



SchoolFood Plus Evaluation

Interim Report: Phase 2

October 24, 2005

- ❖ Market Ventures, Inc.
- ❖ Karp Resources
- ❖ Center for Health & Public Service
Research, New York University

Executive Summary

The SchoolFood Plus Initiative is a collaborative, multi-agency effort to improve the eating habits, health and academic performance of New York City public schoolchildren while strengthening the New York State agricultural economy through the procurement of local, regional produce. The Initiative is based on the principle that a multi-tiered effort of government, school, and community involvement is the most effective way to enhance the school food and physical activity environment. Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, SchoolFood Plus is being led by FoodChange and includes four additional primary partners: the Office of SchoolFood (OSF) at the NYC Department of Education, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, and Teachers College at Columbia University.

The roots of SchoolFood Plus can be traced to the election of Mayor Michael Bloomberg in 2002 and his Children First Initiative, an effort to bring fundamental reform to the NYC school system and a cornerstone of his mayoral agenda. In regards to school meals, the Department of Education was seeking to eliminate the near \$70 million in cost overrun that represented the difference between OSF expenditures and income that came from federal subsidy via the National School Meals program, some state contributions, and revenues from the student paid portion of reduced meals and full priced meals. New leadership at OSF brought an interest in partnerships and input from advocates and food professionals in New York. FoodChange (then called the Community Food Resource Center) was one of the organizations that provided its input and expertise to OSF.

In July 2003, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded FoodChange a planning grant to develop the conceptual basis for the SchoolFood Plus Initiative and to begin laying the groundwork with partnering organizations. In June 2004, FoodChange received additional funding from the Kellogg Foundation to begin implementation of the SchoolFood Plus Initiative over a three year period, with the pilot year commencing in the fall semester 2004 and two full implementation years beginning in September 2005. Funds from the grant are primarily supporting staff lines and programming at OSF, FoodChange, DOHMH and other organizations as needed to further the work of SchoolFood Plus, as well as the evaluation.

In December 2004, Market Ventures, Inc., in partnership with Karp Resources and the Center for Health & Public Service Research at New York University, was retained by FoodChange to evaluate the SchoolFood Plus Initiative. This Interim Report comes at the conclusion of the second phase of the evaluation, which ran from February to August 2005.

In the fall of 2004, the primary partners developed a logic model as a tool to identify concisely the players, activities, goals, and projected outcomes of SchoolFood Plus over the course of SY 04-05 and SY 05-06. Since that first iteration, the logic model has been updated to reflect changes and progress. The version dated April 2005 expresses the most recent goals, implementation plan and projected outputs, and contains the components evaluated by the evaluation team.

The logic model reflects the three pronged approach toward achieving the dual goals of improving children's health and academic performance while invigorating the state's agricultural economy. These include **institutional change** within the New York City Office of SchoolFood (OSF), **school-based programming**, and **coalition building**. Through this three-legged stool

approach and the ways in which each “leg” supports and enhances the work of the others, SchoolFood Plus serves as an example of the maxim, “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”

Most of the school-based programming is taking place at the elementary school level in three targeted neighborhoods around New York City. These are low income neighborhoods that have been identified by DOHMH as catchment areas for intense focus. They include (1) East and Central Harlem, (2) the South Bronx, and (3) Central Brooklyn.

The SchoolFood Plus Initiative takes place within a complex and changing context of organizations, politics, demographics, trends, and time. Some of the most relevant contextual factors include the evolving health status of children within the targeted neighborhoods (particularly the rapid rise of obesity as a public health issue); the scale, structure, and history of the New York City public school system; the requirements and constraints of the National School Lunch Program; the status of agriculture and food distribution in New York State; and the resources, structure and goals of the five primary partner agencies.

Evaluation Methods

The evaluation is being conducted in three phases. In Phase 1, which took place from December 2004 until January 2005, the evaluation team became orientated to SchoolFood Plus, designed the evaluation process for Phase 2, and submitted an initial Institutional Review Board (IRB) proposal to the Office of Assessment and Accountability of the NYC Department of Education (DOE) for research in the schools. During Phase 2, the evaluation team submitted a revised IRB to DOE for additional research activities, collected baseline data, tested research instruments, and began the formative evaluation activities. Phase 3 will include formative and outcome evaluation over the Initiative’s two year implementation cycle in the schools, plus a follow-up period for analysis and creation of a final report.

