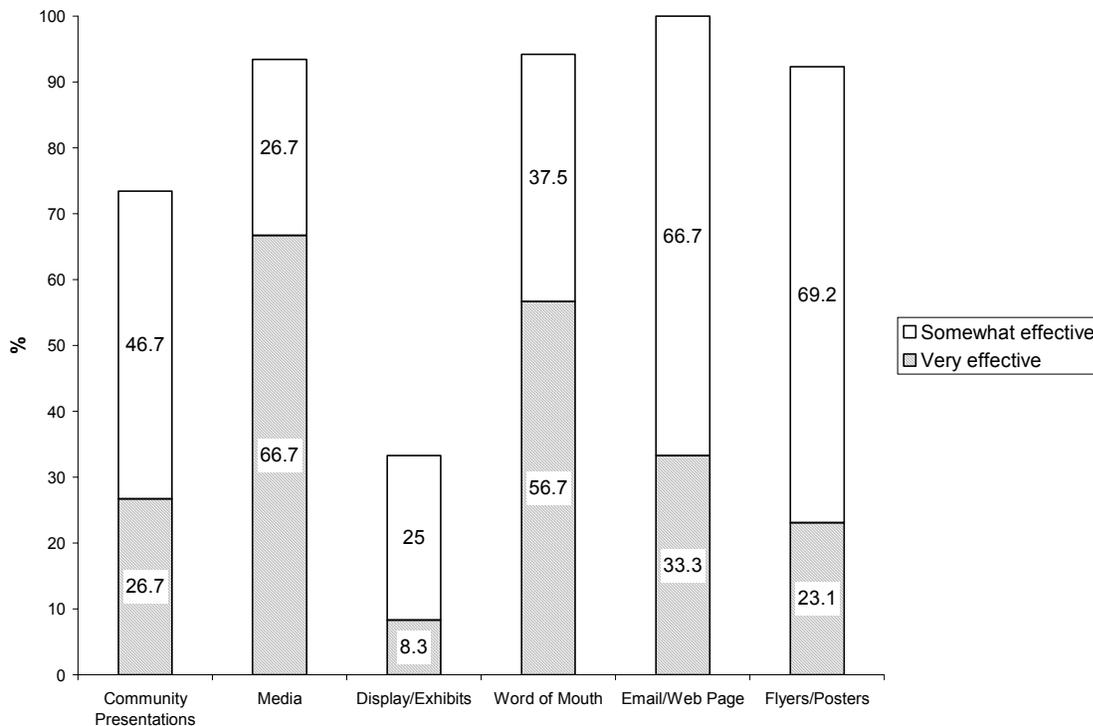
Given the critical role that volunteering, and the effective management of volunteers, plays in the CFA program, a number of questions to both the CFAs and the sponsor reps probed this area. This included questions about sponsors' previous experience with volunteers; volunteer management plans and policies; recruitment and recognition strategies; strategies for keeping connected; perceptions of reasonable length of time for a CFA volunteer commitment; rankings of reasons for CFAs to remain with or leave the program; and perceptions about the impact of CFA attrition. CFAs were also asked the extent to which they feel recognized by their local sponsor and the match between initial expectations and actual commitments as a CFA.

In terms of prior experience with volunteers, most sponsor reps reported some experience (55.6%) or a lot of experience (22.3%). Over half of the representatives (58.3%), however, agreed that adjustments were necessary for the volunteer aspect of the CFA program and cited such things as the independence of the CFAs out in the community; the increased staff time devoted to volunteer recognition and coordination; the need for office/resource space; the need to sensitize and work with staff to increase their familiarity and acceptance of volunteers; and administrative requirements such as the participation agreement, different time tracking, or different reporting relationships compared to other volunteers.

Approximately one-third of the sponsor reps (31.3%) had a formal CFA volunteer management plan. Description of the formal management plans included long-term goals and objectives of the program; yearly activity plans; and CFA strategic plans. One person noted that the CFA volunteers were covered by the same volunteer management plan as for all Health Dept. volunteers.

Almost two-thirds (61.1%) did have written policies and procedures for the CFAs to follow. Areas covered by written policies and procedures included: administrative things such as a leave of absence, conflict of interest, confidentiality, job descriptions for each position, CFA commitment sponsor expectations, waiver of liability and terms of reference for meetings. Again, not all these policies and procedures were specific to the CFA program (e.g. conflict of interest and confidentiality). Other items, such as job descriptions, obviously were closely tied to the program.

Figure 10. Sponsor ratings of effectiveness of various CFA recruitment strategies.



Screening and recruitment:

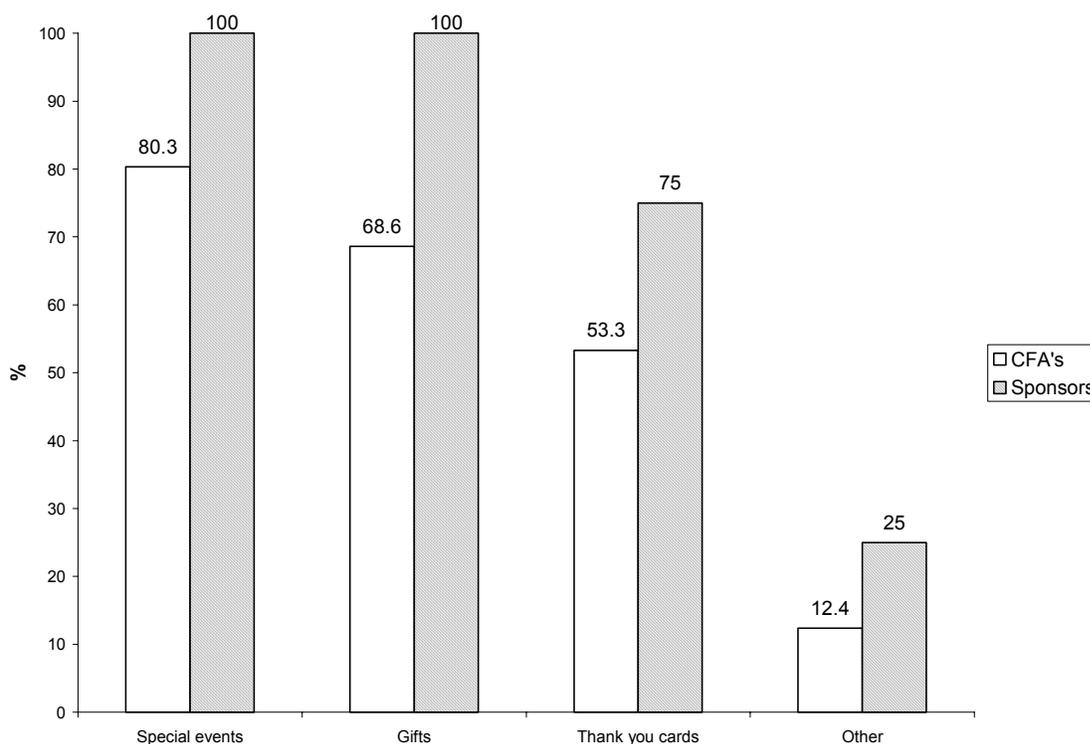
CFA sponsor representatives were asked about how they screen and select CFAs and a wide range of procedures were noted by 17 respondents. Seven reps noted a specific application form to be completed; four listed group interviews; 14 noted individual interviews, often undertaken more than once and by more than one person; only one specifically identified the screening criteria (availability, interest, multicultural); and six mentioned references and/or police checks.

Figure 10 shows the sponsor ratings of the effectiveness of various recruitment strategies. Clearly a wide range of methods was employed with varying degrees of success. With the exception of displays and exhibits, the combined ratings of “very effective” and “somewhat effective” were typically over 80-90%. That said, solicitations through the media and word of mouth were most likely to be cited as “very effective” (66.7% and 56.7%, respectively). Sponsor reps working in programs in existence for 5 years or more were more likely to cite the media as being very effective (8 out of 10).

Volunteer Recognition:

All but two of the sponsor representatives indicated that they provided specific volunteer recognition activities (88.9%). However, this was somewhat less evident to the CFAs themselves: 78.3% responding “yes” to a similar question and 18.3% being “unsure”. In terms of specific types of recognition activities both CFAs and sponsors gave a high endorsement to special events, and gifts and more moderate endorsement to thank you cards (Figure 11). Other activities that were noted by a few respondents included encouraging input, nominations for local/provincial volunteer awards, providing food for meetings, flowers, gifts, lunch/luncheons, and certificates of appreciation.

