Finding Food:
Community Food Procurement in the City of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

The Community Food Procurement (CFP) project assesses the potential for aggregated purchasing for the community food sector in Toronto. The project explores where community agencies get their food and what initiatives are needed to expand procurement options and increase access to healthy food at these key community centres. The overall intention of the project is to increase nutritional quality and decrease costs.

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Finding Food:
Community Food Procurement in the City of Toronto

Executive Summary

The Community Food Procurement (CFP) project assesses the potential for aggregated purchasing for the community food sector in Toronto. The community food sector encompasses a range of organizations that provide food to people who face challenges in food access, usually as a result of poverty. The sector includes multi-service agencies, drop-in centres, shelters, affordable housing with meal provision, community heath centres, food banks, and school nutrition programs. The agencies provide millions of meals per year[i], as well as numerous services that can improve access to health, training, employment and other social services. The project explores where community agencies get their food and what initiatives are needed to expand procurement options and increase access to healthy food at these key community centres. The overall intention of the project is to increase nutritional quality and decrease costs.

The CFP project proceeds through a number of stages:

1) Community food needs assessment and recommendations for procurement initiatives
2) Existing and necessary infrastructure assessment
3) Expansion and integration of new supply options with a focus on local food

This report provides a summary and recommendations from the community food needs assessment stage. Overall, almost one hundred agencies were interviewed intensively in a semi-structured format to elicit good practices and ideas for solutions as well as quantitative data such as budgets, meal counts and food sources. The project has partnered with the Parkdale Food Flow Project, a similar initiative with a focus on a core area of Toronto. Surveys and focus groups have been conducted through the Parkdale Food Flow Project. Secondary research supplements the primary data to identify good practices from other jurisdictions (across Canada as well as abroad).

The research indicates that:

1) Access to fresh, healthy food, either donated or purchased, is not meeting demand.
2) Opportunities for aggregated community food procurement and distribution exist.

Overall the project found that there is a demonstrable need for a dedicated community food distributor. The interviews, surveys, secondary research and focus groups demonstrate many challenges in accessing certain items, as well as a somewhat ad hoc use of budgets and time in purchasing. They also show an appetite for change, coordinated purchasing and collaborative solutions. Solutions to these challenges should be organized through the development of aggregated procurement and distribution focused on the specific needs of the sector.

Key findings from the Community Food Procurement project include the following:

1. Many agencies are not able to meet their healthy eating goals due to lack of funding and lack of staff-time to explore the best supply options.
2. A high percentage of interviewees rely on chain grocery stores for food supplies; they purchase at retail rather than wholesale price levels.
3. Many agencies also have excellent local (neighbourhood-scale) networks of donation and purchase options.

4. In total the amount spent annually by all Toronto agencies is estimated at about $29 million. This number does not include institutions (e.g. hospitals), Student Nutrition Programs, or Meals on Wheels programs.
5. Often, inefficient use of limited funding and staff-time results from ad hoc solutions; solutions are resourceful but may not make the best use of the limited funding and time.
6. The majority of interviewees have inadequate infrastructure to manage the food procurement system or their meal provision needs.
7. A lack of knowledge about supply options as well as nutritional issues can prevent agencies from achieving the greatest impact possible.
8. In general, demand for community meal programs has been increasing significantly, particularly in the last 2-3 years.

Key issues in community food procurement

Key issues reviewed in this report include:

- Healthy eating issues (challenges and solutions)
- Budgets
- Sub-sector variations
- Challenges and solutions for coordinating within agencies and across networks of neighbouring agencies
- Participations levels (of clients)
- Housing with lack of food access
- Waste
- Infrastructure needs
- Knowledge and training needs

Summary of conclusions

Overall the sector shows tremendous resilience and resourcefulness but faces inadequate budgets and staffing to realize the full potential of food programs for a range of issues from health to social enterprise development. A review of the cost per meal and a price comparison from a range of suppliers shows a great deal of variation in expenditures and cost of product. The number of meals provided does not seem to coincide with the amount of staff-time or with the cost per meal.

In the absence of sector-specific suppliers, the practices are not always efficient (in time or cost) nor do they always achieve their healthy eating goals. A dedicated distributor would meet more of their specific product needs in category, format, service model and price. It was clear that an online distribution option tailored to the sector would be well received. Agencies are eager to work with a distributor that truly meets their needs. The research provided precise guidelines for a dedicated community food distributor, including product range and type, service requirements and delivery needs.

The Food for Life Partnership provides healthy food for schools in the U.K. They found that "The Social Return on Investment calculation found that over 3£ in social, economic and environmental value was created for every 1£ spent. This does not take account of any of the health, educational or cultural benefits of a whole-schools approach to food which are the primary objectives of FFLP" (Food for Life Partnership: 8).

The next steps of the project will include the development of supply options to meet the needs of the sector as well as pilot projects to begin to meet the needs identified in the first stage of the Community Food Procurement project.

Community Needs Assessment: From hunger to community response

The community food sector

The community food sector encompasses a range of organizations that provide food to people who face challenges in food access, usually as a result of poverty. One recent report shows that 12.2% of Canadians are living with food insecurity of various levels from severe to moderate. 17% of children are food insecure (Tarasuk 2013). This represents a statistically significant increase (almost 1%) since 2008. Other studies indicate that the impact of even marginal food insecurity on health has been underestimated (Cook 2013). The Hunger Count report[ii] provides excellent statistics on food bank use; the CFP project report explores the "community food sector" in general, including meals and other food provision. The sector includes drop-in centres, transitional/ supportive housing with meal provision, community heath centres, food banks in multi-service agencies, community meal programs, a range of community service organizations, shelters, and school nutrition programs (the latter, as well as affordable housing, have not been included in this research). The impact of food provision, particularly in a community setting, goes far beyond filling bellies, and achieves impacts in health and social well-being that argue for the great importance of the public investment in these programs.

The total financial expenditures for food by the sector are considerable. Reporting agencies (approximately one hundred of the top food purchasing agencies), represent about 27% of the Toronto agencies identified for the research that provide food. However, some of the largest agencies charge fees for meals; in all numeric calculations in this report these agencies (11 in total) were not included. 61 agencies (around 17% of all agencies) interviewed cited budget figures that account for meals without fees (or in one or two cases, very minor fees such as .50/ meal). Purchases among these agencies total over $4.6 million. Estimates that combine primary and secondary sources, with meal programs at supportive/ affordable housing included, put total expenditures on food for the sector at almost $29 million. The total sector expenditure is likely to be considerably more than that with institutions, Student Nutrition Programs and other agencies not in the research set included. Further data would be needed to create a more precise figure.

The expenditures tend to go to transnational food service distributors or to large-scale grocery chains. Collaborative purchasing solutions could result in increased buying power as well as better nutrition and health outcomes.

The project is exploring a number of possible scenarios to address the opportunities. The goal is the implementation of a pilot project based on assessments of agency needs, distributor infrastructure (needed and existing), new supply options, and funding options. Overall, the goal of the project is based on a commitment to collaborative and shared solutions. Each partner organization has key assets and expertise. Together, these assets provide the basis for innovative and shared solutions that will increase overall community food access in Toronto.

The agencies that provide food for people in need—drop-in centres, shelters, churches, settlement programs, multi-service agencies, community health centres, transitional housing, etc.—respond to a diversity of overlapping needs. Has the shaky economy driven you out of a job? Are you temporarily or regularly homeless? Are you rebuilding your life after deinstitutionalization from mental health facilities? Are you climbing out of or struggling with substance use? Are you elderly and lonely in your tiny apartment? Do language issues or newcomer status keep you from accessing workplaces and other amenities? Have you paid your rent from social assistance and now have nothing left for food? Are you all of the above?

"Food makes it all happen. Food brings people together. It creates a neutral space; people might not feel they can go to other spaces. Food is the heart and soul of everything we do."
(Interview 2013).

The reasons that people access community food programs are diverse, overlapping and multiplying. Community food agencies provide essential services that respond to many systemic ills, in particular hunger that results from poverty, as rents increase and social assistance levels are cut. Beyond the simple sustenance of emergency food that keeps people alive from day to day, the centres provide more complex and long-term services to restore community, dignity and capacity to populations that have been marginalized in our society.

The Community Food Procurement (CFP) Project examines and assesses in detail the procurement practices of this complex sector. The research asks where the agencies get their food, how much they spend, and how aggregated purchasing through an existing or new partner distributor might better meet their needs. The results are used to delineate the framework of a community food distributor: what products, service and infrastructure would best suit this sector's needs?

Research approach by the numbers

- 355 agencies identified and assessed for meal programs and food activities. Many sites identified do not focus on food but offer significant meal programs (at least twice/ week).
- Based on approved criteria, all agencies were ranked as interview candidates
- 84 priority candidates for interviews were identified. 27% (95) of the 355 agencies were interviewed. Very few agencies that were contacted did not agree to be interviewed (usually due to lack of time rather than lack of willingness).
- A scan of geographic and sectoral distribution among the agencies was completed
- Two research assistants were trained and integrated into the project
- Regular meetings (bi-weekly) were held with the lead coordinator from the Parkdale Food Flow Project to exchange ideas and plans, coordinate research, and avoid overlap
- Additional non-agency and supplier interviews were conducted for initial partnership development for the next stages: 2) infrastructure and 3) supplier assessments

Summary of project design and progress

Scan and assessment of agencies

- Scan existing community food procurement practices in other jurisdictions
- Conduct key informant interviews to assess the food procurement practices of a broad range of community food sector agencies
- Analyze the cost and quality of foods available through existing suppliers

Overview

A database of agencies with their food and meal activities was created and organizations ranked by their engagement with food for identifying interview candidates (See Appendix C for this criteria). The interview questions were developed in partnership with the Advisory Group, which includes representation from the Parkdale Food Flow Project (lead by the Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC) and Toronto Food Strategy. Interview strategies built on the existing Toronto Food Strategy community food procurement research, focused on Community Health Centres (CHCs). Regular meetings have been held with the Parkdale Food Flow project (a neighbourhood based project with similar goals) to exchange ideas, integrate planning and thereby leverage resources.

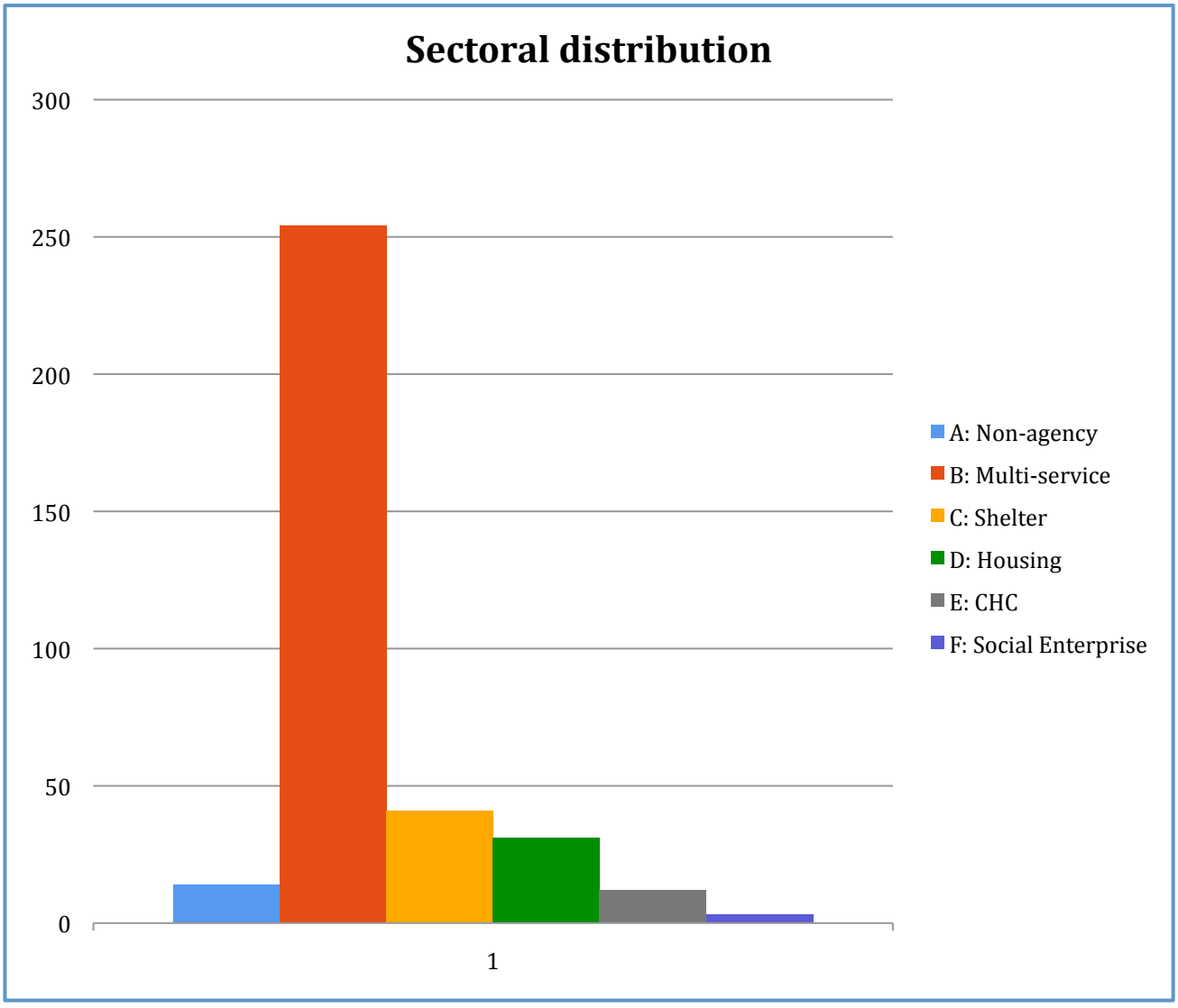
Report design and audience

The report is designed for an array of stakeholders to this project, and contains a variety of tools for different target audiences. For partners developing new community food procurement models, the report provides data on the needs of the sector as well as recommendations for aggregated procurement and distribution. For community agencies, the report provides information on what other agencies experience and the variety of solutions for food procurement that they have

generated. A sampling of comparative prices and a list of suppliers used by agencies provide concrete tools that agencies have urgently requested. For both groups, the impact assessment section provides an argument for change in addition to the proven needs of the sector identified in the earlier sections. Overall, the project has found not only a need for healthier food access in the sector, but persuasive reasons for action in a sector that promises multiplying benefits from health to economic development.