The evaluation is organized around ten research questions, which are meant to guide the research during its entire, three year implementation. These research questions were developed in consultation with FoodChange and approved by the Kellogg Foundation during Phase 1 of the evaluation. Utilizing an extended-term, mixed method evaluation approach, the evaluation design includes formative, context, and outcome evaluation methods.

The methodology for seven of the 10 research questions centered around structured interviews. In total, the team conducted 68 in-depth interviews with representatives of each of the five primary partners, coalition members, suppliers to the Office of School Food, farmers and farmer associations, and government officials. Our research methodology also included observations where the evaluation team experienced various elements of SchoolFood Plus, primarily in the classroom and at coalition and partner meetings. Where available, baseline data was collected in Phase 2, providing the points of comparison for data collected in Phase 3, particularly for the outcome evaluation questions. A literature review was conducted to address the contexts within which SchoolFood Plus takes place.

As new plant-based recipes are introduced into the NYC public schools via SchoolFood Plus, the evaluation seeks to test two hypotheses. One, will children who are exposed to the various levels of SchoolFood Plus programming at the elementary schools level, such as

CookShop® Classroom and social marketing, consume more of the recipes than children who do not receive the exposure? And two, will children who receive this programming have improved knowledge, attitudes and behavior about food, farming, cooking and consumption compared to nonparticipants? During Phase 2, the evaluation team developed, tested, and selected measurement strategies to use in answering these question over the next two school years. The objective of this phase of research was not to answer the research questions but to have good methodologies in place for SY 05-06 and SY 06-07. The measures include a plate waste study and knowledge, attitude, and behavior (KAB) surveys for elementary school children. The evaluation team also proposed to develop a parent survey in Phase 3.

Research Questions and Findings

1. What is SchoolFood Plus, how was it implemented, and how did implementation vary from the plan?

The three clusters of activities and programs – institutional change, school-based programming, and coalition building – are in various stages of development and implementation. Some elements are being implemented city-wide while others are being piloted in a few schools in the catchment areas. Some have been in existence for a number of years (both inside and outside the school environment) while others are new. Still others are planned for future implementation. The activities and programs are summarized below.

Institutional change

Institutional change has three main components:

1. *Plant-based recipes*

“Plant-based recipes” refer to newly introduced school cafeteria menu items that feature fresh vegetable, legume, grain or fruit ingredients that are prepared within the school kitchen. These recipes represent a departure from conventional practice of utilizing processed or manufactured foods. The featured foods can all be grown in New York State.

2. *Nutrition standards*

Nutrition standards refers to efforts to improve the nutritional quality of foods served by OSF. The alteration of nutrition standards takes place within the context of USDA requirements, emerging nutritional theories and recommendations from various health organizations, and, in some cases, the longstanding recipe formulations of food manufacturers that supply OSF.

3. *Local/Regional foods*

The SchoolFood Plus Initiative seeks to incorporate foods grown by New York State farmers into the NYC public school system—particularly for the newly developed plant-based recipes—in order to simultaneously support the state’s agricultural economy and children’s health with more locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables.

School-based programming

School-based programming has six key components as identified in the SchoolFood Plus Logic Model utilized for SY 04-05:

1. CookShop[®] Classroom

CookShop[®] Classroom is a lower elementary curriculum developed and offered by FoodChange to elementary schools in NYC over the past 10 years. The program brings a tactile experience with food and cooking tools directly to the hands of young children, in the familiar environment of their classroom, combining lessons and building skills in math, social sciences, natural sciences and language.

2. SchoolFood Plus Cafeteria (previously named CookShop[®] Cafeteria)

SchoolFood Plus Cafeteria represents the implementation of plant-based recipes in school cafeterias, including testing, developing and scaling up the recipes for institutional production; developing lines of procurement for new ingredients; and training cafeteria staff and managers to prepare and serve the new recipes. For children who have been exposed to CookShop[®] Classroom, it brings the same foods they have studied and tasted with their teachers into the school cafeterias. For all the other students in the public school system, SchoolFood Plus Cafeteria represents the introduction of new menu items.

