CHEAP AND CHEERFUL

How to start an affordable produce market

community food centres
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ABOUT THIS MANUAL

In order to grow healthy communities, residents need access to affordable, healthy food. This manual is intended for community organizations or neighbourhood leaders who are interested in operating an affordable produce market. Typically, these markets are run by established agencies with experience in healthy food programming. A market can be an excellent complement to existing programs like community kitchens or meal programs in low-income neighbourhoods, as it offers a dignified way to access healthy food while strengthening community.

The information, strategies, and stories that follow come from our partner Community Food Centres (CFCs) and Good Food Organizations (GFOs), and are aligned with Community Food Centres Canada's five Good Food Principles:

1. **Take action from the individual to the systemic.** Change needs to happen at the individual, community, and systems-wide level. This means working across program areas to provide points of connection for community members, from addressing basic needs to getting involved in the big picture issues that impact communities.
2. **Believe and invest in the power of good food.** Food is a powerful tool for change, and this recognizes that accepting handouts and serving unhealthy, unappetizing food is no longer good enough.
3. **Create an environment of respect and community leadership.** Dignity needs to be at the root of all programming. Community voices need to be empowered and participation needs to be encouraged.
4. **Meet people where they are at.** Programs are designed to be open and accessible, based on the needs and capacities of community members.
5. **Aim high for your organization and your community.** Programming and organizations need resources to have a positive impact. Invest in fundraising, evaluation, and communications in order to build the necessary capacity to sustain programs.

These five Good Food Principles were developed as a framework for a social justice–based approach to food program delivery (as opposed to a charitable one). The Good Food Principles welcome community members as active participants from being involved in consultations, to volunteering their time, to sharing their skills and knowledge with others.

Creating and operating an affordable produce market is an involved process. By sharing the successes, challenges, and lessons learned from our partners, we hope to help streamline the process of starting up your market program or smooth out any wrinkles in your existing market.

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INTRODUCTION

Think about the tartness of a crisp Granny Smith apple. Or the sweet, sun-kissed juiciness of a field tomato. Then consider that for more than four million Canadians, including one in six children under the age of 18, this is a difficult request: They have little to no access to fresh, healthy produce.

The reasons for food insecurity can be physical, geographical, and, of course, financial. Household incomes have not been able to keep pace with the rising cost of fresh fruit and vegetables. Residents of low-income neighbourhoods tend to have very limited options for buying healthy, high-quality produce: prices at local shops may be too high, the grocery store may be too far. Often, it's both.

How can we put more nutritious meals onto more of the country's plates? Affordable produce markets can be part of the answer.

An affordable produce market can be summed up in three words: food, people, place. The main goal is simple: to provide a dignified manner for low-income communities to access fresh fruits and vegetables.

Most affordable produce markets are run by community agencies with strong ties to the people around them, which means they have a good sense of what is both wanted and needed. The produce, purchased by market organizers at wholesale rates, is sourced sometimes from local farms, sometimes from larger distributors, or often a combination of both. Other perishable items, such as eggs, bread, and nuts, are also often available. Some markets offer as many as 50 different items, from staples such as potatoes, carrots, and onions to seasonal produce like peaches, corn, and berries.

It's important to note that the produce sold at the markets is not free but sold at prices that aim to be affordable to low-income households. Pricing models vary, usually ranging from wholesale to a 10% markup. Market organizers can choose what is most suitable for their communities.

A bounty of vegetables on display at The Local CFC's affordable produce market.

The most obvious benefit a market can provide to its community is affordability. Across Canada, many community members of low socioeconomic status — including seniors, students, newcomers, the unemployed, and the working poor — simply do not have the money to pay for healthy food. A 2017 Food Action Research Centre report found that minimum wage earners in Nova Scotia were consistently unable to meet their nutritional needs after paying for other essential monthly expenses.[1] Similarly, a 2017 Ottawa Public Health report says the cost of a nutritious food basket in Ottawa was $294 per month for a single person, an unaffordable expense when the average rent for a bachelor apartment is $812 per month and Ontario's monthly social assistance rate is $721.[2] And this problem is only getting more difficult. According to the 2019 Canada's Food Price Report, co-published by Dalhousie University and the University of Guelph, the cost of fresh fruit is expected to increase by 1 to 3%, while fresh vegetables will go up 4 to 6%.[3]

Access to fresh fruits and vegetables is vital to physical and mental health. PROOF, an academic team studying food insecurity, reports that low-income Canadians are twice as likely to have cardiovascular disease than those with higher incomes,[4] and four times as likely to suffer from type 2 diabetes.[5] What's more, 40% of Canadians who face severe food insecurity suffer from anxiety and depression.[6]

One subtle long-term outcome of a well-run market is that it can help reduce social isolation in its community. Regular customers benefit from the personal connections they develop while shopping. The most successful markets are meeting places where people can shop and mingle, where they can try new foods and discover new recipes, and where they feel welcome as a part of their community.

"Some of our customers have been a little bit scared of veggies," says Nicolas Braesch, market coordinator for The Depot Community Food Centre in Montreal. "But they trust us. We say you can eat them raw, and they're also easy to cook. We just want to give them an opportunity to eat fresh healthy food." Braesch adds that cultivating a level of trust helps to build more than a healthy diet. "If [customers] believe in what we're doing, then there's a good chance they'll come back. Even if it's just to buy three oranges, they might hang out for ten minutes and chat. People tell me the market is a good reason to get out of the house."

Regent Park CFC in Toronto runs its market throughout the summer months as part of a larger festival, Taste of Regent Park, which features bake oven goodies, entertainers, and an outdoor movie screening.

MARKET DAY AT THE DEPOT

Here's a snapshot of a typical Thursday afternoon at The Depot's St. Raymond market in the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce neighbourhood: Among the 80 or so customers is a young girl who leads her mother toward a basket of locally grown, $1-a-bunch broccoli, saying it tastes good in pasta salad. A volunteer bags radishes and carrots for a senior. Another customer inspects a bag of cashews while market coordinator Nicolas Braesch suggests sautéeing them with Brussels sprouts and butter. "It's a simple recipe," Braesch says. "Give it a try."

GETTING STARTED

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PURPOSE

When starting up a new affordable market, it's important to be clear on your primary goals since some may conflict with others or even be contradictory (e.g., promoting sustainable food and keeping food affordable for customers on low incomes). While an affordable food market benefits a community in many ways, it's likely not going to eliminate food bank usage or reduce food insecurity in any significant way. Setting a straightforward objective that can be measured and used to create a rationale for funding — such as increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables for low-income community members — makes the intended outcomes much more achievable and gets people working on the same page. Both short-term outcomes (community members now eat more produce) and long-term outcomes (improved perceived health, reduced social isolation, and reduced financial stress) are likelier to result. Straightforward and achievable objectives help to manage the expectations of partner organizations, local farmers, and customers. They are also readily measured through evaluation and used to create a rationale for funding.

Affordable produce markets are intentionally designed to serve low-income communities. Organizers strategically plan their outreach to attract people who would not otherwise have access to fresh fruits and vegetables. And since the produce is subsidized, it's affordable.

Targeting programs to low-income populations without creating social stigma takes care and thoughtful planning, but is an important balance to strike. Rather than naming a target audience in their outreach and promotions, our partner Community Food Centres (CFCs) tend to focus their outreach within target neighbourhoods and community program spaces (health centres, social service agencies) and through other CFC programs where people living on a low income are in attendance.

An often-raised concern is that higher-income earners may access subsidized markets, perhaps believing their purchases act as a donation. Fortunately, this doesn't tend to happen enough to be much of an issue, given that the markets are located in lower-income neighbourhoods and within social service agencies. Most people who can afford retail prices tend to live and shop in neighbourhoods that have much greater access to fresh produce.

If higher-income folks do happen upon the market, they are not turned away — after all, they're part of the community, too. But being clear and consistent about the market's goals, conducting outreach accordingly, and inviting the occasional higher-income shoppers to support the organization in other ways will ensure that the time and resources that go into running the market are focused on those who need it.