Figure 11. Sponsor and CFA reports of volunteer recognition activities/strategies.



The cost of recognition activities was typically supported by both provincial funding (88.9%) and the sponsoring organization (77.8%). When asked what provincial or local support was needed for successful volunteer recruitment and retention, a range of things were mentioned by the sponsor reps. The most frequent response focused on funding; either funding levels in general (n=6), funding for a paid coordinator (n=8), or for more volunteer recognition and education (n=4). Other suggestions included involving volunteer leaders in more decisions and as partners, and more coordinator involvement in all CFA meetings.

Figure 12 shows the CFA ratings in terms of how recognized they feel by their local sponsor. Without comparative information for other types of community volunteers, or trends over time, it is difficult to go beyond purely descriptive comments at present. In addition, the survey may be biased in unknown directions; for example, the respondents may be more dissatisfied than non-respondents or vice versa. That 56% feel “very well recognized” is clearly a positive indication. However, the fact that almost 15% feel

“somewhat” or very “unrecognized” may also be cause for concern in a program based on a volunteer model.

While the majority of CFAs did not choose to follow up with specific concerns regarding their efforts being recognized, those that did (n=32) took the opportunity to express some serious reservations in this regard. Most of the comments (n=21) spoke to three aspects of the relationship with the sponsor organization: (1) they didn’t feel the program was promoted enough; (2) contact and/or communication with the sponsor organization was seen as minimal; (3) or the sponsor was not seen as sufficiently well organized to manage the program well.

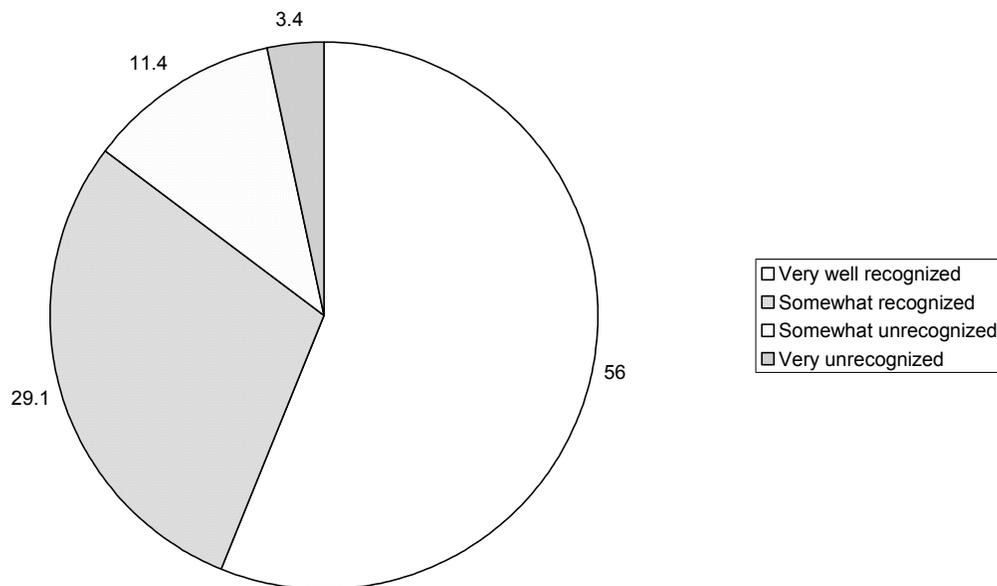
“we are expected to promote ourselves but I feel the health unit should be promoting CFAs in the community”

“no involvement with us, other than brief dietitian presentation”

“very poor communication and organizational skills”

“it seems we are the bottom of the “totem pole” in that the sponsoring unit is in turmoil and we are left floating in the vacuum”

Figure 12. CFA ratings of how recognized they feel by their local sponsors.



When asked about the length of time a CFA should be expected to stay after their initial training, few CFAs (6.5%) and no sponsor reps considered one year or less to be a reasonable expectation (Figure 13). The normative answers for both groups were between 1-2 years or 3-4 years. Interestingly, about one in five CFAs felt that five years or more would be reasonable. Strategies used by the sponsors to keep CFA volunteers involved and motivated included lots of contact and communication through personal one-on-one connection; updates, recognition activities and good support. Two people also mentioned the importance of empowering volunteers and involving them in the decision-making process.

Figure 13. CFA and sponsor opinions of expected duration of CFA involvement after initial training.

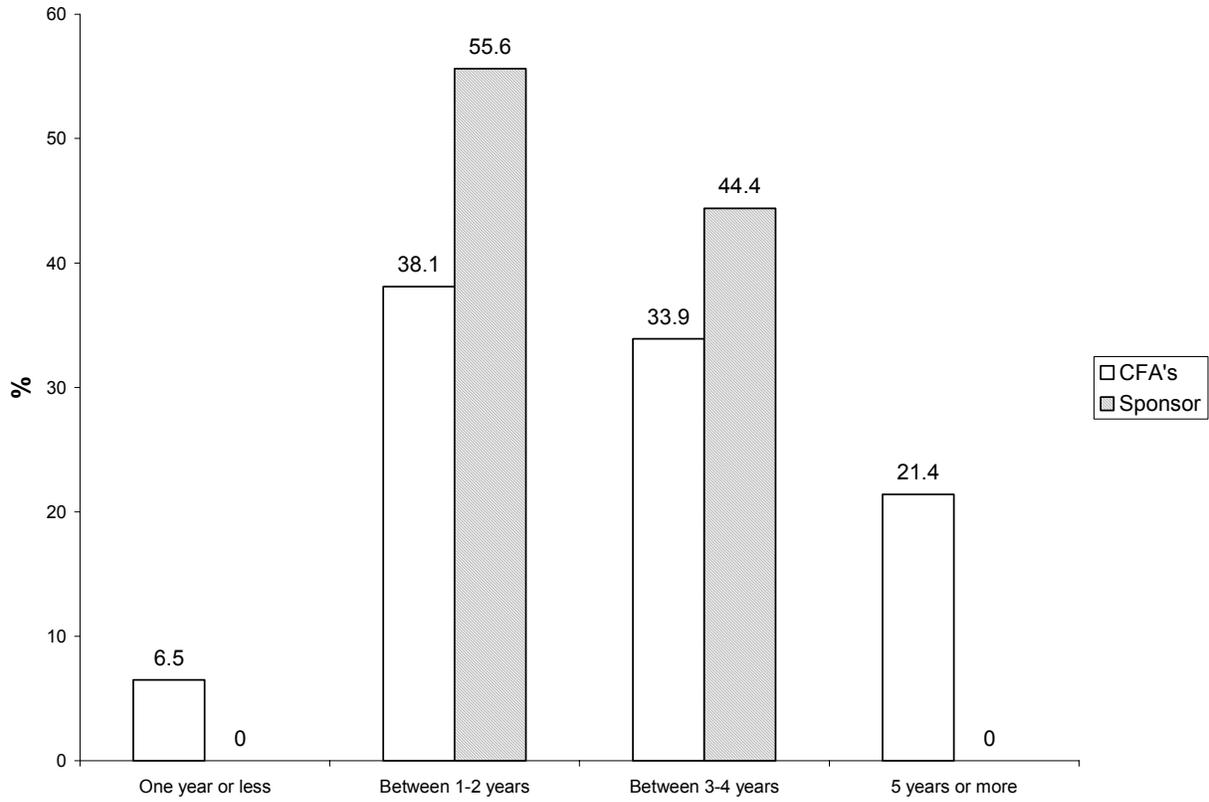
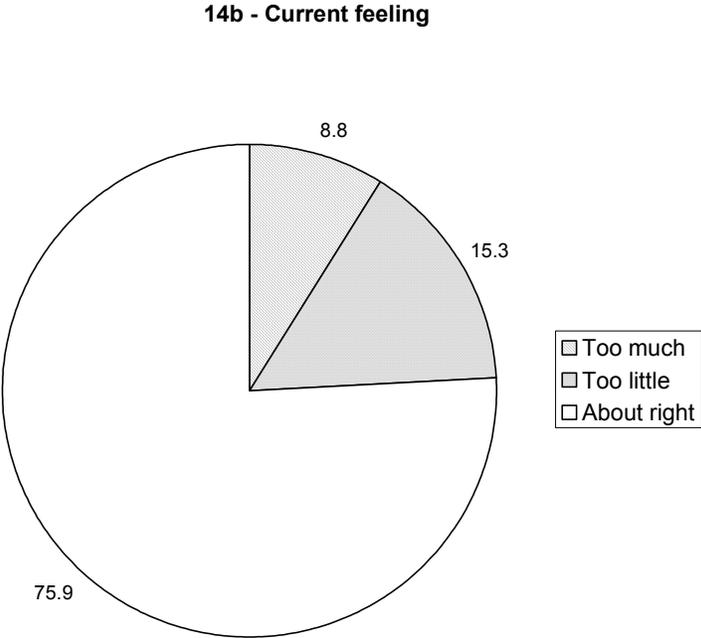
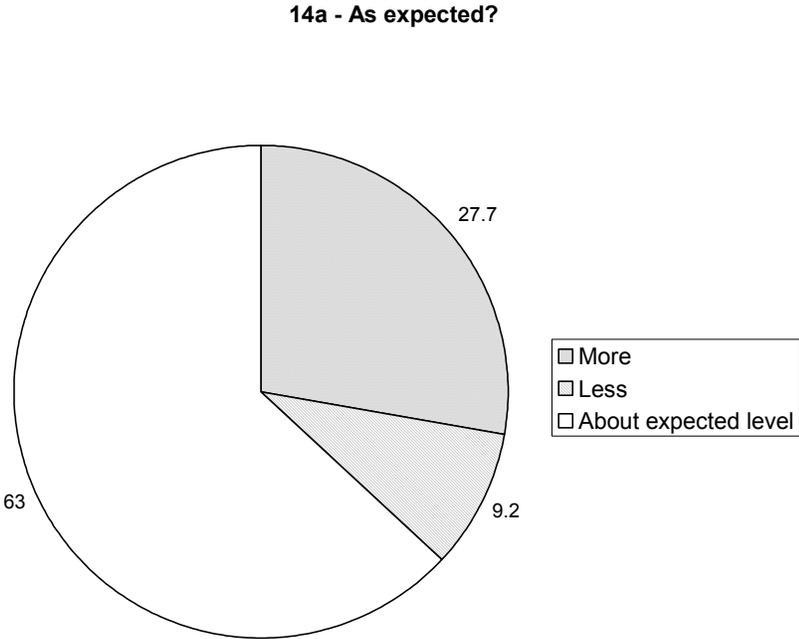