A note on confidentiality: the research was designed to protect the names of individuals as well as the names of the agencies they represent. In a few cases, the material is public knowledge, in which case, the name was used to promote interesting innovations at the agency.

Charts 1: Distribution by agency type

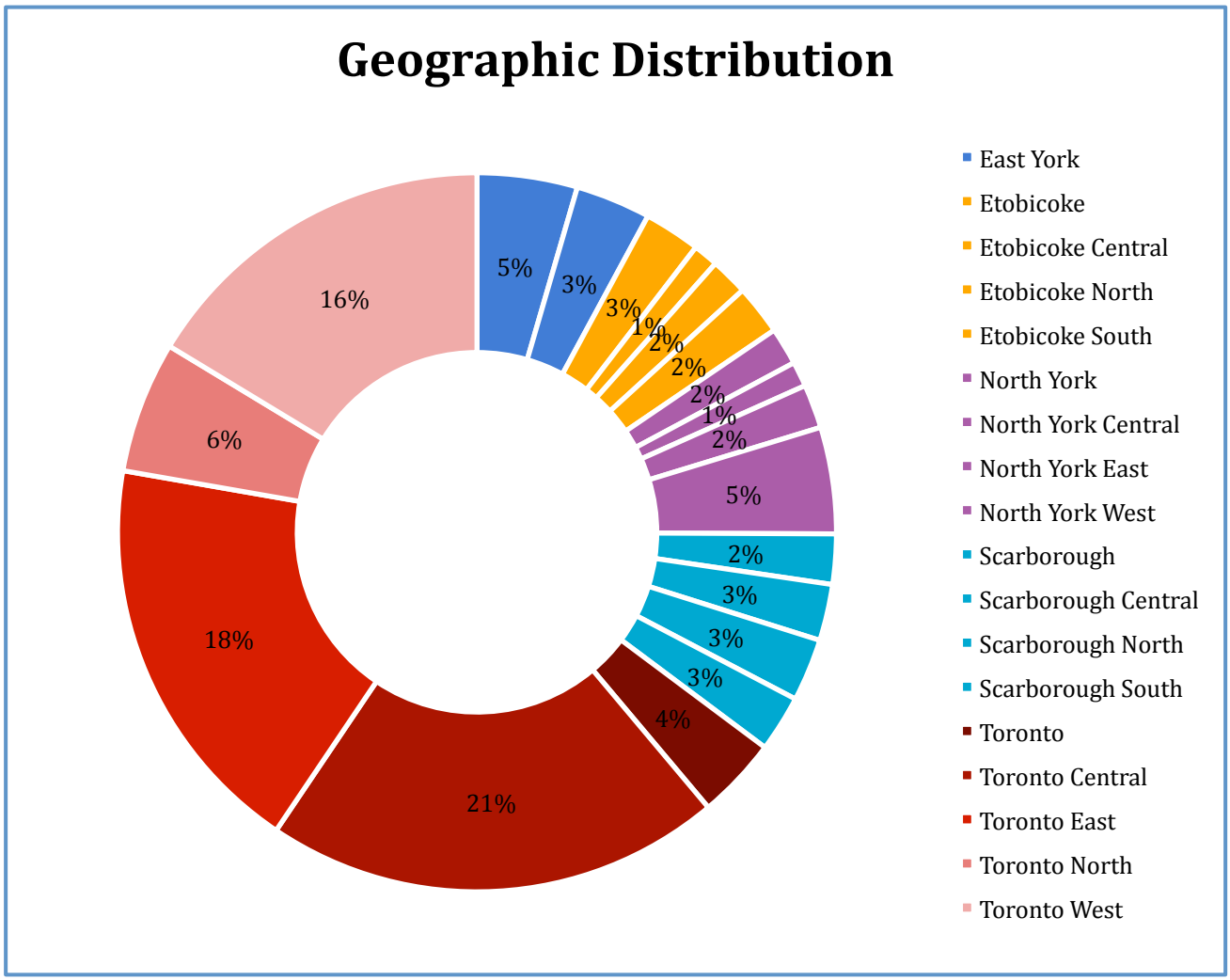


Interviews

In total, the research assessed in detail 95 of the 355 Toronto agencies that were identified with substantial food programs. The focus was on organizations most likely to benefit from dedicated community food distribution, based on the size and frequency of their programs. Interviews were semi-structured. The process included open-ended questions and the solicitation of key budget,

staff-time and purchasing numbers. In addition, surveys and focus groups with several sub-sector groups were conducted through the Parkdale Food Flow Project.

Charts 2: Distribution by geography



Summary of interview results

Results show that:

1. Many agencies are not able to meet their healthy eating goals due to lack of funding and lack of staff-time to explore the best supply options.
2. A high percentage of interviewees rely on chain grocery stores for food supplies, purchasing at retail rather than wholesale price levels.
3. Many agencies also have excellent local (neighbourhood-scale) networks of donation and purchase options.
4. Many agencies have no dedicated food budget, but draw on other budgets for food provision.
5. A significant number of agencies have very limited or non-existent staff hours dedicated to food preparation or client engagement in food preparation or skills development, and rely on volunteers and unpaid staff-time to deliver these programs.
6. Often, inefficient use of limited funding and staff-time results from ad hoc solutions; solutions are resourceful but may not make the best use of the limited funding and time.

7. The majority of interviewees have inadequate infrastructure to manage the food procurement system or their meal provision needs. The most common lack is insufficient storage, but may include inadequate dish-washing or even cooking facilities.
8. A lack of knowledge about supply options as well as nutritional issues can prevent agencies from achieving the greatest impact possible.
9. In general, demand for community meal programs has been increasing significantly, particularly in the last 2-3 years.

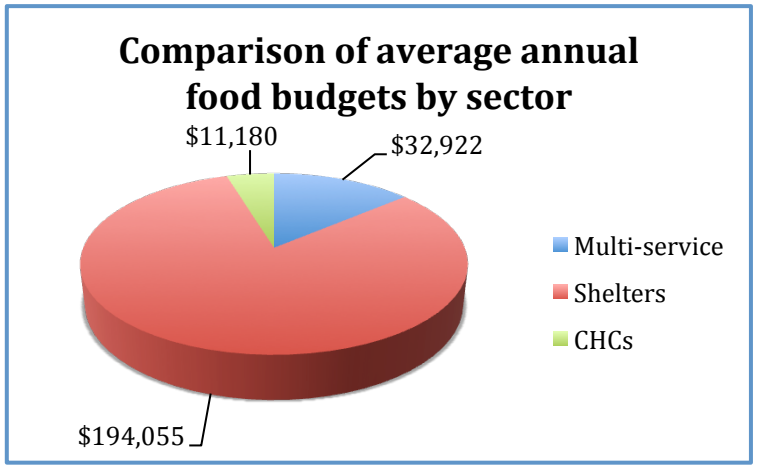
Emerging themes

The data has indicated a diverse sector full of creative (though not necessarily ideal) solutions. Challenges faced in the sector tend to multiply and exacerbate each other, creating a domino effect of sub-optimal results. Key topics have been identified that are recurring and important issues: budgets, procurement needs, knowledge/ training and infrastructure.

Budgets

The chart below shows relative financial resources. Many shelters are funded through city resources while drop-in centres and independent shelters rely on donations and grants. For the purposes of addressing community food needs, the chart indicates average expenditures regardless of the source of funding; this indicates purchasing ability for potential distributors. Note that shelters serve more meals on average (almost twice as many) as multi-service centres, but average annual budgets are almost six times as large at shelters. Other key findings on the issue of budget include:

- Most agencies, especially multi-service ones, feel their food budgets are low; some agencies have little or no budget for food coordinators or for food purchases
- Practices show an opportunity to use resources (food expenditures and staff-time) more efficiently through coordinated purchasing or dedicated food staff at agencies
- Agencies frequently cite waste as a problem. This includes waste by clients or by agencies receiving donations they are not able to use
- There is high turnover or loss of staff due to unstable funding situations
- Significant additional outcomes are delivered in organizations that invest in food staff
- Access to funding varies by sub-sector and is not directly correlated to the levels of food provision
- In some cases, staff levels are not linked to greater output or better healthy eating outcomes, suggesting that more than new staff is required



Procurement needs

- Procurement and menu planning must balance between clients' preferences and healthy eating guidelines
- Some food categories (dairy, eggs, meat and produce) are particularly hard to access for agencies with limited budgets

- Agencies also seek variety, as well as ethnocultural menu ingredients

Knowledge and training

- Agency staff and clients may need additional training in cooking for healthy eating
- Staff lack knowledge of supply options; agencies rarely conduct regular review of pricing and options
- Staff lack knowledge of pricing and have some misconceptions about relative costs (e.g., assumption that produce is more expensive than junk food)
- An opportunity for peer training has emerged from the data; much expertise and many excellent ideas exist scattered across the sector; online or in-person exchanges could greatly increase the capacity of the sector

Infrastructure

- Most agencies report a lack of infrastructure (storage, key equipment), as well as unused infrastructure (e.g., kitchens that are under-utilized)

Solutions

- Agencies identify both city-wide and neighbourhood scale solutions and support networks to access and distribute food
- Existing successful solutions may be integrated with programming (e.g., grocery shopping for meals with participants to teach life skills)
- Emerging themes indicate the guidelines for a successful community food distributor

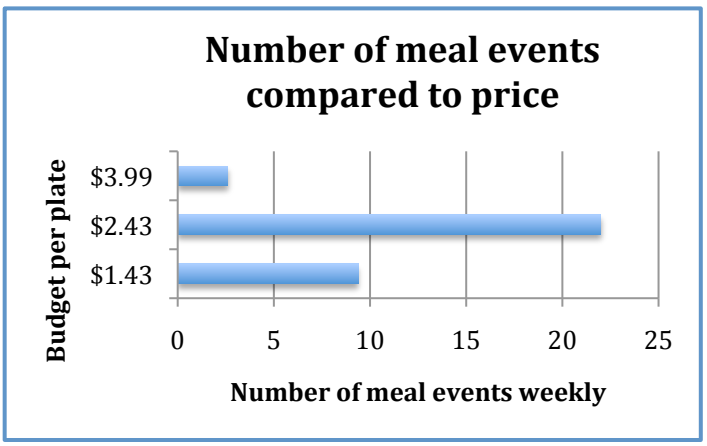
Community Food Needs Assessment: Details

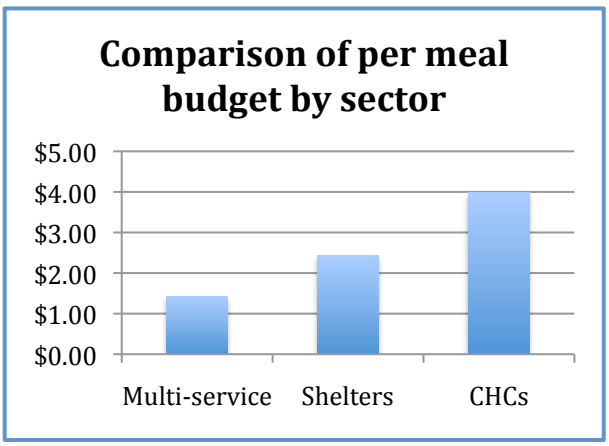
"Every kitchen is its own puzzle" (Non-agency interview).

