



The **Research** Shop

COMMUNITY. CAMPUS. COLLABORATION. 

# EMERGENCY FOOD SERVICES IN GUELPH-WELLINGTON

A SCAN OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM AND THOUGHTS ON THE FUTURE

Erin Nelson, with Petrina Aberdeen, Frances Dietrich-O'Connor, and Elizabeth Shantz

November, 2011.



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**INSTITUTE for COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP**

College of Social and Applied Human Sciences University of Guelph Guelph, Ontario Canada N1G 2W1  
phone: 519 / 824.4120 Ext. 53829 | email: [ices@uoguelph.ca](mailto:ices@uoguelph.ca) | [www.theresearchshop.ca](http://www.theresearchshop.ca)



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November, 2011.

This report was prepared by Erin Nelson, with Petrina Aberdeen, Frances Dietrich-O'Connor, and Elizabeth Shantz.

The Principal Investigator for the project was Erin Nelson who, at the time of research, was completing a doctorate in Rural Studies at the University of Guelph, specializing in the study of food systems and food security within both a local and global context.

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of research on the emergency food service system in Guelph-Wellington conducted by a team from the University of Guelph's Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship/Research Shop. The objectives of this research were to: 1) assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current system; 2) identify programs and services beyond emergency food provision that help improve food security in Guelph-Wellington; 3) analyze best practices in emergency food provision and food security, and; 4) identify strategies for improving emergency food provision and increasing food security in Guelph-Wellington. In order to meet these objectives, the research team conducted 23 in-depth interviews, applied 7 surveys, and reviewed literature.

The most commonly identified strength of the emergency food system in Guelph-Wellington was the collaborative relationships that exist amongst service providers, and between service providers and community organizations/groups. In terms of challenges, the three most pressing issues cited by participants in Guelph were insufficient funding and resources, inadequate food supply, and the stigma associated with use of emergency food programs. In Wellington, the issue of stigma was perceived to be the primary barrier to effective emergency food provision.

Participants were asked about programs other than emergency food provision that aimed to improve food security (e.g. community gardens and kitchens, nutrition education, etc.); however, the majority made little comment on such programs. This could be reflective of the fact that most research participants represented direct emergency food programs and, as such, broader initiatives targeting food insecurity may fall outside their area of focus.

Particular attention was paid in this research to the concept of the "food hub". Widely cited as a best practice in the literature on emergency food provision and food security, a majority of participants believed a food hub project would be useful in Guelph and, to a lesser degree, in Wellington. While most felt that, initially, a potential food hub project in the area should focus on collection, storage, and distribution of emergency food, there was considerable support for the eventual inclusion of other activities, including skills development and education, community kitchens and gardens, and advocacy work. There was also general consensus that the most desirable form of project governance would be an independent Board of Directors. The most widely cited challenges that might face a food hub project were the possibility of overlap with existing services, and the sometimes difficult nature of inter-organizational communication and coordination.

Most participants indicated a desire to begin an action-oriented initiative designed to improve the efficacy of the emergency food system as soon as possible. Both participant responses and the review of best practices highlighted the importance of broad-based collaboration for such initiatives. As a result, the development of any project in Guelph-Wellington would ideally be based on collaboration amongst existing service providers, as well as with organizations serving vulnerable populations, and other groups working more broadly on food security issues in the community.



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## 2. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of a community engaged research project conducted by the University of Guelph's Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship/Research Shop. The primary community partner involved in consultation for the project was the Food Access Working Group (FAWG) of the Guelph-Wellington Food Round Table (GWFRT). This working group consists of representatives of a variety of organizations doing emergency food provision and/or food security work in Guelph-Wellington. The GWFRT seeks to convene stakeholders on issues relating to the regional food system, and is affiliated with the Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination (Poverty Task Force, or PTF).

The report begins by providing some general information about the project, including how it was developed, the primary research goals and key concepts, and the methods used. Research findings are then discussed under a number of headings. In the first sections, some descriptive information regarding different organizations doing emergency food work in Guelph-Wellington is provided, and existing linkages between those organizations are illustrated. Following this relatively general overview, the major challenges to effective emergency food provision in Guelph-Wellington are discussed in some detail. The bulk of the findings are then dedicated to analysing participant opinions regarding the concept of a food hub (see below for definition) and its potential usefulness in the Guelph-Wellington context. Finally, the report summarizes key conclusions and presents a series of potential implications for future work.

### BACKGROUND

In April, 2010, the Poverty Task Force dedicated one of its meetings to the subject of food security and food assistance programs in Guelph-Wellington. Following presentations by the Guelph Food Bank and Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB), it was decided that further discussion of the subject was necessary. As such, during the PTF's May meeting, time was allotted for FAWG to outline key challenges within the current emergency food services system, and for the Food Bank of Waterloo Region to present its work as an emergency food hub (see below for definition) – a model that FAWG expressed support for. At the end of this May meeting, the PTF charged FAWG with the task of developing a proposal for an improved community food distribution model that would address the challenges identified within the current system, and could be brought back to the PTF for endorsement at a later date.

The FAWG decided that a first step in developing a proposal to improve the existing emergency food services system would be to conduct research on the subject. To that end, in the fall of 2010, the United Way Social Planning Department conducted a survey of food banks and food pantries in Guelph, the results of which were made public in January, 2011. According to the report: "The most common theme shared among survey respondents was regarding improvements in food sharing and distribution...", and the most commonly cited



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recommendation for addressing this challenge (noted by 6 of 13 respondents) was the concept of the food hub (Martin, 2010).

The United Way report represented the first phase of a general research plan agreed upon by FAWG. Following its publication, a member of FAWG engaged the University of Guelph's Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship/Research Shop to carry out the remaining phases of that plan. In February, 2011, a research team led by Erin Nelson developed a proposal – including project goals and methodologies – and presented it at a FAWG meeting. Attendees were given the opportunity to comment on the project's scope and methods and, based on the feedback received, a revised version was prepared and sent to two FAWG members for further comment.

At key points over the course of the project, the research team consulted with a small group consisting of three FAWG members and a person closely familiar with emergency food services in Wellington.<sup>1</sup> This group provided guidance with the development of a list of potential interview participants, and was sent updates on the project's progress in April, May, and June, 2011. Its members also provided clarifying feedback on two draft versions of this report in July and October, 2011.