Figure 14. CFA perception of time and work commitment to the program.



One thing that may result in volunteer dissatisfaction is the mismatch between initial CFA expectations and the eventual commitment. These data are presented in Figures 14a and 14b. The majority of CFAs (74.4%) felt it was clear at the outset how much time and work would be involved. However, the remaining 25.6% represents a sizeable minority. Similarly about two-thirds (63.0%) found the time and work involved to be about what was expected, and 27.7% found it to be more than expected and 9.2% less. Despite this mismatch for about a quarter of the responding CFAs, only 8.8% felt their current time commitment was “too much” (see figure 14b). The large majority (75.9%) felt it was about right and, interestingly, 15.3% felt it was too little. These results must be interpreted cautiously since those CFAs for whom the commitment was too much for them might already have left the program.

Attrition:

Both CFAs and sponsor representatives were asked to rank order among three reasons why CFAs leave the program: more work than expected; move on to other things; life circumstances change. They were also given the opportunity to cite other factors. Table 7 and 8 show that both CFAs and sponsor reps felt that changing life circumstances were the most important factor, followed by the CFAs just moving on to other things and, lastly, the work being more than expected. This seems to suggest that the CFAs don't really think it is too much commitment and are prepared to do the work if they are organized, supported and valued. A wide range of other reasons were also given for leaving the program including: lack of interesting placements; lack of motivation/commitment; poor organization or support turnover in coordinator; a conflicting points of view, poor communication, poor recognition, or conflict in the group; boring meetings; placement not what was expected or too few/too many. Other personal factors were also cited such as lack of confidence and taking the course for personal benefit or to further career.

Table 7. CFA rankings of the reasons CFA's leave the program.

	Rankings			Ranked Score ¹
	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Life circumstances change	99	41	14	393
Move on to other things	31	124	48	265
More than expected	57	82	61	200

¹ Rank of 1 is scored 3, 2=2 and 3=1

Table 8. Sponsor rankings of the reasons CFAs leave the program.

	Rankings			Ranked Score ¹
	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Life circumstances change	16	2	1	51
Move on to other things	1	12	5	32
More than expected	1	5	9	22

¹ Rank of 1 is scored 3, 2=2 and 3=1

Table 9. Sponsor rankings of the reasons CFAs stay with the program.

	Rankings				Ranked Score
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	
Work is important to them	11	4	2	-	60
Enjoy connection to group	4	5	5	4	45
Skills being learned	2	4	6	5	37
Personal growth	1	4	5	7	33

Rank of 1 is scored 4, 2=3, 3=2 and 4=1.

Table 9 gives the sponsor rankings for the reason CFAs stay with the program. While the proximity of the rankings suggests all the reasons being ranked are important, the one that emerged with the top ranking was that the CFA work is “important to them”. This was followed by “enjoy connecting to the group”, “skills being learned” and “personal growth”. The CFA perspective on the same question is provided in Figure 15, where the CFA ratings for each of several factors are summarized. Clearly a range of motivating factors are important, in particular the personal sense of satisfaction (79.7% very important), and feelings about impact they are having (70.3% very important). However, the combined ratings of “very” and “somewhat important” for all the factors listed attest to their motivating influence on CFAs to stay with the program. Several other factors were also mentioned by many respondents (n=34) and included such things as the community contacts; just helping people, and the community; fun and “keeps the brain working”; experience working with a team, personal growth and dedication; and improved employment opportunities.

When asked about the level of volunteer attrition from their program both the CFAs and sponsors gave varied opinions (Figure 16). In general, the CFAs perceived the level of attrition as being higher than did the sponsor reps (e.g. 19% of CFAs considering it “very high” compared to 5.6% of sponsors). This may reflect different expectations and experience (i.e. managing versus being a volunteer). There was a tendency for CFAs participating in programs which were in operation for 5 years or more to report “low” or “moderate” levels of attrition. This trend was not reflected in the responses from the sponsor reps.

Figure 15. CFA ratings of importance of various factors in staying with the program.