The interviews identified a number of issues that have an impact on the quality and capacity of food programs at agencies. These include health issues, budgets, partnerships, internal coordination, participation levels, the challenges of food access for newly housed people, waste, infrastructure needs, and knowledge/ training.

Budgets

Overall, agencies report that the need for food provision is increasing, particularly in the last few years, while their budgets have either remained the same or been reduced. Umbrella organizations confirm the agency experience. There has been a doubling of demand at the drop-in centres (non-agency interview). Resources are not evenly distributed. While drop-in centres experience this





significant increase, and are some of the largest agencies providing food to the hungry, their budgets per plate are the lowest across all sub-categories. Per plate costs average $1.43 for drop-in centres (excluding Meals on Wheels programs at multi-service agencies). Per plate for shelters and Community Health Centres (CHCs) are $2.43 and $3.99 respectively[iii]. These numbers are based on self-reporting from the agencies interviewed[iv].

The financial resources of organizations vary enormously, more than averages and totals can capture. Annual budgets for food range from $0 (all food is donated) to almost a million for large multi-site agencies. The number of meals provided does not seem to parallel the financial resources. Financial resources seem to be more tied to sub-sector membership; that is, senior and childcare centres are more likely to be better funded for food, as are the shelters.

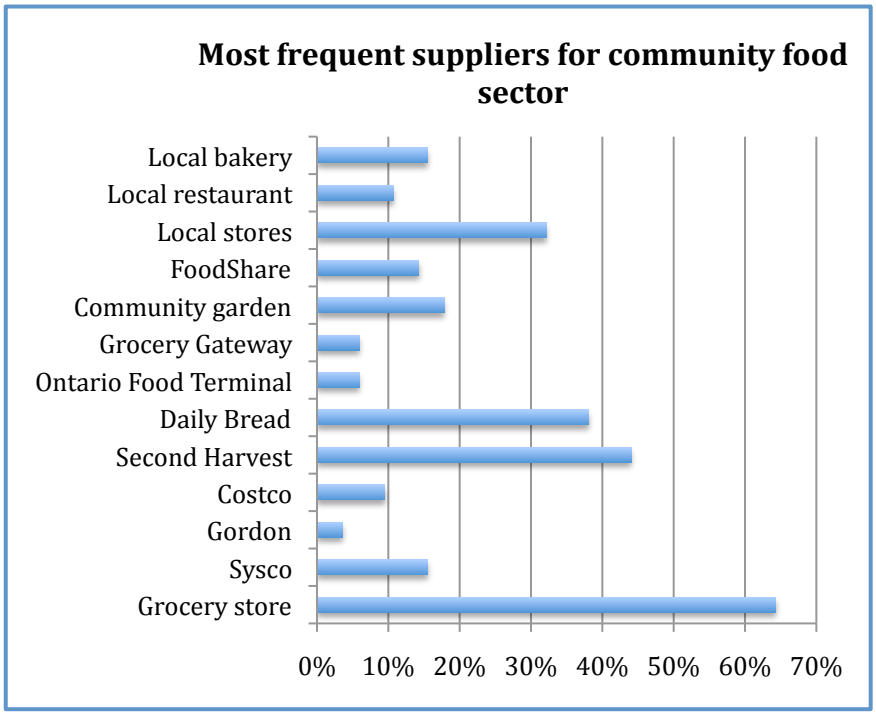
Quantity of meals

Overall, shelters provide almost twice as many meals as drop-in centres on average; however, average food budgets (many of which are based on a per diem from the city) are almost six times as large as drop-in centres. These numbers are specific to food expenditures, and do not include labour, infrastructure or any other expenses. Both primary and secondary research show that over 6.5 million meals are provided annually by the community food sector. Among the 84 agencies from this research that provide regular meals without charging a fee over 3 million meals annually are reported.

Some agencies (e.g., most CHCs) did not know how many meals they provide, but this number would be low and have little significant impact on the total. Interviewees were not always able to report on finances; those able to provide figures in the interview group report annual expenditures of over $4.6 million on food. This number excludes interviewees who charge a fee for meals; among all interviewees reporting (over 2/3 of agencies interviewed), almost $15 million was spent annually on food.

Suppliers

Suppliers for the sector range widely. Discount chain grocery stores, Daily Bread Food Bank, Second Harvest and local stores are the most common sources of supply. Generally, purchases are made at the chain grocery stores. Daily Bread and Second Harvest provide donated food (although through public funding in the Creating Health Plus program, Daily Bread is able to supply dairy and eggs to about half of the drop-in centres). The local stores may be a source for last minute purchases, but are also frequently offering generous and regular donations to a partner agency.



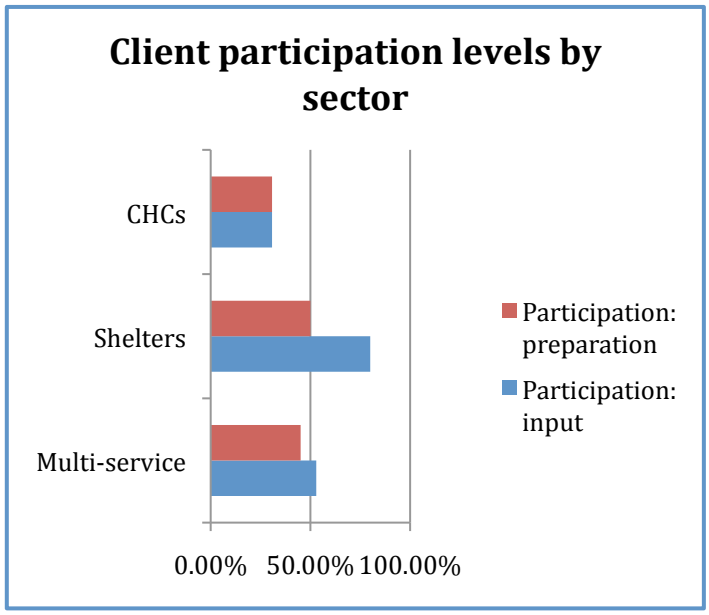
Other important sources include large food service distributors such as Sysco. Many agencies also rely on community gardens, local bakeries and restaurants for donations. They also tend to purchase from independent local grocery stores on a regular basis. The research did not capture relative percentages of supply from

each source. Since the larger agencies are more likely to rely on Sysco and Gordon Food Services, it is likely that these, combined with the discount chain stores, receive the bulk of the sector's budget. Gardens, although an important place for socializing and training, probably provide very little actual food for programs. Only one agency reported an arrangement with a sizable acreage (outside the city).

Almost all agencies also source from a range of other suppliers; these include independent wholesalers, as well as quite expensive options such as Grocery Gateway or local, organic suppliers. A number of agencies also purchase from ethnocultural food sources (particularly for halal meat). These are listed in the appendix to support review and assessment of suppliers. Agencies, unless they are very large, have little time to review prices and compare suppliers. This means that price increases after agencies start to buy are probably not apparent to them. Large suppliers that are able to provide salespeople are able to shape and drive the purchases of the sector without undue accountability or competition. The choice of supplier is often made somewhat randomly, either part of a long-standing contract, or a supplier that the chef knew from previous workplaces.

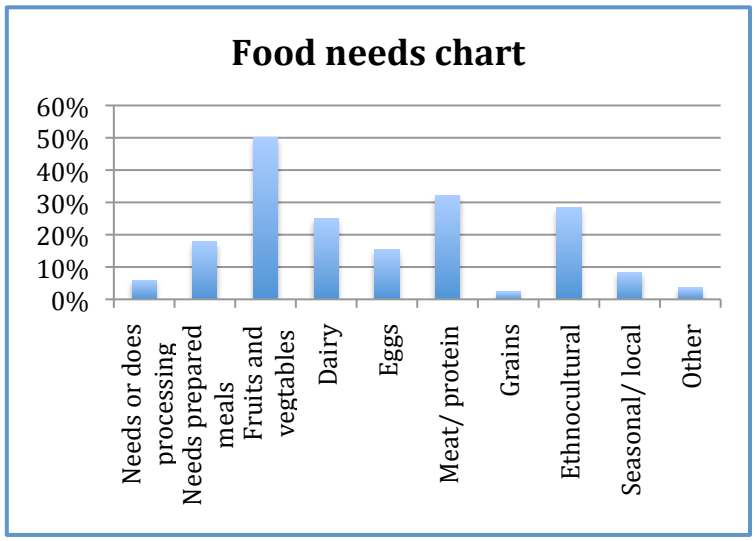
Participation and training

Overall, the community food sector is an important venue for food skills training and engagement of people with each other and the community. Multi-service/ drop-in centres in particular mobilize significant participation (beyond input and feedback on meal quality). This may be partly an exigency due to low or non-existent budgets for the food program, but it also reflects a commitment to help people rebuild their lives and re-engage in the mainstream society, workplaces, and community leadership. Some agencies have regulations that prevent residents or participants from entering the kitchen.



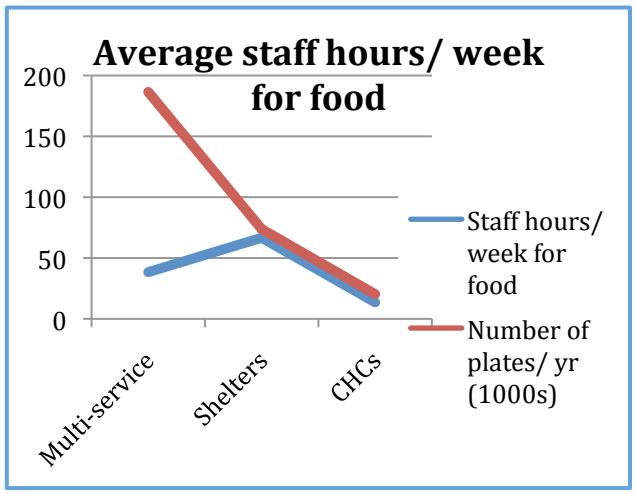
Products and product categories

A pattern emerged from the research that shows that agencies face challenges in sourcing certain key categories of product.



In general, it is clear that many of them would prefer to provide healthier meals than they are able to, given limited resources. Key categories of need include fresh fruit and vegetables (50%), dairy and eggs (25 and 15%), and meat (32%). Meat per calorie supplied may represent some of the highest necessary expenditures for many organizations. Almost 30% of agencies are also looking for more ethnocultural foods. One of the key demands they cite for a distributor is variety; they struggle to provide a

range of healthy nutritious foods without repeating recipes frequently. Only 18% of them rely on prepared meals at least some of the time, and only 6% would like primary processing (pre-diced or sliced vegetables, peeled potatoes, etc.). Compared to programs in the U.S., who frequently rely on pre-prepared meals for large agencies, the Toronto agencies are more likely to have access to commercial kitchens. Also, participation in the kitchen is often an integral part of an agency's programming, either with members or with volunteers; the sector is rich in sous chefs.



Staff-time

Overall, multi-service agencies produce the most meals per food staff-hour. Multi-service agency staff are often also engaged in volunteer coordination, job skills training, and food programming that goes beyond meal provision. Relative staff hours are also more significant as a range: many organizations that are not shelters have no staff hours dedicated to food purchasing, preparation, or programming at all. Several people told us they were managing their (significant) meal programs "off the side of their desk", that is, with unofficial and often unpaid work hours.

Key Issues in Sector

A number of issues emerged from the research that contribute to the service and attributes needed from a successful community food distributor. These are outlined below.

Healthy eating issues

As the staff person who had hummus thrown at her can attest, providing healthy food involves much more than just putting good food out for participants. Most of the agencies describe a delicate balancing act between serving healthy food (whether from formal guidelines or just "eat more fruits and vegetables") to addressing specific cultural and personal preferences. Preference issues range from what people are used to (agencies with mostly older white populations must rely heavily on meat and potatoes) to newcomer issues with foods that are unfamiliar to them to specific dietary needs.

The uptake for healthy food varies enormously; one organization reports that their clients fight over fresh food when it is provided. Some report that they have to have salad out, and that it vanishes faster than anything else. Others say they have tried every way imaginable to get clients to eat fruits and vegetables, and have simply had no success. One agency reports that clients who have been homeless or under-employed for a long time, are used to very poor quality fare. An increase in the health value can backfire, as the clients want familiar dishes even if they are not as healthy. One multi-service centre (which includes drop-in programs and shelters) has taken a firm stance. They report that most of their programs revolve around food, and that food is connected to healing, health, medical issues, and social problems, including violence and isolation. They provide a largely vegetarian menu. They involve staff, residents and clients in meal preparation and planning and are expanding their garden program to supply the kitchens.