RESEARCH

Community agencies would not consider introducing an affordable produce market if they didn't already understand its necessity. Still, it's important to research and assess the community so you can back up anecdotal knowledge, provide evidence to potential funders, and fine-tune market details. Your research doesn't need to be complicated. One simple first step is to assess the local food landscape: Where is the nearest grocery store to where prospective customers live? Is the distance walkable or easily accessible by public transit? Does it sell fresh produce or only canned and non-perishable goods? If it does sell produce, are the prices affordable?

Before you dig in, we recommend studying other markets. What has worked for them? What hasn't? And how can you best apply their lessons to your context? Most market organizers are happy to share their experiences.

Surveys are an efficient way to confirm community interest and can be distributed through other food access programs as well as health centres, social housing offices, and seniors' residences. Questions can be tailored to help assess ideal locations, hours of operation, accessibility needs, and food preferences as well as reach out to potential volunteers.

The Local CFC's market brings families together over fresh food.

The Local Community Food Centre, which ran its Free Farm Fresh food box program in Stratford, ON, asked recipients how they would feel about an affordable market. Their response indicated that they would feel more empowered by a market than the food box. The process of spending even just a bit of money and having choice invites self-determination. People don't want to be passive; they want to be able to choose what to buy, how much to buy, or not to buy anything. Almost 90% of the respondents were even willing to pay a slight markup for the opportunity to shop at a market themselves.

When Nova Scotia's Dartmouth North CFC began to develop their market, they relied heavily on the experience and ideas of community members. In January 2015, they posted flyers seeking area residents who would like to help plan the market. About 12 people responded, among them a single mother and a senior. Everyone self-identified as low-income. This working group was given six weeks of leadership training and then met biweekly with one staff member to decide on everything from sourcing and pricing to the arrangement of physical space of the market. The group ensured everybody had a role. One volunteer, who had limited mobility and eyesight, was unable to unload and restock produce so the group developed a role where she would be most successful: at the farm harvest table answering questions about produce and offering recipes. Most of the original working group continues to meet about the market and run it, with minimal staff support. They have invested much of themselves into their community.

LOCATION

Access to fresh produce can be limited by location as much as by cost. Some neighbourhoods are food deserts, where transportation to any grocery store is difficult, especially for those with mobility challenges. Even if another grocery store is both less accessible and more expensive, locals may still choose to shop there because they can get non-food items, such as toilet paper or laundry soap, along with produce. Time savings sometimes outweighs cost savings. Your market is more likely to be successful if it's easily accessible by foot or public transit as well as conveniently located near other community services your clients might already be using, like libraries and health centres. Researching the needs and barriers of your community will help inform where you should locate your market.

Dartmouth North CFC runs its affordable produce market from its Primrose Street location, a heavy pedestrian thoroughfare with a bus stop. The main bus terminal is two blocks away, as is the Dartmouth Family Centre. There used to be a Sobeys nearby, but it had been closed for almost four years before the affordable market opened. "Time and time again, people told me how much they missed it," says CFC manager Deborah Dickey. "There were still a few smaller stores, but you had to take a bus, maybe two, and that would limit how much you could carry home. So, you had to be able-bodied, you had to be able to afford transit regularly. And that's even before talking about the price of food."

Winnipeg's NorWest CFC runs its Blake Gardens market off-site at a community health resource centre located in a social housing complex. Residents who come to the resource centre also tend to shop at the market. Stephanie Fulford, NorWest's gardening and food skills programmer, says the location is doubly beneficial. "The Blake Gardens market wouldn't have been successful were it not already in an established resource centre that drew in community. Conversely, I think it's also fair to say that the market has contributed to the growth of the resource centre in the past few years. It's brought in new volunteers and families, and changed the feel of the space in

Mobile Markets

Some organizations have tried providing food to communities via mobile markets, trucking out to very small communities with limited facility space. Mobile markets are appealing but tend to be too costly to maintain: gas and vehicle maintenance can be prohibitive costs. In 2018, The Local CFC ran a three month pilot project, offering monthly markets in a volunteer-run store in nearby Listowel and in a long-term care facility in Milverton. Jenn Parsons at The Local says that while sales can sometimes be surprising — shoppers tend to stock up — the project costs ($500 a month for each market) were not sustainable.

a positive way. So there's definitely benefits for a community organization in terms of being a market host as well."

The Miijim Market, in Midland, ON, is a program of the CHIGAMIK Community Health Centre, but it runs at a partner site, Operation Grow. Miijim, which is Ojibwe for "food," has over 600 registered participants and their space is not big enough. "It's hard to have good flow, and hard to have one-on-one conversations with people," says market coordinator Alex King. She says the market will soon be moving to a new, larger location.

TIME

Most markets are open for three to four hours on a consistent day of the week. Spend time up front carefully considering the day and time of your market. The best time slot will largely depend on your target clientele. For instance, parents like to pick up children from school and then shop immediately after so they can get home to cook dinner. On the other hand, shift workers might work nights and sleep days, making it difficult to get to the market at times convenient to many others. Asking your community members about optimal hours is an important first step to determining a schedule.

In addition, we recommend coordinating your market day with other complementary programs like community kitchens, food demos, or advocacy office hours. Not only will this draw more people to the market, but it will also make it more worth their while to come.

Once you decide on a market schedule, keep to it as consistently as possible. People need to know that the market will be open at the same time every week so they can plan around it. Nothing can be more frustrating to a potential customer than making his or her way to the market only to find it is closed. If the time (or location) has to be changed, be as thorough as possible with signage and outreach so people know it has been rescheduled.

Where to run your market

Consider these five key points when researching a location for your market:

1. Physical space (on-site or at a partner organization/community space)
2. Indoor vs. outdoor (safety, weather)
3. Whether the building/area has a stigma/reputation attached (how to prevent the "it's not for me" feeling)
4. How many people the space can accommodate
5. Available storage (space for baskets, signage, etc., and, ideally, refrigeration for leftover produce)

The Local CFC's market recreates a farmers' market vibe with wooden crates and bountiful produce displays.

Year-round markets are definitely something to strive for since they ensure sustained access to fresh food for your target audience. In winter months, low-cost, fresh produce can be particularly difficult to access. Plus, the market can give people a good excuse to get out and be social during the cold, dark months.

OUTREACH

If the goal of an affordable market is to increase access to fresh produce, then the next step will be to decide how to best reach out to those in need of that access. Market organizers, likely well-established in their communities, will already have developed lines of communication via access workers, neighbourhood leaders, and partner agencies. Participants in other food programs can also help spread the word: Someone in a community kitchen or food bank might hear about the market and come check it out. Remember to have flyers translated into all the languages spoken in the community. Try to place a story in the local paper. Social media, such as parent groups on Facebook, is very cheap and effective. Simple incentives can work best.

For example, Stratford's The Local CFC initially distributed free membership cards to participants in their community meal programs, as well as guest passes for family and friends (only a name is required). Build-up was slow (due in part to the number of people who overlapped in the various programs), but now membership totals 1,400. Even though memberships are a simple way to target low-income households, it's important to keep in mind that no one needs to self-identify as such. The procedure is designed to be as unintrusive as possible while still efficiently tracking usage.

Winnipeg's NorWest Co-op CFC initially built up their customer base by handing out $5 gift certificates to community members. Each certificate included a suggestion of how much could be bought with that amount.

As with any other business, attractive signage is always an efficient way to draw people in. Sandwich boards are particularly useful for foot traffic, as are sidewalk stencils. Try handing out an apple with every flyer. A market logo, perhaps donated by a local graphic designer, will help you build a recognizable brand. Social media, of course, is the least costly and most wide-ranging outreach method there is (so long as your target clientele uses social media).

A market featuring a fun and welcoming space with high-quality produce is the best way to build a customer base. The Local's Jenn Parsons says half of their 1,400 members came from word-of-mouth referrals.

RELATED RESOURCES

Checklist: Before starting a market
(Appendix A)
Sample market planning survey
(Appendix B)
Outreach poster template
(Appendix C)

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

An affordable produce market may not be a money-making venture, but, as with any business, it's still very important to pay careful attention to the finances. Start-up budgets will vary, depending on the scope of the market and organizational resources. For example, Winnipeg's NorWest Co-op Community Food Centre (CFC) began its Blake Gardens market with a $100 weekly produce budget, which served a steady customer base of 20 people. Start with what is feasible for your organization and community.