### RESEARCH PURPOSE AND GOALS

The overarching purpose of this research project was to address the need to improve food security and the provision of emergency food services in Guelph-Wellington. The project sought to build on the initial findings of the United Way report in a number of ways, for example by: expanding the scope of work into Wellington; adding depth to survey data by conducting face-to-face interviews; incorporating a review of literature on best practices in emergency food provision and food security, and; examining more closely the food hub concept, which was identified as key by the aforementioned United Way report, preliminary scanning of the literature, and through informal discussions with FAWG members during project development.

Similar to the preliminary report put together by the United Way Social Planning Department, this document is designed to provide research results to FAWG,

<sup>1</sup> These four individuals were identified by the initial FAWG contact, and were asked to provide input and feedback because they all possess experience related to the emergency food system in Guelph and/or Wellington, while at the same time do not represent any direct emergency food program.



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the PTF and, potentially, other community-based organizations or coalitions in Guelph-Wellington interested in the elimination of food insecurity. Within this framework, the specific research goals are:

1. To assess key strengths and weaknesses of the current emergency food provision system in Guelph-Wellington;
2. To identify programs and services other than emergency food provision that contribute to improved food security in Guelph-Wellington, and assess the key strengths and weaknesses of these initiatives;
3. To analyze best practices that have proven effective at increasing food security in other communities, and;
4. To identify strategies for the development of food system initiatives designed to improve food security in Guelph-Wellington.

### DEFINING AND BRIEFLY EXPLORING 3 KEY TERMS

#### 1. Emergency Food Services

In recent decades, the primary model for addressing the problem of food insecurity has been the provision of emergency food services such as soup kitchens, food hampers and, most commonly, food banks. According to the Ontario Association of Food Banks: “A food bank is a broad term for an organization or entity that acquires, stores and distributes food to the needy in their community. Food banks are typically supported by community food drives, umbrella organizations, as well as grocery stores, local agriculture, food manufacturers and other distributors” (OAFB, 2011).

In Canada, the first food banks were established in the early 1980s and were meant to be a temporary solution to hunger caused by economic downturn. Decades later, Ontario is home to approximately 200 food banks, along with many smaller-scale food pantries. The majority of the province’s food banks are member agencies of the OAFB. In addition to its advocacy and public education work, the OAFB also collects food and other resources for distribution amongst its accredited member food banks. According to the OAFB (2011), its accreditation process:

continues to evolve as we grow and develop. All member food banks participate in a simple accreditation process which requires them to complete reports on a regular basis including the following information: client profiles, client intake process, food safety and food handling, warehouse operations, human resources, service points and agencies, and public health inspection history. The content of these reports is reviewed with members during site visits.



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“Community food security can be defined as “a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice”...

In Guelph-Wellington, the Guelph Food Bank, Mount Forest Community Pantry, Palmerston Food Bank, East Wellington Community Services, and Centre Wellington Food Bank are currently accredited members of the OAFB.

### 2. Community Food Security

While emergency food services have played, and continue to play, an important role in meeting people’s emergency food needs, the OAFB (2011) notes that “[t]hey are not set-up to meet the complete hunger needs of those that they serve...” but rather to serve a specific, ideally short-term function. A useful framework for thinking about community food needs in a more systemic way – and an idea that has grown in popularity in recent years – is the concept of “community food security”, which includes, but also expands upon, the more narrowly defined “emergency food services”.

According to the Community Food Security Coalition (an American umbrella group representing over 300 organizations), community food security can be defined as “a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice” (CFSC, based on Hamm and Bellows, 2011). Although its first guiding principle is to reduce hunger and improve health by ensuring that low income communities and individuals are able to meet their nutritional needs, the concept of community food security incorporates broader goals as well, including environmental sustainability, community empowerment and support for local farmers.

Within a community food security framework, there has been a growing trend to move away from the traditional, charity-based, emergency food provision model and toward more holistic strategies that aim to ensure access to healthy food for all people, regardless of economic status. For example, in a 2008 report on local food initiatives in Canada, the Canadian Cooperative Association noted that public education, community gardening, urban agriculture and gleaning programs are good examples of activities that can increase the availability of fresh, healthy food for people with limited access. In 2010, the Dieticians of Canada similarly concluded that activities designed to strengthen local food systems are inextricably linked to achieving community food security. In addition to supporting initiatives that increase the production and distribution of fresh, healthy food (e.g. community gardens and kitchens), the Dieticians of Canada report also specifically recommends increasing education and skills-training for healthy food consumption, and implementing programs to ensure that healthy foods are accessible to people of all income groups as a means of increasing food security.

### 3. Food Hubs

In addition to (or perhaps, more appropriately, as a complement to) a focus on strengthening regional food systems, an important concept that has emerged within the community food security framework is the “food hub”. The



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“A food hub is a place (that can be physical or virtual) where a number of different food-related activities are concentrated and coordinated in an effort to maximize efficiency and impact.”

development of food hubs can be viewed as one means of taking the more theoretical concept of community food security and turning it into practical action.

An extremely broad term that can apply to a wide range of projects, a working definition of a “food hub” is provided in “Investigations into the Workings of Small Scale Food Hubs”, published by Sustain – a food advocacy organization in the United Kingdom:

A hub is an intermediary led by the vision of one or a small number of individuals which by pooling together producers or consumers adds value to the exchange of goods and promotes the development of a local supply chain. This added value may be gained through economies of scale, social value, educational work or services. In other words, the pure function of distribution is only one element of the hub and the distribution function may be contracted out to a third party. The hub may also provide a means for public sector services to reach disadvantaged communities, provide a space for innovation and act as a focal point for developing a political agenda around an alternative food system.

To put it more simply, a food hub is a place (that can be physical or virtual) where a number of different food-related activities are concentrated and coordinated in an effort to maximize efficiency and impact. Because the way a food hub initiative will look is highly context-specific, it is impossible to define it in any more detail.