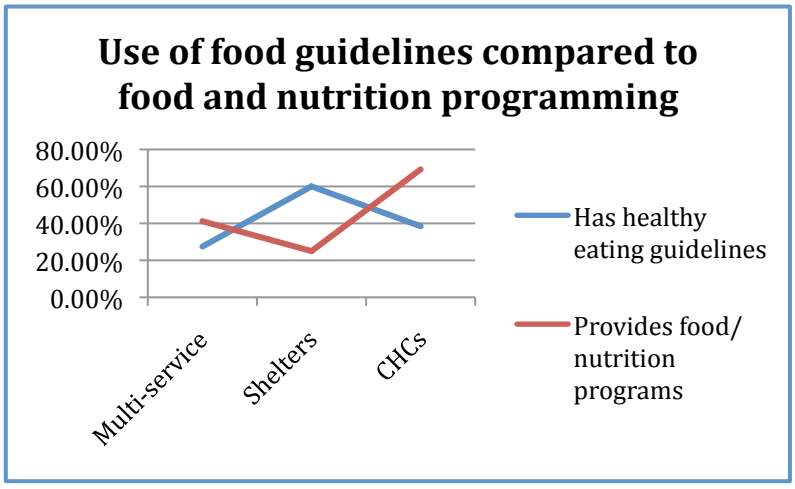
Agencies are facing disordered eating practices that reflect the mainstream society's unhealthy eating practices. These practices may be exacerbated by the clients' other challenges. For instance, people who have had trouble accessing food may overeat when they do get food.

Agency service practices vary and can inadvertently create conflict: unsupervised line-ups that allow some people to get seconds before everyone has been served, meal services that run out as numbers increase and donations dwindle, lack of choice in the food. Various solutions have been instituted which may not be applicable in all cases—one organization asks people to raise their hands to get a meal, another provides tickets to exchange for a meal. These are partly dependent on space; one downtown agency has no place for people to sit down, so there is no chance to institute some of these solutions there.

"We really do need to come to a place where we have some sort of overarching vision about what food is…"

The chefs are naturally interested in meeting the preferences of the people they are feeding. Since agencies recognize the wider impacts of food provision, including comfort, familiarity, a communal setting, and engagement in the kitchen, they take the satisfaction of clients into account in order to try to meet these goals. 56% solicit feedback from clients on their satisfaction with the meal program.

A few of the CHCs have formal healthy eating guidelines. Many shelters as well as Habitat Services agencies have concrete standards to follow. Adherence is monitored in these cases. Many agencies try at a minimum to follow Canada's Food Guide. Most organizations do not have formally recognized healthy eating standards that could allow the chefs to shift (and perhaps access additional training) as part of the organizational direction. The agencies that offer training in nutrition and food skills are not the most likely ones to have an organization-wide guideline (see chart).



If agencies have to depend on donations (38% access Daily Bread, and almost half use Second Harvest, often both), their ability to meet specific nutritional standards is limited[v]. Many of them, especially drop-in centres, source the majority of their food through these donations. They then supplement from nearby grocery stores for missing ingredients. In this context, meal-planning and the assessment or planning of nutrient levels is almost impossible; often the goods come off the truck and are cooked into hundreds of meals that day or the next, so meals are based on whatever is available from the food bank distributors.

One distortion in the system is a result of the culture of donations: from the food bank distributors through the agencies, people report that they sometimes take donations as a form of public relations, afraid that if they don't, the food will not be offered next time. "There is a relations piece when it comes to donations… there is a dilemma because we want to build the relationship… but sometimes taking in the donations is more of a pain than a benefit". One agency reports that they take the donations, but much of it goes straight into the garbage. The only beneficiary of this practice is the initial donor (usually supermarkets) as they avoid the cost of disposing of the waste themselves. This situation may have to change if garbage fees are approved for the charitable and non-profit social service sector.

Budget issues

The details and numbers from the budget assessments are reviewed above. Overall it was found that most agencies report insufficient budgets for the needs of their target populations. As one umbrella organization pointed out, when there are budget cuts, the line for food is one of the first to go. This

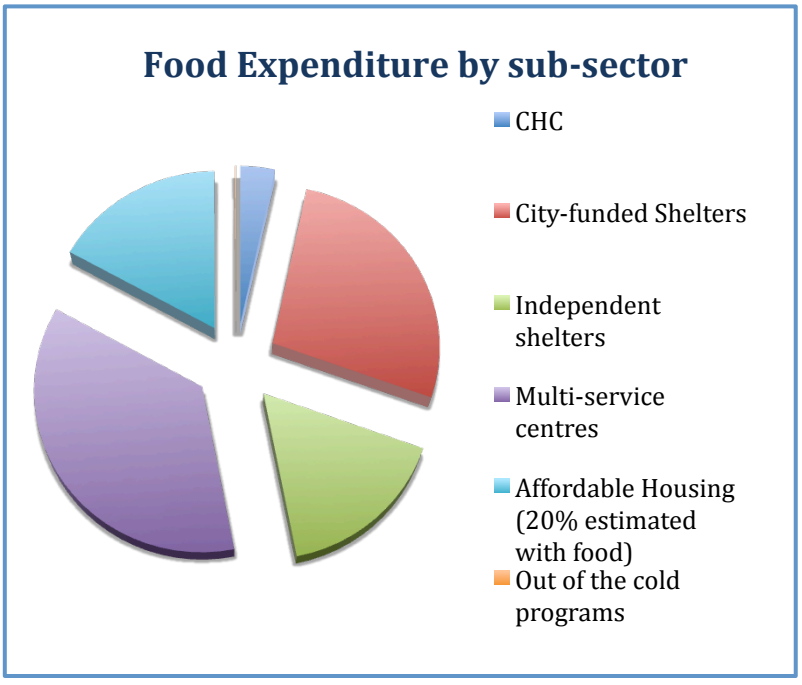
shifts the organization into greater dependence on donations, and less flexibility to achieve healthy eating targets. Agencies also paint a picture of a situation where lack of dedicated funding or insufficient funding results in food programs that achieve the bare minimum of impact. They are able to provide some kind of sustenance for people, but are unable to achieve more planned outcomes around nutrient levels, to address the needs of specific diets and medical needs (such as diabetes or obesity), or to provide nutritional menus for specific issues (to address mental health or substance use). One shelter has experimented with introducing a menu designed for the needs of diabetics, but cites the increased budget as a key challenge.

In addition, the ad hoc quality of many food programs has resulted in a range of solutions that do not seem to form a pattern of staff-time that reflects outcomes. That is, some agencies provide thousands of meals each year with very little staff investment, while others have few meals with a number of food-related staff. In some cases, especially in multi-service agencies, food staff provide training, mentoring and volunteer coordination in addition to food provision. Organizations may also undertake procurement practices that, if every hour was paid and budgeted, would make the practices unsustainable. Organizations may shop multiple times in a week, or take fairly long trips (half an hour one way) to access deals. The shopping practices are often under the radar of the overall budget ("off the side of the desk"), and may be accomplished during unpaid hours using personal vehicles.

Sub-sector variations

Comparison of sectors indicates that resources and capacity are not the same across all sectors. One person commented, "the drop-ins are doing so much for so little. Any kind of investment would go a really long way towards bringing healthy food into these spaces". The chart below shows total budget amounts calculated from secondary and primary research, including some categories not assessed here. It confirms the variation by sector of available funding. It also indicates that although per plate expenditures are low, as a sub-sector, the numerous multi-service agencies have a significant portion of the impact. There are indications that would require further research that certain categories of need are much more likely to be able to access funding.

This report indicates different practices and needs in different sectors, as well as a pattern of resources that to some extent varies by sub-sector. Social housing (often without food) and shelters seem to have better and more stable funding. Drop-in centres and shelters report providing meals for clients who have moved into housing but return to the shelter or drop-in centre for meals out of hunger (once they pay their rent they can't pay for food) and/ or a need for community. Within these categories, certain issues or populations may be better funded than others. However, it is important to recognize that too much emphasis on sector-specific issues may obscure the shared issues that can be addressed with shared solutions to mobilize capacity, assets and resources across all sectors.



Partnerships: external coordination

Agencies turn regularly to their neighbours for local solutions to food access. 32% of them report the use of local (non-brand name) stores; 11% receive food (often donations) from a local restaurant; 15% receive food from local bakeries, also generally donated. There are partnerships with sibling social enterprises, as in the case of a social enterprise bakery next door to a drop-in centre.

Partnerships are mobilized in redistribution models as well. Well-resourced or prominent agencies may receive large quantities of one item that they try to share with neighbouring agencies. One large organization received a truckload of frozen carrots. They were frantically looking up agencies on 211Toronto.ca and calling them to try to redistribute the gift before it thawed. Another small agency was gifted by a farmer with an enormous (for them) amount of apples; they were only saved in this situation by the happenstance of a large volunteer group that day, that was able to help them process it all into applesauce. They would have liked to do a range of items (frozen pies, etc.) but even with the volunteers only had the capacity for the basics. In the absence of community-based storage, freezers, or processing facilities, these solutions are ad hoc and may result in undue waste.

Agencies have been resourceful in developing important local networks. These networks are essential to the smooth running of food provision in community-size geographic areas. In terms of broad change around food, it is important to note that such solutions correspond to the demographics of hunger; if someone is struggling with food access issues, they are likely also not to be able to pay $3 for a ride on public transit, and seek solutions in a circumscribed area of the city. The community food system can develop as a holistic whole with such local solutions, and perhaps lead to more area-specific and effective solutions.

Examples of cross-agency solutions abound. When one organization north of the downtown core lost access to their space for a large drop-in program, they could mobilize several church kitchens in the area to continue the program with little break. A small downtown program rents space from a larger one and can access the kitchen to prepare meals. In some cases, especially for senior groups, social occasions include holding community meal programs at other sites, to meet new people, have an outing or provide outreach. One Community Health Centre has approved a new food co-op to set up on the first level. This gives access to a healthy food education site for programs in partnership with the Health Centre, as well as access for clients to healthier food purchases.

Areas like Regent Park, abutting the South Riverdale area, or Parkdale, have created networks that allow them regularly to draw on and redistribute local resources. The Parkdale Food Network has developed sufficient capacity to begin to explore community-wide solutions, including the training, mentoring and food access opportunities of the Co-op Cred program that is a partnership between a drop-in centre and the local co-op.

In Regent Park, the Regent Park Food Partnership convened to address the food access requirements that are part of developers' process to obtain approvals in the Regent Park redevelopment. Exchanges of land for development and land for food security have led to a new sizable urban garden, a bake oven and a greenhouse A social enterprise restaurant and community agencies with food programs also occupy space among the new condo dwellings. Scarborough, Thorncliffe and Malvern are also developing similar opportunities. Some east end agencies (just north of Regent Park) have assessed meal options in the area to ensure that meal programs are coordinated and not overlapping; further coordination could follow this initial work. With the new eight-acre Black Creek Community Farm, which has recently received significant funding from the W. Garfield Weston Foundation, the Jane-Finch area may be also increasingly home to community development through food-based partnerships. These instances are just a sampling of the networks developing in neighbourhoods around the city to address food issues.

Internal coordination

In order to benefit from centralized community food procurement and distribution, agencies need to establish some internal coordination around food. Second Harvest reports that sometimes so many staff are involved in a variety of uncoordinated food programs that as many as a dozen people come out to get donations from the truck when it arrives. Ideally, one order and one delivery time per week could be arranged. Agencies vary in their ability to synchronize food needs. Aside from shelters, agencies may have one staff, often part-time, or no dedicated staff for food coordination.

One agency coordinates food through a central committee as well as regular meetings with key food staff. This organization has identified food specifically as a gateway to healing and health in mind and body. One CHC has instituted a shared spreadsheet where staff enters orders, and it is totaled and sent to Grocery Gateway. Although they are in a hub with other agencies, so far the option has only been used within the CHC. Research in the spring of 2013 indicated that dedicated staff would save agencies money and time by buying more efficiently. As one CHC staff person pointed out, it should not be necessary for six people all to go shopping to the local grocery store for their separate programs. One CHC that has dedicated resources to a food coordinator reports that more programming happens both at the centre and off-site, because program staff can focus on the program rather than on sourcing food.

Coordination allows organizations to provide food in an organized fashion with better nutritional levels. However, hiring staff dedicated to food is not a simple thing. Food provision is not an item that most funders want to cover, as it is considered frontline service rather than a solution with long-term impacts. It also requires changes in the program operations. As many agencies indicated, when there are budgets cuts going on, the food service is often the first to go. Several community chefs noted that food programming also ranks as low status compared to other agency programs (and therefore it is more expendable, and less able to advocate for resources).

The importance of food is demonstrated by the number of workarounds that agencies conduct in order to have dedicated food staff. Agencies will sometimes redirect budget from other line items, or work with rotating temporary job positions such as the Investing in Neighbourhoods positions. One large Toronto-wide agency has coordinated their purchasing through a central system and negotiated discounts in contracts with Sysco and Natrel. Note that agencies also frequently reported that both Sysco and Grocery Gateway seemed like expensive options for the sector. Although coordination is to be commended, it is interesting that it has not always led to well-informed or high quality and affordable supply options. Several of these examples show that internal coordination has led to other inefficiencies, such as narrowing the supply pool and reducing choice or control through contracts and reliance on single suppliers.