3. Cafeteria as Classroom

Cafeteria as Classroom is a series of social marketing messages and programs that seek to transform school cafeterias into “centers of learning” in order to help children identify and be motivated to choose the SchoolFood Plus plant-based recipes; to reinforce learning about food, plants, fitness and nutrition; and to generate enthusiasm about plant-based recipes and school meals.

4. S.P.A.R.K.

S.P.A.R.K. (Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids) is a comprehensive physical education program designed to help teachers improve the physical activity, fitness, and movement skills of children. It was introduced into the schools by DOHMH who used grant funding to purchase the curriculum and train school staff.

5. Vegetable of the Month[™]

Vegetable of the Month[™] (VOM[™]) is a program developed by FoodChange to teach adult food stamp recipients in New York City how to purchase, store, cook, and enjoy fresh vegetables in season. It promotes a plant-based, whole-foods diet of minimally processed foods. As part of SchoolFood Plus, VOM is being introduced to parents in public schools within the catchment areas for the first time.

6. Choice, Control and Change

Choice, Control, and Change (C3) is an extension into middle school of the existing LiFE science curriculum, which was also developed by Teachers College. In addition to meeting science and health education standards, the program seeks to provide students with clear, conceptual understandings of the complex roles of biology and the 21st century food system in influencing personal behavior, health, and body size; help students build skills and attitudes that lead to competence or personal control in navigating today’s complex food system and sedentary environment; focus students on

improving healthful eating and physical activity practices as a means to overweight prevention; and increase student's interest in the health sciences and health science careers.

Coalition building

There are five components of the SchoolFood Plus coalition building efforts, structured within three tiers: community coalitions, city-wide coalitions and a national coalition.

1. EATWISE/Youth Food Corps

EATWISE (Educated and Aware Teens Who Inspire Smart Eating) was designed by FoodChange to be a youth-led, action based movement focused on improving access to healthier foods both inside and outside of school. Currently organized as a club at Food and Finance High School in Manhattan, EATWISE works to raise awareness among its members, other students, their families and their communities about food and food-related health issues.

2. Food and Fitness Councils

The Food and Fitness Councils are school-based volunteer organizations composed of a cross section of people with an interest in school food who convene about once a month to discuss and assess food and health-related issues within the school setting, create programs, and develop food and health related policies for the school.

3. Youth/Community Coalition

This coalition is still in the development process and its shape and purpose have yet to be defined. As this coalition develops, the Food and Fitness Councils and EATWISE accomplish many of the goals originally outlined for the Youth/Community Coalition.

4. NYC Systems Coalition

The Systems Coalition (more popularly known as the New York City Coalition or the SchoolFood Plus Coalition) brings together a range of New York City and State organizations, institutions and agencies with an interest in school food issues.

5. National Coalition

The National Coalition represents food advocacy organizations from some of the country's largest cities who are coming together to network, collaborate, and create a unified, collective and strong voice for changes in school food policy and food industry practice on a national level.

Some elements of SFP are not directly funded by the Kellogg grant. In particular, the school-based programming and some of the coalition work have independent funding streams and programmatic lives outside of the SFP Initiative. The boundaries between what is included under the title "SchoolFood Plus" and what has its own identity are not always clear.

The SchoolFood Plus Initiative has been and will continue to be implemented gradually, with each component, program, goal and coalition progressing at its own rate and evaluated against its own specific timeframe, projections and goals.

2. How have SchoolFood Plus recipes been utilized by OSF and participating schools?

The SchoolFood Plus recipes being utilized today are based on the plant-based CookShop[®] recipes that were prepared and served in cafeterias by kitchen staff in some of the schools where the CookShop[®] Classroom curriculum was being taught between 1994 and 2004. Over the past year, CookShop[®] Cafeteria was transformed into SchoolFood Plus Cafeteria through the joint efforts of FoodChange and OSF. This represents a move from informality to formality, including the switch from school-by-school to system-wide implementation, the reformulation of all the recipes, systematic training of kitchen staff in cooking skills, and new strategies for introducing the recipes into the schools.