Some food hub initiatives are more market-oriented, with a focus on for-profit sale of local agricultural and processed goods, while others are more community-oriented, with a focus on education, community development, and emergency food services. For the purposes of this report, the community-oriented food hub model is most appropriate. Within this category, a broad range of models also exists, from projects that focus more narrowly on storage and distribution of emergency food, to ones that incorporate a wide variety of elements, including education and resource centres, classes and workshops, community kitchens, community gardens, and more. Throughout this report, the more basic model of emergency food collection, storage and distribution will be referred to as an **emergency food hub**, while the more holistic model will be referred to as a **community food hub**, with the understanding that the two categories are not always entirely exclusive, but often overlap at least to some extent.

Some factors that have been identified as important to the success of food hub initiatives include: 1) visionary, motivated leadership; 2) sufficient human resources to allow for work on both project development and day-to-day operational activities; 3) diversification of activities, particularly to allow for-profit

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ventures (e.g. space rental) to cover the expenses of non-profit work (e.g. emergency food provision); 4) accurate costing/budgeting prior to initiation of any new activities; 5) some combination of grant funding, community financing and/or soft loans, along with in-kind support such as reduced rent, volunteer labour and donated equipment, particularly in the early stages of project development; 6) collaborative relationships amongst a wide cross-section of actors, and; 7) the existence of an appropriate physical space. Interestingly, the aforementioned UK study on small-scale food hubs found that “creating relationships was at the heart of the initial development of the food hubs”, while “buildings could play an important role in subsequent stages of a hub’s development, in increasing the profile of the food hub in the community and providing a possible location for high-value diversification” (Horrell et al., no date).

In both Canada and the United States, increasing numbers of projects can be considered food hubs. In many cases, these projects or organizations began within the framework of a more traditional food bank model and gradually expanded, or became incorporated, into emergency food and/or community food hubs. Indeed, Toronto-based researcher Charles Levkoe explains that food banks have a unique opportunity to become leaders in the construction of sustainable food systems by moving “beyond the traditional model of charity and emergency response” and integrating broader social justice and environmental work into their activities.

South of the border, a good example of a food hub project with a strong focus on emergency food provision and increasing access to healthy food in vulnerable communities is the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona. In Canada, one of the most commonly cited examples of a community food hub is Toronto’s Stop Community Food Centre. Like the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, The Stop initially began working from a neighbourhood food bank perspective, but gradually expanded over the years to include community gardening, food-related skills-building and nutrition education, and other social and environmental activities into its operation. An example of a food hub that more closely resembles an emergency food hub model is the Food Bank of Waterloo Region. Registered with the OAFB, this food hub provides food to a number of food banks and pantries in Waterloo Region, as well as in Wellington.

Although the above models provide useful examples of what a food hub could be, the concept is meant to be adapted to suit local context, with an almost infinite number of possible visions and definitions existing, each of which depends on the unique needs and capacities of a given place. (For more information, see Appendix I.)

### 3. METHODS

The two primary data collection methods employed in this study were semi-structured interviews with key informants and, in a select number of cases,



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surveys. A review of literature and web-based information regarding emergency food services, food security, and food hubs, was also conducted, the results of which are mainly presented in Appendix I.

### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Initially, 18-20 participants were targeted for participation in the study. These participants were identified based on their affiliation with organizations engaged in emergency food provision, projects seeking to otherwise improve food security in Guelph-Wellington, or work with vulnerable populations. An attempt was made to include a broad cross-section of participants, representing a range of emergency food programs, along with a number of other relevant organizations. As noted earlier in this report, the research team consulted with a small group of community members in order to determine the list of potential participants.

In the end, a total of 23 interviews were conducted. Eleven of these were with people from Guelph-focused organizations, seven with people from organizations located in Wellington, and five with representatives of organizations active in both Guelph and Wellington. The majority of the organizations that participated in the study are engaged directly in emergency food provision. A small number do so only peripherally, but work closely with vulnerable populations that experience food access challenges. These organizations – which include Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, Guelph-Wellington Immigrant Services, Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis, Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County, and the Community Resource Centre of North and Centre Wellington – were included in order to broaden the scope of the work beyond an exclusive focus on the perspectives of emergency food providers. (For a full list of interviewees, see Appendix II).

Interview participants were asked questions regarding their emergency food provision (or related) work, their awareness and opinions of other emergency food provision work being done in Guelph-Wellington, their awareness and opinions of relevant work being done in other communities to promote food security either through emergency food provision or otherwise, and their suggestions for improvement. In addition to discussing general suggestions for improvement, participants were specifically asked for their opinions regarding the concept of the food hub. (See Appendix III for a full interview guide.)

### SURVEYS

In the case of participants representing emergency food services (specifically food banks and food pantries) in Wellington, a survey was applied in conjunction with the more open-ended interview. This survey was developed by the United Way Social Planning Department and had been previously applied to food banks and food pantries in Guelph. In the case of the Drayton Food



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Bank, a survey was applied without an interview. (For a full copy of the survey, see Appendix IV.)

### LITERATURE AND WEB-BASED INFORMATION REVIEW

In addition to the key informant interviews and surveys, a review of literature and web-based information on the subjects of emergency food provision, community food security, and food hubs was conducted. Studies, reports, and websites, among other sources, were used to analyze best practices. The focus of this review was on Canadian experiences, particularly those within Ontario; however, some international experiences were included as well.

## 4. RESULTS

The following section provides a summary and analysis of the information from 23 interview transcripts and six completed surveys. Except in cases where a specific reference to survey data is noted, the information presented refers to data obtained during interviews. The discussion of similarities and differences between Guelph and Wellington is based on the survey data collected in Wellington as part of this study, along with the survey data previously collected in Guelph by the United Way.

### OVERVIEW OF THE EMERGENCY FOOD SERVICE SYSTEM (GUELPH)

The chart presented on the following page provides a brief summary of the emergency food programs offered by the 13 Guelph service providers included in the study. The information is based on participant interview responses. For a more complete listing of emergency food providers in Guelph, please refer to the city's Food Access Guide, which can be accessed online from the website of the Poverty Task Force (<http://gwpoverity.ca/>). For a more detailed service summary, see "A Survey of Emergency Food Services in Guelph: Overview and Analysis", prepared by the United Way Social Planning Department.

