

## Acting Together for Food Policy in Halifax

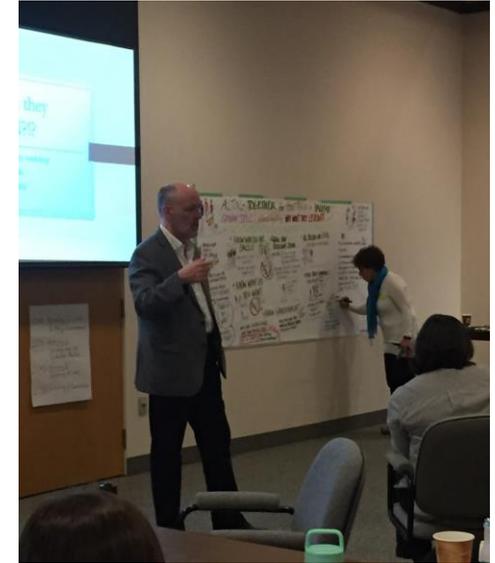
Oct. 17th, 2018

### Event Summary

In October, the Halifax and Chebucto West Community Health Boards and the [Halifax Food Policy Alliance](#) (HFPA), co-hosted *Acting Together for Food Policy*. The workshop brought together 25 stakeholders to learn how to influence policy and to identify policy priorities and opportunities to act together.

To kick off the event, Graham Steele provided an engaging and practical presentation on six key principles for engaging with politicians.

- **Principle #1: Know who you are** (as an individual, group or organization) and be able to clearly articulate that. Be on same page as other members of group.
- **Principle #2 Know what you want.** Don't be vague or come in with a long list. Be clear.
- **Principle #3 Know how government works.** Know the roles of different government staff and elected officials and who has influence over your issue.
- **Principle #4 Know how politicians think.** Consider how your issue can help or hurt the politician before meeting with them. You are always competing for a politician's time and attention and you need to get up higher on the priority list.
- **Principle #5 Find your champions** Some champions may not be the most senior staff. Find out who decision-makers listen to and consult (e.g., formal and informal advisors, relatives, friends & influential people.) It's even better if they have personal experience with issues.
- **Principle #6 Don't Give up!** Patience and persistence are key.

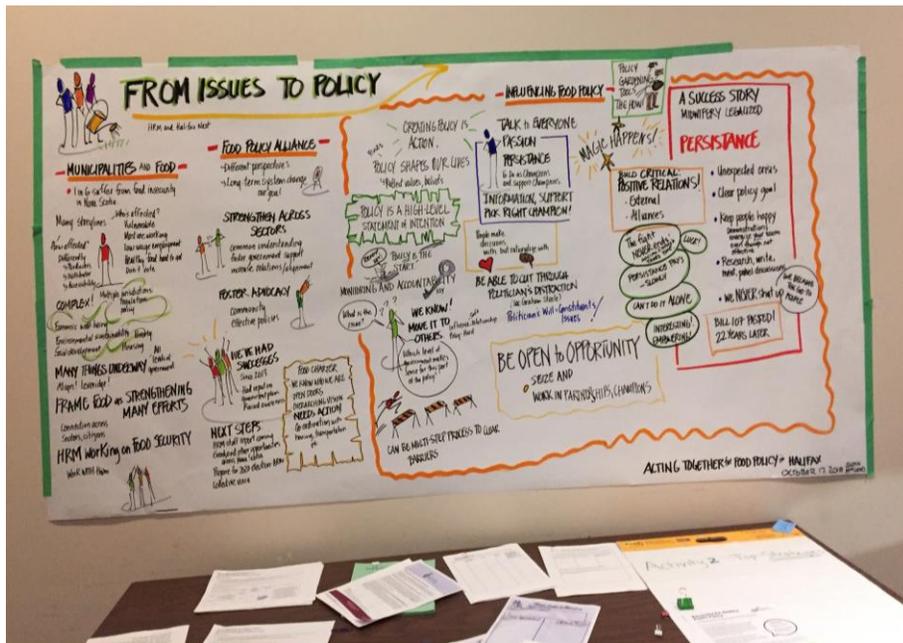


For more details see Graham's book : *The Effective Citizen: How to Make Politicians Work For You.*

Next, representatives of the Halifax Food Policy Alliance -- Satya Ramen (Ecology Action Centre), Aimee Gasparetto (Ecology Action Centre) and Madeleine Waddington (Public Health Central Zone, NS Health Authority) -- presented on the local food policy context in HRM, the role of a Food Charter and Action Plan, and an overview of key concepts and considerations for influencing policy. Jan Catano, Halifax Community Health Board volunteer, also shared a policy change success story to inspire participants that change is possible!

## Workshop Activities

Participants worked in small groups to develop policy goal statements with corresponding approaches and actions. Conversations focused on both policies to create supportive enabling environments (i.e., coordination, resources), as well as specific food policy issues (i.e., income and cost of living, urban agriculture). These goal statements and actions have the potential to inform a Strategic Food Action Plan for HRM and will be built upon in future conversations. Detailed notes can be found [here](#).



Following this, workshop participants collectively brainstormed approaches and tools to highlight food as key issue for the 2020 municipal election. The group also discussed strategies to ensure that diverse voices are heard. Detailed notes can be found [here](#).

## Successes and Areas for Improvement

Evaluation of the workshop showed that most participants had an improved understanding of how to develop policy goals, the importance of collaboration, and opportunities to bring community voice to policy work.

Evaluation comments also reinforced the complexity of policy and the challenge of moving from issues to solution-focused conversations within a short timeframe. These comments will be used to refine the facilitation of future workshops to ensure that facilitators are well prepared to host complex policy conversations.

## Next Steps

- The group identified a food security election primer for the 2020 municipal election as a key opportunity for future collaboration. The HFPA and CHBs are currently working to bring together workshop participants and other partners to co-create this.
- Planning is underway around other opportunities to engage other partners and stakeholders.