As of the end of SY 04-05, 32 SchoolFood Plus recipes had been created, tested, and served as a part of the school lunch menu cycle, with varying frequency, citywide. From December 2004 through June of 2005, SchoolFood Plus recipes appeared on citywide menus 97 times, or 173% of the SchoolFood Plus goal. In those schools in which multiple components of SchoolFood Plus are being implemented (30 schools by the end of SY04-05), the recipes were planned to appear 1,935 times (76% of the goal).

Some of the obstacles to taking SchoolFood Plus Cafeteria to scale include time and labor intensive trainings (such as knife-handling and culinary technique); tweaking recipes effectively for non-cooking kitchens; and developing a system for training cafeteria staff with varying skills and kitchen equipment and resources.

In SY 05-06, a total of 40 SFP recipes are planned for school lunch menus, all of which feature the plant-based foods of the CookShop[®] Classroom curriculum.

3. Has students' consumption of SchoolFood Plus recipes increased in participating schools, and why?

The evaluation team identified, developed, and tested two broad types of measures for this outcome evaluation question. The first assesses knowledge and attitudes about foods and nutrition, preferences for the foods emphasized in the SchoolFood Plus program, and reported behaviors around eating these foods. The second type of measure involves direct observation of food being selected, eaten, and left as waste. The team established the psychometric properties of these measures in the targeted population. Equally as important, the feasibility of administering these measures on a large scale, for the Phase 3 evaluation, was assessed and determined.

4. Has SchoolFood Plus led to increases in the number of students eating school meals?

This outcome evaluation question is meant to test the hypothesis that SchoolFood Plus activities are leading more children to eat school meals in the targeted elementary schools. A large quantity of data was gathered by FoodChange staff during Phase 2 that reflects the number of students eligible for free and reduced meals and average daily participation in school breakfast and lunch. This information becomes the baseline data for outcome evaluation over the next two school years. In the targeted elementary schools within the catchment areas, nearly all of the

children are eligible for free and reduced meals (for example, 98% of the children in Central Brooklyn). To maximize federal reimbursements, OSF and its partners are seeking to increase the timely submittal of household income verification forms (Form 1041).

Over the course of Phase 3, the evaluation will monitor changes in the eligibility and participation rates for school meals. From a program design standpoint, however, with the exception of the 1041 working group within the SchoolFood Plus Coalition, it is not clear what facets of SchoolFood Plus are expected to increase either eligibility or participation rates. The program is not focused on encouraging children to eat more, per se, but rather to be educated and interested in the plant-based recipes. Over the next few years, these recipes will constitute a small percentage of the foods being served to the children, even in the SchoolFood Plus Cafeteria schools.

5. How have students, teachers, administration, parents, and coalition partners responded to SchoolFood Plus?

This question relates to the formative evaluation and seeks to determine, in a qualitative way, the relevance and importance of SchoolFood Plus to people within reach of the NYC school meals program but who are not involved in the leadership of SchoolFood Plus.

As part of the interview process during Phase 2 of the evaluation, nearly all interviewees were asked “What is SchoolFood Plus?” The evaluation team received a wide range of responses to this question. Though individual components of SchoolFood Plus are well known and respected by those within its reach, there is little awareness of SchoolFood Plus as a distinct entity, including among partners, coalition members and others closest to the Initiative. Among stakeholders, there is a distinct inability to succinctly define SchoolFood Plus and a lack of shared language or nomenclature for the program’s many components and subprograms.

To remedy this, FoodChange has undertaken recent efforts to strengthen the identity of SchoolFood Plus and promote the initiative overall, as well as several of its components individually. A SchoolFood Plus logo has been developed as the first step in a broader communications plan for the program. A biweekly email newsletter was published and widely distributed. CookShop® Cafeteria was renamed SchoolFood Plus Cafeteria as part of an effort to bring more attention to the recipes’ centrality in SchoolFood Plus.

6. Does participation in CookShop® Cafeteria or CookShop® Classroom lead to change in KAB about food, farming, cooking, and consumption compared to nonparticipants?