Participation

Among interview participants:

- 56% of agencies ask clients for input on the food service
- 44% involve the clients in menu-planning and preparation
- 42% of agencies offer food programs
- 25% offer training programs specifically in food skills
- 13% have or would like to develop a food-related social enterprise

In some agencies, the participation in food provision is a rich program designed to provide new skills and prepare people for work in the food industry. The Learning Enrichment Foundation has a teaching kitchen program that prepares meals for hundreds of children at their childcare centres. They also prepare meals for other agencies from ingredients provided by Second Harvest ("Harvest Kitchen" programs). Second Harvest delivers the meals once they are prepared, using hot boxes to keep the food warm[vi]. PARC provides transitional work experience through their kitchen; kitchen crew members may go on to work as staff at other agencies.

For many organizations, participation is an end in itself. Many agencies adhere to the principle that, as one chef remarked, "everyone has skills and everyone has gifts that they can give". Participation is often seen as a pathway to more substantial changes such as better nutrition practices and more knowledge about cooking and health. One organization reduced weekend staff to allow the women residents, many of whom were newcomers, to cook for themselves, access food more familiar to them, and contribute to the overall operations of the residence.

For shelters that serve populations who may have few food skills (girls or older men), they engage the residents in everything from grocery shopping to cooking as part of preparation for moving to permanent housing and living on their own. One small drop-in centre works to create a family atmosphere, with people able to access food at any time. Second Harvest provides meals for them from another Harvest Kitchen. Food is eaten family style, with everyone sitting down together for a meal. The delicate balance of continuous food access and communal dining can be knocked off kilter if the population changes. This organization has faced challenges in maintaining their open culture when a large nearby drop-in closed and people used to a different culture came to the smaller one for food.

Community kitchens, one version of a participatory kitchen model, have a long and illustrious history. One staff person of a multiservice agency was a champion of the model from the beginning in Toronto. She remembers they began in Montreal when someone noticed that women accessing a food bank would walk together to a kitchen to cook up the food they had just received. She has seen them develop from a communal cooking model with everyone bringing something to put in the pot to the more agency-based model we have now. Only one interviewed agency takes the traditional approach fully, providing a kitchen for members to bring ingredients to cook, share and take home; one problem is that the residents are not interested in buying or cooking vegetables. The full participation model in this case has led to one of the less healthy menus reported.

Food and housing

Agencies report that while funding for emergency, transitional and supportive housing has increased, funding for food programs that help people to establish themselves permanently in independent housing has been reduced. The result is that a person may leave the shelter system for, as one person put it, "a shell of an apartment". They may then find themselves both hungry and lonely, and without the skills to solve these problems, they end up back in the shelter.

> *"Moving people into housing is one thing; having them stay there and feel like we're supporting them in creating a home is another thing. And food is really central to that".*

Many agencies see these as intertwined issues, and devote resources (whether officially or not) to providing basic food skills like grocery shopping and simple meals. They may also provide meals to housed clients for a period of time after they leave. Newly housed people may also access the food bank at the agency. This can present a challenge if they have been housed in another area and are not supposed to access the food bank services in this familiar location. In an effort to control access to the food banks (reducing the number of people who go to more than one in different parts of the city), registration and some regulation of the food banks have been instituted by Daily Bread. They recently relaxed the boundaries however, recognizing the challenges in setting strict geographic limits. One innovative housing option has a central communal food program but also provides access to food supplies for tenants to use in their individual kitchens.

Waste across system

Inevitably, a certain amount of waste results from a lack of dedicated staff to manage inventory, uncertain donation flows, food that goes uneaten and uncertain participation in individual meals. One coordinator with wide experience in the sector remarked that, "if people had staffing resources, then half the food that is thrown out in the garbage would not be thrown out". This problem

includes agencies that take donations in order to maintain links with the donors but do not use the food for various reasons. Although in general, the research indicates very lean operations, some of the chaos of inadequate resources and personnel shows in the waste stream.

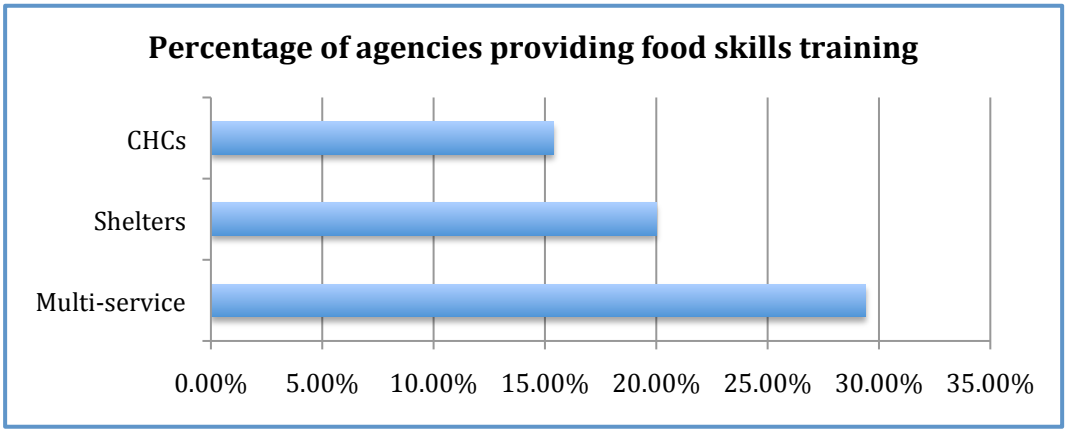
Infrastructure needs

Infrastructure varies enormously from one agency to another. Some have no commercial kitchen at all, or struggle with non-commercial grade appliances like dishwashers or stoves. Others have spacious, underutilized kitchens, as in the case of shelters with kitchen staff that purchase prepared food from suppliers and simply reheat.

Knowledge and training

Among interview participants:

- 29% of multi-service agencies and 20% of the shelters provide food skills training.
- Some multi-service agencies would like additional training (internal or third party) for their members (10%) and cooks (18%).



In some cases, through partnerships, an agency has access to dieticians who review the menus and can suggest specific options. The interviews show a widespread lack of formal knowledge or guidelines in nutrition: a significant absence was noted in the knowledge around specific dietary needs for people with specific medical challenges, although most agencies have knowledge around diabetes. But most agencies are unable to address needs resulting from specific medical regimes, or from mental health and/ or substance use issues. Some initial resources are provided in the impacts of food practices section (Appendix A). Beyond this high level knowledge, agencies were enthusiastic about the idea of access to basic healthy recipes through a cookbook or online website for sharing information.

Multiplying issues

The issues described above can multiply to create what can seem like insurmountable challenges. Agencies that have been able to address many food issues at once can achieve better healthy eating outcomes. For the sector in general, programs with complex goals can be a challenge where funding is doled out in silos (for housing but not food for housing transition, for food skills training but not food itself, etc.). One agency who is leading the way in using food to rebuild communities has created a diversified set of responses around food, including

1) Engagement of staff, volunteers, residents and drop-in clients in menu planning and preparation
2) Dedicated food staff
3) Internal coordination of food programs through committees

4) Pro-active initiatives (including an agency vehicle) to access the food terminal and other good quality sources of food
5) Urban agriculture for engagement and production for the kitchens
6) One of the lowest per plate expenditures in the city and one of the larger meal programs
7) Meals with high nutrient values (meat only 2-3 times per week, focus on vegetables)
8) A social enterprise café to create a workplace and engagement for local youth at risk
9) An agency-wide commitment to the tenet that "food is part of the healing process"

They have one of the lowest per plate budgets and probably one of the highest concentrations of healthy food on their menus. It would be interesting to follow up with residents who have moved on to see if the experience at the shelters translates into healthier eating habits. A centre that integrates food solutions at every step of their engagement with members offers an impressive model of the potential of food for personal and community development.

Prioritizing Food to Increase Impact

"It is increasingly clear that public health dietary guidelines and obesity prevention cannot be met without a focus on the food system, from field to fork." (Story: 222)

"For me, food is not 'I have to have nutrition, I'm hungry, it's got to fill my belly'. Food is a whole bunch of different things. Food to me is like geography. It's culture, it's human interaction it's relationships, it's recreation, it's poetry, it's art, it's a kind of war. It's everything." (Agency Food Coordinator, interview)

The innovative but disorganized solutions to food access challenges indicate a sector that is not a priority, either for funders or for internal agency decision-makers. Funding is hard to find for food provision, so agencies develop solutions on their own (and often on their own time), and infrastructure lags behind need. Programs are often run by undertrained volunteers; staff resources are not devoted to it; and existing food workers are at a lower pay-grade than others in the organization. These systemic problems stem from a broad cultural assessment of needs and priorities. Often the more far-reaching and long-term impacts of food programs are underestimated, or at least, not quantified in a way that can change the overall climate.

Many agencies reported a need for concrete assessments of the full and multiplying impacts of healthy food programs, beyond the general recognition of the impacts. In order to begin to meet this lack of information in the sector, a review of secondary research that aggregates studies on the impacts of food provision on health, social isolation, the environment and the economy were reviewed and are summarized in Appendix A. The section provides resources for agencies to follow up for their own purposes, and provides an overall view of the power of community food programs. It is a starting point based on reports aggregated from other studies and is not meant to be exhaustive.

Solutions and Good Practices Overview

"We need more structural change, not just entrenching the system more and more [with] the food bank and the emergency meal program provision. It's tricky, where should we… put our efforts?" Agency Food Coordinator, interview

The food system can be understood as a network of nodes. The community food sector practices intervene at various points, from production to consumption. In the course of the research, examples of initiatives have been identified that address food access at every point in the system shown graphically below. The question for future initiatives however is to examine these practices for specific ideal

outcomes. For instance, do results show that the solution:

- Achieved cost efficiencies?
- Made better uses of staff-time?
- Resulted in higher nutritional levels in meals?
- Resulted in more participation and knowledge for clients around healthy eating?
- Resulted in a resilient and sustainable practice (not dependent on one-time funding)?

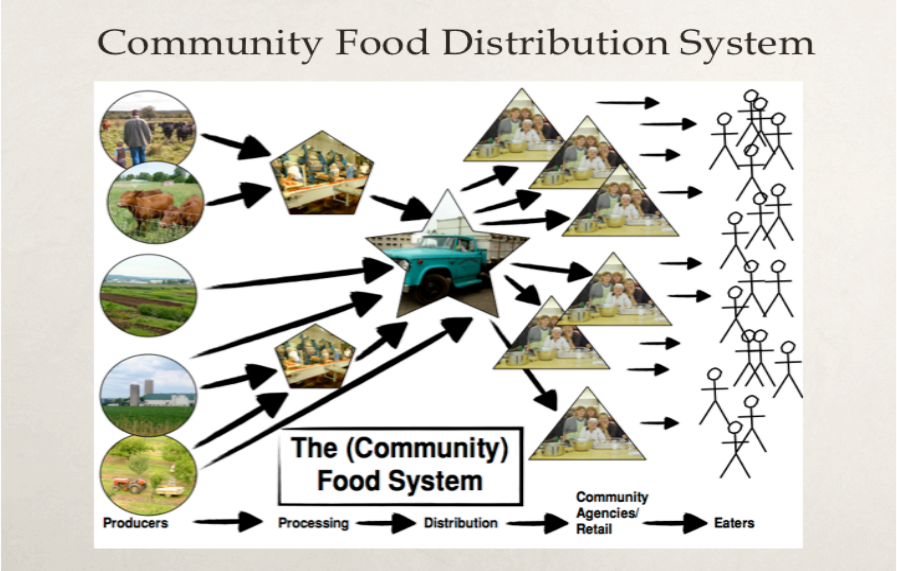


Chart 3: Community Food System Summary

The image of the food system above also raises the question of whether innovation has been more focused on certain nodes of the food system. Are there other areas that offer new opportunities for innovation? The burgeoning neighbourhood and community-level networks are interesting in that they are establishing a new agent for change that has been built organically on local resources, knowledge and commitment. These networks tend to look at the community-level food systems holistically, and to develop projects with multi-level impacts.

The Community Food System graphic above raises other questions: does it make sense to move the meals to the people (Harvest Kitchen model)? Or is it best to move the people to the food (Out of The Cold emergency food and shelter programs model)? Is there a place for moving chefs from one agency to another to supply expertise to occasional programs? Does it make sense for one agency (rather than a group) to access quality food at the terminal (using staff-time and agency vehicle expenses)? Some agencies combine programs (such as drop-in meal programs with meal provision for shelter residents). Is there more opportunity for such multipurpose practice? Are there more opportunities for cross-agency collaboration around food?