In addition to the direct emergency food services outlined in the following chart, research participants also identified a number of other programs that help contribute to overall community food security by supplementing provision of emergency food. Four participants highlighted the importance of Guelph's neighbourhood groups. Two participants specifically mentioned the community kitchens run by these groups, while two also referred to breakfast programs, which provide nutritious meals to students. Three participants showed an appreciation for community gardens – also often run by neighbourhood groups – such as Parkwood Garden, Brant Avenue Garden, and Onward Willow Garden. Furthermore, two participants noted that the Royal City Church plays a significant role in the city of Guelph with the community suppers that it holds.



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Organization	Service Summary
1. Brant Neighbourhood Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-day supply 1/month</li> <li>• Garden Fresh boxes 1/month (donated from churches) to be split up</li> </ul>
2. West Willow and Parkwood Gardens Neighbourhood Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-day supply 1/month</li> </ul>
3. Guelph Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food hamper available 1/month (singles/seniors on ODSP can come 2/month)</li> </ul>
4. Crestwick Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benevolent fund for individuals in the community, e.g. Price Chopper card</li> </ul>
5. Chalmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Wed, Thu, Fri (few hours)</li> <li>• Provide 2-3 day supply of food, every other week</li> <li>• Fresh food (dairy, meat, vegetables)</li> <li>• Program committee/registered dietician to oversee/regulate food servings/food groups</li> </ul>
6. CSA Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency food available for U of G students,</li> <li>• Referrals to other organizations when necessary</li> <li>• Compassionate fund 1/year that students can apply for (\$50)</li> <li>• Special diet fund (e.g. celiac), \$20-40/month</li> </ul>
7. Food and Friends Student Nourishment Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support 76 student nutrition programs throughout W-D-G, serving 12,000 students per year</li> <li>• Monthly basis but also 3 times/week or every day depending on case</li> </ul>
8. Salvation Army	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 day supply once every three months</li> <li>• additional food on emergency basis</li> </ul>
9. New Life Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective kitchen serving subsidized meals</li> </ul>
10. St Vincent de Paul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voucher system for purchasing food and other items</li> </ul>
11. Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shelter for women and children</li> <li>• Provide limited emergency food kits as needed</li> </ul>
12. Family and Children Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with five neighbourhood groups, engaging in food provision, capacity-building/re-skilling, and advocacy for clients</li> <li>• Provide grocery cards to families in need</li> </ul>
13. Salvation Army	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide 2-3 day balanced diet to clients once every 3 months</li> <li>• Provide shelved food for emergency access</li> </ul>

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A number of organizations included in the study do not themselves engage directly in emergency food provision, but do refer people to direct service providers and, in some cases, facilitate access to those providers. Among the organizations active in Guelph that described doing referrals were Guelph-Wellington-Dufferin Public Health, Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis, Immigrant Services and Family and Children's Services. In addition to referrals, these organizations also collaborate in a number of different ways with direct service providers, for example by sharing information.


### Strengths

The United Way report on emergency food services in Guelph identified a variety of strengths that characterize the city's current emergency food programs. These included: convenient locations; being able to provide clients with a variety of different foods; high quality service (i.e. treating clients in a warm, respectful manner); community support; meaningful collaborations with other programs and services; reasonable eligibility requirements, and; availability of healthy food (Martin, 2010). While not all of these elements are mirrored in the results of the study presented here, there is a significant degree of repetition, thus helping to confirm some of the preliminary findings of the earlier research.

In response to an open-ended question on the subject, the most commonly identified strengths of the current emergency food system in Guelph were: collaborations amongst service providers and between service providers and community organizations/groups (identified by 31% of interviewees representing organizations active in Guelph); provision of healthy food (25%), and; the diversity of services/available food (19%).

In addressing the rich partnerships between organizations, Participant G stated that there are "some really great collaborations in our community." Participant K shared this perspective, noting that there has been a real increase in food-related work in different neighbourhoods and that this work has been associated with "great community building... [it] gives them [neighbourhood residents] connections." Participant I also agreed, identifying networking as a key success: "We network...we really try to bridge gaps and tear down silos around local food. Networking is key."

With respect to the variety of food provided, Participant C stated "...at least every[one] who uses [the emergency food service] is able to get what they need, a diversity of things." Lastly, in regards to healthy food, Participant D stated: "In terms of what we do well, I think the supply of fresh food and vegetables, dairy and meat products to our guests – that's something we're proud of. We have a registered dietician so we periodically review what we're giving out..."

 There are some really great collaborations in our community.

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**OVERVIEW OF THE EMERGENCY FOOD SERVICE  
SYSTEM (WELLINGTON)**

Using information provided during interviews and through survey administration, the chart below provides a brief summary of the emergency food programs offered by the Wellington food banks and pantries included in this study.

Five of the six Wellington organizations operate out of a shared space – often a church. Despite this potential limitation, five of six respondents indicated that they would have no interest in expanding their capacity, as the space available suited the demand from the community. Five of the six organizations had relatively small operating capacities, with 20-60 users accessing the program each month (one organization indicated that this changed seasonally), and program availability ranged from only one day per week to by appointment only to, in one case, home delivery. There was one organization in Wellington that had a significantly larger operating capacity and longer operating hours.

The items available for recipients varied between programs; however, all programs offer vegetables (a mix of canned, frozen, and fresh), bread and pasta products, proteins such as meat, fish or eggs, and prepared food, as well as baby and hygiene products.

Organization	Service Summary
1. Centre Wellington Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One week supply once/month</li> <li>• Additional food on emergency basis (fresh produce once/week, bread products daily)</li> <li>• Food pick up available daily/ by appointment</li> <li>• Holiday hampers</li> </ul>
2. Arthur Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food pick up once a week</li> <li>• One week supply once/month</li> </ul>
3. Mount Forest Food Pantry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food drop-off to clients</li> <li>• One week supply every other week, depending on family size</li> <li>• Fresh food available</li> </ul>
4. Palmerston Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One week supply once/month</li> <li>• Subsequent pick-ups (3 day supply) in same month available but discouraged</li> </ul>
5. Harriston Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One box for pick up once/month</li> <li>• Additional food available three times/month on emergency basis</li> <li>• Christmas hamper</li> </ul>
6. Drayton Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One large box available once/month</li> <li>• Pick up any day by appointment</li> <li>• Holiday hampers</li> </ul>



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Nelson et. al., 2011.