In addition to the purchase of produce (discussed below), staff wages are a major expense. Each organization will have different wage rates and business hours, as well as market space and equipment needs. Larger markets might already have access to tables, fridges, and even computers. When it comes to purchasing equipment, much of it will be a one-time expense and can often be found at thrift stores (or even donated). Ongoing expenses, such as advertising and promotion, can be kept to a minimum by relying on social media, local news sources, and word-of-mouth by people who access other food programs and community services. Flyers can be created in-house.

Try to coordinate orders with your agency's other food programs, such as community kitchens and food bank. Purchasing items in bulk will lower overall costs. It can also streamline the time staff spend sourcing and ordering. A bigger order might make it economical enough for farmers and distributors to reduce (or perhaps waive) delivery costs.

WEEKLY MARKET BUDGET FROM DARTMOUTH NORTH CFC

Expenses:	**Cost:**
Staff hours (approx. 8 hours/week)	$170
Produce purchased from distributor	$600-700
Delivery	$100
Produce unsold*	$100-$200
Small equipment (flyers, bags, etc.)	$15
APPROX. TOTAL:	$1,000-1,200
Revenues:	
Produce sold	$500-600

**Leftovers are resold at Monday mini-market; remaining items are used for snacks, kitchen classes, and the Community Food Centre's three weekly meal programs. Usually, affordable markets will sell produce at or near cost, with the host organization paying for additional costs like staffing and equipment.*

SUBSIDIZATION MODELS

The basic premise of a market is to be able to offer healthy and affordable food while staying financially sustainable. Cost recovery — through a balance of subsidy and sales — is key. For example, some markets sell all produce at wholesale prices; others mark it up by 10% to cover the cost of unsold produce or other overheads. Different subsidization models exist, and organizers will need to fully understand all their costs to help keep their market viable.

When community organizers planned the Dartmouth North market in 2015, they considered a 10% markup on food, but ultimately decided to sell produce at cost. CFC manager Deborah Dickey says the price of fruit and vegetables has gone up so much since then, it's unlikely they will ever mark up prices, even if it means operating at a loss. Not every market can do this, of course (the loss is part of programming costs in the larger budget of Dartmouth North CFC). When it comes to helping funders see this subsidy as a legitimate program cost

(one that is relatively small compared to the potential benefits), explaining the value of the market in supporting health and community can be key.

Calgary's The Alex CFC, which ran an affordable produce market from early spring through late summer in 2017, tried a hybrid approach. A one-person household would receive three $1 tokens with a suggested $2 donation; households with two to four people would get six tokens with a suggested donation of $5; and households with five or more people would have nine tokens with a suggested donation of $8. This system proved to be too complicated. There was some chaos when the market opened and customers lined up to receive their tokens; and some customers would go through the line twice to get more than their share. For their 2018 market, The Alex opted to contract out the market to an external agency, which added a 10% markup on produce.

Another subsidy model is the sliding scale: customers can choose how much they pay within a defined range. The low end is most affordable and is subsidized by those who opt to pay on the high end (which tends to be akin to or above conventional retail prices). While this model could appeal for its internalized revenue generating approach, we suggest proceeding with caution if you pursue this route. Firstly, customers paying the lower price may feel stigmatized for having to self-declare their price point. Secondly, if your market's primary goal is to increase healthy food access in low-income communities, then a sliding scale market is likely to divert too much of your organization's staff time and resources to running a program for a demographic outside your target audience. No matter how you decide to price your food, it's important to note that no amount of built-in subsidy will cover your operating costs. And the more your market presents as a social enterprise the harder it will be to fund those core costs.

Making adjustments to the weekly price list can be an effective way to subsidize certain items; i.e., putting a small markup on less expensive products in order to lower the prices of more expensive ones. For example, if your weekly order includes apples, potatoes, and onions (all quite inexpensive) and strawberries (more expensive), you can charge a bit more for the inexpensive items and reduce the cost of the berries to make them more affordable. Unlike the sliding scale model, the retail price would be the same for all shoppers here.

The Alex CFC 's affordable market.

Equipment list

Necessary:

- Tables
- Tablecloths
- Chairs
- Paper, pens, and markers
- Masking tape
- Clipboard
- Baskets or other produce containers
- Banners
- Sign holders and signs (for item name, price, possible uses)
- Price labels
- Cash box and float
- Calculator or tablet with POS system
- Storage bins (for tear down)
- Cleaning supplies, such as diluted bleach spray (required by Public Health), as well as paper towels or washcloths

Optional:

- Shopping bags or open shopping baskets
- Sandwich board
- Weigh scale (though selling by the unit not weight is much easier)
- Coolers
- Tents (for outdoor markets)
- Trolleys or hand trucks
- Delivery vehicle

SOURCING AND MANAGING PRODUCE

SOURCING AND MANAGING PRODUCE

In order to make your market successful, you'll need to find consistent, convenient, and affordable sources of produce. Fresh fruit and vegetables can be purchased directly from local farmers or from wholesalers — sometimes it's a combination of both. The key is to find suppliers that offer the right product mix at prices (including cost of delivery) that makes sense.

The primary goal of an affordable produce market is to provide access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Unfortunately, this might mean some secondary goals, such as supporting local farms, can't always be met. Local produce might be more expensive, especially once the cost of delivery is factored in. It also takes additional staff resources to connect with all the farms and coordinate orders for each. Stratford's The Local Community Food Centre (CFC) has been fortunate to source from the Elmira Produce Auction, a nearby growers' co-op that acts as a one-stop shop (see Appendix D). Not only does this streamline The Local's order and pickup process, it also provides consistent sales for several family farms at the same time.

In some cases, delivery costs alone can be prohibitive. Deborah Dickey, at Dartmouth North CFC, realized she could not provide inexpensive produce to the community and support local farms. After reaching out to several farmers in the Annapolis Valley — an agricultural region about an hour away — she was deterred by the issue of delivery. "We have zero capacity to pick up orders," she says. "We had to find a way to make transportation as easy for us as possible. With that in mind, there was only one choice based on our needs." Dartmouth North CFC purchases $600/week from Dave's Valley Fruit & Vegetables, a long-running, family-owned wholesaler. The $100 delivery cost of is manageable.

While some farms are large enough that their wholesale rate will be within your budget, it's important to note that we never advocate for asking farmers to artificially lower their price point. Some farmers might be able to sell you their "seconds" — produce that is mildly blemished or misshapen but still high quality — at a reduced rate. Other farmers have gotten quite creative in order to support the "good food for all" philosophy: The New Farm in Creemore, ON, hosts Farms for Change — an annual live concert at the farm to raise money for Community Food Centres in Ontario to buy New Farm vegetables throughout the year. That said when it comes to affordable markets offering healthy and affordable food are top priority.

Aside from the dollars and cents of it, keep in mind that local and seasonal items are not always the right choice for your market. Celery or iceberg lettuce might be both regional and affordable, but that doesn't mean it will sell. Try to stock what customers want. Community demographics can help you determine what is culturally appropriate. A newcomer form Delhi, for example, might prefer to buy a mango more than a cabbage. Tropical items will certainly be more expensive, but adjusting the weekly price list (as mentioned in the previous chapter) is a way to make such items affordable for customers.

Do affordable markets cut into local farm profits?

Some people may be concerned that affordable produce markets will undercut local farms. In our opinion, the scale of the markets is too small to make much of a difference. Target consumers are not buying large volumes of local/organic produce elsewhere. In other words, affordable markets are providing a new resource to the communities they serve, not replacing one.

LARGE FOOD PROCUREMENT SYSTEMS

FoodShare Toronto offers a model of a large food procurement system. FoodShare helps subsidize 45 Good Food Markets across the city by directly purchasing produce in bulk from the Ontario Food Terminal then consolidating orders and making deliveries. FoodShare effectively acts as a non-profit distributor and allows markets, especially smaller ones, to sell food at cost while keeping them viable.

Not all agencies, especially those in smaller towns, will have such a unique advantage. Still, there might be opportunities to tap into other community food programs. A healthy food box organization, for example, might be willing to extend their purchasing system to accommodate your program.