Solutions in the community food sector are innovative but often dependent on unsustainable items such as non-recurring grants, unpaid staff-time, personal vehicles, etc. Solutions are piecemeal and improvisational; they are often opportunistic based on who has what resources and who is willing or has the capacity (or stubborn determination) to do a project. Unfortunately, the answers, being opportunistic, are not always goal or mission-based, nor do they always result from careful long-term strategic and financial planning (a luxury often beyond these cash-strapped programs). Without forcing the agencies all to buy the same things from one place, there is another way: dedicated community food procurement and distribution.

Attributes of a Community Food Distributor

One respondent said that if a community food distributor offered competitive pricing and delivery, "we would be all over it". Others also reported they were ready to buy if certain parameters were met. What would a successful community food distributor provide[vii]? Interviewees were able to describe ideal attributes with some precision, including:

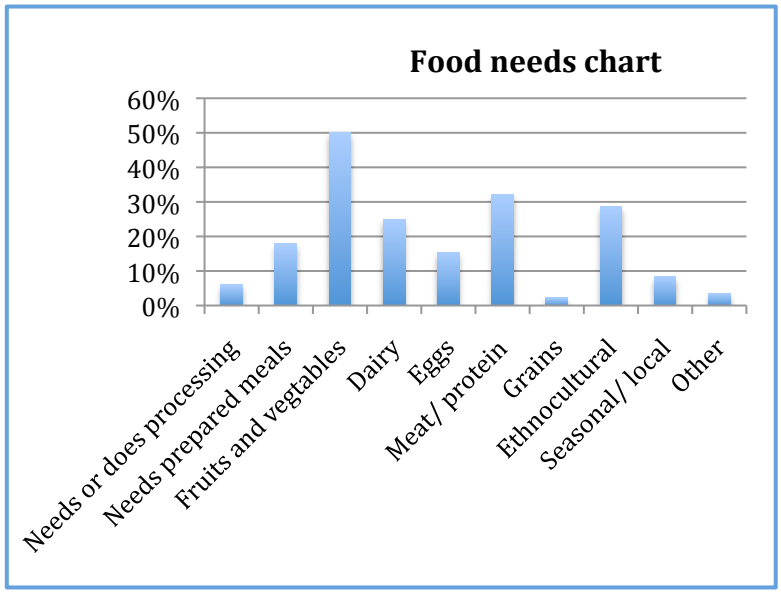
1) Product range and categories
2) Ordering and service requirements
3) Delivery procedures

Product range and categories

Agencies would work with a supplier that provided better access to:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Meat/ protein
- Dairy
- Diverse products (more than one category)
- Ethnocultural recipe ingredients

Interviews identified products that agencies have trouble accessing. 50% of interviewees would like more fruits and vegetables for their agency. 32% would like more meat or protein, while 25% want more dairy. Dairy is already offered to almost 30 drop-in centres through Creating Health Plus, a City of Toronto and Daily Bread supported program. Budget restraints mean that only some drop-ins can participate and those that do often need more yoghurt, eggs and milk. In addition, most agencies (and about 50% of the drop-ins in the Toronto Drop-In Network) do not have access to this program at all.

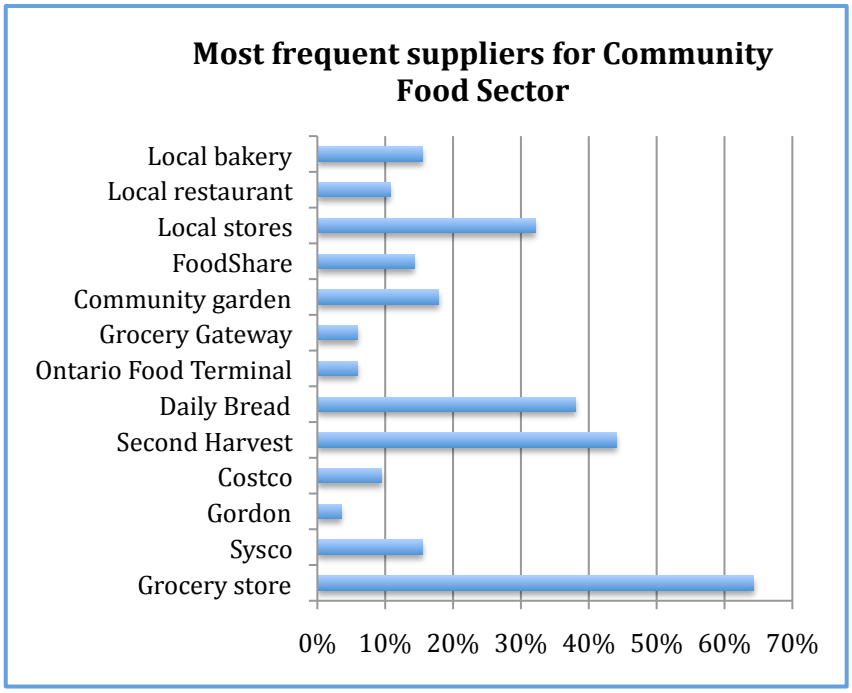


Interviewees cite specific needs for more fresh food in general, as well as access to processed ingredients or prepared meals. The need for prepared food (almost 20% of respondents) reflects the lack of infrastructure; many agencies have inadequate kitchen facilities or staff to do all their food preparation and cooking on-site. For many of them, the preference would be to cook at the facility from scratch.

Some (12%) called specifically for variety in supply options, reporting that providing variation was a key problem for them. This problem is exacerbated by limited budgets and dependency on donations. Given the diversity of products that agencies are challenged to source, and the size of orders, a reasonable level of diversity in products from a distributor would be more likely to meet the needs of the sector. 29% of agencies also report a need for ethnocultural options.

The type of cooking is an important consideration for distributors. The agencies are similar to restaurants (rather than retail stores). They have less flexibility around short shipments; if they

have a recipe planned and an ingredient fails to show up, they will have to make a trip to a local store to get it. Like restaurants, they also have some flexibility in the range of product they can take; broken but fresh carrots are less of a problem for them than half moldy carrots that require sorting. Lettuce of variable sizes is also better than lettuce with poor quality heads mixed in. The sector thus provides a new market opportunity for local farmers and processors to place product that is not the right format for retail stores, but fresh and easy to use for a community dining program. Much of the produce that is donated to this sector goes first to retail chain stores, so it is unnecessarily uniform and of a standard size. This type of food flow (from producer to mainstream retail to community agency) misses a significant amount of food that is wasted at the source. Food that does not fit supermarket requirements for uniformity is often plowed back into the field or composted on the farm.



Agencies also mention the need for good pricing (in some cases, they report that they would not switch unless the pricing was better than current suppliers). In fact, agency practices and budgets mean that almost none of them have time to compare prices. If a supplier changed the pricing structure upwards (as is likely to happen once a relationship is established), there is no standard practice to compare current prices with other options. In many cases, reported suppliers seemed unnecessarily expensive, as in the case of the groups that order from an online website from a retail store which is mid to high-price. Companies offering this option (delivery from a grocery store) no doubt add the cost of delivery to the online retail prices, to make it more expensive than direct shopping at a grocery store. For wholesalers, delivery is included in the margin. An online portal could provide better transparency around pricing.

Several agencies explain that they do not use fresh ingredients because they are more expensive, although it is difficult to substantiate that claim if the source is chosen carefully. Another agency reports that buying at the terminal means they are paying 1/3 of retail prices, a difference for large agencies that would make up for the cost of staff-time and transportation. Greater transparency among suppliers as well as increased knowledge for agencies could curtail any misconceptions about price.

A community food distributor can benefit from the financial cycles of the non-profit sector. Agencies tend to have their funding in regular cycles, with the top fundraising period occurring in the fall into the winter holidays, and grants issued quarterly and in lump sums. Often they have their funding for the next quarter or so in-house. This account, despite its limitations in quantity, provides a strong base to negotiate deals for prepayment and bulk purchases to be delivered over time. Many agencies put this funding into grocery cards from the chain grocery stores and distribute them to program staff. One agency spends millions each year on food cards, but reports that they are only able to negotiate a nominal discount in return. Redemption rates for grocery cards are notoriously low, as they tend to be unused or misplaced. It also makes sense to mobilize this financial muscle

for working with local farmers (whose need for cash occurs in the spring so it coincides well with the non-profit and charitable cycles). Credit accounts with a dedicated distributor would allow that distributor to source volume deals for better pricing and local sourcing. The stability of funding cycles provides the capacity to support and partner with new local processors and other community enterprises. It can offer a base for the implementation of new social enterprises as well.

As one respondent suggested, healthy eating guidelines could guide purchasing and sourcing for the community food procurement project. These can be subject to input and review by member agencies, as well as experts in nutrition. Social procurement guidelines can also be implemented to build new local supply networks, social enterprises and partnerships.

Ordering and service requirements

Agencies would like the ordering and service to include:

- Low minimums
- Regular deliveries
- User friendly ordering
- Flexibility
- Combined deliveries of donated and purchased items

Agencies often are concerned that their purchases are too small to warrant a supplier delivery. In general, the agencies over-estimate the size of the order that a non-profit supplier would require for delivery (based perhaps on the high minimums required by food service companies). Foodshare's minimum for a low margin product (produce) is only $50; a minimum of $200 is probably common for downtown deliveries even from mainstream suppliers. For dairy suppliers the minimum is probably much lower. In the next stage of research on supply options these numbers can be confirmed, but it is likely that even mid-size agencies can command free delivery once a week or so. A few of the large agencies would prefer more than one delivery/ week.

Ease of use of any procurement system is of paramount importance in this sector. There is frequent staff and volunteer turnover, so training in purchasing should be quick and straightforward. In some agencies, ordering may be quite decentralized, so the preference would be for orders to be coordinated electronically through the ordering software. In addition, the reported computer literacy varies significantly, so online options would need to be user friendly and to offer training and help options. The ordering and delivery process would have to be straightforward and easily transmitted from one user to another.

Several agencies mentioned a need for flexibility; ideally a supplier would be able to make route changes if necessary, and to provide extra deliveries for special events, etc. For most small to mid-scale distributors, this is a common practice; for larger distributors it can be harder to provide customized service.

Online portal

A well-designed online portal could readily answer many of the needs of the community food sector. It can provide access to a diversity of products in a user-friendly process. The online presence can meet other goals of the sector, including 1) sharing and exchange of ideas, 2) pricing and supply information, 3) outreach for redistribution in case of surplus, 4) recipe exchange, 5) event promotion and 6) online training in various food skills as a supplement to existing hands-on training options. Elements of an online community food procurement portal should include:

- Aggregated purchasing from a number of suppliers for community agencies
- User friendly ordering to reduce training time
- Clear criteria for suppliers including:
    - Bulk quantities (large format sizes, restaurant grade packaging)

    - High nutrient values
    - Range of processed options from primary (washing, bagging), secondary (dicing, basic ingredient preparation) through tertiary (meal preparation)
    - High volume of recurring items, sufficient product diversity, ethnocultural options
    - Ability to work with practices specific to sector (for instance, member and volunteer involvement in receiving and ordering)
- Community/ agency ownership and involvement in development, operation and governance
- Low minimums for delivery, fair pricing based on non-profit structure and values
- Access to online training, recipes, community food events listings (meetings, trainings, etc.)
- Internal platform to manage surplus donations and equipment at individual agencies
- Shared price and supplier reviews, option to log in to share additional information
- Nutritional information (including the links between food, health and other outcomes)
- Social enterprise development and procurement where possible
- Aggregation of information from agencies across Toronto through their use of the portal

Conclusion

There is a clear need for a dedicated community food distributor. The interviews, surveys, secondary research and focus groups reported many challenges in accessing certain items, as well as a somewhat ad hoc use of budgets and time in purchasing. They also show an appetite for change, for coordinated purchasing and collaborative solutions. Solutions to these challenges should be coordinated through access to aggregated procurement and distribution focused on the specific needs of the sector.

The breadth of impacts that improved access to healthy food can have in the sector is impressive, from health to learning to reduced isolation to economic impacts. The range of direct and secondary impacts argues strongly for dedicated community food procurement and distribution. Such a solution should not conflict or compete with neighbourhood level solutions that bring capacity and community development networks to a community. Community food procurement should complement and integrate with local projects that work best at a neighbourhood scale, and that mobilize an array of community members in local solutions to food access challenges.

Agencies are eager to work with a distributor that truly meets their needs. There can be an awkward fit between large-scale suppliers who are focused on large grocery chain accounts and the needs of this sector. Agencies saw advantages in working with a supplier that shared their values. These recommendations were confirmed in the focus group discussions, which explored the ideal attributes of a dedicated community food distributor.

