



**Division of Community
Engagement and Food Systems**

Just Food Systems Evaluation Framework

Report

Acknowledgements

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Acknowledgements | 1 |
| Authors | 2 |
| Introduction | 5 |
| Project Background | 8 |
| Urban Foodlands Case Study | 8 |
| Food Systems Planning Evaluation Framework(FSPEF)..... | 11 |
| Just Foods System Evaluation Framework Development | 12 |
| Literature Review | 13 |
| Analysis of Food System Evaluation Models | 13 |
| Selecting a Foundational Model | 16 |
| The Framework Structure | 17 |
| Integrating a Thematic Analysis of the Framework | 18 |
| Piloting and Refining the Framework | 20 |
| Pilot Workshops | 21 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| The Just Food System Evaluation Framework | 23 |
| Justice Dimension 1: Recognitional Justice | 24 |
| Justice Dimension 2: Procedural justice | 26 |
| Justice Dimension 3: Distributive justice | 27 |
| Using the Framework | 31 |
| A: Evaluate a policy, program, or intervention | 31 |
| B: Organizational audit and gap analysis | 32 |
| C: Measure community progress towards a just food system | 33 |
| Conclusions and Limitations | 34 |
| Limitations | 34 |
| Conclusion, implications and next steps | 35 |
| Appendix | 37 |
| Appendix A: Literary Review Search Terms | 37 |
| Appendix B: Literature Review | 38 |
| Appendix C: Comparative Analysis of Four Models of Food System Evaluation | 40 |
| References | 42 |

Introduction



In North America, socio-economically disadvantaged communities face greater health challenges due to the limited availability and quality of retail food environments, despite their outsized contribution to the retail food workforce (Kuhnlein, 2013).

Justice-focused evaluation frameworks are essential to highlight and address inequities in the food system. The availability of these frameworks can support the development of more justice-oriented food policies and programming, liberate alternative ways of knowing, and contribute to the creation of a more just and equitable society (Giombi & Stephens, 2022; Waapalaneexkweew & Dodge-Francis, 2018; Tribaldos & Kortetmäki, 2022).

The mainstream food system represents a complex and political system of trade-offs between social, environmental, and economic factors (Ruben et al., 2018; Glennie & Alkon, 2018). It is a socially constructed system that has evolved over time alongside and operating within oppressive systems, such as colonialism, racism, and individualism, which underpin modern society. Consequently, marginalized communities are often exploited to uphold industrial





food system practices (Ruben et al., 2018). The same systems of oppression are also responsible for:

- Underrepresentation of marginalized groups in governance and decision-making processes (e.g., IBPOC¹, 2SLGBTQI+², people experiencing poverty, people living with disabilities)
- Insufficient allocation of resources to build the leadership organizational capacity of marginalized communities.
- Limited integration of food justice-related issues and tools in training programs for food actors.

These manifestations of oppression are linked to a misunderstanding and misdiagnosis of the causes of food insecurity, diet-related diseases, and the lack of access to clean water, which are more prevalent in marginalized communities. Consequently, the design and implementation of many food system

interventions are ineffective at addressing the root causes of these and other adverse conditions that disproportionately impact marginalized groups.

For example, decision-makers may attribute food insecurity to an individual's limited budgeting or cooking skills and respond by addressing that education gap. However, this approach overlooks the structural drivers of food insecurity, places undue emphasis on individual responsibility, and applies a paternalistic approach where decision-makers position themselves as knowing more than the individual. Moreover, a narrow focus on household food insecurity fails to account for the compounding effects of generational poverty and income inequality, the rising costs of food and housing, and the devastating impacts of the climate crisis that characterize the experience of some communities more than others.

¹ Indigenous, Black and People of Colour

² Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and additional people who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse communities

By emphasizing individual responsibility without addressing the underlying structural drivers of food insecurity, decision makers risk adopting a paternalistic approach that involves inaccurate and harmful assumptions about the individuals they aim to serve.

In British Columbia, a diverse range of food system policies and practices exist, but their benefits are not equitably distributed across communities. Access to adequate, safe, and nutritious, and culturally appropriate food varies, and some communities disproportionately experience harms such as exposure to pesticides, pollution, and malnutrition. Despite well-intended efforts, food system planning work can inadvertently contribute to cross-cutting issues that uphold harmful systems of oppression for marginalized communities. This includes the unequal governance and resourcing for food systems planning and limited exposure to food justice-related issues in professional planning training. This inequality is further perpetuated by a lack of capacity to evaluate food policy and practice with a social justice lens.

In light of the issues highlighted above, it is crucial to integrate an equity and justice lens into all aspects of food systems work. This should be embedded in the

process, rather than treated as a separate endeavor or distinct component of policies and practices that may or may not be implemented. Doing so will ensure food system interventions align with efforts underway to dismantle oppressive systems. Actions towards sustainable and resilient food systems should therefore use a justice, equity, decolonization, and inclusion (JEDI)³ lens.

To support this effort, a JEDI evaluation tool was developed by a diverse team of food system actors, researchers, students and experts from academic institutions and the non-profit sector. The tool is designed as a practical guide to help food system actors critically reflect on their policies and practices and assess the extent to which interventions facilitate justice, equity, decolonization, and inclusion. The evaluation tool outlined in this report is one component of the *Planning for Future Food Systems: Aligning Efforts with Actions* project, which is co-led by the Public Health Association of BC and researchers from Royal Roads University. The tool and the wider project aim to build the collective capacity of community, municipal, and provincial food system actors for integrating justice into their activities and facilitating a just transformation of the current mainstream food system.

³ See here for how these terms are used: <https://justfood.landfood.ubc.ca/glossary-of-terms/>

Project Background



In 2020–2021, the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC) conducted dialogues with food system stakeholders in three cities, Kamloops, Vancouver and Victoria, and published findings in the *Urban Foodlands Case Studies Report* (PHABC, 2021).

The Just Food System Evaluation Framework (“the Framework”) builds off of previous work conducted in BC through collaborations with the Public Health Association of BC, the University of British Columbia, Royal Roads University, University of the Fraser Valley, Kamloops Food Policy Council, Vancouver Urban Farmers’ Society, and Food Eco District. These projects (Urban Foodlands Case Study and Food Systems Planning Evaluation Framework) represent a collective effort to build an approach to food system transformation that progressively moves food system actors and institutions to integrate social justice into their core activities.

Urban Foodlands Case Study

Participants included urban farmers, community garden coordinators, neighbourhood house representatives, food policy council members, and



food advocacy non-profit organizations. The objective of this project was to understand how these stakeholders envision urban agriculture's potential role in advancing sustainable food systems; and which existent and potential policies could help them achieve these outcomes within their respective municipalities (PHABC, 2021).