PRODUCE ORDERS: AN EVOLVING JOURNEY

Winnipeg's NorWest Co-op CFC provides a good example of how the process of sourcing food can evolve. The Community Food Centre's parent organization, the NorWest Co-op Community Health Centre, started its first market in summer 2014, before their Community Food Centre even officially opened. With only $100 per week to spend, they originally bought staples from the local Sobeys Cash and Carry, which the staff then delivered themselves. "We were able to buy boxes of some staples — bananas, apples, oranges, some greens, eggs — and whatever was cheap and in good condition," says Kristina McMillan, former director of NorWest Co-op CFC. "Some items, such as apples, would last us for a few weeks. It was good value at the Cash and Carry. I remember you could get a box of peppers for $15 (though none of it was local or organic). But the amount became too much to lug ourselves." NorWest then ordered from a healthy food box organization, but there were fewer produce options and drop-off times were inconsistent. Next, they sourced from Neechi Commons, an Indigenous workers co-op grocery store. "We really wanted to support a worker co-op, but we found we were getting less for our money than when we purchased direct from the bulk distributor."

When the NorWest Co-op CFC opened in March 2015, McMillan says their sourcing process became more adept, with increased access to food distributors and a dedicated staff to navigate ordering. "There are always tradeoffs in terms of staff time, effort, cost, and what your money is supporting." NorWest added a second market, at the CFC site, in February 2018. The first market, in Blake Gardens, has up to 30 customers each week, while the second draws up to 40 people. The markets now purchase $800 worth of produce per week.

DELIVERY AND PRODUCE MANAGEMENT

Produce delivery or pickup is another important consideration. The cost of a vehicle (plus maintenance), gas, and staff time can be a strain on a market's resources. The Depot Community Food Centre, in Montreal, QC, used to save on delivery costs by having staff transport by bike trailer. Market coordinator Nicolas Braesch says he couldn't load up enough produce to keep up with demand. "I could only carry one box of strawberries, and we'd sell out so early." The Depot bought a truck, which is used for all agency programs. Their bigger haulage capacity now means a better-stocked market (sourced from Trottier Fruits et Légumes), which makes it more attractive to customers.

Ideally, deliveries will arrive only a few hours before the market opens, which limits the need for storage and also keeps produce fresh for customers. Staff and volunteers generally will need two to three hours to unload, repackage, and price everything. It's a good idea to pre-chop or bunch some items.

Students help out market staff throughout the summer months of The Depot's market in Montreal.

FREE FOOD

In Nova Scotia, the Dartmouth North market also features a table with produce from the Community Food Centre's urban garden program. Garlic scapes, radishes, and sugar snap peas are all given out free of charge. While this is a good example of how two separate food access programs can complement one another, it's important to note that affordable produce markets should not rely on donated foods. There are several reasons for this: lack of reliability, less control over selection and quality, and perhaps most importantly, it is not ethical to sell something that has been donated. Selling food rather than giving it away maintains the clear distinction between markets and food banks — the former is more dignified due to its transactional nature; the latter is less so because it requires accepting charity.

MANAGING USE OF EXCESS PRODUCE

Having a good selection (both in quantity and variety) of fruits and vegetables is necessary to attract customers. It's also important to ensure you have enough stock to offer customers throughout business hours (e.g., so you don't sell out of everything early). Unfortunately, this means that some produce will remain unsold. Market organizers need to plan for leftovers so they can recoup these costs as much as possible. The simplest way to do this is to sell any excess to other food programs, either within the organization or outside of it.

On average, Dartmouth North CFC is left with about $100 in unsold produce per week from its main Friday market. Leftovers are then resold at a mini-market run in conjunction with their Monday night young family dinners. Midland's Miijim market, which averages $35 in unsold produce each week, resells their leftovers to partner organizations, such as the Georgian Bay Native Women's Association. Whatever is still left is then sold to staff and volunteers at CHIGAMIK Health Centre programs out of the office of food access worker Alex King. The Depot, in Montreal, in Montreal, stores end-of-week leftovers and then sells them the following week as a mixed bag of "7-diferent items-for-$7."

What's hot and what's not

You may be surprised by what sells and what doesn't, and how certain items can rise and fall in popularity. Two market coordinators offer their thoughts on what items were most popular and which were harder to sell:

"Sweet potatoes are more popular than regular potatoes. Our food skills coordinator offered free samples of rutabaga and turnip, and now those sell well. Sometimes, we introduce an item and people can't get enough of it."

— Jenn Parsons, manager of food logistics at **The Local CFC**

"Berries are one of the fastest-selling items. Almost all families who access the market will always pick up a small basket of berries, which are also one of the most expensive items. Zucchini was an interesting product to sell as well. Individuals were hesitant until we introduced the spiralized zucchini noodles in a workshop and showed them how to create a neat product. Broccoli, cauliflower, and asparagus were hardest to sell. Celery is another weird item that has its ups and downs from week to week. But I think it was due to the size — a bigger head of celery seemed like a better deal than a small one."

— Alex King, market coordinator at **CHIGAMIK Health Centre's** Miijim market

A shopper holds their bounty from the Mijim market.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Your local, provincial, and federal public health agencies will offer complete lists of health and safety regulations around food sale and handling as well as storage, packaging, and labelling. Because the onus is on customers to wash their fruits and vegetables before use, markets that sell produce exclusively will have fewer risks than those that offer other perishable items such as bread, meat, and eggs. Public Health will also want to inspect kitchens and warehouses. The organizers of the Miijim market have considered dehydrating unsold root vegetables and selling them as a soup package, but their kitchen was not certified — an exhaust hood needed to be installed, and using another kitchen might be too costly. It's also important to have a first-aid kit along with an emergency procedure document on hand, and to ensure staff and volunteers are familiar with it.

Try to ensure staff and volunteers are trained in how to help de-escalate tense moments and manage crisis situations. Kristina McMillan, former director of the NorWest Co-op CFC, says: "It was key for me to have the other staff members at Blake Gardens — a social worker and a community developer — to work with on these things. If it was just me alone trying to sell food, the market would have been totally derailed by crisis every week."

THEFT

As with any market, there may be incidents of minor theft. Try to focus on theft prevention while being careful to avoid stigmatizing anyone. Foster sincere interpersonal engagement among all staff, volunteers, and customers. People are less likely to steal from a place that welcomes them.

Train volunteers on how to lock up valuables and how to report anything that is missing. If possible, use open baskets (budget for them as a startup cost): baskets make it easy to see what customers are carrying. The Miijim market started with paper bags but found that they made it too easy for people to hide items. Ask volunteers to assist shoppers in tallying their quantities so no mistakes are made at checkout.

Remember: Theft might well occur but confronting people for stealing a piece of fruit is very humiliating for everyone.

Tips for ordering produce

NorWest Co-op CFC offers the following on ordering produce:

1. Listen carefully to what customers want: Blake Gardens market didn't initially stock onions and potatoes because of space limitations, plus the fact that these items were easy to find at local convenience stores. Customers, however, said they appreciated being able to purchase them with everything else, and the cheap price really helped stretch what they could buy with only a few dollars.

2. Keep a schedule of when government payments arrive: Quantities purchased really depend on when Manitoba's Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), Canada Child Benefit, and GST rebate cheques arrive in the community. Try to coordinate orders with payment schedules. Order more when people are likely to have more money.

Tips to repackaging produce

Dartmouth North CFC's Deborah Dickey acknowledges the complexities of repackaging produce:

"Repackaging produce is not an exact science. We try to err on smaller amounts, and if someone is shopping for a bigger family, they can buy two bags."

Deborah explains that a 10-pound bag of potatoes proved to be too much for customers who lived alone. Bags were broken down to a 5-pound quantity, but sold best at 2.5 pounds. Similarly, a 5-pound box of mushrooms sells best when broken into 13 small brown bags.

MINI MARKET PROFILE: THE DEPOT COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

From June through October, The Depot operates three Good Food Markets in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, a neighbourhood in which 25% of the population, including one in three children, live below the poverty line.

Across the three markets:

- Average customers: 230
- Average amount of food purchased from distributors (produce, bread, eggs, nuts): $1,700/week
- Average amount of produce sold: $1,850/week

Unsold produce is used for other programs at The Depot, such as food baskets, kitchen classes, and community meals. The rest is discounted at markets the following week.

