

# **Women's centre: Proposal**

## **Introductions**

### **Purpose**

Support a women's centre in the Downtown East Side by surveying women that use its resources, determining their needs and desires for the food program to be established at the new drop-in center. The program should be practical and not replicate other services in the area, to best serve the specific needs of the women in the DTES.

### **Background**

The women's centre will be converting its head administrative office into a drop-in center for women looking for resources and support within the DTES. Services will include: Legal Advocacy, Stopping the Violence Counselling, and Housing Outreach.

The project was developed to research what is offered and what is needed for women using the women centre's services within the DTES. We will be exploring different food program options for the women who access the center, based on the information gathered. Asset-based community development principles are based in the use of current community structures, systems, and patterns as the foundation of positive change. By using the opinions and voices of those who will be accessing the services in their development of them, the women's centre is ensuring that its resources will be used, maximizing its potential as a resource center.

### **Significance**

While other studies have looked at food security on the DTES (Miewald & McCann, 2013), our project aims to determine specific desires and needs of women using the women centre's programs. Low food security levels and indicators of poverty and poor access to food have been documented, the specific connections between services in the DTES, in particular between the centre and other resources, is not well understood. The women's centre would benefit from understanding which resources their patrons use, and which holes could be filled in this group's needs. This group is not necessarily bound in any quantifiable demographic category, and thus measuring the needs and services accessed by this group by speaking with their patrons themselves as opposed to analyzing research that is more broad, will allow them to fine-tune their programs to those who would use it, as a starting point for a dynamic food program that will follow shifts in needs.

We are planning to achieve this goal with communication between the women's centre staff and those who access the services. We will conduct a survey in a respectful and culturally appropriate manner and provide the women's centre with a final report that will reflect the needs and voices of their patrons. The guiding approach of our work is open dialogue, culminating in something to analyze within the bounds of the women centre's resource supply to determine the best course of action. The report will aid women centre to create a suitable and cost-effective food program that provides nourishing food for patrons of the women centre's new drop-in center.

## **Objectives**

- Conduct a needs assessment of the community that uses the women centre's resources to understand the gaps in regards to food access programs.
- Observe gaps within current food programs to contextualize this program in the larger sphere of food access programs, further ensuring its relevance and usefulness to patrons.
- Make recommendations based on analysis of our research and what we think is most suitable and cost-effective for achieving the goal of increasing food security.

## **Methods**

### **Prior to working with patrons**

- Perform literature review and write an applicable report of similar experiments to see which questions yield relevant answers for our objectives;
- Understand structural capabilities of the women's centre and its current assets, to see what the food program is launching off of. Base this analysis on asset-based community planning theories;
- Understand limitations of the women centre's drop in centre when analyzing the best plan of action;
- Review other drop-in center food programs; conduct research online about resources that are currently available in the DTES;
- Review and qualitatively research the women centre's goals and values to ensure that our survey for participants, recommendations, and report work with the women centre's vision and structure, ensuring that our work is ultimately viable and useful.

### **Working with patrons**

- Create a poster in the drop-in centre to explain our purpose and to inform members that we will be holding interview/survey sessions that they can attend if they want to. Have this approved by the women's centre before setting it up;
- Design data collection questions in an interview format for patrons about a drop-in food program. Questions will be approved by the women's centre;
- Conduct qualitative research by interviewing patrons who are interested, during specific times designated by the women's centre, to survey what their food needs and wants are in a food program at the women's centre. Our conversations will be casual and comfortable for those who want to offer their opinions to us. For members that do not want to be interviewed in person or cannot attend an interview session, we plan to set up a box with survey forms so that members can voice their opinions. We plan on going to the women's centre a minimum of three times for interviews. We will interview enough people to gain an adequate understanding of the diversity of opinions that may be out there;
- The privacy of patrons will be kept by assigning each patron a number and keeping the names associated with their number separate from survey results;
- With the information we gather from the patrons, only including answers of those who have explicitly consented to allowing their answers to be analyzed, we will summarize our information in a report outlining what an ideal food program looks like for members of the women's centre

## **Outcomes**

- To have an infographic and final report detailing the needs of the women who access the women's centre as well as a recommended food program(s) designed to meet those needs included in the report, to be delivered by December 3rd;
- Learning about the food challenges and needs, community resources, and resiliency of women in the DTES accessing the women centre's services;
- Developing our ability to support the development of participatory-built food resource programs, with increased organizational capacity;
- A clear understanding of how to implement a food program at a drop-in center.
- Practice professionalism, proper scheduling, planning, and execution of a creative and effective project, with the intention of our work being as useful as possible.

## **References**

Miewald, C., & McCann, E. (2014). Foodscapes and the geographies of poverty: Sustenance, strategy, and politics in an urban neighborhood. *Antipode*, 46(2), 537-556.  
doi:10.1111/anti.12057