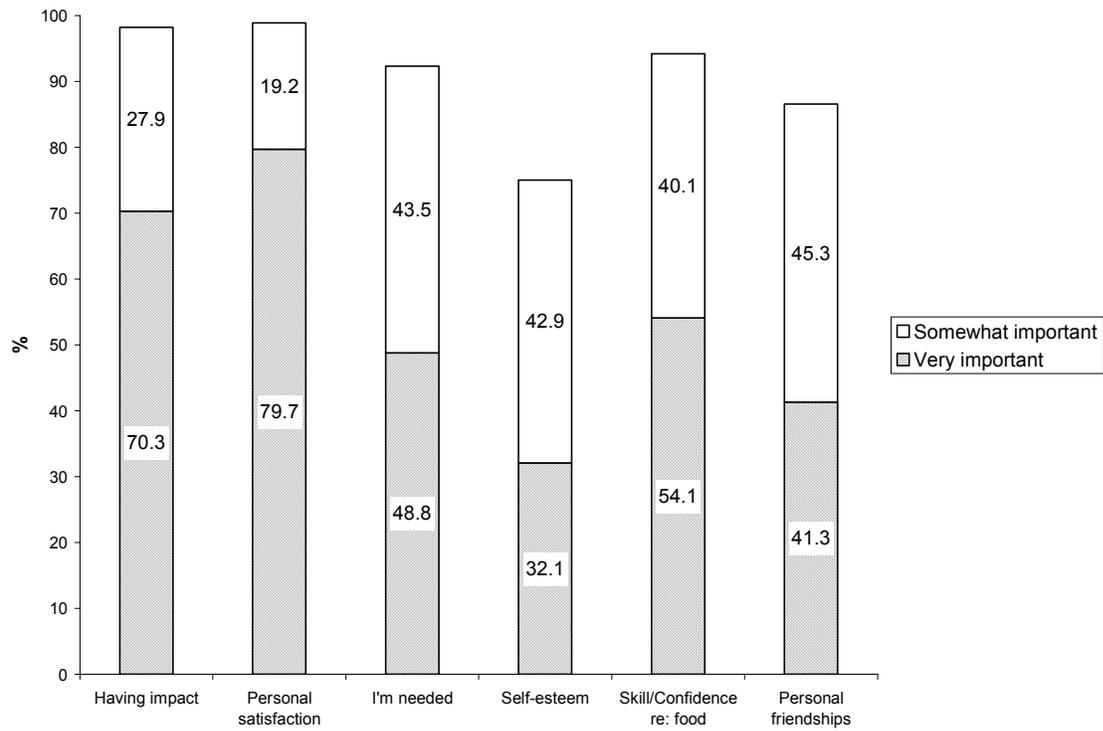
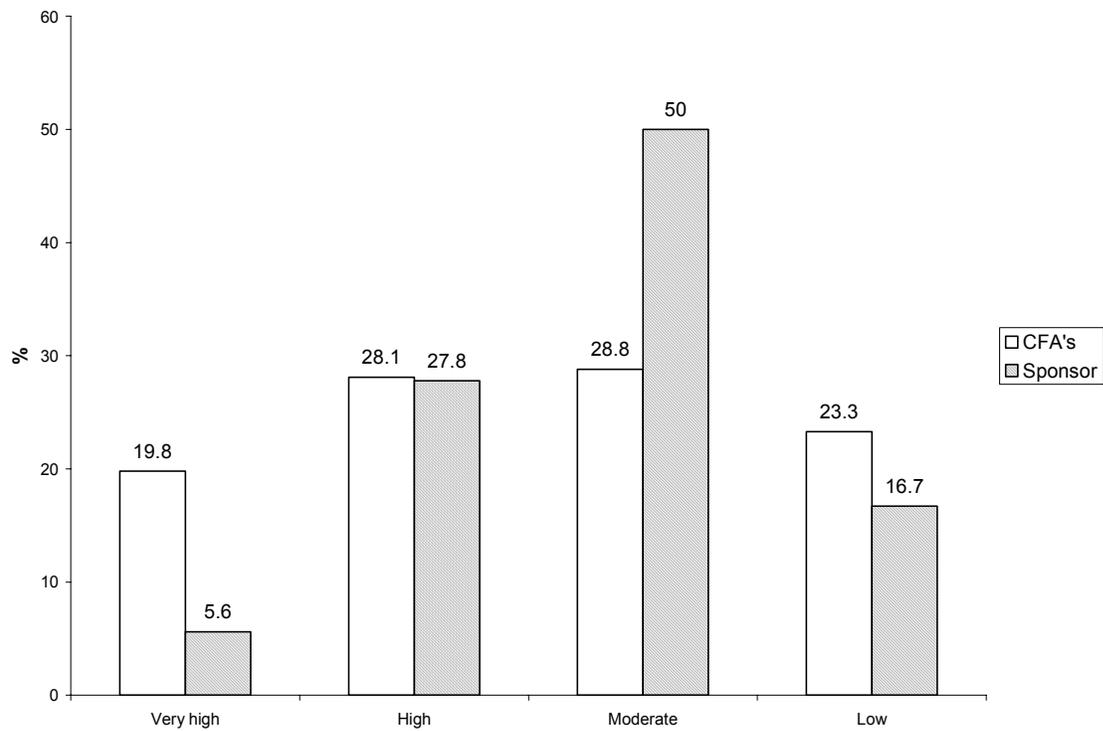


Figure 16. CFA and sponsor ratings of program attrition.



The CFAs themselves voiced several concerns about the effect of attrition on the program with 128 of the respondents (71.5%) expressing a view on the topic. A small number commented on the waste of resources that this represented and suggested charging a training fee which would be recoverable in stages. The most common concern was the effect on the workload of the remaining CFAs and the related loss of efficiency and increased pressure (57%). These concerns were also closely associated with a concern about the morale of those still with the program (12.5%).

“there are few people to handle the requests. There is less diversity in the group”

“the rest of us feel increased pressure to do more placements”

“unable to meet demand. The CFAs that are left consider leaving as well”

“dwindling numbers affect group morale -- core group are more active”

A small number commented on the effect of attrition on the meetings and noted that the meetings were less interesting.

“Discouraging when so few, if any, attend the regular meetings”

Finally, a small number of those providing comments (14.1%) spoke of the minimal impact on their program, that they were able to carry on, or that attrition seemed to weed out the people less interested or committed.

“People that left were not able to give any time to the program”

“A certain amount of attrition is expected. I think there is still a good number of CFAs who are active”

“We have a great group. People have left due to family circumstances and life issues, therefore everyone respects and understands”

Sponsor reps also commented on the potential effect of attrition on their program. Eight of the 18 (44.4%) spoke of the difficulty in meeting requests and the need to become more selective in placements. Seven reps or 38.9% commented on the negative impacts on such things as morale, workload, efficiency and also getting help with program management. One respondent cited unspecified difficulties. Four of the 18 sponsor reps (22.2%) felt that the impact was either minimal or manageable at this time.

“Decreases motivation of other volunteers. Difficult to fill requests”

“Small group - harder to meet requests, group cohesion, less expertise, social connections, less energy to administer the program”

“Within one year of graduating our second group, attrition was high but in the last two years it has not. The group has gelled nicely and attrition is low”

Finally, Figures 17 and 18 show the various ways used to keep the sponsor connected with CFAs and to facilitate connection between the CFAs themselves. Both CFAs and sponsors most frequently reported regular meetings (91.6% and 100%, respectively). Several other strategies were also used, however, and informal gatherings and social events in particular. Other strategies included phone and email contact and a mentoring program. Interestingly, the data with respect to a local newsletter suggest different perceptions among the CFAs and sponsor as to its connecting role. Whereas sponsors viewed it largely as a vehicle for them to keep connected to the CFAs, the CFAs were more likely to value its potential for keeping them connected with each other. CFAs in rural areas were less likely to report regular meetings, newsletters and social events as a means whereby their sponsor keeps in touch. They were also less likely to report social events as a means for the CFAs to keep in touch with each other.

When asked if there was a process by which volunteers leaving the program can explain their reasons for ending their participation, 77.8% of the sponsor reps indicated there was a process in place. This was almost always done with a face-to-face or telephone exit interview. One respondent commented on the difficulty enforcing this process since CFAs often go on a leave of absence and never return.

Figure 17. CFA and sponsor reports concerning how sponsor keeps in touch with CFAs.