This is an outcome evaluation question. The research design for administering KAB surveys during Phase 3 was determined and the instruments tested for reliability and validity and refined during Phase 2. Evaluators administered surveys to 87 children in kindergarten and second grade in two schools, and retested students in one of the schools in order to establish test-retest reliability of the survey instrument. During this phase of research the survey was significantly revised based on suggestions made by the evaluators who tested it initially and according to input from teachers as to appropriate wording and formatting. FoodChange staff were also extremely involved in the revision process to ensure that the topics and foods represented in the survey instrument were appropriate for assessing the impact of SchoolFood Plus as a whole.

7. *Have the three different combinations of SchoolFood Plus programming (cafeteria only, classroom only, or saturation intensive model) led to different outcomes in terms of student knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and program satisfaction?*

This outcome evaluation question seeks to determine if KAB is different among students depending on the level of SchoolFood Plus programming implemented within their school. During Phase 2, the research design necessary to answer this question was formulated, including a determination of the unit of analysis.

8. *How has procurement of locally grown fruits and vegetables changed as a result of SchoolFood Plus and who are the participating farmers?*

One objective of the SchoolFood Plus Initiative is to “utilize foods grown by New York farmers and procured by the NYC public school system in the newly developed plant-based recipes, in cafeterias city-wide.” This research questions explores how SchoolFood Plus has affected the purchasing practices of OSF in buying locally grown fruits and vegetables.

During Phase 2, the evaluation team collected information about the types of products that OSF is looking to procure from local sources, as well as information about the Department of Defense’s DOD Fresh program and its recruitment of suppliers. OSF has not and does not currently collect information on the quantity or value of produce that comes from New York State. While this baseline has yet to be established, several concurrent efforts to increase the flow of local product into OSF are presently underway.

The intentional purchasing of New York State produce began as a partnership between OSF and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) in 2003, when OSF made a commitment to purchase exclusively New York State apples. This coincided with OSF’s participation in the DOD Fresh, a federally funded program focused on increasing schools’ access to fresh fruits and vegetables which has made it a practice to procure from regional farms. In SY 04-05, OSF received over \$3 million in allocations from DOD Fresh and used its full allotment. The funds were used to obtain fresh sliced apples and whole apples (from NYS farmers) and other fresh fruit and vegetable “ready to eat” items such as sliced oranges and pineapple push-ups, which are increasingly popular among school children and seen as one of the most important vehicles to increase children’s consumption of fruits and vegetables.

NYSDAM plays an important role in the state’s farm-to-school efforts. A NYSDAM staff member identifies and facilitates relationships between NYS farmers and farmer organizations and DOD Fresh and, increasingly, works with other farmers and farmer associations to help OSF meet more of its fresh produce needs with local supply outside of the DOD system. Local procurement goals will be met through an intricate product development agenda starting with a broad-based outreach approach.

NYSDAM views DOD Fresh as a gateway to increased future local procurement in NYC schools via other mechanisms. The program provides an opportunity for OSF to get a taste of buying local produce and for NYSDAM to build successful examples of farm-to-school relationships. For this reason, NYSDAM has worked closely, strategically, and carefully—item by item, and menu by menu—with OSF, farmers, growers’ associations, processors, packers and DOD Fresh employees to ensure and to prove that NYS agriculture has or can build the capacity to serve NYS schools. In particular, the example of apples grown, sliced and packaged in New

York has been held up as a great victory for NYC local procurement and an indicator of what is possible.

Outside of DOD Fresh, OSF's produce comes through their 5 distributors who each supply one borough and are contracted through an established bid system. Brokers play a significant important role between OSF and sources of food, whether it is processed foods coming from food manufacturers or fresh foods coming from farmers or distributors. Brokers are vital assistants to both sides of the procurement equation, as they both introduce new ideas or specifications, and find the right firms to bring new products to their customers.

Though OSF defines specifications for the bid, distributors source produce at their discretion and OSF has not set (and potentially *may not* set due to federal law) any requirements or geographic parameters on where the produce comes from. Further, OSF pays its distributors a set price for produce (a price that is adjusted for the Producer Price Index) and for other items, with a consistent per-case mark up, regardless of where those items come from. Because of that, OSF employees tend to know little about the relative costs, qualities and logistical issues of local vs. non-local produce.

