

Food Centre End of Year Report

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- 1. This is where you are able to summarize the year overall, mentioning a few highlights and few areas of opportunity. Be sure to include your accomplishments over the year, what barriers may have existed and how you overcame them. Lastly, be sure to leave room for some words of wisdom to help out incoming coordinators.**

Undoubtedly, the biggest accomplishment this year was successfully adapting the Food Centre's operations to align with COVID-19 safety protocols.

Specifically:

- Pivoting from a grocery store model to a hamper model.
- Formulating and implementing a delivery service in collaboration with Foot Patrol.
- Hosting all programming virtually.

In the early stages, we had to conduct some trial and error with our delivery service. There was a need to re-train volunteers, figure out efficient work hours, and define roles between Foot Patrol and Food Centre, all while adhering to COVID 19 protocols. To overcome these challenges, we had to schedule volunteers for each day of the week and assign different tasks to them. Tasks included packing dry items on specific days, packing cold items on other days, portioning (rice, flour, vegetables, etc.), and receiving the Ottawa Food Bank delivery. In addition, to ensure that volunteers adhered to a positive standard of work, we created video tutorials detailing the process of packing hampers, sent them frequent reminders, and posted written procedures around the Food Centre. Furthermore, we made sure to have consistent communication with our volunteers, show our appreciation, and ask for feedback about how we can

improve our service. Throughout the winter semester, our delivery service ran smoothly and the volunteers indicated that they felt supported in their role.

There were periods of time where we had to temporarily close for pickups due to the government directives (the summer of 2020 and the first two months in 2021). At the end of March 2021, we were able to re-open for pickups, however, we had to pre-pack the hampers and carry them down to the first floor of UC during the students' appointment times, in order to limit the amount of people accessing the building.

For future coordinators, it would be beneficial to continue assigning specific tasks to each volunteer in order to improve efficiency and distribute workload fairly. Building good relationships with the volunteers is essential as they are one of the Food Centre's biggest allies. Communication with them should be frequent, friendly, and efficient, and they should be regularly asked if they have any questions or concerns about their role or about the Food Centre's operations.

Getting feedback from all involved parties is also key to ensuring that the service is actually meeting their needs and expectations. We used Google Forms to ask for this feedback from clients and Food Centre volunteers, but future coordinators can improve this by including foot patrol volunteers to the feedback audience, and incentivising the feedback process with tangible prizes.

- 2. In this section include any data that may be relevant to understanding the dynamics of the service centres. Being online this year posed a whole host of challenges but it's important to highlight the importance of what was accomplished (Feel free to include: any analytics from your social media platforms, number of events held (big and small)).**

The pandemic presented a unique set of challenges for the Food Centre since some of our most important services could not be provided virtually. With support from our community, colleagues and supervisor, we were able to achieve some important milestones including:

- Launching delivery service
- Completing over 690 hamper deliveries
- Completing over 120 hamper pickups
- Reaching 500+ followers on Instagram
- Collaborating on several projects with 16 different community partners/organizations
- Posting at least one weekly recipe to our social media unfailingly
- Executing 17 virtual events
- Increasing availability of fresh fruits and vegetables to clients
- Securing over \$3000 in external funding

3. This year we were innovative. We were able to overcome some greatest challenges in engaging our community and demographic. Here please highlight the successful recurring events (that should continue next year), a specific format of programming that worked well, or larger themes that were engaged with.

Three of our most successful events were the Halloween and Chinese New Year cooking tutorials, and International Food Month.

For the cooking tutorials, we collaborated with clubs to demonstrate how to cook dishes that followed the theme of the specific event. The student chefs each pre-recorded their cooking videos which were then sent to the communications office for combining and producing one cohesive final video. A live Q&A session with all the chefs was then held on Zoom in order for students

to ask questions about the recipes and socialize. The first 15 students who registered for the event received free ingredients that were either delivered to their doorstep by Foot Patrol or picked up at the Food Centre.

For International Food Month, we reached out to all the cultural clubs on campus and some of them sent us short (less than 5 minute) cooking tutorials or written recipes, which we posted to our social media. We also encouraged students to submit entries to our contest, for the chance to win an air fryer, by making a dish from their cultural cuisine and explaining its significance.

These events were successful because students enjoy learning how to cook simple dishes that they haven't tried before and learning about different cultures or seeing their own culture represented within CUSA.

4. Briefly list the clubs, societies, on campus or in community stakeholder you partner with and feedback on each of those interactions.

The Food Centre was fortunate enough to work with 16 community partners over the course of the academic year. A list of these organizations, along with feedback on each interaction, is found below:

CUSA Team

- Morgan McKeen: We collaborated with Morgan (and the FSSS) for the *Lunar New Year Cooking Tutorial*. In her capacity as the VPCE, she was able to assist with covering the cost of our prize for the contest winner, effectively liaison with the communications office and involved parties, provide valuable insight into the event's logistics, and develop creative promotional ideas. Overall, this collaboration was a successful one.
- Eve McGurrin: We collaborated with Eve (and the Wellness Centre) for *Nutritional Dimensions of Mental Health and Smoothies and Yoga*. Eve was very

thorough in her capacity as CUSA's Events Coordinator and we greatly benefitted from her expertise.

Service Centres

- Wellness Centre: We collaborated with the Wellness Centre (and Eve) for the *Nutritional Dimensions of Mental Health* event. Communication proved slightly challenging in the earlier stages of planning, however, we were able to overcome that and produce a quality, well-attended event.
- RISE: We collaborated with the RISE Centre for two events, *Tea vs Coffee*, and *Decorate With Me*. The coordinator, Noor, was very diligent and efficient with her work and we felt well supported by her. Overall, we enjoyed this partnership.
- Foot Patrol: We collaborated with Foot Patrol for the entirety of the academic year. Earlier on, we faced some challenges pertaining to communication, technological differences, and low staffing capacity. However, thanks to open conversations and mutual understandings, we were able to smooth out those kinks and create a beautiful partnership that we are very proud of.

