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Richmond Food Bank Society
Project Proposal

Introduction:

The goal of this project is to find out what work is currently being done or has already been done in terms of perishable food recovery within Richmond and to increase the amount of perishable food donations made to the Richmond Food Bank. Perishable food is food that spoils quickly if not properly stored in an appropriate temperature environment. This includes fresh foods such as dairy products, vegetables, and meat (Gallary, 2015).

In order to achieve this goal, our team will be working with the Richmond Food Bank, a registered charity that has been distributing groceries in Richmond since 1983 (Richmond Food Bank Society, 2018). As of now, they serve over 2200 people and distribute food to them five days a week. Due to the buying power of the Food Bank, they are able to buy six dollars worth of food for each dollar spent. They currently receive a plethora of food donations from community members and stores since they receive no government funding. However, most of the food obtained are non-perishable, processed foods which contain high amounts of added sugar, saturated fat, and sodium (Monteiro et al., 2011).

The Richmond Food Bank desires more perishable foods because they are more nutritious compared to non-perishable food. For example, citrus fruits are rich in vitamin C, an antioxidant that protects the integrity of the cell walls in our bodies to maintain proper cell function (Yang et al., 2011). Right now, the Food Bank relies on grocery stores for donations of perishable foods and use monetary donations to purchase perishables themselves when they don't have adequate quantities for redistribution. In addition, most of the food items that are deemed unsellable by grocery stores are thrown out, even though the nutritional value is retained. The dumped foods are then sent to the landfill along with the packaging they are contained in, which causes environmental damage. Thus, by donating unsellable food to the Richmond Food Bank, we are able to reduce the amount of avoidable food wastage and environmental harm.

Overall, the increase in perishable food donations to the Food Bank will reduce food insecurity, improve the health and lives of food bank users, and reduce food waste.

Significance:

Food security exists when everyone has consistent access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary requirements and preferences. This will ensure that all people will be able to maintain health lives (Canada, 1998). However, reports from the Canadian Community Health Survey stated that 14.7% of the Canadian population experienced food insecurity in 2000 (Ledrou, 2005). Over the past two decades, poverty, unemployment, and policy changes have resulted in a significant increase in demand and growth for charitable food institutions such as food banks (Tarasuk & Beaton, 1999).

The emergence and institutionalization of food banks behave as a particular form of surplus food distribution to expand access to food (Riches, 2002). These food banks ensure that people who come from low-income families or have disabilities are able to acquire sufficient amounts of food to meet their dietary needs at no cost (Riches, 2002). In this way, although hunger issues brought from food poverty are not completely resolved, they are greatly alleviated. Furthermore, along with new arrangements of distributing foods, low-income families and people with disabilities gain more access to food (DBFB, 1999).

Transporting food products that are deemed unsellable in grocery stores to Food Banks have significant benefits on reducing food wastage. A lot of food wastage is avoidable and is due to the massive food surpluses of the food supply chain (Papargyropoulou et al, 2014). During the process of rescuing nearly dumped foods, food waste that are sent to landfills are reduced, thereby reducing the amount of damage to the environment.

Limited by the variety of food available at food banks, 70% of the families receiving food bank support reported nutrient deficiency in Toronto 1998 (Tarasuk & Beaton, 1999). It is not surprising to find that food items in food banks have unbalanced nutritional values. The Richmond Food Bank currently receives donations composed of 70% non-perishable food and only 30% perishable food. On the other hand, the Kamloops Food Bank has perishable food donations that make up to 70% of the total storage. Hajira from the Richmond Food Bank suggested that we extend perishable food access. The methods of seeking out more potential suppliers and surveying recipients about obtained foods in terms of quantity and quality are suggested (Teron & Tarasuk, 1999).

Objectives:

Our first objective is to determine the current perishable food surplus and food waste of potential donors (grocery store chains) in Richmond. There are several types of perishable foods. However, for the scope and the time constraint on this project, we will focus solely on fresh vegetables.

Our second objective is to design a program that will inform Richmond grocery stores of their food wastage and encourage these grocery stores to donate any unsellable perishable food to the Food Bank. Consequently, healthier diets among food insecure community members will be encouraged and perishable food wastage from grocery stores in Richmond will be reduced.

Methods:

In order to carry out our objectives, we must first develop a survey that we can distribute to local grocery stores which will provide us with information regarding how perishable foods are disposed of and approximately how much are wasted per week along with possible concerns that they may have about donating to the food bank. To supplement the survey results, we will do our own research about food waste in Richmond as well as look in to other food recovery programs to obtain a better understanding of the barriers preventing participation by stores, namely the donor's obligation regarding food safety, concerns of proper transportation and storage that the food bank provides, and humanitarian thoughts of giving out leftovers. We will also seek possible solutions to these barriers while keeping in mind the three core principles of ethics: respect of persons, concern for welfare, and justice.

In addition, we must look in to possible results of our project. What happens if grocery stores donate more food than needed? What if they still choose to not donate to the Food Bank?

Outcomes:

The expected outcome of this Community Based Experience Learning Project is a "Perishable Food Recovery Guide" for the Richmond Food Bank to print and hand out. The two main "targets" are the general public - for them to read during a community event held by the Richmond Food Bank - as well as the participating donors of the Richmond Food Bank. This will allow these prospective donors to gain more knowledge about Perishable Food Recovery Programs and to answer some of their general concerns about making perishable food donations.

The second outcome of this project is a perishable food waste cycle infographic complete with our findings, suggestions, and statistics about perishable food items in grocery stores in the Richmond area. However, if the Food Bank received an overwhelming donation of perishable foods, there are farmers who takes the leftovers to turn them into animal fodder; thus further reducing the amount of potential food wastage. On the flip side, if we are unable to reach our initial goal, we will need to revise our plan or come up with a new methodology to help the Food Bank.

In essence, we aim to reduce food wastage in the Richmond area and most importantly, help the Richmond Food Bank receive more perishable food donations from local grocery stores as well as provide the families who use the food bank with a sufficient supply of nutrient rich foods. We hope to have the guide and the infographic completed and delivered by March 19, 2018.

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