From these dialogues, six core themes emerged as shared priorities and visions for urban foodlands:

- Greater *equity* to improve access to resources and uplift decolonization efforts;
- Revitalization of the local *economy*, including local food assets and sharing economy;
- Commitment to the *environment* such as protecting land, water, and restoring ecological food systems;
- Fostering community *health* and wellbeing;

- Providing *education* and opportunities for skill development and knowledge sharing;
- Facilitating *community building* and connectedness (PHABC, 2021).

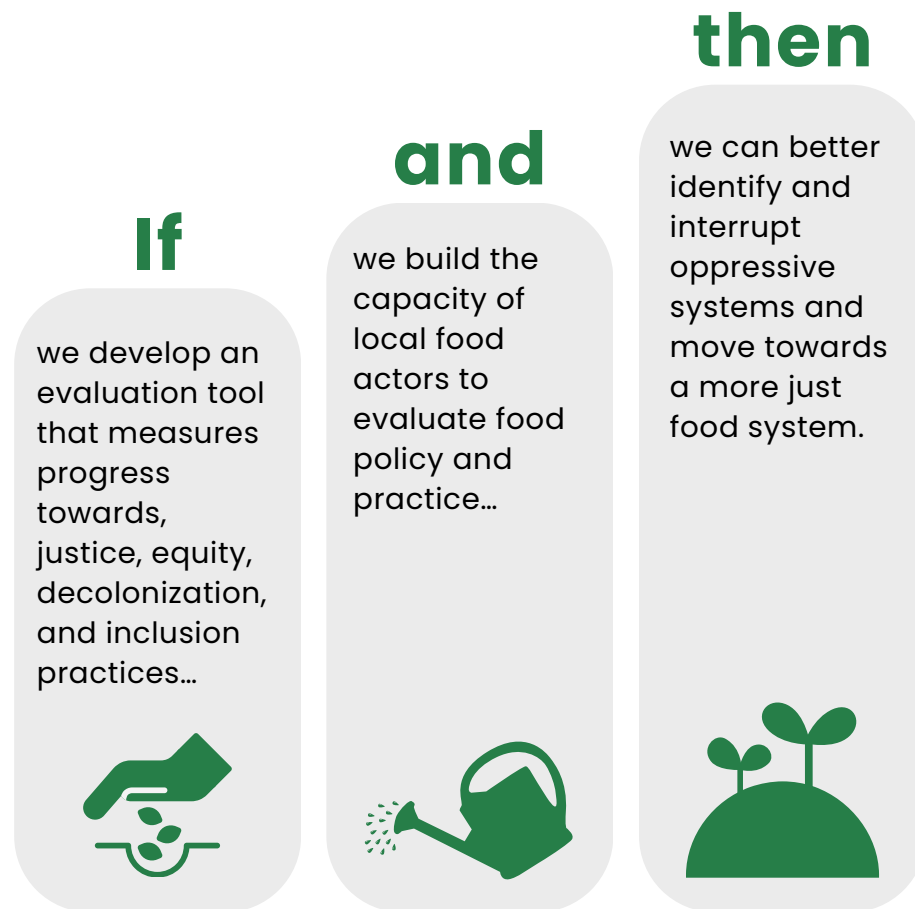
This report also noted the dynamic relationship between these core themes, illustrating how crucial it is to look at food system change from a cross-cutting lens.



A key recommendation from this work was to create an equity evaluation framework to interrupt policies and practices that further marginalize and exclude communities. This recommendation informs this project's theory of change. (Figure 1)



Figure 1: Theory of Change



This theory of change is driven by two key assumptions:

First, evaluation, when connected with the purpose of correcting an injustice, can help us to understand the changes needed to move towards a just food system. Shifting the focus away from individuals and towards structural barriers can reveal the upstream drivers of food injustice. An evaluation tool that evaluates progress towards JEDI does just that. For example, when monitoring rates of food insecurity among racialized communities, it is imperative to understand that the metric is actually monitoring racism.

Secondly, evaluation has historically been used as a tool by 'experts' and 'specialists' to determine what should be considered the 'truth' or 'normal'. If evaluation is the lens in which the world is perceived, then this can be problematic when individuals and communities are told how to see their world by people not living the day to day of those realities. Building the evaluation capacity of local food actors makes progress towards dismantling the idea of 'experts' and moving power towards the community to determine what matters to them.

Food Systems Planning Evaluation Framework (FSPEF)

In the Summer of 2022, through the Sustainability Scholars Program at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and in collaboration with researchers from Royal Roads University and PHABC began developing an evaluation framework to:

- Map out visions of food systems in BC, including agriculture-related activities;
- Provide measures and metrics on how these visions can be realized and the degree to which these activities are successful in achieving desired social justice outcomes.

Essentially, the intention was to develop appropriate and relevant indicators to measure, track, and document progress on social justice, particularly in the context of food systems planning (MacKechnie et al., 2022).

The structure of the Food Systems Planning Evaluation (FSPE) Framework was based on six core themes identified in the above Urban Foodlands Case Studies report: Equity, Economy, Environment, Health, Education, and Community Building. Following a logic model, the Framework used food policy recommendations identified during the dialogues in

Kelowna, Victoria and Vancouver as example activities upon which outputs, outcomes, and indicators were developed to measure progress towards the six core themes. However, several challenges emerged with the initial framework's structure. Firstly, it was difficult to develop measurable indicators without first understanding the data sources communities had access to and the ability to measure. Secondly, many of the policies were only relevant to a given municipality's specific context and would not be applicable to other communities or on a provincial scale. Lastly, although equity was included as a key pillar of this framework, and for building a sustainable food system, the structure and theory of change did not consider how equity would impact the other core themes (i.e., Economy, Environment, etc.). This is a significant limitation, given that equity is a cross-cutting theme (e.g., you cannot achieve health without equity since inequities such a lack of access to resources can lead to poor health outcomes). As such, a key recommendation for next steps of the FSPE project was to extend the work to employ an equity lens and centre equity in the framework.

The FSPE report further suggested:

- Including contemporary scholarship on food justice and planning;
- Testing the framework, and its equity lens, with community practitioners and organizations.

Just Food Systems Evaluation Framework Development



In September 2022, PHABC partnered with the School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) and researchers from Royal Roads University (RRU) to further develop the FSPE Framework to:

- Build on the recommendations and lessons learned from the previous FSPE project;
- Assess movement towards a food system that embodies justice, equity, decolonization, and inclusion (JEDI).

