

# Forming a Habit of Measuring and Monitoring

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**Monitoring the work of a food policy council, from capturing internal organisational processes to tracking advocacy activities and policy outcomes, is important for understanding whether efforts are advancing change toward more resilient, equitable and healthy food systems. Measuring progress is also important to demonstrate the value of a collaborative, multi-sector stakeholder model.**

The work of FPCs is multifaceted and extends beyond food systems change. The food system is the lens through which FPCs focus on advocacy and civic engagement, networking and partnership development, equity and inclusivity, and education and community readiness. Although these functions might not rise to the top of the list of variables to monitor, they are significant because FPCs contribute a lot more to the greater community.

Still, according to the 2018 census of FPCs in the US and Canada, only 5 % of councils reported monitoring and evaluation as one of their top three organisational priorities. While not a priority, around 12 % of FPCs do have a method of evaluation (and even more have conducted a community food assessment although we do not have exact numbers). Several factors contribute to monitoring and evaluation not being a priority or even an activity of FPCs: young age of the council, knowledge about monitoring and evaluation, capacity and processes to

collect and track data, and funding for evaluation (8). We see from the 2018 census that as councils mature, there is a slight increase in prioritising monitoring and evaluation.

Assessment is one way for FPCs to form a baseline from which to measure their progress – and it does not have to be a burdensome task. Many FPCs are already doing some form of assessment through a process of collecting information about the infrastructure and needs of the current food system. There are also tools to help FPCs assess their organisational capacity, advocacy capacity and the policy landscape of a jurisdiction. The Food Policy Council Self-Assessment Tool is a publicly accessible survey to assess organisational capacity (leadership, formal structure, inclusivity), social capital (relationships, knowledge, credibility), and council effectiveness (synergy, impact). Another assessment tool is Get it Toolgether, which helps FPCs to reflect on their current advocacy performance and learn about opportunities to further work on food policy. Lastly, the food policy audit is a tool for food policy councils to inventory existing policies of a local jurisdiction related to the food system (9). The tool does not evaluate the policies, but it can help to inform the policy priority decisions of an FPC.

Collecting and tracking data can be done at any time, even during the formation of an FPC. Collecting data helps form the story, and sharing the data helps to tell the story. Sharing data and reporting on progress to funders, policymakers and the general public can build the credibility and validate the work of an FPC, even among its members.