OSF has not formally mandated that distributors procure certain foods or a certain percentage of food from local or regional growers or put "local" as a requirement within the bid. Blight, weather, and other agricultural risks were raised by OSF employees as concerns about limiting distributors to local produce. In addition, there are issues related to the legality of using federal funding (like the Child Nutrition funds that OSF relies on) to specify geographic boundaries for purchasing foods because of interstate commerce laws, unless those foods are purchased *directly* from farmers or farmers' associations rather than through distributors, OSF's traditional procurement process. Barring any such restrictions, OSF employees felt that simply expressing a preference for locally procured produce would be insufficient; "if it's not mandated, [distributors] won't do it."

To support increased efforts to procure local foods at OSF, SchoolFood Plus established a Local Procurement Working Group (LPWG), composed of representatives from FoodChange, OSF and NYSDAM. Recent LPWG goals have included analyzing OSF's bid system and prioritizing bringing local foods into the Summer Meals Program.

9. How has participating in SchoolFood Plus affected local farmers, individually and in aggregate?

When seasonally available, OSF's distributors purchase whole truckloads directly from farmers and wholesalers at Hunts Point Market who buy from local farms. Here, too, there is no record keeping about the quantity or value of locally grown foods that is purchased by OSF. In part, this is because the network of wholesalers and distributors keeps OSF three or more steps removed from the farmer who grows the produce they receive. Further, while more than \$3 million of fresh produce was procured by OSF through the DOD Fresh program in SY 04-05, the portion that came from local farmers was not discernable.

Based on existing information, it will not be possible to track quantities of local purchasing. Furthermore, before outcome evaluation can take place, it is important to determine measurable goals against which progress can be measured. There is a strong commitment to buying local produce among the leadership at OSF and to establishing a tracking system beginning in SY 05-06.

10. *What value have the various coalitions added to the SchoolFood Plus program?*

There are three coalition components to SchoolFood Plus, distinct in their goals, interests, jurisdiction, and the value they seek to add to SchoolFood Plus:

1. *Community or school-based coalitions*, which currently operate on a school level, but which are intended to operate as a network of school-based coalitions that advocate for change at a school, neighborhood or community level. The EATWISE club has been very active at the Food and Finance High School in Manhattan and three Food and Fitness Councils were formed and active in three elementary schools;
2. *“New York City System” Coalition*, comprising representatives from a broad range of city-wide organizations in the fields of education, health, politics, and social services, which advocates for change at a city level; and
3. *National Coalition*, which is in its nascent phase but will work as a network of large urban centers that advocate for change in both federal food and health policy and food industry practices.

The coalitions are directed by SchoolFood Plus staff at FoodChange to create and build organized interest groups that will operate at various levels to advocate for change and to create a coordinated and organized culture of action on issues related to food health and nutrition. The coalitions place SchoolFood Plus activities in a broader context (a neighborhood, a community, another urban center, another conceptual frame). The experience of assembling these groups provide SchoolFood Plus leaders with broader perspectives, while building interest in food issues in people and organizations that might have been unexposed or unfocused on the impact food might have on their work. In this way, the coalitions serve a dual purpose: they gather stakeholders, but they also create stakeholders.

Conclusions

By design, the SchoolFood Plus Initiative is complex. The underlying theory of SchoolFood Plus is to intervene at different levels: student, parent, school, community, city- and nation-wide. Activities and decisionmaking at these different levels ultimately have an impact on the eating behaviors of children. By intervening at all of these different levels the Initiative seeks to affect not only individuals but also the environment (including policies, procedures, informational messages/marketing, and food availability) which ultimately impacts consumption.

This complexity is part of the Initiative’s strength, but is also its greatest challenge, because the ambitious scale of intervention makes it difficult to define, implement, and communicate the Initiative’s multiple actions and positions.