This report focuses on the next iteration of the evaluation framework, renamed the *Just Food System Evaluation Framework* (Framework). This Framework would no longer be solely based on what communities were planning on, or already doing, and would instead move beyond that by incorporating what the literature suggests communities should be doing to create a more just food system. Moreover, the revised framework would centre equity throughout the tool, recognizing that addressing JEDI may have the



co-benefit of achieving other core themes and outcomes. For example, alleviating poverty can have positive outcomes on the economy and help strengthen community building.

The objective was to develop a comprehensive framework which considers all aspects of a just, equitable, and sustainable food system; and helps build capacity and improve the resilience of food systems and food actors across BC. To accomplish this, we conducted a literature review, analyzed existing models of food justice evaluation, selected a foundational model to inform the framework's design, and integrated a thematic analysis to ensure the other core themes were captured in the final framework.

Literature Review

A comprehensive literature review was completed to understand important social justice and decolonial considerations for evaluation. This included conducting a scan of existing models of food systems evaluation with a social justice lens to understand different approaches and methods to evaluation.

The literature review was conducted using the Google Scholar platform. Key search terms were used (see Appendix A) and articles were included in the

review based on their relevance to the intersection of food systems, evaluation, and JEDI. While the inclusion criteria was originally focused on a North American context, due to limited academic literature, the scope was expanded to a global context. After reviewing titles, abstracts and a scan of the content for relevancy, 37 articles were selected and reviewed by the team. A synthesis of this literature can be found in Appendix B.

Analysis of Food System Evaluation Models

The reviewed literature was then scanned for existing models, tools or frameworks for social justice-based food systems evaluation, which resulted in identifying ten models of food systems evaluation with various focuses including sustainability, resiliency, health and justice. Four of these models in particular applied a social justice lens to food system evaluation and were thus selected for further analysis (see Appendix C).

These include:

1. City Region Food System Indicator Framework (Carey & Dubbeling, 2018);
2. Community Food Systems Resilience Audit Tool (Campbell et al., 2022);

- Food Sovereignty Indicators for Indigenous Community Capacity Building and Health (Blue Bird Jernigan et al., 2021); and
- Criteria for Just Transition in Food Systems (Tribaldos & Kortetmäki, 2022).

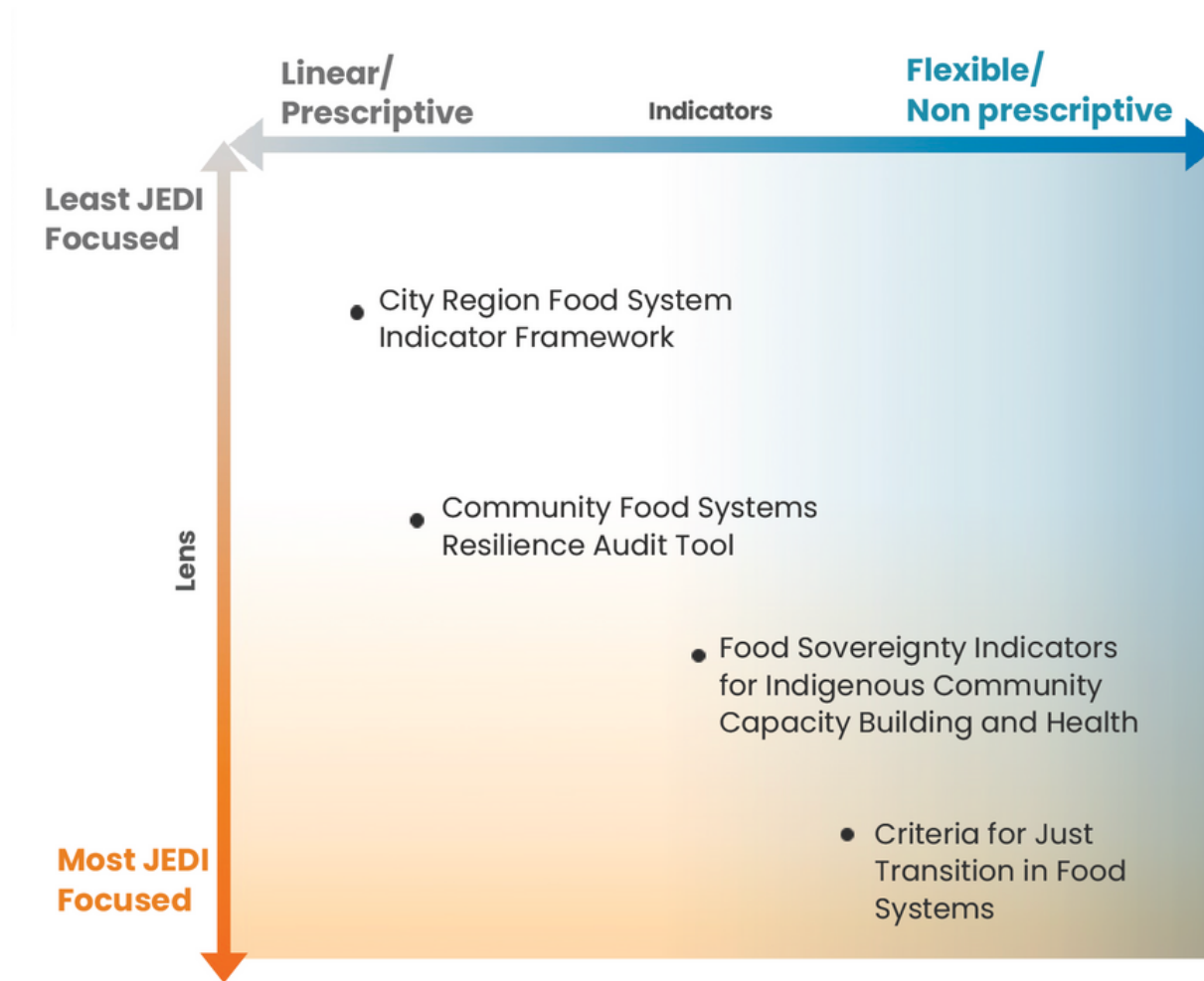
Each model was unique in that it sought to measure sustainability, resiliency, health, and justice, respectively. These models also have various approaches to the evaluation of food systems. As seen in Figure 1, the more the models centred on JEDI, the more flexible and non-prescriptive their indicators. This approach allowed for greater space for reflection and critical examinations. Where as, models or tools that included defined metrics to measure progress limited the degree the tools can be used in various contexts. This finding demonstrates the trade-offs and tensions between evaluation approaches (i.e., prescriptive versus open ended) in the context of JEDI and food systems.

Learnings from the literature review and analysis of food system evaluation models revealed seven key principles for developing a food equity evaluation framework:

- Respecting self-determination by ensuring the tool can adapt to different contexts and needs;
- Empowering participatory processes and centring community and lived experiences in implementation;
- Measuring relevant elements and avoiding prescriptive approaches;
- Approachable for diverse levels of knowledge and experiences in food justice;
- Feasibility (i.e., metrics can be reasonably collected and analyzed by end users);
- Utilizing multi-method and mixed method approaches; and
- Embracing “other(ed)” ways of knowing.



