

To: Erica Paterson

From: Salma Ismail

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Subject: **Expanding Culturally Informed Food Security Approach for the South Vancouver Food Hub**

Audience

This report can inform the Food Hub of the gains in developing community partnerships and encourage prospective companies to the significantly strong impact of their food donations on the community.

Introduction

South Vancouver Neighbourhood has been a pillar in the South Vancouver area (Main to Boundary, 41st to Fraser River) by providing programs, services and support for individuals and families since 1977. During the Covid-19 pandemic, in November 2020, South Vancouver Neighbourhood House launched the South Vancouver Community Food Hub with the Langara YMCA as its centre of operations to support food-secure families. In partnership with various organizations, including Greater Vancouver Food Bank, the Hub provides weekly emergency grocery boxes to 320 households representing 1,100 individuals in the South Vancouver neighbourhoods of Sunset, Victoria-Fraserview and Killarney.

While the Food Hub supports many families, an extensive waitlist of over 50 individuals wanting to access their services has yet to be addressed, leaving many community members food insecure.

Statement of Problem

There is a high demand for access to the Food Hub, and more food needs to be provided to meet this need. This notion is further complicated because community members choose to identify as 'food insecure' and do not need to provide supporting documentation. This may lead to some community members continuing to access support while financially independent. The implication of this issue will be a growing number of community members in need of food support that is not being addressed and minuscule percentages of families opting out once they have become financially independent, causing a standstill in the waitlist.

Proposed Solution

One possible solution is expanding the Food Hub's partnerships to increase the amount of food distributed to community members. Recently, grocery stores such as SPUD and cafes such as Starbucks have donated good quality but unsellable produce and nonperishable items to community patterns. Moreover, companies such as ReFood have partnered with organizations to connect grocery stores to organizations supporting at-risk individuals. Through partnerships with organizations like the ones mentioned, the Food Hub will serve more families on the waitlist while continuing to provide services without requiring proof of need.

Scope

To assess the success rate of expanding and developing partnerships with waste reduction companies and organizations to meet the needs of the community members on the waitlist, I plan to see which companies would accommodate the culturally appropriate food items for families and the capacity of the Food Hub to receive such donations in South Vancouver:

1. What products do these companies intend to donate?
2. Is there a cost to receiving food donations from the companies?
3. How frequently will the food items be donated?
4. What is the capacity of the Food Hub to store and manage additional food items in terms of space and staffing?
5. How will the additional food be stored in the Food Hub?

Methods

My primary data source will be interviewing Food Hub Staff, Pamela Ramirez Vargas, Food Security Coordinator, and Joey Joey Liu, Food Security Manager, regarding the needs of the community members utilizing the Food Hub and those who are on the waitlist. This will capture the types of food community members seek and the barriers preventing community members from seeking food security resources from other organizations and instead choosing to be on the waitlist. I will also gather information regarding the current partnerships in place. I will use the Annual report of the previous years to understand the extent of the need for this program in the community. Secondary sources will include analyzing publications regarding the application of providing culturally appropriate food for low-income families and the income per household in the South Vancouver area to highlight the importance of expanding the Food Hub to a larger population in that community.

My Qualifications

I have been working at the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House (SVNH), the parent organization of the Food Hub, since 2020 and have worked closely with Pamela and Joey in the past. As the Youth Settlement Counsellor at SVNH, I have referred many youths and their families to the Food Hub. I recognize the significant need within the community to access food programs and the lack of availability in the neighbourhood. I also grew up and am a current resident of South Vancouver. I am familiar with the demographic living in the area and local grocery stores, cafes, and organizations that can be appropriate candidates for building partnerships.

Conclusion

There has been an identified need for community members to access food through the South Vancouver Food Hub. By investigating the feasibility of increasing the amount of food to meet this need, i.e. if the Food Hub has enough staff and storage space and the capacity to develop and expand partnerships with food companies and organizations as well as which companies offer the food items that are culturally relevant to community members, this investigation may provide instructive feedback in increasing the operations of the Hub and enhance its ability to support more community members in need.