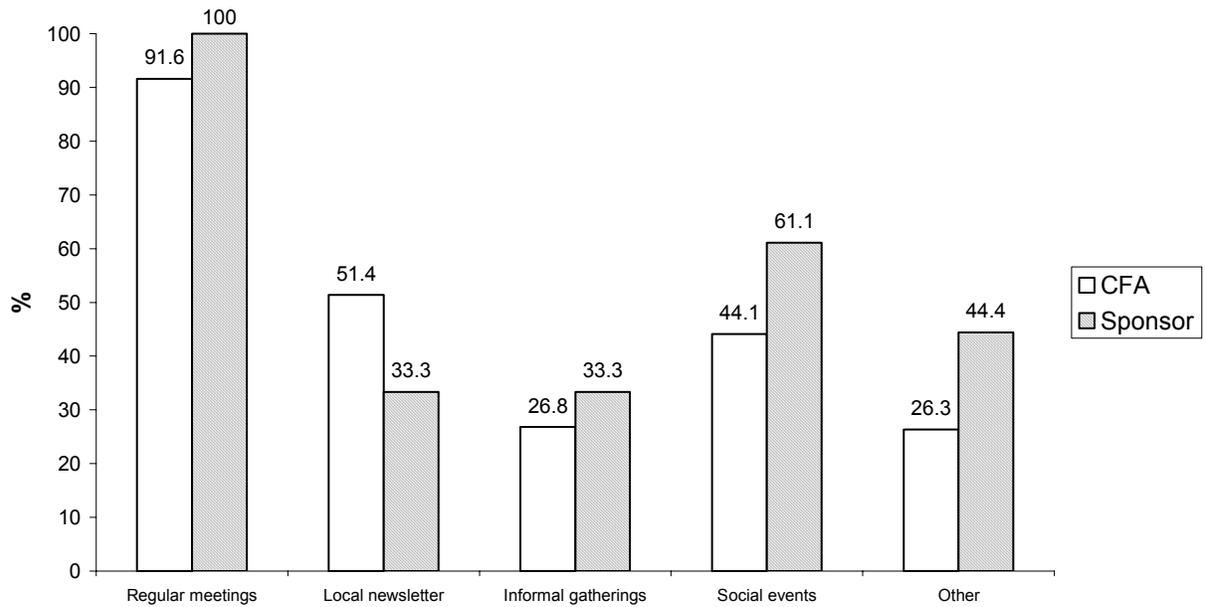
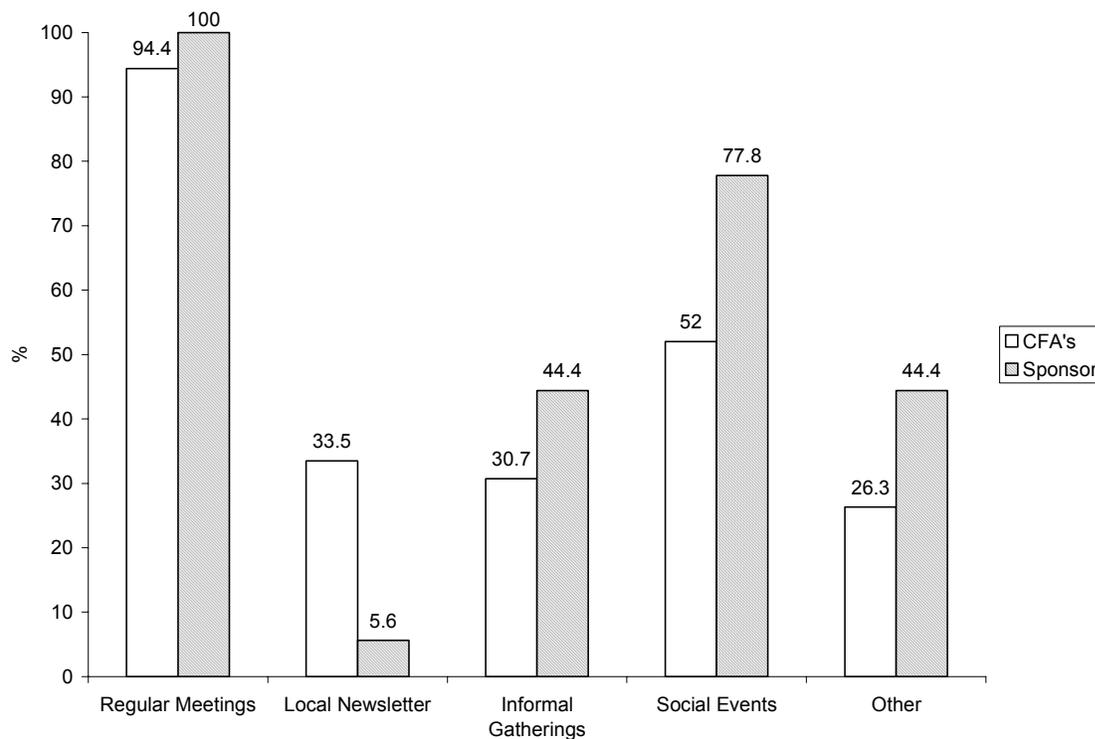


Figure 18. CFA and sponsor reports of activities to keep volunteers connected with each other.



3.5 Community Promotion and Involvement

In terms of whether they promote the CFA program in the community to generate service requests, four programs or 22.2% of sponsor representative responded “yes” and the majority (10 programs or 55.6%) indicated “sometimes”. In general, the programs reported gauging the nature and level of promotional activities against the availability of CFAs to fulfill resulting requests. Six of the 15 programs were not currently doing any promotion either due to low numbers of CFAs at present or that they were operating at “capacity”. The other programs used a wide variety of promotional activities including flyers at presentations, media work, public service announcements, pamphlets, word of mouth, mail outs to local agencies, CFA business cards and promotion by staff of the sponsoring organization.

In terms of a formal Coordinating Committee to help support the CFA program, 13 or 72.2% of programs had such a committee, whereas the remainder did not. The nature and involvement of the community on the committee was variable, and usually limited. Many respondents commented more on the involvement of the CFAs themselves on the committee, or representatives from the Health Unit (e.g. Dietitian). At one end of the spectrum there were instances of no community representation and, at the other end, new committees being developed with quite broad stakeholder involvement, including new and existing CFAs.

Finally, when asked about community partnerships with the CFA program, 15 reps or 88.2% of sponsors cited various partnerships within their organization (e.g. Collective Kitchens; Healthy Babies/Healthy Children; Prenatal Health Fairs; workplace committee; Heart Beat and other Heart Health activities; Cooking Clubs; school programs; Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Project) and 13 or 72.2% cited partnerships with other health promotion programs in the community (e.g. Family Program; Health Unit programs, rural fairs, Healthy Living Coalition; YMCA/YWCA; local hospitals and schools).

3.6 Evaluation and Feedback Activities

The sponsor reps were first asked to briefly describe their approach to the evaluation of their CFA program. Ten reps (55.5%) noted the informal nature of their evaluation activities, relying, for example, on CFA discussion at meetings or call-backs for repeat presentation. Five programs (27.7%) mentioned a process for assessing CFA satisfaction and two described more formal evaluation activities but focused on “customer” satisfaction and service delivery statistics. Five responded noting the lack of any meaningful evaluation activity and/or the need to do more.

“Discussions that take place at the monthly meetings. Two CFAs are also on the coordinating committee.”

“No, I have wanted to do some individual goal setting at start of each year and monitor at end of year and during year. So far we have not implemented.”

The sponsor reps were also asked to respond in more detail about the use of feedback forms with people attending presentations, displays, etc. A small number of respondents (one or 5.9%) noted their routine customer satisfaction forms (Figure 19). Otherwise a range of forms were noted as “sometimes used” (e.g. satisfaction and learning around 50%); but the percentages are still very low concerning feedback on how they may *use* the information, or with what *results*. This may be understandable when you factor in time commitments and the knowledge and skill level concerning evaluation.

When asked directly about the process for getting feedback from the CFAs themselves concerning their satisfaction and personal goal achievement, this was noted as a formal process by five reps (27.8%), and an informal process by nine (55.6%) (Figure 20). Somewhat smaller percentages were, however, noted by the CFAs themselves (18% formal and 32.9% informal). CFAs in largely rural areas were less likely to report any formal evaluation processes.

Figure 19. Sponsor report of the use of feedback forms with people attending presentations.