RELATED RESOURCES

Sample order and inventory sheet
(Appendix D)
Sample market preparation and packing instructions
(Appendix E)

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

When it comes to creating a vibrant and welcoming market, it takes the combined efforts of your staff and volunteers. The staff coordinator, who will likely have prior experience with both food programming and community engagement, plays a key role in keeping volunteers focused on the goals of the market and how best to achieve them. Volunteers tend to be community members, familiar faces who fulfill the same duties from week to week. The deeper their involvement becomes, the greater their sense of community. Nurturing a feeling of camaraderie among your market team will help to create a warm, welcoming, inclusive vibe at the market.

Staff should be able to work well with all kinds, people with a range of life experience, personalities, cultures, and physical and mental health challenges. Staff responsibilities typically include market research, promotion and planning, and financial management. In addition to a market coordinator, some larger organizations have a professional chef on staff who can lend their expertise to sourcing and ordering produce. If you don't have a chef on your team, consider asking a local chef if they would be willing to volunteer this service — many chefs are proponents of healthy eating, food sustainability, and the "good food for all" mandate.

Rob MacNeish, at Dartmouth North Community Food Centre (CFC), in Nova Scotia, spends up to eight hours each week preparing for their Friday market. Even though their market is mostly volunteer-run, certain tasks are only appropriate for staff. On Wednesdays, he is responsible for inventory. He takes stock of what is on hand and estimates, based on previous sales figures, what needs to be reordered. He will also check in with other CFC program coordinators to assess what their produce needs might be. Then, he phones in the order to the distributor. On Thursdays, he's on hand for delivery and to check the invoice against his order. Next, he greets the volunteers, who help unload, repackage, and price the produce.

Ideally, for most affordable markets, which tend to be on the smaller side, staff time will be limited to seven to eight hours per week in order to keep overhead on target. Of course, staff time will be higher if there is more than one market per week or additional programming is offered.

As your market grows, so too will your need for volunteers. Typically, you will need to organize 10 to 20 volunteer hours each week, often in two-hour shifts. Tasks will vary, from restocking produce to working the cash or

taking inventory. These latter two will require additional training and management, but giving volunteers more responsibility instills a greater sense of trust while presenting them with more opportunities to develop leadership and other skills. Volunteers, in turn, will feel a greater sense of ownership and pride in the market. In some instances, the experience market cashiers have gained allowed them to be eligible for retail positions elsewhere.

Anyone who wishes to volunteer — from students to seniors — is welcome, though preference is usually given to neighborhood residents and other food program participants, which helps to avoid any sense of class divide between volunteers and customers. When hiring volunteers, it's important to set clear expectations. Ask them to commit to one role for at least four months. This continuity will help volunteers and customers feel comfortable. Fostering an overall climate of goodwill will help reduce volunteer turnover, which also reduces the time needed for training.

Volunteers often receive some sort of perk in exchange for the time they give to the market. When NorWest Co-op CFC, in Winnipeg, MB, opened their Blake Gardens market, they initially attracted volunteers by offering half-price produce but switched to giving each volunteer one free bag of produce. Stephanie Fulford, a gardening and food skills programmer, says this has proven to be fairer for volunteers. "Some volunteers might not have funds to purchase food, even at 50% off, and it helps make costs to the program more predictable (i.e., everyone gets $5 worth of food vs. some people getting a $10 discount one week, a $4 discount the next, etc). It's also a handy way to distribute the last few items from a case of produce that would otherwise go bad!" (If you want a full cost accounting for your market program, remember to include the cost of these incentives.)

Pro tip #1

Consider training your volunteers on more than just the mechanics of the market. Offering workshops on food security issues, healthy eating, and leadership skills such as team-building and conflict resolution is an investment in your team's knowledge and skills, and will have ripple effects well beyond the market itself.

Pro tip #2

Having staff and volunteers wear name tags or aprons will help customers recognize that they work there and are available to help them.

RELATED RESOURCES

Sample market tasks
(Appendix F)
Sample volunteer training program
(Appendix G)

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Low prices might be what first brings people to the market, but customer experience plays a huge role in bringing them *back.* Warm greetings help set a pleasant tone and create a positive space. Similarly, a friendly, unbiased experience at checkout leaves everyone feeling good.

Small details can make big differences, such as eye-catching signage and clear pricing. Handing out price lists to each customer makes it easier for them to keep a running tally of their purchases, as does pricing by item rather than weight. Restock often: half-empty shelves and baskets can be discouraging. Also, it's a good idea to put a limit on purchases of popular seasonal items, such as peaches, plums, and strawberries, so there is enough for everybody.

Try to organize the market's physical space so there is an easy flow. A bottleneck at checkout, for example, can create tension between customers and volunteers. Everyone will be happier if there is a smooth path for people to browse and chat on the way to the cash. Calculators or, if possible, a point-of-sale system, also facilitates checkout. It really helps to have volunteers on cash as it frees up staff to resolve any possible disputes, ask customers for suggestions, and generally mingle.

It's small but inexpensive touches like baskets, table cloths, and signage that help make the space inviting to customers.

When Calgary's The Alex Community Food Centre (CFC) opened their first market in spring 2017, they operated out of the Centre's main dining hall. Erin Gionet, food skills coordinator at the time, says they had trouble moderating the flow of customers. "People wanted to line up and get out of there. There was this sense of urgency and anxiety. They felt if they didn't get there early enough, then they wouldn't get what they needed, or they'd get stuck with the worst-looking produce. People who struggle with food insecurity can have a scarcity mindset, and it can be contagious. There were some confrontations." Avoiding line-ups reminiscent of soup kitchens or food banks is one of the key principles of Community Food Centres. In order to figure out how to re-work the market, The Alex shut it down in early fall 2017 and ultimately chose to contract out to a mobile market agency.

Keep in mind that social interaction is one of the most important goals of any affordable food market. People who are living on a low income are six times more likely

"Crowd control has been a sticky issue for us. For the smaller market, first come, first served works; for the larger market, we do a lottery-style draw of numbers at the start of the market. This prevents people from arriving hours early to be first in line! We also sometimes put a limit on special weekly items, like strawberries."

—Stephanie Fulford, market coordinator, **NorWest Co-op CFC**

to be socially isolated. A market with quality produce and friendly faces and more than one reason to visit it can provide just the encouragement some people need to leave their apartment and connect with their community. As mentioned previously, try to coordinate market day with other program offerings so there are more reasons for people to come and hang out. Have coffee and tea available. Consider offering a seniors' lunch before the market opens or setting up a café after it closes. One sure way to animate a market is to make it kid-friendly. Not only does this allow parents to shop more leisurely, but it also adds a festive vibe. Kid-friendly activities can include a colouring station or a story time hosted by the local public library. Some markets have gotten very creative, offering outdoor pizza-making sessions at a bake oven or inviting a local bike repair co-op to provide tune-ups. Miijim market's most popular activity is the bike blender: Participants get to choose their favourite fruit and mix a smoothie using the pedal-power of a repurposed bicycle. "The physical activity makes it really fun for them," says Miijim's market coordinator Alex King. "And the fact that it's fun makes it more likely they'll want to do it again."

Tips for making a vibrant market

Offering pop-up programming or entertainment at the market will make it a more dynamic, celebratory space, encouraging more people to visit the space and getting them involved in new ways. Here are some examples to consider.

- Offer taste tests to introduce new or potentially unfamiliar foods
- Provide recipe suggestions
- Have food-of-the-day workshops; e.g., how to use a spiralizer to make zucchini noodles
- Hold nutritional food demos
- Coordinate with cultural festivals; e.g., order yucca and plantains during a Latino festival
- Sell baked goods or grilled corn
- Start a garden club
- Invite local musicians and artisans
- Host a social justice meeting
- Set up English conversation circles

A happy customer shows off some green beans from the Dartmouth North CFC market..


What Motivates You To Shop
at the GOOD FOOD MARKET?
Please answer with a tick each category a-g. Thank you!
Does not motivate me
Somewhat motivates me
Strongly motivates me
A. LOCATION
D. PRICES
HOURS OF

EVALUATION

EVALUATION

Ongoing evaluation is essential to ensure that your market is a) running efficiently and b) routinely providing the community with the desired benefits. Having an up-to-date snapshot of your market is always attractive to potential funders, too.