“ Collaborations amongst service providers and between service providers and community organizations/groups [is one of the key strengths of the existing emergency food provision system in Wellington.]

### Strengths

Survey responses revealed that the most commonly identified strengths of the emergency food provision system in Wellington were: collaborations amongst service providers and between service providers and community organizations/groups (cited by 4 participants); volunteer and community dedication to ensuring success of the emergency food provision program (cited by 3); and provision of healthy food (cited twice). Collaborations amongst service providers took the form of food sharing when organizations had excess food (cited twice) and assistance with transporting food (cited twice). Collaborations between emergency food provision organizations and other services were also highlighted; for example, two participants pointed out the contribution of the Community Resource Centre to the region's emergency food system, because of its role in facilitating access (e.g. through transportation provision) and increasing system coordination and capacity.

### SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON

For organizations in both Guelph and Wellington, collaborations amongst service providers and between service providers and community organizations/groups was one of the key strengths of the existing emergency food provision system. Organizations in both Wellington and Guelph further identified their ability to provide healthy food as a key strength, with organizations in both regions generally able to provide vegetables (fresh, frozen or canned), fruit, proteins such as meat/fish/eggs/beans, dairy products such as milk (fresh, canned or powdered), baby products, and hygiene products to their users.

Differences between organizations in Guelph and Wellington were largely a function of scale, with the main differences lying in the number of users, interest (or lack thereof) in expansion, and staff time devoted to the organization. Organizations in Wellington tend to run on a much smaller scale than their counterparts in Guelph, with under 50 individuals, on average, accessing services from each rural food bank, in contrast to well over 50 (and up to 4000) individuals accessing services from 11 of the 13 organizations in Guelph. Most emergency service provision organizations in Wellington did not wish to expand their capacity, while a majority of organizations in Guelph (54%) did indicate an interest in expanding their capacity. Finally, five of the six organizations in Wellington had no paid staff time devoted to the organization, and only 10-30 hours of volunteer time. Of the organizations in Guelph, however, 11 of 13 organizations had paid staff time supporting service provision (ranging widely from 1-95 hours per week), and all but one organization also had volunteer time, often in significant amounts.



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Nelson et. al., 2011.

### LINKAGES BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS

Many meaningful and practical connections exist between the various emergency food provision services in Guelph-Wellington. Indeed, as mentioned above, collaborative relationships were identified as an important strength of the current emergency food system by many study participants in both Guelph and Wellington. Participants who noted this strength were adamant that networking and establishing mutually-beneficial relationships between organizations are necessary in order to build a cohesive community surrounding emergency food provision. Furthermore, these connections were recognized as being essential in terms of ensuring that each organization makes a unique contribution to the system as opposed to duplicating services, and that organizations act in a cooperative, collaborative manner, thereby maximizing effectiveness. Overall, partnerships between organizations were viewed as a crucial way of ensuring a functional system.

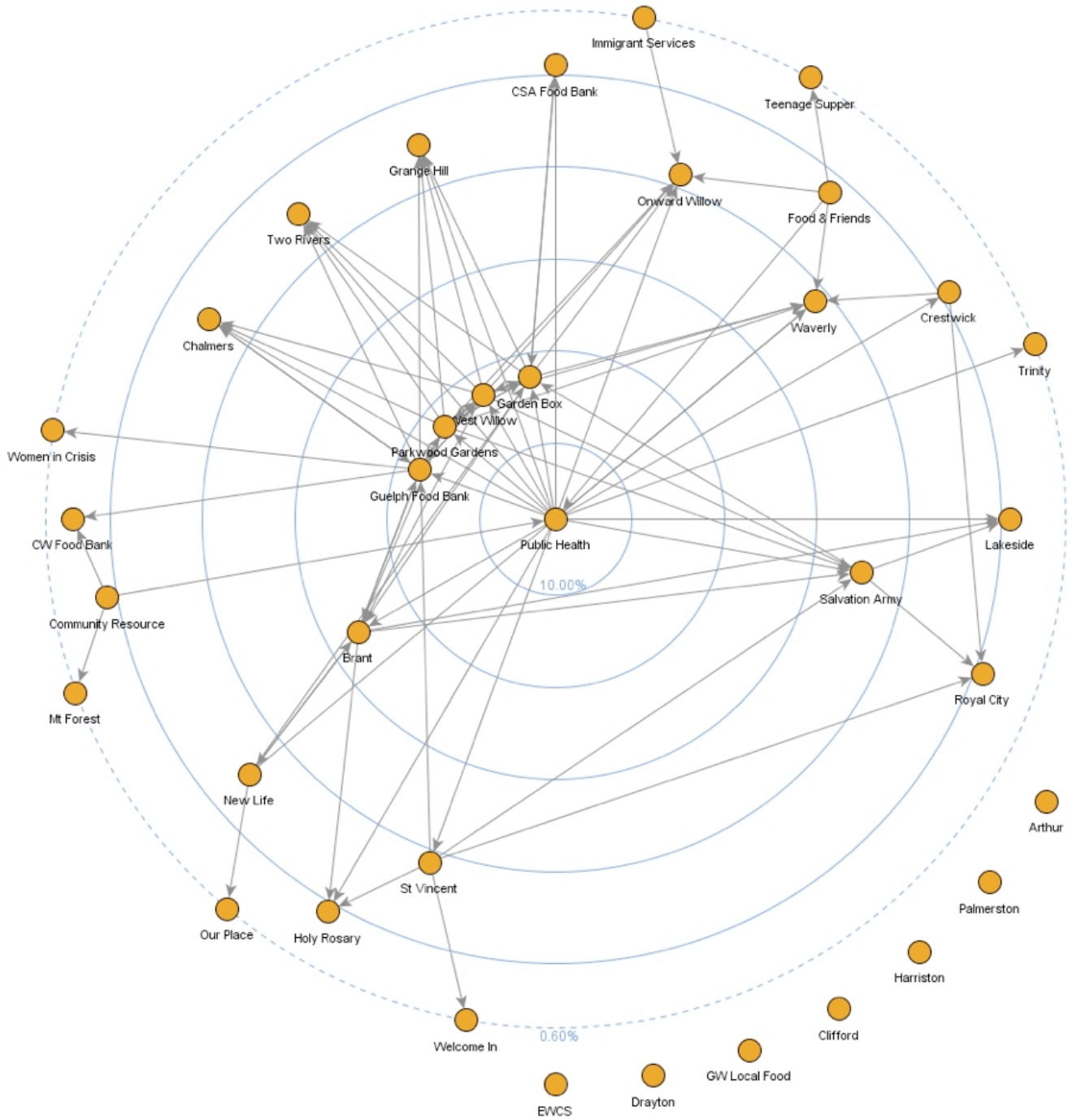
The following illustrations provide graphic representations of the existing linkages between the emergency food provision services identified in the Guelph-Wellington region. The first demonstrates formal alliances or partnerships identified by participants, while the second illustrates less formal relationships, characterized primarily by the sharing of information. Each reported linkage is indicated with an arrow, and the organizations with the highest number of linkages appear closest to the centre of the figures, while those with the fewest linkages appear closest to the edges. The definition of what constituted a formal or informal relationship was, to an extent, subject to the perspective of each interviewee. (For a full list of the organizations represented in these diagrams, see the checklist of organizational linkages that appears at the end of the Interview Guide in Appendix III.)