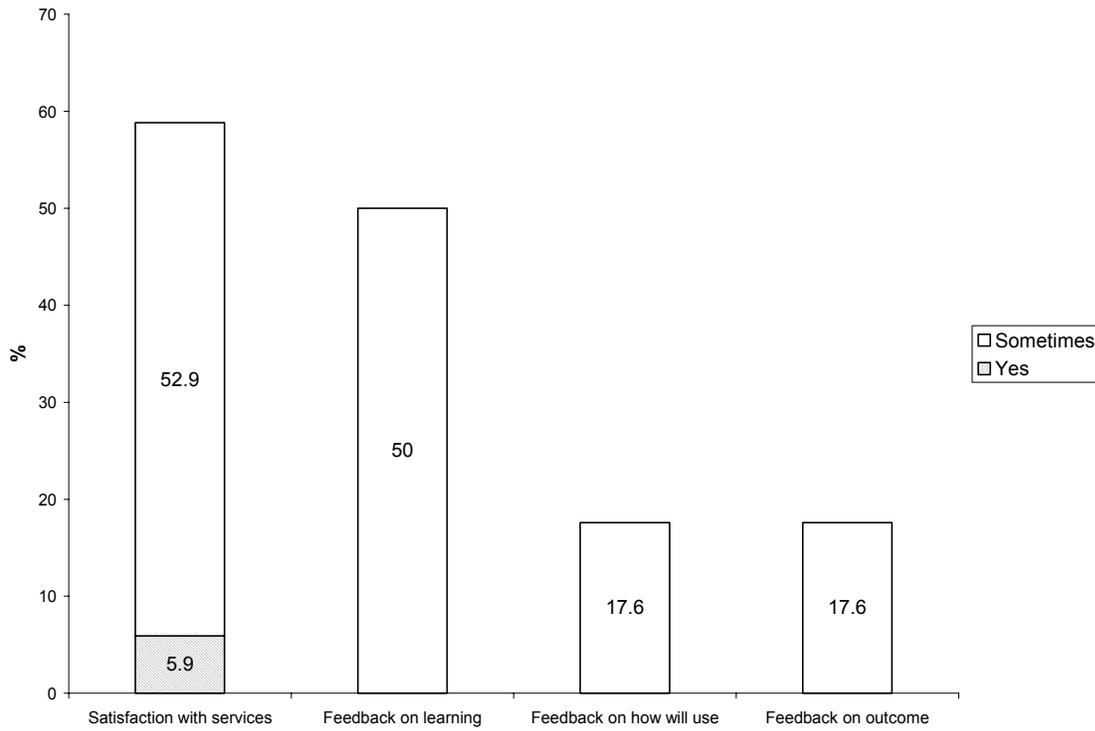
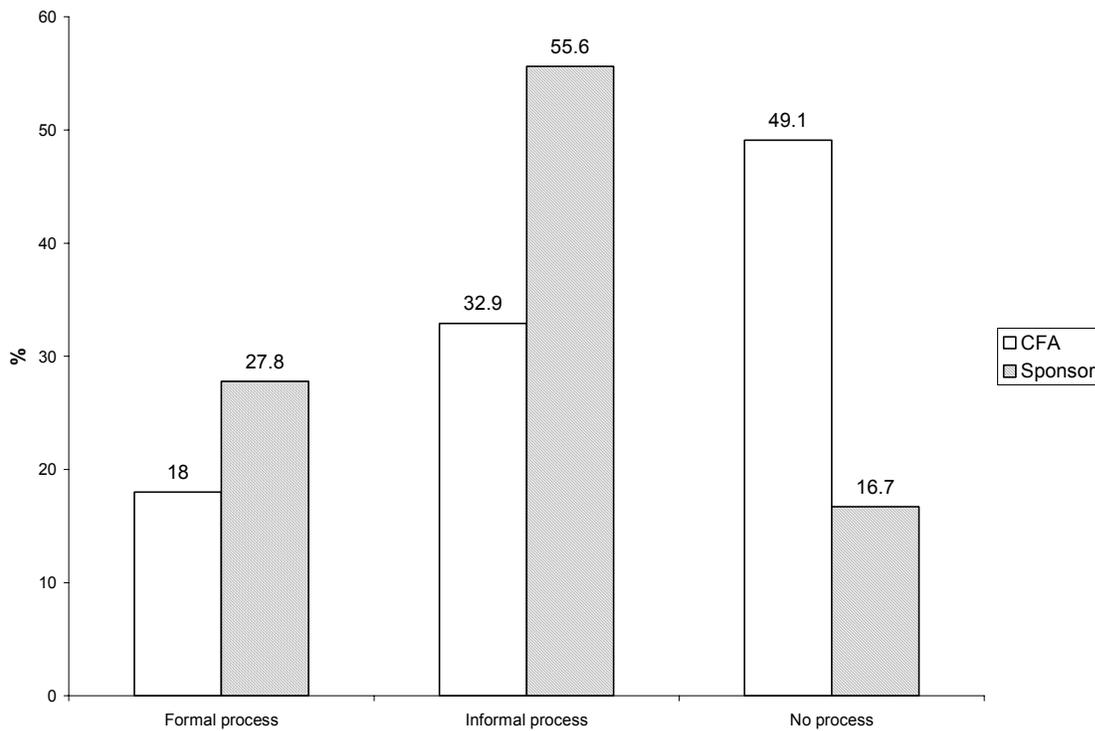


Figure 20. CFA and sponsor report on process for assessing CFA satisfaction and personal goal achievement.



In further describing the process of getting feedback from CFAs, 12 sponsor reps (66.6 %) mentioned group discussions; 11 or 61.1% mentioned a one-on-one process (often in addition to groups), and seven or 38.9% mentioned their formal feedback questionnaire. One person mentioned that there was no such process in place.

This same pattern emerged from the open-ended feedback from the CFAs themselves (n = 79). Many cited either an informal process of discussion and communication with their Coordinator (39.2%), or a more formal one-on-one review process (16.5%). The group discussion was mentioned by 41.8% and about a third (30.5%) noted a specific form or survey for this purpose, including placement feedback forms.

“Our Coordinator is available to talk to and we can easily bring things up at meetings”

“Survey was done asking us if we were satisfied with our training and current support and resources”

Finally, self-reported measures of impact and utilization of knowledge and materials from training are summarized in Figures 21 and 22 and Table 10. While the CFAs reported a reasonably high level of preparedness following the training (64.4% very prepared; 31.6% somewhat prepared), it could be argued that after an intensive year-long training process these numbers could quite reasonably be higher. It suggests perhaps the need for additional adjustments to the training and ongoing monitoring of impact.

The same could be said for the perceived impact on knowledge and skills regarding nutrition and food impact. About two-thirds (66.7%) reported a “big impact” while about one-third (31.1%) reported “some impact. (Figure 22). In terms of using the knowledge and materials from the training, the Nutrition section of Phase 1 was the most frequently used (79.4% “used a lot”) followed by Food Safety (66.7% “used a lot”).

Again these numbers seem somewhat modest given the intensity of training and the nature of the work in the community. The results concerning Phase 2: Presentation

Skills and Community Training are lower still. However, 82.3% of respondents reported using the knowledge and materials from the overall.

Feedback was also sought from the sponsor representatives on how the provincial tracking forms could be made easier to use. The most frequent comments (n=8) spoke to the perceived redundancy and repetition in the format and suggested less confusing and less detailed formats. Three people suggested the forms, or revised forms be put on line. One person noted that most of the information was not relevant locally and another suggested that the problem was in collecting the data and not the form itself.

Figure 21. CFAs self-report on level of preparedness.

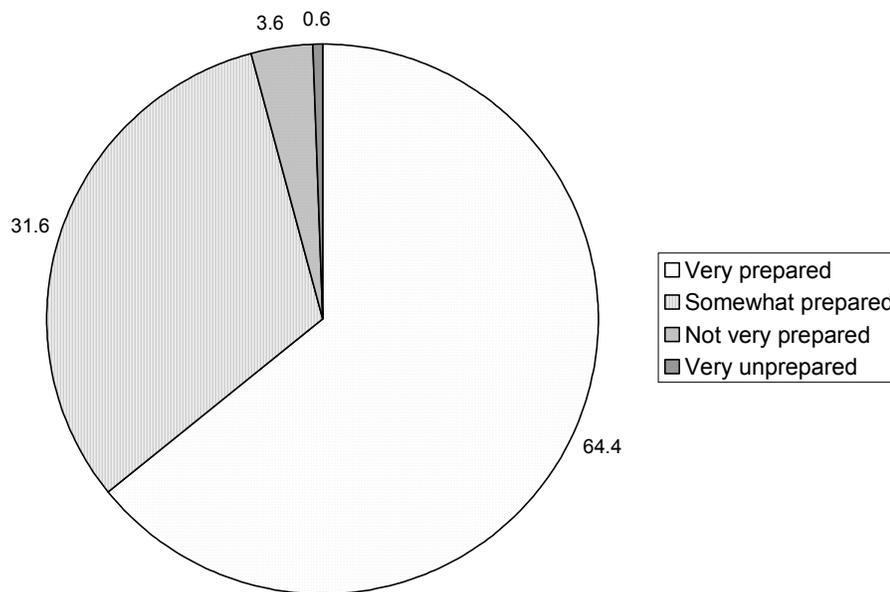


Figure 22. CFAs self-report on level of impact on their knowledge and skills regarding nutrition and food handling.