There is also growing potential for neighbourhood hubs to address some of the challenges, particularly perhaps centralized preparation of meals and processing surplus. Such a hub could also have sufficient storage (dry, refrigerated and freezer) to manage surplus from individual neighbourhood agencies. It is possible that a hub solution for each side of the city (west and east) would be ideal for the communities and for logistical purposes.

A dedicated distributor would also be conversant in working with volunteers who may, depending on the agency, do the ordering, meet the truck, and prepare or help prepare the meals. They are not available full-time (often doing their procurement work at irregular hours, at night or on weekends). They may meet the truck but need help getting product down the stairs due to insurance issues. They are not usually professional food industry workers. Given the importance of participation and engagement for many agencies, the project should be open to the opportunities for social enterprise-based solutions (from accessing the food terminal to planning and cooking meals). For instance, what if a group starts a community bakery that provides healthy granola bars and baked snacks that can be used at breakfast, after-school and other programs needing snacks? The

distributor would need to have the capacity to source from nearby production sites, as well as local farmers.

The initial steps to partnerships have been taken. Several existing distributors are interested in discuss the range of options, and have begun in some cases rich partnership practices already to improve supply to agencies (for instance, ongoing collaborations exist between Daily Bread and Second Harvest). Joint solutions should be explored to maximize the use of existing capacity and expertise. Social enterprise solutions like Raging Spoon, the LOFT Kitchen and Delightfully Yours that can cater to agencies' needs should be explored.

The opportunity and need for dedicated community food distribution is here and now; food is the first small stepping stone that points the way across other barriers, including social, health and economic challenges. Without access to healthy food, people face multiple challenges. These intertwining barriers to well-being are met singly and in isolation by current funding and service patterns. Without the first stone of good healthy food, the way ahead for people in trouble is a vast, undifferentiated river with no clear way to cross.

Next Steps

The next phases of the project focus on expanding the assessment of existing distribution infrastructure and supply development.

Infrastructure

Initial assessment of distribution infrastructure was conducted in partner meetings. The next phase will include more detailed assessment of warehouse space, cross-docking options and customer interface services and software capability. In general, the parameters of new community food distribution initiatives to meet agency needs will be compiled.

Supply options

Partner meetings have revealed the need for additional supply development focused on local producers (fruits and vegetables, and also meats, grains, etc.). Opportunities will be explored for additional fresh food supply from Ontario sources.

Appendix A: The Impacts of Healthy Food

Prioritizing Food to Increase Impact

"It is increasingly clear that public health dietary guidelines and obesity prevention cannot be met without a focus on the food system, from field to fork" (Story: 222).

The innovative but disorganized solutions to food access challenges indicate a sector that is not a priority, either for funders or for internal agency decision-makers. Funding is hard to find for food provision, so agencies develop solutions on their own (and often on their own time), and infrastructure lags behind need. Programs are often run by undertrained volunteers; staff resources are not devoted to it; and existing food workers are at a lower pay-grade than others in the organization. These systemic problems stem from a broad cultural assessment of needs and priorities. Often the more far-reaching and long-term impacts of food programs are underestimated, or at least, not quantified in a way that can change the overall climate.

"For me, food is not 'I have to have nutrition, I'm hungry, it's got to fill my belly'. Food is a whole bunch of different things. Food to me is like geography. It's culture, it's human interaction it's relationships, it's recreation, it's poetry, it's art, it's a kind of war. It's everything." (Agency food coordinator, interview)

Many agencies reported a need for concrete assessments of the full and multiplying impacts of healthy food programs, beyond the general recognition of the impacts. In order to begin to meet this lack of information in the sector, a review of secondary research that aggregates studies on the impacts of food provision on health, social isolation, the environment and the economy is summarized below. This section provides resources for agencies to follow up for their own purposes, and provides an overall view of the power of community food programs. It is a starting point based on studies that aggregate from other studies and is not meant to be exhaustive.

As one respondent pointed out, the impacts are not addressed sufficiently partly because they affect so many different issues. She asked whose responsibility it is, when so many different levels of government concern are involved? Some of the positive impacts from healthy eating identified include:

- Improved health and well-being
- Entry point to other services
- Reduction in violence and better atmosphere at drop-ins and shelters
- Reduction in social isolation, increase in social networks of support
- Improvements in mental health
- Improved learning outcomes
- Support for harm reduction
- Improved environmental quality
- Increased economic access and opportunity

"We always fill the box with dignity." (Agency food staff, interview)

There is an awareness of the power of food to change lives at the agency level. This awareness is often not translated into capacity and resources. The agencies see good food as a path to health promotion, harm reduction, the reduction of violent behaviour, access to better energy and mental acuity, opportunities for re-engagement in the economy, and the first step towards other more difficult steps (accessing housing, education and work). The daily search for food that people

living on the street or marginally housed may have to conduct can prevent them from addressing other steps to stabilize their lives. Food also is seen as a key to reducing social isolation. This effect has important impacts on health and mental ability. Good food is also seen as key to maintenance or prevention for specific issues (diabetes, hypertension). Food leads the way to other services; it gets people in the door and thereby facilitates access to staff or other members who have experience in and knowledge of services. It can lead the person to be able to address other issues, from health to clothing to reskilling for the workplace. It is a low cost catalyst to long-lasting change.

"Food makes it all happen. Food brings people together. It creates a neutral space; people might not feel they can go to other spaces. Food is the heart and soul of everything we do."

Health impacts of healthy food

The health impacts of access to healthy food range from primary effects such as managing diabetes to secondary effects such as reduced health care costs through prevention. Healthier eating can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke and diabetes. The Union of Concerned Scientists (based in the U.S. but with scientists across the globe) published a significant report in August 2013 entitled *The $11 Trillion Reward: How Simple Dietary Changes can Save Lives and Money, and How We Get There*. They write, "more than 127,000 deaths per year from cardiovascular diseases could be prevented and $17 billion in annual national medical costs could be saved if Americans increased their consumption of fruits and vegetables to meet dietary recommendations" (Union of Concerned Scientists: 1). In Canada, a study published in the *Canadian Journal of Public Health* showed that

> "Approximately 3.7 million Canadians worry about having adequate amounts of food, do not eat suitable quality or selections of foods, and/or have inadequate amounts of food. These Canadians live in food-insecure households. Physically, food insecurity is associated with anemia, chronic illness, depression, obesity, and poor overall health'" (Irwin: 17).

The report also found that "99% of food in hampers did not contain 3 days worth of nutrients" (Irwin: 17).

A recent study also shows that the effects of food insecurity are underestimated, and can be significant even in marginally food insecure households (Cook). One study from the California Center for Public Health Advocacy and PolicyLink "demonstrates that people who live near an abundance of fast-food restaurants and convenience stores compared to grocery stores and fresh produce vendors, have a significantly higher prevalence of obesity and diabetes" (Center for PHA: 1). As noted above, the general Canadian diet is not particularly healthy; among other issues, the dependence on high animal fat items and exposure to antibiotics in animal products affects heart disease, colon, breast and prostate cancer, and type II diabetes[viii].

"In the United States today, access to healthy foods is marked by inequities." (Recipes for Change, executive summary).

A recent comprehensive evaluation of Toronto's Student Nutrition Programs cites numerous positive impacts from a healthy breakfast that are supported now by scientific research: *"There is a growing body of research, including Canadian findings, which solidifies the positive relationship between eating breakfast and health, learning and behavioural outcomes among students. Studies also confirm that student participation in school meal programs increases if the programs are available to all students who would benefit from the program, provided they are not identified or centered out"* (italics original, DeWit: 4). Citing a Surgeon General's report, a recent research review reports that "a dietary pattern that contains excessive intake of foods high in calories, fat (especially saturated fat), cholesterol, and sodium, but that is low in complex carbohydrates and

fiber, is one that contributes significantly to the high rates of major chronic diseases among Americans" (Horrigan: 450). Careful food choices and good access can improve outcomes for a variety of health challenges: for example, a recent study showed that HIV positive drug users who were also food insecure were twice as likely not to survive (Anema 2013).

The links between food access and health are not evenly shared across society; food and health are issues of social justice. A review of 132 studies by PolicyLink and The Food Trust from the U.S. confirms this as well: "PolicyLink and The Food Trust conducted this inquiry to summarize the existing evidence base, carefully reviewing more than 132 studies. We found that a large and consistent body of evidence supports what residents have long observed: many low-income communities, communities of color, and sparsely populated rural areas do not have sufficient opportunities to buy healthy, affordable food" (Treuhaft 2010: 5)[ix].

A report from the Prevention Institute states that "the current system of agricultural production contributes to numerous health problems including cancer, asthma, antibiotic resistance, and nutrition-related chronic disease. These health problems affect everyone but occur at higher rates among people with low incomes and people of color" (Cohen 2004:1). Likewise, in Canada, non-reserve Aboriginal households are more likely to face food insecurity (1/3 vs. 9% in the non-Aboriginal population (Willows 2011: 2; Willows 2008). Children are disproportionately represented among the hungry in general (Tarasuk 2011: 2). One study has also shown that seniors are at increased nutritional risk in Canada (Ramage-Morin).

Studies have identified the issue of food deserts in low income neighbourhoods where there are no grocery stores). One broad study across the United States shows that people of colour can be two and a half times as likely to live in a Limited Access Supermarket area (LSA) (CDFI Fund 2012: 2). In Toronto, areas without access to fresh and healthy foods predominate in low income communities and communities of colour; an important Toronto Food Strategy project is addressing this issue further (Martin Prosperity Institute 2010).

Food as entry point to other services

Agencies deliberately use food to help people access other supports and services. One agency has staff, students and volunteers who interact with people who come in for a meal, sitting with them, hearing their stories, and offering solutions. They offer a range of services from health care with volunteer medical professionals to psychiatrists, pre- and post-natal services, and employment support. They now have established an outreach program for seniors; the agency's senior group will go out to other sites to provide meals and talk to people. They engage members in many aspects of the service, and see themselves as building leaders to provide community development in one of the key areas of need in Toronto.

"Food is the point of entry for a lot of our community members. We see it as a start to building community as well as a start to building relationships with people." (Agency interview)

Food and social impacts

One staff person will give a plate of food to someone in a difficult mood and tell the person they will talk after the meal. She reports that the food does much to mitigate the level of upset, and can lead to more constructive solutions.

"Food is the thing that makes a relationship work or breaks it; if the residents are not happy about food then there is no peace in the house" (310).

During the Nutritious Food to Drop-ins project in Toronto, assessments of the nutrient values and needs at drop-in centres encouraged the drop-in centres to offer more of a range of healthy choices. The staff reported positive changes in nutrition, energy levels and atmosphere at the drop-ins (16). The project meant that "servings of milk and alternatives tripled, vegetables and fruit doubled, orange vegetables increased by 75%, dark green vegetables doubled, Vitamin D content increased by 150%". (Daily Bread Food Bank: 18). This research eventually led to Creating Health Plus, a program that ensures better access for about 26

drop-in centres to dairy and eggs. Daily Bread also reports that one of the outcomes from the Creating Health Plus program was a change in the way people behaved based on the kind of food they got.

Other research confirms the practices at these agencies; one study in prisons provided youth with nutritional supplements and was able to record a subsequent reduction in violence, which in turn could reduce costs for the prison system (Laurance 2008). One shelter reports that the food service can set the mood for the whole day—if people are upset about the food, kitchen staff gets upset and it ripples through the whole house.

Many agencies, particularly ones that work with seniors, report the power of food to reduce social isolation. This can lead to improved mental abilities as well as reduced mental health issues from loneliness. It can create networks for support in hard times: a place to turn if life becomes challenging.

Food and substance use

Studies show that alcohol can increase craving for fatty and high sugar food, leading to behaviour that may contribute to obesity and other problems (Morleo). The comprehensive review from the Liverpool JMU Centre for Public Health also reports that "alcohol consumption can lead to an imbalance of minerals and vitamins" (Morleo: 2). The report states that "consuming food before drinking alcohol can slow the absorption of alcohol into the bloodstream and subsequent levels of intoxication. Conversely, alcohol consumption (at 24g or three units) has been linked to higher levels of food consumption, with hunger potentially being increased up to six hours after drinking compared with baseline (although study sizes are small)" (Morleo: 9).

> *"I believe that the first thing you do with harm reduction is feed somebody, 'cause everyone can deal better with whatever life throws at them with some food—and decent food—in their body." (Multi-service agency staff)*

Substance use can also lead to greater food insecurity, if money is spent on drugs rather than food. Substance use is also often accompanied by periods of insufficient or unhealthy eating. The social determinants of health approach recognizes the impact of substance use on a range of health issues, but most agencies lack the capacity to put this knowledge into action. Additional review and summary of existing studies can help disseminate the existing knowledge of this category.

Food and the brain

"Mental health is all too often a neglected subject and, until now, it has been completely neglected by those working on food policy issues. Although common sense tells us that what we eat will affect the way we feel, there is resistance to the idea that diet affects mental health" (de Weyer: ix).