Figure 1: Comparing Four Models of Food System Evaluation





Selecting a Foundational Model

The Criteria for Just Transition in Food Systems (Tribaldos & Kortetmäki, 2022) aligned most with these seven principles (see above), and was therefore selected as a foundational model for building the Framework.

The model contains the following features:

- Five justice dimensions based on established theories of social justice;
- 12 principles that the authors operationalized as practical rules of justice; and
- 27 criteria of food systems specific standards and policy pathways.

The project team modified the language from this model and made it more accessible to diverse, public audiences. The dimensions, principles, and criterias were consolidated and refined to align with contemporary theories of food justice and used to inform the development of impacts and outcomes that signify progress towards a more just food system. These components make up the Framework structure which is further detailed below.

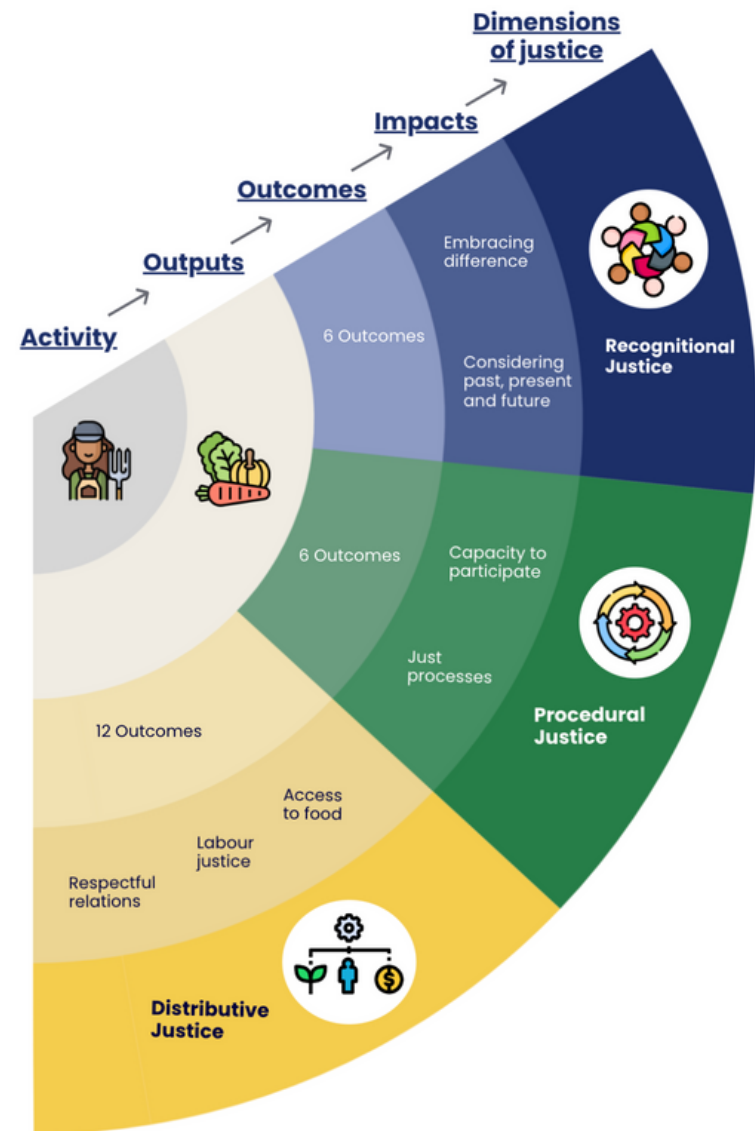
The Framework Structure

The Framework was designed based on the literature review, analysis of models and frameworks, and adaptation of the Criteria for Just Transition in Food Systems. Specifically, the Framework responds to several questions: How do you know if an intervention is contributing to JEDI? Why is it just? For whom is it just? The Framework pulls from Western liberal justice theories, decolonial theories, and food systems literature (see Appendix B) to identify components of progress and movement towards a just food system. In this section, we present the overall structure and terminology of the Framework, while its content is presented later in Section 6. Using a similar approach to a logic model, the Framework's components are organized under five hierarchical levels:

Activities: Activities are the interventions Framework users implement and perform that result in outputs. These include a wide range of initiatives, such as policies, programs, and projects.

Example: School meal program.

Outputs: Outputs are the immediate tangible or intangible results of an intervention (implemented by Framework users) that contribute to achieving an



outcome. Outputs can contribute to a single outcome or multiple different outcomes.

Example: 200 students eat a free daily nutritious breakfast with culturally preferred food options.

Outcomes: Outcomes are the short- and medium-term effects of an intervention. Outcomes capture details on how meeting a desired impact is done, and thus, the outcomes serve as criteria for evaluating progress toward an impact. The Framework features 24 outcomes that are linked to specific impacts.

Example: Increased food security for marginalized groups (e.g., increased availability of culturally preferred foods, access to nutritious food, affordability of food).

Impacts: Impacts are the wider-scale changes in the food system that occur when specific JEDI outcomes are achieved through an activity or intervention. The Framework has seven impacts derived from the literature. These impacts represent guideposts food actors should work towards. However, interventions can also contribute to other unintended positive or negative impacts.

Example: Access to food (see full description [here](#)).

Justice Dimensions: The justice dimensions refer to the basic rules of justice established in the literature. The Framework consists of three key justice dimensions relevant to food systems: recognitional, procedural, and distributive justice. These dimensions serve as overarching themes that informed the selection and identity of the other Framework components.

Example: Distributive justice (see full description [here](#)).

Integrating a Thematic Analysis of the Framework

The Framework was examined to determine whether the five themes of the initial Food System Planning Evaluation Framework (i.e., Economy, Environment, Community Building, Health, and Education) were captured in the Framework. Recall, these five themes represent a synthesis of the visions and priorities of a diverse group of food system stakeholders in BC (see 3. Project Background above). By exploring how the Framework engages users in thinking critically about these themes helps ensure that the Framework is meaningful to its prospective users.

Community Building



Local Economic Development



Environmental Sustainability



Education and Knowledge Sharing



Health and Wellbeing



The analysis involved reviewing the Framework's outcomes and impacts and identifying the ways in which they align with the respective themes. Essentially, the objective was to determine whether the JEDI outcomes resulted in impacts that directly or indirectly contribute to local economic development, environmental sustainability, community building, health and wellbeing, and improvements in education and knowledge sharing.