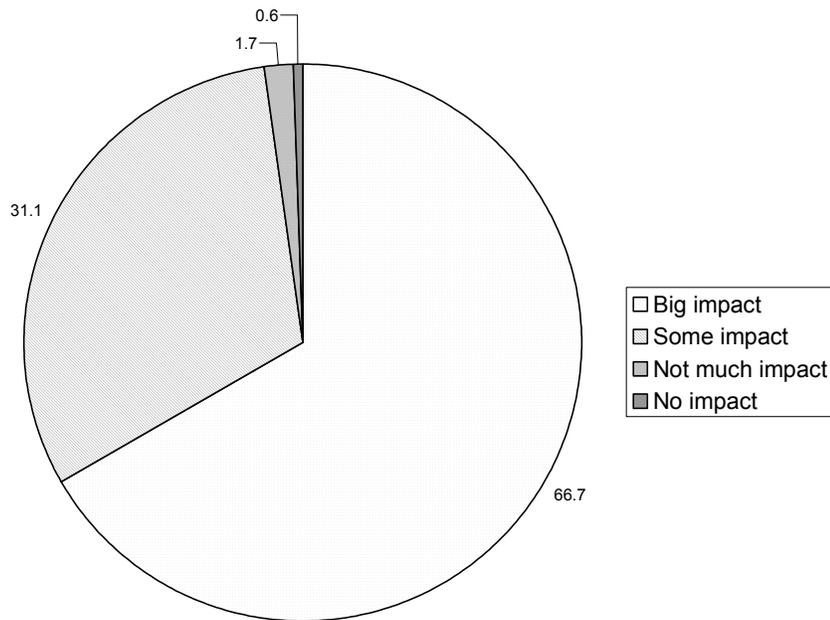


Table 10. CFAs self-reported utilization of knowledge and materials from training.

	Have used a lot (%)	Have used somewhat (%)	Haven't used as yet (%)
<i>Sequencing of the sessions</i>			
Phase #1: Classroom Training, Nutrition	79.4	18.3	2.3
Phase #1: Classroom Training, Food Safety	66.7	29.9	3.4
Phase #2: Classroom Training, Presentation Skills	52.9	44.8	2.3
Phase #3: Community Training	38.7	47.1	14.2
Overall Program	82.3	17.7	-

4.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To date the funding support for the CFA program has come primarily from OMAFRA and the MOHLTC has also supported the program since its inception in 1992. The administration of the program was transferred to the NRC in 2001 and this evaluation was intended to help transition the program fully to the NRC when the OMAFRA connection ends. In particular it was anticipated that the evaluation would help identify critical elements of program design and delivery to be preserved in this transitional period and to provide guidance with respect to any changes needed to support sustainability. Consistent with the results of the evaluation planning process this final section of the report is organized in four areas:

- program support;
- training;
- recruitment and retention of volunteers;
- program evaluation and monitoring.

The issues highlighted for discussion and the specific recommendations that are offered are for the consideration of the NRC manager and staff as the provincial sponsors of the program. It is anticipated, however, that the findings will also stimulate local discussion among CFAs and their sponsor, and contribute to ongoing program enhancement at the local level. To that end local sponsor representatives and CFAs may find particular issues “ring true” for them and use the provincial findings as a vehicle for internal dialogue and ongoing program improvements. The provincial results may be particularly helpful with respect to discussing issues related to recognition and retention of volunteers and outcomes associated both with CFA training and community presentations.

Support-related issues and recommendations:

The sponsor survey showed that a total of \$82,505 was dedicated last year on a provincial basis to the local CFA programs, with almost two-thirds coming from the local sponsors. This reflects only a portion on the sponsor support being directed toward the program since an additional \$286,167 was also tallied for in-kind FTE's. There are also many types of additional in-kind supports (e.g. administrative support, office/meeting space) not captured in the present evaluation. Although the amount of in-kind personnel and other support provided by the local sponsor is highly variable it represents a significant contribution which needs be acknowledged up front in any discussion of program support. Also, when considered at a provincial level, the total support to the CFA in financial terms is considerably higher since one would also include dedicated funding which pays for a provincial Program Coordinator, resource development, networking and the local funding (estimated \$150,000 per year). The time, enthusiasm and in many instances, direct costs for travel and photocopying, from the large group of CFA volunteers also represent a very significant support being given to the provincial program as a whole.

Considerations of the cost/benefit of a health or health promotion program must always reflect the perspective from which the costs and benefits are determined. While the evaluation data do not allow for a direct determination of program benefits, and certainly not in financial terms, the cost of this program from the perspective of a government funder is not extremely high in comparison to its potential benefits, given the reach of the program across the province and many communities. In addition, there are several indicators in the evaluation data that many CFA programs are unable to meet the demand for their services and this suggests a high level of customer satisfaction and possibly other positive nutrition-related outcomes. Thus, while more outcome data are clearly needed, there is some indirect evidence of good value being achieved for the financial and other resources which are supporting the program at the present time.

There was a very high level of agreement that having a paid coordinator was an essential aspect of program sustainability, and the CFAs themselves clearly placed a

high value on the role of the coordinator with respect to placements, keeping them connected and other supports. While only about half the sponsor reps felt provincial funding was needed for a paid coordinator this may well reflect their perceptions of limited feasibility of provincial funding for this purpose. Further, many programs, particularly the more mature and successful sites, have found the resources to pay for a full or part time coordinator. There are also several examples where the CFA responsibilities have become part of a paid staff person's job and not a separate person who is the CFA coordinator. In light of these data it is recommended that:

- *the Nutrition Resource Centre work with, encourage and support to the extent possible, local sponsor organizations to hire a full-time or part-time paid CFA coordinator (or to incorporate the coordinator duties into an already existing staff position.)*

Overall, the sponsor representatives and a majority of CFAs, reported few barriers to accessing materials for displays, presentations and other activities. However, for some CFAs this presented significant challenges with common issues cited such as distance to travel, office hours of the building or not enough materials on hand. In many instances, the CFAs are paying significant travel or photocopy costs, or doing their own Internet searches and presentation development. From a provincial perspective this presents somewhat of a challenge. On the one hand, the dedication and creativity of the CFAs in overcoming challenges related to accessing materials must be praised. On the other hand, if a sponsor organization and/or a local coordinator are struggling with management or other issues this may leave the CFA without sufficient support and monitoring of presentation content. Thus, it is recommended that:

- *the Nutrition Resource Centre engage in a process of review and discussion with the sponsor organizations to ensure sufficient access of materials and overall support to CFAs, including monitoring of individually prepared presentation materials.*

Two related findings were the high level of support for provincial and centrally distributed presentation kits and the high (but not universal) level of Internet access.

These findings suggest:

- *the Nutrition Resource Centre continue with their production and distribution of two presentation kits per year and that distribution be primarily by electronic format (with mailed hard copy as a back-up for those requesting this option, for example, due to concerns about printing and collating time/costs).*

Training-related issues and recommendations:

Considerable feedback was obtained from the sponsor representatives and the CFAs concerning the duration, sequencing and content of the training program. Further, almost all the sponsor reps reported either minor or major changes had already been made to the provincial training program. When considered in light of some of the more specific feedback obtained, the data suggest some changes to the training program (but not drastic changes) would be appropriate. The local experience to date would be invaluable in this revision process. Specifically, it is suggested that:

- *the NRC, in collaboration with local sponsors and CFAs, revise the provincial training package with particular attention to blending Phases I and II to build in more presentation experience in the early stage of training; use other strategies such as video taping or “buddying” with experienced CFAs to gain more experience and confidence in making presentations; and trim content in selected areas that are less frequently used following training (e.g. canning);*

In addition, it is recommended that:

- *the NRC formally examine the pros and cons of adding the Safe Food Handlers Course into the CFA training program.*

The questions about training the CFAs also touched on the perceived role of CFA in the community, how it fits with other nutrition-related activities in the community and familiarity with liability issues. Few CFAs cited major concerns regarding the fit of the CFA role in the community. However, about one in five expressed some “minor concerns” in this area and this should stimulate discussion at the local level to address any such concerns in their site. In particular, the local sponsor and CFAs should use these evaluation data to address any local concerns about the CFAs being asked to take on more than might be reasonably expected for a volunteer, and what they feel should remain the responsibility of a paid dietitian or public health nurse. Similarly about half the CFA participants were “somewhat” or “not at all” familiar with liability issues. Thus it is recommended that:

- *the NRC examine ways to incorporate more community content into the provincial training program, for example, other nutrition-related activities and provincial programs; and*
- *the NRC examine ways to incorporate more content related to liability issues into the provincial training program.*

Recruitment and retention-related issues and recommendations:

It is critical that a provincial program based on a volunteer model give a very high priority to the processes of recruitment and any issues or concerns with respect to volunteer retention. It was noteworthy that only about one in three sponsor organizations had a formal CFA volunteer management plan and, even though about two-thirds had written policies and procedures for CFAs to follow, it was not clear whether these were oriented to CFA volunteers specifically. Given this information, and the previously cited findings with respect to liability issues, it is recommended that:

- *the NRC explore additional ways to support local sponsors in developing written volunteer management plans and policies and procedures for their CFA program. This should include a process of sharing existing materials from those sites with good examples to offer.*

Similarly with respect to recruitment strategies it is recommended that:

- the NRC explore ways to encourage the sharing of successful recruitment strategies across local sites.