A growing body of research shows important links between brain health and food choices. This impact is significant for people with mental health issues, for children's education outcomes and for seniors. A comprehensive study on mental health and food from the U.K. reports that students both learn better and behave better when nutritious meals are provided (The Mental Health Foundation: 34). Results following the implementation of Jamie Oliver's program for better food in schools were significant: "test results among 11 year-olds in English and Science shot up and absenteeism owing to sickness has fallen… School Food Trust research found that healthier school food has a positive impact on pupils' academic achievement and therefore on their lifetime earnings, returning the Government's investment tenfold" (Food for Life Partnership: 6).

Sustain U.K. in *Changing Diets, Changing Minds* reports that "our analysis of the research indicates that [unhealthy] diet is fuelling not only obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and some cancers, but may also be contributing to rising rates of mental ill-health and anti-social behaviour.

The personal costs of mental ill-health are already too high. The costs to society as a whole are high - the latest estimate is £100 billion in the UK alone - and rising" (De Weyer: xi).

One transitional housing site has changed its approach to food, increasing the budget and insisting on good quality food produced from scratch. "We have really seen the difference food makes in the women's lives. There is an improvement in their ability to stabilize and focus. It is about priorities. There needs to be more awareness". Sustain U.K. reports that "a wealth of research studies appear to confirm that the nutrients in food affect the health and well being of the brain" (De Weyer: 37). Providing food that helps brain health as well as physical health is not that challenging: "the same factors that seem to cause damage to the brain are those linked to problems with the rest of the body, e.g. saturated fat, trans fats (from artificially hydrogenated fat in processed foods) and sugar. Consequently, the dietary advice needed to build and maintain a healthy brain is really no different from the advice for a healthy body" (Ibid: 89).

Food and the environment

Although the impact of community food practices on the environment may seem less obvious, in fact many healthy eating programs rely on "relocalizing" food sources, thereby reducing transportation miles for food and the associated pollutions. This applies to the mainstream food system as well as food provision at social service agencies. In many cases, these community food projects also access sustainably produced food that reduces chemical and waste pollution in rural communities. Cohen for the Prevention Institute writes, "there are compelling reasons to link sustainable agriculture and health sectors. In light of the obesity crisis, both sectors are concerned with increasing production of, and access to, fresh, affordable, high-quality farm products, and altering elements of the food system which favour production and distribution of highly processed, high-fat and high-sugar foods" (Cohen: 1) [x].

Many of the costs of industrial agriculture go to the public purse for clean up and health care; the costs are not passed back to the industrial agriculture sector. Cohen also points out that agricultural subsidies, from public dollars, tend to drive the production of the ingredients for junk food (corn, sugar, white flour), rather than providing incentives for fresh and diverse fruits and vegetables (Cohen: 1). The impact of mainstream agricultural practices belies the notion of "cheap food"; though we may not pay at the grocery store, we may indeed pay later.

Several studies compare nutrient levels of local fresh food and food that has traveled a distance, with some indication that fresher is better. It has been found that the focus on long shelf-life and rapid growth in industrial agriculture has resulted in a marked decrease in the nutrient values of vegetables: "Recent studies of historical nutrient content data for fruits and vegetables spanning 50-70 years show apparent median declines of 5% to 40% or more in minerals, vitamins and protein in groups of foods, especially in vegetables" (David: 18).

Food and Community Economic Development

Community food distribution can have important economic impacts as well as health and social impacts. Many sectoral needs can be addressed through innovations in community-based or social purpose enterprises. Community-based enterprises can provide the food products needed (such as healthy baked goods, or prepared meals) as well as reintegrating people into the workplace, community and educational opportunities.

If solutions to food challenges are linked to increasing the provision of local food, then additional multiplying effects come from stimulating local economies, creating jobs, and reducing poverty (which is, after all, a root cause of hunger). In the Michigan Double Up Food Bucks program, the program matches the U.S. nutritional assistance program (SNAP) to increase the voucher value if used at local farmers' markets. These vouchers have been shown to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables, and support local farmers (Union of Concerned Scientists: 9). Measurements of the impact of increased healthy eating in schools through the Food For Life

Partnership reports that "the SROI [Social Return on Investment] calculation found that over 3£ in social, economic and environmental value was created for every 1£ spent. This does not take account of any of the health, educational or cultural benefits of a whole-schools approach to food which are the primary objectives of FFLP" (Food for Life Partnership: 8).

This is a sampling of the work that has been done that shows the wide-ranging and long-term impacts of healthy food programs. The breadth of positive impacts argues well for the continued and increased use of public, charitable and private dollars to support food programs in the community sector.

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Appendix B: Suppliers from Community Food Sector

Supplier Name	Area	Contact Information
100 km Foods	Toronto	Paul Sawtell and Grace Mandarano info@100kmfoods.com 416-203-2164 http://www.100kmfoods.com/
Apetito (Catering for Meals on Wheels)	National	Toll-Free: 1-800-268-8199 Brampton, Ontario: (905) 799-1022 http://www.apetito.ca/9889/apetito-in-canada.html
Aramark	National	416-255-1331 http://www.aramark.ca/en/ARAintro.htm
Avron	Ontario	1-800-997-9752 http://www.avronforkids.com/
Baraka (halal meat distributor)	n/a	
Canada Bread	National	1-877-229-1042 http://www.canadabreadfoodservice.ca/
Cash and Carry	various	
Costco	National	http://www.costco.ca/food.html
Daily Bread Food Bank	Toronto	info@dailybread.ca 416-203-0050 http://www.dailybread.ca/
Essence	Toronto	Paul 647-285-2801
Fiormart	Toronto	416-736-7347
Flannigan's	Ontario	(519) 748-6878 http://www.flanagan.ca/home/
Foodshare	Toronto	Asher Miller 416-363-6441X275 asher@foodshare.net http://www.foodshare.net
Front Door Organics	Toronto	416-201-3000 info@frontdoororganics.com http://www.frontdoororganics.com
Gordon Food Services	National	1-800-268-0159 http://www.gfscanada.com
Grocery Gateway (part of Longo's supermarkets)	Toronto	905-564-8778 http://www.grocerygateway.com
Homestead	Ontario	info@homesteadeggs.com 905-775-2106
Maple Lodge	National	http://www.maplelodgefarms.com customerservice@maplelodgefarms.com 1-888-664-4444

Mr. Dairy	Toronto	info@mrdairy.com 416-741-6455 http://www.mrdairy.com
Natrel	National	1-800-501-1150 http://www.natrel.ca
North York Harvest Food Bank	North Toronto	416-635-7771 info@northyorkharvest.com http://www.northyorkharvest.com
Parmalat	National	1-800-563-1515 http://www.parmalat.ca
Real Food for Real Kids	Toronto	416-410-5437 http://www.rfrk.com
Reliable	Toronto	905-612-1156 1-888-612-1156 http://www.reliablefoods.com
Rowe Farms	Ontario	416-532-3738 info@rowefarms.ca http://www.rowefarms.ca/index.php
Second Harvest	Toronto	416-408-2594 http://secondharvest.ca
Sophia Catering	Regent Park	n/a
Stewart's	Southern Ontario	customerservice@stewartfoodservice.com 1-800-461-4473 http://www.stewartfoodservice.com
Sysco	National	http://www.sysco.ca/canada/home.cfm?id=2421
Tatangelo's	Toronto	905-850-2241 1-877-328-8503 info@tatangelos.com http://www.tatangelos.com
Weston Bakery		416-252-7323 http://www.weston.ca/en/Weston-Foods.aspx

Appendix C

General rating criteria for prospective interviews from 1-5 (most to least relevant)

1. Organization has large group of clients, provides regular eating programs (multiple meals every weekday) as well as other food-related programming (food banks, nutrition programs, etc.)
2. Organization is medium large, provides regular meal programs more than once/ day.
3. Organization provides once/ day meal program as well as other food related programming. Medium to small size.
4. Organization provides a few meals each week. Medium size.
5. Organization is seasonal or provides only a few meals/ month. Small size.

Appendix D

Price review

The price review gives some rough estimate of the range of prices available based on current invoices from some agencies. The pricing data was assembled over a few months of research, and can be refined with additional input from a wider range of agencies. A collaborative spreadsheet for price review can be shared among the agencies as part of the online portal to create sector-wide transparency in pricing. The analysis and actual price sheets are attached at the end of this document.

Price comparison analysis

Prices were drawn as much as possible from invoices from the same period (early fall 2013) in order to ensure consistency. Wherever possible, prices were extrapolated to a case price for comparison purposes. Errors may occur where the wholesale unit per case format listed on the invoice used was inaccurate. For produce, the industry standard was used. For many products, it is possible for case sizes to vary depending on origin and supplier. Although there are general standards for the industry, there may be more than one case size that is acceptable, particularly if they are coming from different countries of origin. Note that discount supermarket prices were mostly from a Regent Park area store; prices vary in different parts of the city. Prices were averaged where more than one price from the same source was available; in most cases only one agency source was available. The price analysis had insufficient data to test whether prices vary within one distributor from one customer to another, but it is likely to be the case (depending on volume of purchases). In addition, best pricing was ascertained without including Grocery Gateway; their prices in most cases were so much higher that comparisons were not relevant. If only one source was available (besides Grocery Gateway), best pricing was not recorded in the right hand column. The number is also not included in the averages.

Prices vary considerably from one supplier to another. The variation does not show any definite pattern. A distributor may have the best pricing in one case and be a great deal higher on another product. Sometimes large format is cheaper, but not always. Although retail prices should be higher (simply because there is more handling, transportation and loss involved), this is not always the case, particularly for the discount chain store prices.

The analysis indicates that retail price does not seem to vary in the same way that wholesale does. This is most likely to be due to the use of loss leaders (items like bagged milk that are sold at a loss to bring customers into the store) and other marketing strategies. Customers tend to remember prices of certain items (eggs, milk, bananas). These tend to be competitively priced from retail, whereas other things are twice or three times as expensive as wholesale sources. Likewise, the retail price varies erratically. One specific size or brand of one category may be the best price in that moment. However, to fill a menu from the retail store, the customer would inevitably purchase from other categories that could be much higher than the wholesale price.

Prices also vary widely from one distributor to another. No distributor or store consistently has the lowest prices. The source closest to showing a pattern of lower prices is the independent wholesaler ("independent wholesaler", Reliable or Essence on the chart). Foodshare generally offers the best produce prices. The analysis indicates that many other factors come into play to establish pricing besides the actual FOB ("freight on board": delivered) cost from the original supplier. Price-setting is independent of supply (product's original origin); various strategies and marketing arrangements may be applied that make the pricing vary quite a lot from one source to another. For instance, although bananas are likely to come from the same place and company (Dole) at any one time, prices may nonetheless vary across sources.

Endnotes

[i] The research indicates that the number is around ten million for these categories of agencies.
[ii] See Food Banks Canada for this annual report: http://www.foodbankscanada.ca/Learn-About-Hunger/Publications/Research.aspx.
[iii] Long-term care facilities only have $7.46 per day to provide 3 meals and 2 snacks. An OMAFRA report further states that expensive nutritional supplements may also come out of this same budget. (C)
[iv] Note that these numbers have been calculated without calculating expenditures on snacks. Most agencies that provide 3 meals/ per day also provide snacks. The per meal estimates would be lower in some cases if snacks were included. However, the amount of food provided in a snack varies so much that unless the agency specified that the snack was a light meal, the budget for snacks was included in the meal calculations.
[v] This is confirmed in studies in the U.S.: "the obstacles to implementing strong nutrition policies included fear of reducing the total amount of food distributed, discomfort choosing which foods should not be permitted, and concern about jeopardizing relationships with donors and community partners" (Schwartz).
[vi] The preparation of meals to be served at other agencies seems much more common in the U.S., where places like DC Central Kitchen mobilize underemployed populations in training and meal preparation for numerous sites in Washington D.C. In Winnipeg, Diversity Food Services offers an excellent example; the principles include hiring from the local area. Certainly, hiring practices in food programs should be addressed; in many cases agencies place people in the position of cooking and serving food who have no food training for large groups, or in some cases have food training but no experience in social service or volunteer engagement. In many ways, it seems like the best pool of trained labour for social service agencies are programs like the Learning Enrichment Foundation and the Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre who provide formal training (food safety handling, etc.) along with experience in providing food from a donated supply to large populations with a variety of challenges and needs.
[vii] The development of dedicated solutions for community agencies' food needs is gathering steam in the United States. See *Recipes for Change*. As *Recipes for Change* points out, "In the United States today, access to healthy foods is marked by inequities" (7). To redress these inequities, sector-specific and sector-driven solutions may be required.
[viii] See report from the Centre for a Livable Future at Johns Hopkins University (Horrigan: 445).
[ix] See also Cohen 2004.
[x] See also Shak 2010 on the need to link public health and agricultural practices.