The findings indicated a strong link to the above themes, with community building, health and wellbeing, and local economic development being represented the most. The Framework was further refined by modifying and expanding its outcomes and impacts to better capture the five themes, that again, represent the visions and priorities of diverse groups of food system stakeholders.

This exercise and the resulting Framework illustrate that as we make progress toward a more just and equitable food system, it will concurrently lead to improvements in the economy, environment, community building, health, and education.

Piloting and Refining the Framework



A series of focus groups and workshops were conducted with community food actors from Revelstoke and Prince George BC to test the usability, applicability and accessibility of the Framework and gather feedback to further refine its contents. This section highlights key findings from the engagement activities.

In order for the framework to be useful, it was critical that community needs and experiences were centred in its development. Engaging with community aligned with the core values identified from the literature review, including the importance of participatory processes and embedding lived experiences.

Focus Groups

Three 1.5 hour focus groups were held virtually in February 2023 with food system actors and stakeholders in Revelstoke, BC. These focus groups solicited feedback from community members on the Framework's structure, terminology and clarity of



concepts, as well as its relevance for food system work and various community food security actors.

Overall, participants expressed that the tool is useful for providing a methodical approach to applying JEDI concepts to food work. In particular, the visual elements were noted to be helpful to communicate and clarify the different elements and aspects of the Framework. Participants mentioned that the Framework would help to allow marginalized groups to see themselves in evaluation work. However, the academic language and concepts used were noted as being a possible barrier, given that there are varying levels of knowledge and education on JEDI principles. More accessible language to improve the Framework's ability to build capacity was flagged as a key area for improvement.

Pilot Workshops

The feedback received from the virtual focus groups in Revelstoke was used to refine the Framework. Two virtual 3-hour pilot workshops were then held to test the refined version: one with Revelstoke participants in March 2023, and another with community food security actors and stakeholders in Prince George in June 2023.

The pilot workshops had three objectives:

- To share findings from the focus groups and revisions to the Framework;
- To test the usability of the Framework and people's ability to apply the tool and;
- To get feedback on how participants could use it in their work.

Participants saw potential in using the Framework as an audit tool to review and assess their food system activities against the list of outcomes across all three dimensions of justice. This would allow the user to validate whether an existing or proposed policy, program or intervention meets each outcome or not. However, participants raised concerns that this application could simply be done as a means to validate the current work, rather than as a true evaluation exercise. Alternatively, other participants saw value in using the tool to identify relevant JEDI outcomes and develop a policy, program or intervention that would help to achieve these outcomes. One participant described these two approaches as 'theory down' and 'practice up'.

Participants noted that the Framework helped to identify linkages between theory and practice; they were able to quickly identify their activity's outputs and

their linkages with the outcomes. This can help Framework users to see how their work contributes to JEDI outcomes. Additionally, participants saw the Framework as a helpful tool to justify the purpose of a program or initiative. They expressed appreciation for how the Framework translates complex justice theories into food systems practices that are relevant to their work.

However, limitations and areas for improvement were also noted. For example, many participants found the Framework’s design to be complex and content-rich, making it difficult to understand without support from the framework creators. Further, the draft Framework initially included indicators for measuring and verifying whether JEDI outcomes had been met; however, a common concern was around implementation, particularly the challenges of

accessing data sources and obtaining the necessary resources for collecting data on the indicators. Moreover, pre-selecting indicators was seen as a more prescriptive, less flexible approach since they are only applicable to specific activities. As a result, the indicators limited the ability for the Framework to be applied to a wider range of self-determined food activities.



The feedback collected during the pilot workshops was then used to adjust and improve the Framework to better fit user needs. Namely, due to concerns about the prescriptive nature and capacity challenges associated with the indicators, these were removed from the Framework’s structure.



The Just Food System Evaluation Framework



In North America, local food movements and the rise in associated farmers markets have been critiqued for being predominantly White and serving affluent communities. The lack of culturally appropriate food in procurement programs have resulted in calls for food diversity and greater attention to cultural preferences, demonstrating the need for increased diversity of food options.

The following section presents the various components of the framework, including the three justice dimensions relevant to food systems, the impacts associated with each dimension, and the outcomes serving as criteria for evaluating progress toward each impact. This is followed by an overview of the different ways the Framework can be used.

Additionally, a **comprehensive user guide** is available for food actors to apply the Framework in evaluating how their work contributes to creating a more just food system and identifying gaps to be prioritized.





Justice Dimension 1: Recognitional Justice

Different values, life experiences, and knowledge systems inform people's food practices and the meaning they attribute to these practices. For example, race, culture, gender, and ability-level influences how people interact with food. However, the mainstream food system often limits this difference from thriving by privileging certain values and food traditions over others, such as those that perpetuate individualism and neoliberal capitalism, which ultimately shape food system policies, practices, and interventions.

For example, late-stage capitalism requires people to earn enough money to buy food and to prevent hunger. Colonialism limits Indigenous Peoples' ability to access traditional foods in public settings because the food must meet legislative guidelines, and the law established to protect the safety of the food supply is

often experienced as an impediment to traditional gathering and distribution of food. Recognitional justice asks us to consider whose values are being normalised or oppressed, how to challenge this division, and what can be done to value difference.

Impact 1.1: Embracing Difference

Embracing difference moves away from privileging certain values while oppressing others by providing space for differing values, experiences, and knowledge systems to co-exist and be shared. Differences can also elicit conflict. This impact also suggests that rather than seeing conflict as something to be managed and removed, consider how it can be generative. Ultimately, embracing difference helps to build strong and equitable relationships.

Outcomes:

- 1.1** Multiple goals, outcomes, and principles are represented in visions of the food system.
- 1.2** Differing interpretations of problems and solutions are acknowledged and incorporated in food work.
- 1.3** Processes are established to allow for differing or conflicting visions to resolve or coexist.

Impact 1.2: Considering past, present and future

Food system problems or solutions are often framed by looking at the present. Who is affected? How are they harmed? To what extent? Looking at an issue's historical roots shifts framing away from present-day damage or deficit, and towards recognizing that inequities stem from historic and ongoing forms of oppression (e.g., colonialism, racism, patriarchy). Inequities also arise when food systems are built on singular visions and goals that overlook diversity and the needs of future generations. Unfortunately, not all groups have equal power to shape the future, some organizations and communities are better resourced to enact their future plans than others. To reduce inequities, this impact calls food actors to account for historical and persisting legacies of oppression, ensure

a diversity of perspectives, and consider the long-term impacts of interventions on future food systems.

Outcomes:

- 1.4** Historic and ongoing injustices (e.g., colonial legacies, intergenerational poverty, racism) are incorporated into how food system problems are framed, root causes are understood, and solutions are developed.
- 1.5** Marginalized communities are recognised as experiencing hope, joy, resiliency and vibrancy in the past, present and future, rather than simply being framed as oppressed.
- 1.6** The impact on future generations (of humans and other species) is intentionally incorporated into food systems planning (e.g., considering social, economic and environmental impacts).