As is clear from the diagrams, less formal relationships of information-sharing are more common than more formal partnerships. The major players identified as partners in more formal collaborations were Public Health, the Guelph Food Bank, a number of neighbourhood groups and the Garden Fresh Box. Organizations that appeared particularly disconnected included the county food banks, possibly because of the physical distance that separates them. In terms of relationships focused on information-sharing, there was a more even distribution of partnerships, with key players including the Guelph Food Bank, Public Health, neighbourhood groups, Women in Crisis, Immigrant Services, Chalmers and the Salvation Army.



# The Research Shop

## Formal Linkages







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Nelson et. al., 2011.

### CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY FOOD SERVICE PROVISION IN GUELPH-WELLINGTON

In accordance with research goals 1 and 2, participants were asked during interviews to identify challenges within their own emergency food provision organization, as well as within the overall Guelph-Wellington emergency food system. A total of ten major challenges were identified, the majority of which were also referenced in the earlier United Way report. The primary challenges reported were:

1. an overall lack of funding (identified by 48% of participants);
2. insufficient food supply, particularly in the case of nutritious and/or fresh food, as well as various high-demand items (39%);
3. stigmatization issues related to emergency food service use, in conjunction with overly stringent eligibility requirements (39%);
4. a lack of adequate staff, volunteers, and overall community engagement (26%);
5. insufficient space for food storage (22%);
6. difficulties with transportation to and from emergency food provision organizations (22%);
7. insufficient communication and collaboration between organizations (22%);
8. a lack of awareness on the part of potential users regarding existing services (17%);
9. time constraints and inflexible hours of operation (13% participants), and;
10. complications resulting from local political fluctuations and a lack of food-related policy in the region (9%).

The most commonly identified challenge for emergency food provision in Guelph-Wellington was financial difficulties resulting from a lack of stable funding. For instance, Participant G noted that financial issues are “always a challenge.” This sentiment was shared by Participant I, who stated that “funding is always a challenge, especially finding on-going sustaining funds.” According to interview participants, one impact of insufficient funds is a low supply of food – and thus less frequent food distribution to clients. Addressing this problem, Participant D stated that “our challenges are the funding. We would like to be able to provide food every week but with our funding, we can only do every other week.”

The second most prominent challenge identified was the ability to obtain sufficient quantities of food to meet user needs. This is particularly problematic in the case of high quality, nutritious and/or fresh food. Concerns about food supply were expressed by nine interview participants. With respect to securing healthy food specifically, Participant M stated: “Challenge number one is to get good nutritious food. Look in my front room, you’ll see stacks of beverages that aren’t nutritious but that’s the sort of thing that often gets donated.” One reason for this is the difficulty in preserving fresh food without adequate facilities



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Nelson et. al., 2011.

“ There is a stigma against people using food pantries...it is uncomfortable.

“ You have to navigate all these systems to get food and they all have different criteria and hours are changing and transportation is an issue...

(Participant Q, Participant U); however, even when facilities are available, fresh food availability remains a problem. In the words of Participant A: “We bought a brand new freezer and we’ve had it for months but where do we get food for it?” The problems with both storage capacity and donation supply leave many participants with a strong desire to find creative solutions to allow for the provision of a wider selection of fresh, nutrient-rich foods to their clients.

Nine interview participants believed that stigmatization and eligibility requirements act as a significant barrier to partaking of emergency food services. With regards to stigmatization, it was noted that there are “negative connotations” associated with going to a food bank (Participant R); “...there is a stigma against people using food pantries...even for Canadians, it is uncomfortable” (Participant P). This opinion was echoed by Participant L’s illustrative account: “People get embarrassed when they go and feel like they’re having to beg for food...People should be able to feed their families in a nutritional way, and you should not have to have your dignity stripped to do it.” Participant G elaborated, “you’ll probably find this when you’re in rural communities more...this ‘we can feed our own’ attitude and ‘why aren’t parents feeding their own kids’...not wanting to admit the need for the program in some cases.”

Related to the notion of stigmatization, multiple interview participants shared the opinion that eligibility requirements can be rather strict, the results of which are twofold: 1) people in need may be deterred from accessing services because they do not want to disclose the personal information required, and; 2) various people in need are being turned away for not meeting criteria established by emergency food providers (Participant A, Participant J). One participant sums up these issues: “I think that people in poverty have expressed frustration... there is a quote [from a community member, which I share often] about ‘Oh, we’re going hunting and gathering for food’ because you have to navigate all these systems to get food and they all have different criteria and hours are changing and transportation is an issue...” Participant A explains one way in which this problem can be addressed: “I don’t ask for a whole big income thing like other places do, where they have to show bank statements and explain their entire life...people might not want to disclose any of that information.”