TRACKING SALES

One of the easiest places to gather data is at checkout, whether from handwritten tallies or a point-of-sale (POS) system. Sales records can help market coordinators gauge the successes and failures of their market. Here are some numbers to track and factors to consider:

- **Weekly sales:** Are sales steady from week to week? Higher? Lower? Why? In some instances, low sales could be due to bad weather. High sales might be due to timing; e.g., the week government assistance cheques were delivered.
- **Sales per item:** If a new food is introduced one week, are sales encouraging enough to continue stocking it? Adjust food orders based on what is popular or not.
- **Seasonal items:** Summer fruits, such as strawberries, are both popular and more expensive. Can the prices of year-round items, like carrots, be raised slightly in order to lower the prices of seasonal items?
- **Number of customers:** How do you measure your customer base? Are memberships issued? How many customers are new each week? How many are returning?
- **Average sales:** Are you selling enough produce each week to warrant expanding the market?

Market goers speak!

What customers have to say about their local affordable produce market:

"I like to eat good food. The produce market has been very beneficial and very important to me. It's nice to see my friends here." — *The Alex CFC market participant*

"It's a lot cheaper and I don't have to travel too far. I can just buy what I need." — *Blake Gardens market participant*

"[The] market is out of this world. People become aware of the richness of abundance that we have in South-western Ontario. Good food equals good nutrition equals good health." — *The Local CFC market participant*

ASKING FOR FEEDBACK

Staff and volunteers see the inner workings of the market each week, so gleaning insight from them through regular debriefings is an invaluable way for team members to share ideas and express concerns.

Customer feedback is, of course, also very important. Surveys are a simple and inexpensive way to collect comments and criticism. Most markets place a brief questionnaire near the checkout, asking basic questions about produce selection, market atmosphere, and changes to dietary habits as a result of the market.

More thorough surveys can be conducted in person during market hours. Staff, volunteers, or, preferably, an external evaluator, can ask a shopper if they'd like to participate in a short questionnaire (no more than ten minutes long). The conversational nature of these exchanges might encourage more detailed answers. For example, the affordable markets at our partner Community Food Centres (CFCs) are evaluated every year through our nationally coordinated annual program survey. A Community Food Centres Canada evaluator visits each CFC to personally interview participants across program areas. If any of the interviewees indicate they have shopped at the CFC's affordable produce market, the evaluator asks a series of market-specific questions, such as:

- Why do you shop at the market?
- How often do you shop at the market?
- Is there anything preventing you from shopping more often at the market?
- Have you tried a new fruit/vegetable at the market?

PAINTING A PICTURE OF IMPACT

In addition to each Community Food Centre receiving a unique report on the findings for their site and programs, we aggregate the data each year to paint a picture of the collective impact these organizations are having in their communities.

Impact by the numbers

In 2017, six Community Food Centres across Canada offered affordable markets. In our annual program survey that year, 290 survey participants indicated that they shopped at a market in the last year. Of these, 87 individuals were asked specific questions about this program:

94% said the market helped them get more fruits and vegetables in their diet.

97% reported that the affordable produce market helped them stretch their food purchasing budget further.

RELATED RESOURCES

Market logic model template
(Appendix H)
Sample market evaluation
(Appendix I)

INCENTIVIZING HEALTHY FOOD

INCENTIVIZING HEALTHY FOOD

In order for an affordable food market to be sustainable, it must continually attract customers and promote healthy eating at lower costs than traditional food sources. Offering vouchers or incentive programs are two ways to do this.

Vouchers that offer additional savings (on top of the already subsidized market produce) can be given to some of your community's most vulnerable members — families with children living on low incomes and people either at risk of or living with diet-related illnesses, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Although finding the funds to sustain these vouchers or to offer them broadly is often a big challenge, it is still a valuable exercise, even at a small scale or shorter term if the health benefits to participants can be shown. If your research shows that consumers are shifting their shopping and eating practices toward healthier eating in ways that will be sustained after the subsidy ends, you may be able to attract further funding.

This kind of deeper subsidy not only attracts more customers to your market, it can encourage them to sample new foods without having to risk their scarce dollars. Increased exposure to fruit and vegetables might lead to greater opportunities to experiment with different recipes. It also can help children to accept a wider variety of produce and perhaps more permanently shift shopping and dietary habits. What's more, children who have been raised on healthy diets are more likely to continue eating well as they grow up.

A better diet, of course, leads to better health. An article in PLOS Medicine, an American peer-reviewed journal, predicted that a 10% fruit and vegetable subsidy could prevent or postpone more than 150,000 U.S. deaths due to heart disease alone within 15 years, and would be five times more effective than a sugar-sweetened beverage tax.[7] Such health benefits are a cost-effective form of illness prevention and treatment. There have been several successful examples of voucher programs in both the United States and Canada.

In 2007, U.S. non-profit Wholesome Wave launched its Wholesome Rx program (formerly called the Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program), in which healthcare providers prescribe healthy produce for patients at risk of diet-related illnesses. The patients receive vouchers good for $1 per day and can then redeem them at participating grocery stores and farmers' markets. Out of 13,000 Rx recipients, almost 70% increased their consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables, and 47% lowered their body mass index (BMI).[8]

Also in 2007, the British Columbia Association of Farmers' Markets established the Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program (FMNCP). In this program, local community organizations distributed coupons worth $15 per week to low-income pregnant women, seniors and families with children over the course of 16 weeks. A 2013 FMNCP report found that over 2,200 households had received FMNCP coupons, with 69% reporting they found healthy food to be much more affordable.[9] To date, the Association estimates the program has led to an estimated $1 million or more in social and economic benefits to B.C. communities each year.

Some fresh produce at Dartmouth North CFC is displayed with healthy recipe cards.

Finding public or private stakeholders to support this approach to promoting health at scale and in the longer-term is still underway. Community Food Centres Canada (CFCC) is trying to add to the evidence base and look for ways to deliver subsidies at scale here in Canada.

In 2018, CFCC launched our own fruit and vegetable incentive program: Market Greens. It's a two-year pilot program in partnership with The Local CFC, in Stratford, ON, and CHIGAMIK Community Health Centre, in Midland, ON. Funded by the Government of Ontario and administered by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, this program targets families with kids up to six years old. The program aims to remove income barriers to fruit and vegetable consumption and to test the results of the subsidy on a family's health, children's eating habits, and the parents' likelihood to shift shopping and eating patterns toward more fruit and vegetables once introduced to the low-cost market. The Market Greens program provides $10 vouchers each week for a family of two, $15 for a family of three, and $20 for a family of four or more (total: $200/$300/$400 over 20 weeks). Subsidies are indicated on participants' membership cards, and these are automatically applied, stigma-free, when they present their cards at checkout. Market Greens only covers fruit and vegetables.

Market Greens follows a three-step program evaluation:

1. Once enrolled, staff take recipients through a detailed baseline survey that assesses their current household food environment.
2. Upon completion of the program, participants complete a follow-up survey that explores any changes to shopping and eating habits.
3. After six months, participants are given a post-completion survey to see if any positive changes have been lasting ones.

In the words of Market Greens participants...

"We can go into the fridge and go, *Look! When have we ever really had this much fruit and vegetables in the drawers?* It's a good thing."

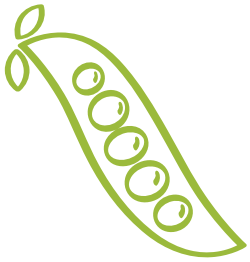
"I eat way more fruits and vegetables now than I have before. Now I'm like *Oh, I kind of like zucchini.* And then it's like *Oh, it's free*, and it makes me more motivated to look up what I can do with zucchini, so I become more creative."

EVALUATING THE MARKET GREENS PILOT

Community Food Centres Canada hired an external evaluator to assess the impact of the Market Greens pilot project at The Local Community Food Centre's Community Access Market in Stratford, ON, and the Miijim Market in Midland, ON. The early results are promising! Based on 82 baseline surveys, 54 post-test surveys, and in-depth interviews with a random sample of participants, the findings point the value that the affordable market, and the additional voucher, had on participants. Prior to the pilot, participants had not been shopping at the affordable market.