Justice Dimension 2: Procedural justice

Procedural justice asks us to consider who makes decisions and how. Decision-making power is often concentrated among a select few. However, due to inherent biases, strategies that prove effective for one individual or group may not necessarily benefit another. When certain groups are excluded from political, social, and economic processes and opportunities, inequities emerge. Procedural justice aims to address this issue by removing barriers and facilitating meaningful participation in decision making, moving beyond tokenistic participation and towards a distribution of power to communities. It honours the approach of “nothing for us without us”. In other words, any decisions that impact communities should be decided by the community members themselves.

Impact 2.1: Capacity to participate

This impact seeks to uplift people’s capacity to engage with decision-making processes (in traditional forms of government and self-government). This requires acknowledging and reducing capacity-related disparities and barriers of different social groups to ensure all people have access to the knowledge, skills, resources and funding needed to meaningfully engage in food system governance (either to decide to build

their own tables or to sit at existing decision-making tables). Valuing and supporting the ways that marginalized groups already organize themselves and supporting the creation of diverse organizations and governance structures is vital to this effort.



Outcomes:

- 2.1** Increased capacity of marginalized groups to address their own challenges and achieve their own objectives (e.g., organizational development, self-determination, resources, business development, food sovereignty).
- 2.2** Increased knowledge and understanding of food system governance, processes and tools.
- 2.3** Food-system grants/funding sources support community-determined priorities, are flexible, and have accessible, low-barrier application and reporting processes.

Impact 2.1: Just processes

Just processes question the structures and systems that determine who is designing, delivering, and enforcing procedures and processes. It seeks to examine how decisions are made and what is prioritized. While having seats at the table is an important first step, these spaces must be accessible and safe for people. If not, you risk causing additional harm. It is important to acknowledge and meaningfully address barriers to participation. Planning and decision making must respect and centre

relationships by moving at the speed of trust.

Outcomes:

- 2.4** Reduced systemic power imbalances in governance (e.g., moving from top down, prescriptive, opaque approaches to more transparent, flexible and non-hierarchical approaches).
- 2.5** Marginalized communities are leading, or are meaningfully engaged, throughout the planning, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs.
- 2.6** Reduced barriers and increased safety to participate in food systems planning (e.g., offering financial stipends, childcare, transportation, language translation, etc.).

Justice Dimension 3: Distributive justice

Distributive justice calls for the equitable distribution of resources and the fair sharing of benefits (e.g., safe and nutritious food) and burdens (e.g., exposure to pesticides, malnutrition) in the food system. Here, 'benefits' and 'burdens' refer to both tangible and intangible factors, such as access to food, land, opportunities, partnerships and other resources. Currently, these are not equitably distributed. For instance, low-income groups, Indigenous communities

and racialized populations are often at greater risk of food insecurity and have less access to land. To move towards distributive justice, food practitioners should consider: who will be impacted by our actions, and how can we deliver benefits to those who are in the most need?

Impact 3.1: Access to food

The “physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food... at all times...” is internationally recognized as a fundamental human right (FAO, 2008;



Ayala & Meier, 2017). Marginalized groups often face barriers to realizing this right. This impact aims to address food security at the household and community level. This includes exploring the following questions: is there enough food? How stable is the food supply? Is the food easy to access, high in quality and culturally appropriate?

Outcomes:

- 3.1** Increased food security for marginalized groups (e.g., access to culturally preferred, nutritious, and affordable food).
- 3.2** Processes are established to identify individuals or groups experiencing/ at risk of food insecurity.
- 3.3** Greater Indigenous food sovereignty/ food sovereignty (i.e., more local control over distribution, supply and production).
- 3.4** Increased resilience in local food systems to ensure they can withstand natural disasters, economic shocks and supply chain disruptions.
- 3.5** Increased food literacy so people can participate in their food system in whatever way they choose (e.g., gardening, preserving classes, nutrition, cooking, cultural and traditional food practices, etc.).

Impact 3.2: Labour justice

Fair labour conditions for workers in food systems include ensuring fair compensations, safe working conditions, the ability of self-employment, and the power to make decisions on issues affecting their livelihoods (e.g., land use decisions relating to farmland).

Outcomes:

- 3.6** Fair, adequate and equitable pay in food-related jobs (i.e., across genders and races, providing at minimum a living wage).
- 3.7** Increased employee support (e.g. health insurance, training, adequate staffing) and safety from pollution, hazards, weather, and other adverse conditions in work spaces.
- 3.8** Increased access to food system jobs/business opportunities and infrastructure (e.g., farmland, processing facilities, distribution chains, etc.) for marginalized groups and rural/remote communities.



Impact 3.3: Respectful relationships

A just food system requires examining its various relationships and the power dynamics between them. This includes developing accountable, reciprocal and respectful relationships between humans, the environment, and non-humans (e.g., animals, plants, fungi, insects, etc.). This impact aims to challenge harmful power relations, and to encourage reciprocal relations, especially between marginalized and dominant groups.

Outcomes:

3.9 Reciprocal relationships between marginalized (e.g., women, racialized groups, Indigenous communities, LGBTQ2SI+, low-income) and dominant groups (e.g., white, cis, hetero, white-collar workers/managerial class) are established.

3.10 Marginalized food actors have opportunities to provide feedback on partnership relations.

3.11 Reciprocal relationships between different food actors (e.g., farmers, processors, distributors, food access organizations, funders) are established.

3.12 Humans have an ethical (versus exploitative and harmful) relationship with the animals, plants, and land needed for food (e.g., animal welfare, reduced food waste, agroecological practices, increased biodiversity and ecosystem health)



Using the Framework



The Framework can be used by food system actors in three main ways, as briefly outlined below.

The Framework can be used by food system actors to evaluate how their organizations and initiatives are contributing to JEDI outcomes and impacts required for transforming the food system. In doing so, food actors and communities can use the framework to identify gaps where JEDI can be integrated into programming and strategic planning. This can support food system planning and direct resource allocation. Additionally, a comprehensive [user guide](#) is available, offering further details and instructions on how food actors can apply the tool to their work.

A: Evaluate a policy, program, or intervention

The Framework can be used by food system actors to evaluate whether their activities or policies are contributing to JEDI outcomes. When using the Framework in this capacity, users can assess which justice outcomes the outputs of their activity supports



and which they do not, as well as whether there are opportunities to contribute to additional justice outcomes. This approach would help foster discussion and strategic thinking on how best to address the identified gaps.