It should be noted that there were a number of differences between Guelph and Wellington organizations when it came to identifying the most significant challenges constraining their work. This was particularly the case for barriers to access for service users. In Wellington, survey results indicated that the most common barrier to access was the stigma associated with emergency food (cited by 5 of 6 participants), followed by a lack of awareness of the program (cited by 4 participants), and logistical problems such as the location of the program, days and times of program operation, and affordable transportation (cited by 3 participants). In contrast, when the same survey was applied in

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[F]ood hubs are emerging as an innovative new model that can be adapted to suit the needs of many different contexts.

Guelph, the most commonly identified barriers to access were transporting items (cited by 11 of 13 participants), and insufficient high quality food (cited by 10 participants) or food quantity (cited by 9 participants) (Martin, 2010).

### THE FOOD HUB CONCEPT WITHIN THE GUELPH-WELLINGTON CONTEXT

The concept of the “food hub” (as defined on page 8), was identified as a particular subject of interest at the outset of this research project. This focus was decided upon based on the findings presented in the United Way report on emergency food services in Guelph, as well as discussions with FAWG representatives who, based on their professional experience, felt there could be benefit to exploring the idea. Additionally, a review of information on best practices in emergency food provision and food security suggested that food hubs are emerging as an innovative new model that can be adapted to suit the needs of many different contexts.

In this section, participants’ vision regarding what a food hub might look like in Guelph-Wellington will be presented, the degree to which it is perceived as a desirable model will be assessed, ideas about potential governance structures will be outlined, and some comment will be made on the subject of what requirements would be both currently available and necessary in the future.

#### Vision

In general, most participants had an awareness of the basic “emergency food hub” model, defining it as a centralized location designed for large-scale food storage, with the capacity to distribute fresh, nutritious and quality food to smaller organizations in the region (18 participants). As Participant K suggested, an emergency food hub would be “just one place supplying the rest of [the emergency food providers] so that these individual communities are serving people that they actually know and it’s closer.”

The majority of participants expressed the opinion that the focus of a potential food hub project in Guelph-Wellington should – initially at least – be central storage and distribution of emergency food. However, 15 participants also stressed that they would like to see a food hub initiative eventually address issues surrounding food, health and poverty in a more holistic way, with a wide range of programming that could include community gardens, kitchens, nutrition (and other) education, and more. In the words of Participant O: “I think [a food hub] is just a place where communit[ies] gather around food and then, from that, everything happens. I think of a hub [as] where we do everything around food.” In other words, the majority of research participants hoped to see any possible food hub project in Guelph-Wellington begin with a focus on the “emergency food hub” model, but held the idea of a gradual transition toward the broader “community food hub” model as a longer-term goal.



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For many participants, their opinions regarding what a food hub might look like in Guelph-Wellington were informed by awareness of existing food hub projects in the region. Two commonly cited initiatives were the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank and the Food Bank of Waterloo Region. These were both seen as useful examples of the emergency food hub model. In the case of Cambridge, one participant explained that “they were a perfect example for us of a food bank that is kind of working very differently from others. You can go into that food bank and shop, you know, the shelves are open and you can pick what you want...[and] they’ve done really well with partnering. They’ve really brought in other agencies – public health, mental health, and all those other people under one roof and they recognize that all of these things are interconnected and needed to really serve people well.” Participants indicated that, because they are primarily emergency food hubs, the Cambridge and Waterloo Region experiences could serve as good examples of what might be feasible in Guelph-Wellington in the shorter term.

In terms of the more holistic community food hub model, Toronto’s Stop Community Food Centre was cited by a number of participants as an excellent example of a project that could be considered a hub, and is well-grounded in a local neighbourhood. One participant noted: “I love...that they have that advocacy centre. They bring in people who are struggling with Ontario Works and all of these different systems. They train them for ten weeks and they come out with this certificate in the end and they leave the office and they help people and they gain these skills and they can become outreach workers in other communities. That whole skill development, I think that’s a huge piece around food” (Participant O). Participant V was equally impressed by the Stop experience: “I’ve visited the Stop and it’s really amazing how they’ve been able to integrate so much around food and involve the community. It’s really evolved into a centre that has promoted so much health in so many different ways.”

Although most participants felt that, initially at least, any potential food hub project should focus on creating a centralized storage location and effective distribution system (i.e. an emergency food hub), there was also significant enthusiasm regarding the inclusion of other elements. Specifically, participants indicated that a food hub in Guelph-Wellington might, eventually if not immediately, ideally incorporate:

1. skill development/re-skilling and education in areas such as financial management, employment skills, waste management, cooking and meal preparation, nutritional guidance, and gardening (cited by 40% of participants);
2. community kitchens (30%);
3. community gardens (22%);
4. space for advocacy groups and services (22%), and;
5. resources and information, such as computer access, legal and social services, child care, and books (17%).



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“ [W]hile the majority of participants identified storage and distribution of emergency food as the primary priority, many also imagined that a project would eventually be about “a lot more programs coming together and having a central place...to create more of a food culture.”

Participant K provided a good illustration of the vision of a community food hub expressed as a medium to longer-term goal by most participants:

[i]t would be a multiuse centre that would be about animating food. There would be a spot available for micro-enterprising, kitchens for new businesses to start up and...do workshops, outreach, education. There could be a garden fresh box packing location, farmers' market. There could even be front end retail, a place to hold other events around food, and various staff working at it. It could also be a bit of a distribution connection for chefs, that sort of thing.

It is evident then that, while the majority of participants identified storage and distribution of emergency food as the primary priority, many also imagined that a project would eventually be about “a lot of programs coming together and having a central place...to create more of a food culture” (Participant E).

#### Desirability

While there were a few noteworthy concerns about developing a food hub project in the Guelph-Wellington region, the idea was received favourably by most participants. Specifically, of 23 people interviewed, three expressed a lack of interest in and/or generally negative opinion of the idea, with the rest expressing varying degrees of support.

In general, those in favour of the food hub idea felt that it could be a useful means of addressing some of the challenges described above. Specifically, the most commonly cited reasons for supporting a food hub project were:

1. the need for a centralized storage and distribution centre to facilitate the accessibility of fresh food in the region (cited by 35% of participants);
2. the need for a unified holistic approach to emergency food provision and food security work – i.e. to connect community members, increase collaborations between organizations, and create a cohesive culture surrounding food (35%), and;
3. the need for health promotion, which might be achieved through increasing knowledge about food, gardening, and food preparation (26%).