AFTER RECEIVING MARKET GREENS VOUCHERS FOR 20 WEEKS...

Participants' children were eating, on average, **2 more servings of fruits and vegetables** per day compared to when they began the program.



67% of participants reported that they tried new fruit and vegetables, and **76%** reported that their children tried a new fruit or vegetable because of the program.

Participants felt a significantly greater sense of belonging to their community.

57% of participants reported that they noticed improvements in their children's attitudes toward eating fruits and vegetables.

80% of participants had changed the way they shopped for, cooked, or chose fruits and vegetables

50% of participants noticed improvements in their mental health and **47%** noticed improvements in their physical health. Participants also reported there was a significant improvement in children's overall health.

NEXT STEPS

Building on the results of the Market Greens pilot, Community Food Centres Canada is looking to create a grants fund to support the creation of new affordable markets, as well as a fund that is directed at creating deeper subsidies for more vulnerable populations and documenting the impacts. Finally, we plan to research the results from using a prescription model in a healthcare setting. Between these approaches, we hope to create a strong and broad enough evidence base to encourage much more significant investment in subsidized strategies to promote health through increased fruit and vegetable consumption.

RELATED RESOURCES

Community Food Centres Canada Backgrounder: Fruit and Vegetable Incentive Programs

Download at https://tinyurl.com/CFCCFVbackgrounder

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CHECKLIST BEFORE STARTING A MARKET

SOURCE: COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES CANADA

- ❑ Location: Is there an established need for the program in the community? Where do people currently shop? How far is it? Is it accessible for people with mobility issues?
- ❑ Startup equipment: Are items such as tables, chairs, and baskets already on hand? If not, can these be borrowed, or bought at minimal expense?
- ❑ Customer capacity: How many customers are expected? Can the market space accommodate this amount, and can it do so if the customer base grows?
- ❑ Sourcing: Is the produce from local wholesalers and/or farms affordable? Can price be negotiated? What about delivery costs?
- ❑ Storage: Is there space to store produce, both before market day and after? Is it refrigerated? Is there space for deliveries?
- ❑ Personnel: Is there enough staff availability and/or volunteers to support the market?
- ❑ Budget: Is startup funding available? Can costs be shared with another program? Can the organization absorb the cost of unsold produce?
- ❑ Leftovers: Can the organization use any leftover produce? If not, can some arrangement be made to sell (perhaps at discount) some/most of the leftovers to volunteers or other food access programs?

SAMPLE MARKET PLANNING SURVEY

SOURCE: COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES CANADA

The following survey could be used in your market planning phase as a way to consult your community members on how an affordable produce market could best meet their needs. Alternatively, the survey can be adapted to a time post-launch when you are seeking to refine your approach. It can be conducted verbally or via comment cards (personally handed to a sample size of people via another program like a food bank or meal program).

What days of the week would you prefer to visit our affordable market? (circle all that apply)

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

What hours would you most likely attend the market? (circle one)

9 a.m.-12 p.m. 12-3 p.m. 1-4 p.m. 2-5 p.m. 3-6 p.m. 4-7 p.m. 5-8 p.m.

What food items would you most like to see sold at the market?

_____

If bulk items like flours, rice, dried beans, and whole grains were sold at the market, would you purchase them? (circle one)

Yes No Don't Know

Which, if any, of our organization's other programs do you currently participate in?

_____

How would you describe your household?* (circle one)

Single Couple/no kids in home Couple/kids at home

Single parent/kids Multi-family/Multi-generations Group/Communal Housing

** Ask this if you want to know if your survey population is representative of your target demographic or participants coming to your other programs.*

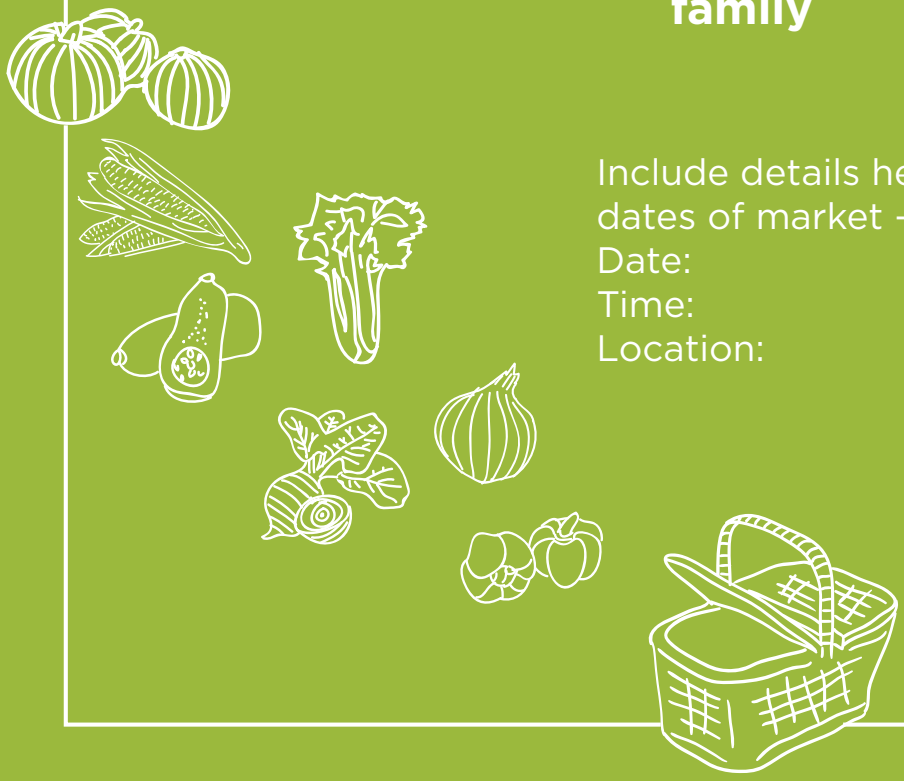
DOWNLOAD Download this template at: https://tinyurl.com/CFCCmarketsmanual

OUTREACH POSTER TEMPLATE

SOURCE: COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES CANADA

Join us at the
AFFORDABLE MARKET

Affordable, fresh fruits and vegetables for you and your family



Include details here about dates of market –
Date:
Time:
Location:

ADD LOGO HERE

Find out more
Website URL
Email
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SAMPLE ORDER AND INVENTORY SHEET

SOURCE: THE LOCAL COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

Item	Supplier	Unit	Amount left	Amount in stock/ ordered	Amount in case/bag	Delivered when?
Apples	John	Each		1 bushel	113	July 31
Arugula (organic)	Pfennings	150g (1/3 lb)		2 cases	9	July 31
Avocado	Gambles	Each		1.5 case	84	July 31
Bananas	Gambles	1 lb (2 bananas)		*****Keep out of walk-in ***** 2 cases	77	July 31
Bananas (Fair Trade)	Pfennings	1 lb (2 bananas)		*****Keep out of walk-in ** 1 case	77	July 31
Basil (GYF)	GYF	Bunch		10 bunches	1	July 31
Beans	Farmer Tom	1/2 lb		2 cases	9	July 31
Beets	Gambles	Each		1 case	24	July 31
Blueberries	Farmer Tom	Each pint		5 cases	12	
Broccoli	Farmer Tom	Each		30 heads		
Cabbage	Gambles	Each		1 case	16	
Cantaloupe	Gambles	Each		1 case	15	
Carrots	Gambles	Bunches (1 lb)		1 case	50 lbs	
Carrots (Baby)	Gambles	Bag		1 case	40	
Cauliflower	Farmer Tom	Each		1 case	20	
Celery (Organic)	Pfennings	Each		2 cases	30	
Cilantro	GYF	Bunch		6 bunches		
Clementines	Gambles	Each		1 case	240	
Corn	Farmer Tom	For 2		2 bags	30	
Cucumber (mini)	Farmer Tom	Each		2 cases	50	
Cucumber (Seedless)	Farmer Tom	Each		4 cases	12	
Dill	GYF	Bunch			12	
Eggplant	Gambles	Each		1 case	20	
Garlic (Organic)	Farmer Peter	Each				