B: Organizational audit and gap analysis

An organization can use the Framework to audit its activities, programs or policies to determine which outcomes and impacts are, or are not, being met in relation to moving towards a just food system. This involves users identifying the outputs of their policies and activities to determine which outcomes are being met or not by the outputs.

For example, a universal school breakfast program that provides barrier-free breakfasts for students could contribute to outcome '3.1 Increased food security for marginalized groups' by increasing availability of culturally preferred foods, access to nutritious food, and/or affordability of food.

By identifying gaps where outcomes are not supported, organizations can better prioritize, plan and generate ideas for how they can further support JEDI in their work.



When using the Framework in this capacity, organizations can assess where their community is performing well and **making progress toward JEDI objectives and where it is falling short.**



C: Measure community progress towards a just food system

The Framework can also be used by municipalities and collectively by multiple organizations to measure community progress towards a just food system. Organizations are encouraged to first each conduct their own audit and gap analysis, then come together to compare results and use the tool to assess gaps in the food system across a given community. When using the Framework in this capacity, organizations can assess where their community is performing well and making progress toward JEDI objectives and where it is falling short.

Such an application of the Framework can support discussion on how to collectively work to address the identified gaps, as well as support advocacy efforts for attaining the resources and support that may be needed to do so. This approach can help inform planning, prioritization, and resource allocation, all of which can be difficult in the context of food work and finite financial and human resources available to support food system initiatives.

Conclusions and Limitations



To the best of our knowledge, the Just Food System Evaluation Framework represents the first of its kind as a tool to support community organizations and different levels of government to integrate justice into food system planning activities.

Limitations

While the Framework can be a helpful guide for identifying JEDI targets to work towards, it does not guarantee interruption or alternatives to the root causes of social and environmental inequities (see Appendix B). There is a high amount of complexity, uncertainty, and unknowability involved in making progress towards creating just and sustainable food systems. For example, this framework uses a logic model format to structure and organize its components (activities, outputs, outcomes, etc.); however, this assumes that outputs contribute to outcomes in a meaningful way, which may not be the case. Framework users should explore this limitation by engaging in discussions about the assumptions and



logics used in problem identification, solution development, and prioritization of high impact work (e.g., strategic planning).

Although the Framework offers the benefit of shared language and can be used to identify gaps where JEDI targets are not being met, the omission of indicators (due to reasons described above) can make it more difficult to verify whether or not JEDI outcomes have been met. Users of the tool are encouraged to explore developing their own relevant indicators where possible to measure and verify whether their specific activity contributes to a given outcome. These can be based on what data sources and measurement tools the user has available to them. However, it is important to note that some JEDI outcomes are more qualitative and abstract in nature and thus can be more difficult to measure than others.

Moreover, while it is not a requirement for using the tool, those who wish to apply the Framework for cross-regional, community-wide and coordinated evaluation activities may wish to take their evaluation efforts a step further by developing shared indicators to more concretely measure and verify progress on priority outcomes. The comparability of the data is important in these instances, so similar measures are used by all parties involved. However, caution is needed that data collection and analysis capacity may vary across organizations and communities.

This may require investment in resources to build organizational and community-wide capacity for coordination and cross-collaboration in evaluation. Users of the Framework should consider enlisting community-based researchers to support broader training efforts and coaching in the use of the tools.

Conclusion, implications and next steps

As we intend the Framework to be broadly applicable to a variety of communities and organizations by existing as a 'living tool' that can be further adapted and refined, we hope that people will put the framework into practice, as well as enhance and add to the outcomes and explore different ways of applying it to food systems work. Addressing stark food system inequities is challenging, and often people do not know where to begin or what to do.

This framework can be seen as a first step, to analyze and assess what has been done and to provide a shared set of metrics, outcomes, and language that may be familiar to food actors. It is important to keep in mind that just and sustainable food systems are a journey of many, many steps. It is our hope that this framework can act as a guide for those looking for beginnings and entry points.



The Framework will be further used, tested, and refined in future community-based action research designed to support food actors in using the tool and checking its utility and appropriateness. To support this future work, an [online version](#) of the Framework has been developed, which allows food actors to input and apply the framework to their current and proposed food systems actions and interventions. The online tool is accompanied with worksheets to support people in learning about the Framework and ways of applying the tool to practice.

For those who would like to learn more about the tool and how it can be applied to practices and/or are interested in collaborating on projects that use and further develop the tool, please reach out to us at **admin@phabc.org**.

Appendix

Appendix A: Literary Review Search Terms

Evaluating Food Systems

- “Food system*” AND “JEDI” AND “Evaluation framework” OR “Indicator*” OR “Assessment*” OR “Standard*”
- “Food system*” AND “JEDI” AND “Evaluation*” OR “Indicator*” OR “Assessment*” OR “Standard*”
- “Food systems” AND “social justice” OR “Justice” AND “Evaluation” OR “Indicator*” OR “Assessment*” OR “Standard*”
- “Food systems” AND “equity” AND “Evaluation” OR “Indicator*” OR “Monitor*” OR “Assessment*” OR “Standard*”
- “Food systems” AND “decoloni*” AND “Evaluation” OR “Indicators” OR “Monitoring” OR “Assessment*” OR “Standards”
- “Food systems” AND “inclusion” AND “Evaluation” OR “Indicators” OR “Monitoring” OR “Assessment*” OR “Standards”
- “Evaluation tool for equitable food systems”

Alternative/ decolonial evaluation methods

“social justice” OR “Justice” AND “Evaluation” OR “Indicator*” OR “Monitor*” OR “Assessment*” OR “Standard*”

“JEDI” AND “Evaluation framework” OR “Indicator*” OR “Monitor*” OR “Assessment*” OR “Standard*”

“Decoloni*” AND “Evaluation” OR “Indicator*” OR “Monitor*” OR “Assessment*” OR “Standard*”

Appendix B: Literature Review

The first key finding from the literature reviewed was the need for food justice-oriented evaluation. The current food system is complex and political, requiring trade-offs between various social, environmental and economic factors (Ruben et al., 2018; Glennie & Alkon, 2018). Marginalized groups often face the brunt of these trade-offs, faced with inequality and exploitation within the mainstream food system (Ruben et al., 2018). As such, it is crucial to understand and take into account the power dynamics and their impact on these factors and trade-offs (Ruben et al., 2018; Kuhnlein, 2013; Hesterman & Millet, 2018). Evaluation is a key tool that is used by policymakers and governments to better understand the impacts of policies, practices and programs, and make more informed decisions (Pérez-Escamilla et al, 2017; Blay-Palmer et al, 2019; MacKechnie, Topley, & Dring, 2022). However, often current evaluation practices and processes uphold western and colonial ideologies and systems, resulting in limitations in addressing the root cause of food system related inequality. The literature that was reviewed focused largely on sustainability, with limited considerations for assessing JEDI. Further, limited literature exists on JEDI factors, including food system drivers, determinants of food choices, political economy and power relationships

(Brouwer et al., 2020; Hebinck et al., 2021; Clapp et al., 2018; Goossens et al., 2019; Kaljonen et al., 2021).