In terms of CFA recognition there appears to be some disparity in the CFA and sponsor perceptions of the extent to which sponsors are recognizing the contributions of the volunteers. While all but two sponsor reps reported engaging in specific volunteer recognition activities, about one in five CFAs were unsure as to what their sponsor did in this regard. Further, about 15% felt “somewhat” or “very” unrecognized. Thus, while sites may think they are doing enough to recognize their volunteers, not all CFAs are feeling that these efforts meet their expectations. This is an important disparity in perception that may be contributing to the high attrition in some programs. Local sites are encouraged to use these findings to open a dialogue about this potential disparity in their organization.

There is no question that many sponsor reps and the CFAs perceive volunteer attrition as being too high and influencing the program in many negative ways. Further, although the majority of CFAs feel the time and work commitment are “about what they expected” and that the current amount of CFA work is “about right”, a substantial minority are feeling over extended and doing more than expected (9.2% saying it is more than expected and 15.3% saying the current level of time and commitment is too much work). In some sites this may be setting up a cycle of CFA drop-out and a resulting burden on those who stay with the program. This was supported to some extent by the open-ended feedback. The feedback did also indicate, however, that some sites are better prepared than others in keeping attrition at a minimum and to manage its impact.

Taken together, the results suggest that local sites review their level of attrition, discuss the potential impact with current CFAs and develop strategies that will maximize CFA

retention and program morale. At a provincial level it is important that the level and impact of attrition be acknowledged and that:

- *the NRC consider ways to respond to this concern by supporting effective screening and recruitment strategies as well as strategies for managing the negative consequences of attrition.*

Evaluation issues and recommendations:

The survey results offer considerable insight into the current status of evaluation and quality improvement activities at the local level. Overall, the results suggest there is considerable room for improvement in the frequency and quality of such activities. While the sponsor reps and CFAs report a considerable degree of informal feed back activities and indicators (e.g. discussion at meetings; call-backs for repeat presentations) more formal evaluation activities were rarely cited. There was very little reported use of customer satisfaction forms, or feedback on how the recipients of CFA services may either use the information or with what results. As a provincially funded program there seems to be a disparity between the receipt of public funding and the low commitment to program evaluation, in particular outcome assessment.

Finally, there also seems to be considerable room for improvement in local processes for assessing CFA satisfaction and personal goal achievement - this being predominantly an informal process across the province as a whole. More formally assessing these CFA outcomes would seem to be particularly critical given the high level of attrition in some sites and its negative impact on the local program.

Thus it is recommended that:

- *the NRC work with the local sponsor organizations to improve the quality of local evaluation and feedback activities consistent with the provincial mandate and available resources; including more formalized assessment of CFA satisfaction and goal achievement.*

Conclusion:

This evaluation has highlighted several areas for potential improvements provincially, as well as key items for follow-up discussion between both the NRC and the various sponsor organizations, and between the sponsors and their CFAs. The evaluation has also highlighted many positive aspects of the program, including but not limited to, the high commitment from a large number of CFA volunteers and their coordinators who often face many challenges in program implementation. In summary, this is clearly not a program “in crisis” at a provincial level. However, the data suggest some challenges for provincial implementation and management, and that there are some sites where the CFAs probably need more support. Finally, the CFA program as a whole would be better positioned provincially if it had more evaluation data on service recipient outcomes in order to better demonstrate the net value of the program activities.

5.0

Appendix A

Figure 1. Logic model for Community Food Advisor Program (generic)

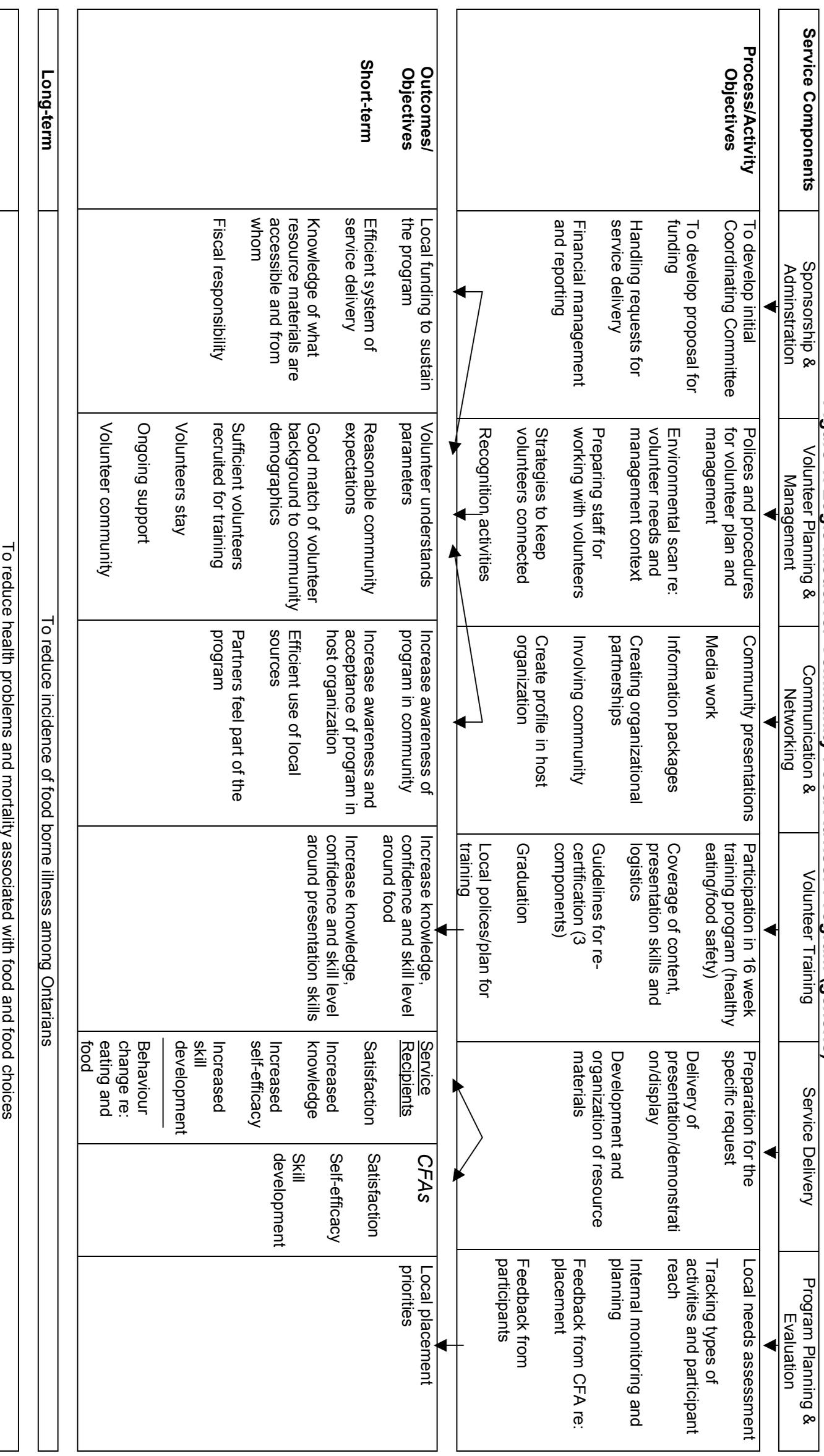


Figure 2. Logic Model for Management of Community Food Advisor Program by the Nutrition Resource Centre