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SAMPLE MARKET PREPARATION AND PACKING INSTRUCTIONS

SOURCE: DARTMOUTH NORTH COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

Beans (green/yellow)	10 lbs is divided into 20 even bags
Beets	4 beets per bag — mix 2 large beets and 2 small beets in each bag so that bags are even
Brussels sprouts	10 lbs is divided into 25 even bags
Carrots	Carrots come in 5-lb bag — open 2 bags so that you have 10 lbs of carrots and divide those into 5 bags (2 lbs each)
Garlic	Put in a bowl
Lemons	Put in a bowl
Lettuce (romaine)	Each head goes into a bag
Mixed greens	Each large bag of mixed greens is divided into 13 small bags
Mushrooms	Each 5-lb box is divided into 10 paper bags
Onions (yellow)	Leave as is in 2-lb bags
Onions (red)	Put in a bowl
Oranges	Put in a large stainless-steel bowl
Parsnips	10-lb bag is divided into 1-lb bags
Potatoes	2 sizes are created: (1) 10-lb bags are divided evenly into 2 bags (5 lbs each) (2) 10-lb bags are divided evenly into 4 bags (2.5 lbs each)

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SAMPLE MARKET TASKS

SOURCE: DARTMOUTH NORTH COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

Wednesday: Staff time

- Assess inventory (including what is available on the farm)
- Speak with coordinators about produce needs
- Phone in the produce order

Thursday: Prep day for staff and volunteers

- Receive the pallet of produce
- Greet four to eight prep volunteers
- Rearrange dining room for market and café
- Set up cash and information tables at the front
- Set up chopping station
- Check invoice against what was delivered (phone in any discrepancies)
- Repack produce into different quantities based on packing sheet
- Chop hard veggies into cubes and bag
- Refrigerate
- Create price list based on invoice
- Update prices on produce markers
- Sweep
- Ensure $200 float has proper coins and bills

Friday: Market day

- Retrieve produce from fridge
- Set out produce items on tables
- Set up farm harvest table with produce available
- Set up knitting sales table
- Get out bags and baskets
- Let volunteers shop before opening
- Bring cash box out last

After market closes

- Put away leftovers
- Count cash recovered and separate to be submitted to accounting (staff only)
- Rearrange tables and chairs back to regular dining room set up
- Sweep and mop floors

SAMPLE VOLUNTEER TRAINING PROGRAM

SOURCE: DARTMOUTH NORTH COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

MARKET LEADERSHIP PROGRAM TO DEVELOP A "GOOD FOOD" MARKET

- Location: Dartmouth North Community Centre
- Dates/Time: March–April 2015/ Time 9:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m. (6 sessions)
- Childcare, food, and drinks provided

SESSION 1: UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

- Participant food experience and interest — Guide discussion using topic questions
- Food security and food systems
- Localized food systems and community resilience; social justice.
- Exercise: Track real food items on a map: local vs. not local (split into two groups)
- Examples of what other communities are doing (PowerPoint pictures)
- Touch briefly on the "good food" market
- Small group exercise: What examples speak to you (facilitators each go into a group)

SESSION 2: A VISION FOR OUR MARKET

- Identifying purpose and values
- Place-making (creating inviting and inclusive space; what does "welcoming" mean/look like?; welcoming activities for market days; inviting other services, e.g., Dartmouth Community Health Team)
- Small group exercise: Think of a time when you felt welcome vs. unwelcome; brainstorm what would create a welcoming atmosphere/whose responsibility is it?

SESSION 3: BEING LEADERS AND WORKING AS A TEAM

- What does leadership look like?
- Confidence building
- Team building
- Conflict resolution/working with others
- Identifying and building the "market team" and possible roles for team members (leadership in the context of the market)

SESSION 4: HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE, AFFORDABLE FOOD

- Promoting health and nutrition/correlation of chronic disease to poor eating
- Goals for local/sustainable/organic
- Sourcing local produce for the market

SESSION 5: MONEY AND MARKET SETUP

- Budget planning and management
- Fundraising/grant writing
- Financial accountability
- Market setup (displays and signs, presentation, etc.)

SESSION 6: COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND PROMOTION

- Messaging
- Outreach strategy
- Marketing and promotion
- Developing communication materials (e.g., flyers, brochures, web articles, signs, etc.)

ADDITIONAL FOLLOW-UP SESSIONS

- Safe food handling

MARKET LOGIC MODEL TEMPLATE

SOURCE: COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE CANADA

PROGRAM TYPE: Affordable Produce Market	**TARGET GROUP:** (include demographic details such as age, socioeconmic status): [Enter target group details here]
PROGRAM NAME: [Enter program name here]	**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:** [Enter program description here]

COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

1. To increase access to healthy food in a respectful and dignified manner.
2. To increase healthy food knowledge, skills, and behaviours.
3. To reduce social isolation and increase connections to a variety of supports.
4. To increase knowledge of poverty and food system issues and create inclusive opportunities for effective action on these issues.
5. To increase volunteerism and leadership opportunities.

ACTIVITIES *The major activities involved in running the program. Collectively, these activities should work to achieve the listed outcomes.*	**OUTPUTS** *The numbers we count in our programs to track and measure the level of activity.*	**OUTCOMES** *The short- to medium-term changes in knowledge, skills, behaviour, etc. that the program aims to bring about with participants.*	**OUTCOME INDICATORS** *Things we measure to determine how well we are achieving our outcomes.*
• [List major program activities here] Example activity: • Develop low-cost purchasing options that are suitable to the particular community	• Approximate number of customers • Number of market sessions • Dollar value of affordable produce sold to low-income community members • Number of volunteers (including participant volunteers) and volunteer hours • Number of additional program sessions (e.g., food demos, community agency info sessions) • [Optional: add outputs here]	• Increased access to healthy food (including local, organic, and sustainable) • Reduced feelings of stigma in accessing food programs • Social isolation reduced • Improved physical and mental health • [Optional: add outcomes here]	• Participants report affordable market to be an important source of healthy food • Participants report market helps them stretch their food-purchasing budget • Participants report feeling welcome in the affordable market space • High level of participant satisfaction with various aspects of the market's delivery (space; staff and volunteers; quality of food) • Participants report new close friendships made • Participants report increased sense of community belonging • Participants report improved physical and mental health • [Optional: add outcome indicators here]

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SAMPLE MARKET EVALUATION

SOURCE: COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE CANADA

Introduction:
The purpose of this survey is to gather your feedback on the Affordable Produce Market*: What you liked best, what we can improve, and how the market has made a difference for you.

1. How long have you been coming to the Affordable Produce Market?
   Check One:
   - ❑ Less than 3 months
   - ❑ Between 3 and 6 months
   - ❑ Between 6 months and 1 year
   - ❑ More than a year

Please circle the response that <u>best represents your answer</u> to the following questions:

2. I feel welcome at the Affordable Produce Market. Yes / Somewhat / No
   - If no, please explain:

3. Do you feel that you belong to a community at the Affordable Produce Market? Yes / No

4. Is the Affordable Produce Market an important source of healthy food for you, and if applicable, your family? Yes / No

5. Do the prices at this market help you stretch your food-purchasing budget further? Yes / No

6. Does this market help you get more fruits and vegetables in your diet? Yes / No

Please circle the response that <u>best reflects your level of satisfaction</u> with each of the following aspects of the Affordable Produce Market and provide any additional comments:

7. Space (i.e., cleanliness, safety, etc.):

Very happy	Somewhat happy	Neither happy or unhappy	Somewhat unhappy	Very unhappy

Comments/ suggestions:

8. Staff and volunteer service (i.e., level of respect, helpfulness, welcoming):

Very happy	Somewhat happy	Neither happy or unhappy	Somewhat unhappy	Very unhappy

Comments/ suggestions:

9. Quality of food available:

Very happy	Somewhat happy	Neither happy or unhappy	Somewhat unhappy	Very unhappy

Comments/ suggestions:

10. Has the Affordable Produce Market made a difference in your life and, if applicable, your family's life? If yes, please explain:

***NOTE: enter the exact name your organization uses wherever the text is green**

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HOW TO START AN AFFORDABLE PRODUCE MARKET
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Community Food Centres Canada builds health, belonging and social justice in low-income communities across Canada through the power of food.

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