Clubs and Societies

- Food Science Student Society (FSSS): We enjoyed a partnership with the FSSS on multiple events: *Lunar New Year Cooking Tutorial*, *Halloween Cooking Tutorial*, and *Debunking Myths About Expiry Dates*. This was a positive collaboration and future coordinators are encouraged to maintain it.
- International Food Month Collaborations: For this initiative, we received cultural recipes from clubs including: Egyptian SA (ESA), Filipino SA (CUFSA), Korean Society (CUKIS), HOLAS and Indian SA (NAAIS). Receiving these recipes to share was valuable, however, we learned that working with clubs and societies requires more efforts to maintain communication as there were some delays in receiving the recipes.
- Engineers Without Borders: We worked with EWB for our well-attended *Food security Panel*. With their help, we were able to secure three amazing panelists

from Parkdale Food Centre, Meal Exchange, and Dining Services. The folks at EWB are passionate and hardworking; overall a great partnership.

University Partners

- Dining services: We collaborated with Gabriella Carrier and Jackeline Samaniego from Dining Services for 4 events/projects: *Nutritional Dimensions of Mental Health*, *Food Security Panel*, *Pursuing Plant-Based Eating*, and prepared meal donations (e.g. soup donations for *The Caf*). Working with Gabby and Jacky was always efficient and delightful. Overall, this was a great partnership.

External Partners

- Ottawa Food Bank: The Food Centre is a member agency of the OFB. This year, they were especially effective with communication and accommodations. This partnership has been sustained for several years and is encouraged to be sustained for several more.
- Good Food on the Move: We have worked with the Good Food Box in previous years, however, this year, we created a new partnership where they supplied us with produce on a weekly basis (as opposed to a monthly basis). This has greatly helped the Food Centre meet the demand for fresh produce from our clients.

- 5. This section may be particularly difficult to fill out as things were drastically different than from years past. Include how you were effective in organizing administrative tasks and highlight some of the achievements and areas of improvement.**

Pivoting our activities from a physical to a virtual setting was particularly challenging for the Food Centre since most of our activities are naturally physical. The first step we took to adapt to the new situation was to conduct an evaluation for all our activities. We

created a list of services that we NEEDED to provide physically in order to satisfy our fundamental food bank objectives. These included:

- Providing hampers for students, and
- Receiving deliveries from distributors

Some of the methods we adopted to conduct these safely include:

- Using Google forms to completely digitize the Hamper Request, and Link2Feed Food Bank Intake process. This required some manual efforts to transfer all the data we collected in the Google forms to their actual platforms. An area of improvement for Link2Feed will be to provide more information about the items users are frequently requesting, in order for the Ottawa Food Bank to gain a better understanding of what items need to be allocated in greater or lesser quantities.
- Limiting the number of volunteers per shift to a maximum of three. We made sure that PPE was always worn in combination with social distancing where possible. This measure helped us prevent a potential COVID-19 outbreak at the Food Centre. Areas of improvement here will be finding ways to ensure that volunteers adhere to COVID-19 prevention measures when the coordinators are not present.
- Formulating a delivery service in partnership with Foot Patrol in order to limit physical contact. This is an achievement that we are extremely proud of because it gave us the opportunity to continue providing food for people in need. Areas of improvement here will be to arrange recurring check-ins with Foot Patrol to address concerns, improve the quality of the service, and better communication.

6. This is another section that may be particularly difficult to fill out as things were drastically different than from years. Include how you were effective in pivoting programming to a virtual setting and highlight some of the achievements and areas of improvement.

Like the administrative activities, programming was also challenging to pivot into a virtual setting. Figuring out the in-office services and getting into a healthy rhythm aided us in gaining clarity for our programming. Some specific changes we made included:

- Creating an online Shopify store for food drives, as opposed to physical ones. This helped us continue our annual Trick or Treat event without the physical aspects. We also conducted another food drive in January for the new year. Although we were able to secure much appreciated funds, areas of improvement could be to arrange for paid posts on social media as opposed to regular promotions. This will expand the number of interactions and possibly increase donations.
- Developing more collaborations in order to take advantage of the follower base from other organizations. A general trend with virtual events this year was an understandably lower attendance rate compared to previous years. Achieving these collaborations definitely helped increase attendance, however an area of improvement could be to collaborate with even more folks from the university.
- Conducting more online contests, giveaways, and events in general, in order to increase user interaction and outreach. This year, we were able to drastically increase the number of events we conducted in spite of the pandemic. This was helpful because it improved the frequency of interactions we had with community members. Areas of improvement here could be to collaborate with more service centres for giveaways, and to acquire more enticing prizes.

7. This section allows you to think critically of what specific barriers inhibited you from doing the best job you are capable of doing. This insight will be a good reflection for yourself as well as for management, allowing us to ensure that any issues are addressed and agreeable solutions are found.

Although we had many wins this year, there were some instances that we have had to learn from.

In the Fall semester, a volunteer indicated that they felt underappreciated. Although we knew how much we appreciated them, we could have done a better job of making them aware of that. This was an experience that affected us deeply and caused us to reflect. With extra effort, we have made sure to let all our volunteers know how much we appreciate their work by telling and showing them more frequently, and checking in with them regularly. Delightfully, we received 100% positive feedback from our volunteers at the end of the semester, which is indicated by the Volunteer Feedback Google Form we sent out.