While some “value-neutral approaches” (i.e., removing any emotions or biases from interference with research) to evaluation have emerged in an attempt to address this issue, it often leads to losing the complexities and nuances of experiences of race, culture, colonization and other historical socio-cultural nuances. These have fuelled certain stereotypes, leading to problematic narratives, particularly for example for indigenous peoples (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021; Tuck, 2009). Hesterman and Millet (2018) have argued that evaluation however can be a key tool in combating these issues if the context is taken into account and the impacted communities are involved throughout the process. Several pieces of literature exist proposing the concept of decolonizing evaluation to help shift away from Western thoughts and approaches, while honouring alternative perspectives and knowledge that have historically been ignored (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021; de Sousa Santos, 2015). A decolonial approach to evaluation must take into account the context; centre the values, experiences, and opinions of the communities who are being evaluated (Kawakami et al., 2008; Waapalaneexkweew & Dodge-Francis, 2018; Porima, 2005; Held, 2019) and be co-planned and

implemented with the communities of interest (Kawakami et al., 2008; Waapalaneekweew & Dodge-Francis, 2018; Porima, 2005; Held, 2019).

Although a standard model for decolonial approaches to evaluation was not found, Thambinathan and Kinsella (2021) outline four key considerations for qualitative researchers to use. While considerations were developed by Thambinathan and Kinsella (2021) for qualitative researchers, they equally apply in the context of policy work and research, as they are foundational for establishing respect and shifting power dynamics between communities and participants and policy makers.

These considerations include:

- Exercise critical reflexivity. People working in food and food-related areas have a responsibility to consider their inherent power over participants and reframe their approaches in a way that shifts unequal power relations (Robertson et al., 2004).
- Reciprocity and respect for self-determination. Reciprocity considers the need to have collaboration and collective ownership throughout the project to establish accountability to participants. Self-determination demands the need to listen and to allow Indigenous ideas drive

processes (Barreiros & Moreira, 2020; Kuhnlein, 2013).

- Embrace “other(ed)” ways of knowing. People educated through Settler institutions should strive to unlearn dominant ways of thinking, and to recognize and value diverse “ecologies of knowledge” (Chilisa et al., 2016).
- Embody a transformative praxis. A transformative praxis represents a shift from status quo approaches that have yielded limited results, and movement towards approaches that work with marginalized communities to bring about about social justice and the elimination of inequities (e.g., self-determination, organizational development, community capacity building; Smith, 1999).

Appendix C: Comparative Analysis of Four Models of Food System Evaluation

| Model | Author | Purpose | Formats and components | Learnings |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| City Region Food System Indicator Framework (Carey & Dubbeling, 2018) | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), RUA Foundation, and the Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems (LCSFS) | It is designed to help cities with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assessing the baseline of a CRFS with performance indicators. 2. Identifying priority areas for action with outcomes and directions of change 3. Planning and creating strategy to achieve desired outcomes. 4. Monitoring effects policy or program implementation with performance indicators | Logic model: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 dimensions of sustainability in the food system • 9 objectives • 21 outcomes (i.e., desired direction of travel) • 29 impact areas (i.e., types of changes) • 210 indicators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation is strengthened by other tools in a toolkit that help food actors assess the current state of their food system, create a vision, and set priorities. • Evaluation cannot be treated independently from other components of food systems planning. • Importance of applying to local contexts. Indicators were drafted by experts and focus on quantitative measures which may not be culturally relevant for many communities. • Developers of this toolkit encourage to use any of the components as a starting place. The developers do not prescribe one method to use the tools. • Acknowledges issues related to accessing and collecting data for indicators. A process is provided for users to prioritize which indicators are relevant to local context, have the most potential for change and available data. • Example of a food systems evaluation tool that does not centre JEDI, but includes dimensions of JEDI as a theme. |
| Community Food Systems Resilience Audit Tool (Campbell et al., 2022) | Catherine Campbell, Alicia Papanek, Alia DeLong, John Diaz, and Cody Gusto and Debra Tropp Consulting | To help food actors assess the resilience of their local food systems, identify priorities, and implement policies to achieve their desired outcomes. | Audit/ checklist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven core themes for policies and programs (including food justice and distributive and democratic leadership) • 17 sub themes • 35 primary indicators • 61 sub indicators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formatting the tool as a checklist provides a high degree of functionality and usability for end users. This format makes identifying policy gaps simple and effective. However, it does not have the ability to highlight the significance of the gaps. • This format supports the capacity building of food actors to identify community priorities and gaps but policy is only effective if action is taken on them. • Evaluation focused on the current state of the food system but has limited ability to evaluate outcomes or progress. |

Principles for Just Low-Carbon Transition and Criteria for Just Transition in Food Systems (Tribaldos & Kortetmäki, 2022).

Theresa Tribaldos and Teea Kortetmäki

To help decision makers pay attention to the harms of the mainstream food system and overcome deeply rooted power structures inherent in the food system. Tool provides 27 criteria or policy pathways to support food actors to make decisions and implement policy that is grounded in justice.

- 5 distributions of justice
- 12 principles of just transition - practical rules of justice serving as an analytical lens to just transition questions across systems
- 27 criteria - food specific standards / policy pathways

- Rather than defining specific indicators it prompts users to ask questions and analyze the current state of their food system. This non prescriptive and open ended approach allows room for meaningful reflection. However this process would likely be time and resource heavy.
- The framework is highly theoretical which may pose a barrier to food actors that have limited knowledge of or experience with justice work.
- This approach would require additional tools to draft policy and measure progress.

Food Sovereignty Indicators for Indigenous Community Capacity Building and Health (Blue Bird Jernigan et al., 2021).

Valarie Blue Bird Jernigan, Tara L. Maudrie, Cassandra Jean Nikolaus, Tia Benally, Selisha Johnson, Travis Teague, Melena Mayes, Tvli Jacob and Tori Taniguchi

To support community capacity building for communities to discuss food security issues and to plan for food sovereignty.

- 7 food sovereignty indicators
- 25 sub indicators

- Responds to calls from Indigenous communities to support and promote Indigenous ways of knowing in evaluation.
- Format is open ended and reflexive with sub indicators formatted in a way to generate conversation. Authors stress the importance of centring community in the application.
- Indicators and sub indicators are described in plain language which reduces barriers for communities to engage with the tool.

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