The barriers to change in the arenas of school food and children’s nutrition are substantial, yet the evaluation team has found significant progress in achieving many of the goals established at the outset. These achievements stretch across all sectors of the Initiative, including institutional change, school-based programming, and coalition development. The Initiative has also innovated and corrected its course on various occasions, responding to both new opportunities and unforeseen obstacles. In particular, the integration of SchoolFood Plus chefs into OSF and the progress with developing, testing, and implementing new plant-based recipes in the schools deserve special recognition. This recognition extends to the cooperative efforts

among the primary partners that led to the creation of the SchoolFood Plus positions, the training of cafeteria workers, and the introduction of new plant-based recipes in the school menus.

One purpose of this phase of the evaluation was to determine whether or not the Initiative was ready for outcome-based research that will test certain aspects of the Initiative in a quantifiable way. We feel that it is. However, while the outcome-based research over the next two school years is important for measuring progress, there has been an increasing recognition that SchoolFood Plus is a long term strategy whose accomplishments should be measured over several decades. The long term time horizon also suggests a need to be patient as strategies and programs are implemented and results emerge.

One of the challenges in evaluating SchoolFood Plus is determining program boundaries. A number of the elements that make up the Initiative existed before its creation and have their own funding streams and operational imperatives. The conceptualization of SchoolFood Plus followed what can be described as an “umbrella model” in the sense that it integrated existing programs into its own logic.

The strength of this approach is threefold. One, the integration of existing programs with their own substantial funding streams results in tremendous leveraging of resources. When aggregated, the funding that supports the various school-based programming adds millions of dollars to the Kellogg investment. Two, the existing programs give entrée into the public schools while a totally new program would have to convince numerous actors within the school system to participate in a new effort. And three, the Initiative can rely on proven programs that “work” and which already reach many students. Time had already been spent developing and testing these programs so they were able to make an impact immediately.

The limitations of the umbrella model must also be recognized, including a potential danger demonstrated in the tendency to add programs or ideas as they arise and thereby stray from the core logic of the Initiative. On one hand, the Initiative can be strengthened by its flexibility and willingness to improve when good opportunities become available; on the other hand, the Initiative can lose focus if new ideas or new directions are pursued without the agreement of primary partners or thorough vetting of the change in terms of its potential value and costs.

The coalition and partnership elements of SchoolFood Plus are a unique addition to efforts to reform school meals. Despite a range of challenges and some raw nerves at times, the primary partners have dedicated themselves to the partnership approach, devoting substantial hours and energy to many meetings and finding areas for collaborative work and decision making.

The strategy of using grant funding to directly support the work of OSF in terms of paying for personnel in the bodies of the SchoolFood Plus chefs has been very successful. It has brought significant value to both OSF and the SchoolFood Plus Initiative and has been the bridge that has kept FoodChange and OSF working together despite their differences. The grant has also brought new personnel to FoodChange to work specifically on SchoolFood Plus and has recently paid for a new staff person who splits her time between DOHMH and FoodChange while representing the views and interests of DOHMH on SchoolFood Plus issues.

It is important to remember that the primary partners are not equals. This imbalance affects the partnership in a variety of ways. While all the partners have embraced SchoolFood Plus, it is an initiative primarily owned by FoodChange because of its role in developing the concept, administering the Kellogg Foundation grant, and employing the program leadership staff.

FoodChange holds the primary responsibility for the success of the Initiative because it controls the financial resources and employs the staff leadership.

The primary partners have had to learn to take very different roles as the Initiative has unfurled. For FoodChange, a longstanding advocacy organization, this has required adopting the patience needed to encourage change within a large public bureaucracy. The organization's tactics have needed to evolve from law suits, exposes, and press conferences to being an empathetic partner who sometimes accepts unsavory positions in order to maintain the partnership in the long term. For OSF, it has meant exposing its inner workings to a previously harsh critic and adjusting its priorities to the interests of others. For the other primary partners, it has meant, among other things, getting involved in issues far from their traditional purview.

In the midst of implementation, it is very difficult to step back and resume process oriented work, such as reviewing the logic model. From the evaluation perspective, however, the logic model provides a concise set of quantifiable goals against which to measure progress. As the evaluation team has proposed in its work plan for Phase 3, SchoolFood Plus should revisit the logic model, make changes if necessary, communicate these changes to staff, partners, and coalition members, and then carry on the work of the SchoolFood Plus Initiative into the second year.