In answering whether or not a food hub might work well in Guelph-Wellington, one participant stated: “Absolutely. We just came back from a conference where they had some vendor markets that provided information about bulk purchasing for our programs and it would be [a] wonderful thing for us to have a hub because currently we don't. We have no place to access [or] store any kind of bulk food” (Participant G). Participant C shared this eagerness to increase food accessibility through a food hub: “I think the idea of having a hub is genius because then people don't have to, you know, we could ship out whatever to all these local food banks and [that would help make the food] more accessible.”



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Reflecting the view of a strong majority of study participants, Participant D agreed: “I really think that the hub is a good idea. I think that that’s what’s really going to help us all.”

A number of those in favour of the food hub idea identified a variety of challenges that they believe would need to be addressed for a potential project to be effective. The first obstacle foreseen by participants was difficulties with the logistics of developing and implementing a food hub. For example, Participant H predicted that transportation and keeping up with the demand for emergency food in the region will be major challenges for a local food hub, while others pointed to potential challenges around secure funding, sufficient staff, and the ability to find an adequate physical location. Participant I, Participant K, and Participant L also raised the issue of the logistics of communication and collaboration, acknowledging that, with all the different people and organizations involved, ironing out issues surrounding the roles and priorities of different actors will be a challenging but necessary element to any food hub project development.

With regards to inter-organizational communication and collaboration, a number of participants expressed specific interest in ensuring that any potential food hub project be developed in a way that recognizes the important role currently (as well as historically) played by the Guelph Food Bank. Notably, the Guelph Food Bank is the only agency in Guelph accredited by the OAFB, and it already exhibits some of the characteristics integral to an emergency food hub – for example significant storage capacity, as well as a fledgling initiative to help distribute food to smaller neighbourhood pantries. Given how deeply enmeshed the Guelph Food Bank is in the emergency food provision services of the region, it is evident that “how they want to participate in [a food hub project] is going to hinge on how we’re going to be able to create the model” (Participant D).

Of the three participants who did not believe a food hub project was desirable and/or necessary in Guelph-Wellington, the main rationale cited was that, given existing services, creating a local food hub would be redundant. This viewpoint was particularly relevant for Wellington participants who, unlike their counterparts in Guelph, currently have access to food from the Food Bank of Waterloo Region. As one participant explained, “the hub in Kitchener is doing a fantastic job already”, raising the question: “Why have two so close together?” (Participant W).

In addition to potential redundancies and overlap with existing services, one of those not in favour of a food hub project explained that one of the main reasons has to do with the difficult nature of inter-organizational communication and coordination – a concern shared by a number of food hub proponents as well. In the words of the participant not in favour of a food hub initiative:

From a supply chain perspective, trying to logistically coordinate things with so many different people from different backgrounds



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and diverse ideas about how to do things would be very, very difficult. If the issue of information sharing between organizations hasn't been resolved in...years, how is it going to be resolved now with this food hub idea? It doesn't seem practical to me. Also, people tend to be territorial, because they believe in what they're doing and they don't want to give it up.

It is important to note that, even the participant who expressed most reticence about the food hub idea did indicate an interest in at least "exploring the food hub idea...to be better informed...and have more information to be able to make a more informed opinion."

### Governance

One issue important to the potential development of a food hub initiative is the question of how such a project might be governed. When asked their opinions regarding possible food hub governance options, establishing an independent board of directors structure was the most popular idea. Participant D suggested that a useful way forward might be to start with the Food Access Working Group (or a committee consisting of some of its members) and gradually work towards creating a separately functioning board of directors. Participant G concurred, stating:

I think that the governance of [a food hub] could easily be held by the Food Accessibility [Working Group]. It could also be held by the [Guelph-Wellington Food] Round Table in general because they're a really strong group. There's huge collaboration from what I understand. They're a really wonderful group and they're really cooperative. I don't see any reason that they couldn't administer it.

When discussing governance issues, Participant E warned that wages would be necessary in order to "make sure that things actually happen, so you don't have something completely volunteer-based." In addition, two participants noted that care would need to be taken in order to ensure that those managing a food hub project would take an unbiased, objective approach: "I think [a food hub] has got to be its own organization... You need to have an unbiased, objective group come in and do it. Everybody's got vested interest. By having an unbiased group, you're going to be able to get more funds, more buy-in" (Participant C). Citing the example of Waterloo Region's emergency food hub, Participant J stressed that a board should not include member agencies (that would be receiving food from a hub) in order to avoid potential conflicts of interest.



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### Requirements

One of the final topics considered by participants was what they felt would be required for the successful development of a food hub initiative. The following eight items were identified as essential:

1. funding, a constant donor/sponsor, and fundraisers (cited by 40% of participants);
2. a facility in a central, accessible location (35%);
3. relationship-building, collaborations, and partnerships between emergency food provision and related organizations (30%);
4. volunteers (26%);
5. paid staff (26%);
6. transportation/trucks (22%);
7. community consultation and community interest/participation (22%), and;
8. a key person who is familiar with local food systems and logistics who would be able to organize and bring people together (17%).

On the subject of securing a convenient and appropriate location, Participant A noted a number of points to keep in mind: “The first step would be to find the space, and there’s all these questions about the space, too. Does it have the right capacity? Is there a loading dock? Because even if you’re starting off small, you still have to be able to look at the potential for expansion in the future. Is there an area for warehouse space and that can be made into offices?...” When it came to brainstorming potential locations, Participant E provided a starting point: “One thing I think of for space is there are schools... for example, Tytler Public School is closing down in the Ward in Guelph, so that’s one place where they’re losing a community resource and it could turn into a community centre. I think that a food hub is basically a community centre, just with more of a food focus. I think schools are a big thing as well as churches...Old churches or schools were strategically placed in certain communities and the communities that are losing the schools are the ones that probably need food hubs the most.”

In addition to funding and an adequate physical location, collaboration and partnering with other organizations was identified as a primary requirement. Participant J explained that “...the relationship-building is just as important as the activity, so without that, it’s really unstable.” Participant O agreed, stating “I think we all need to work together better and I think we need to partner more and get more people involved.” Participant M illustrated the idea of collaboration quite effectively: “Communication, collaboration, cooperation. Those are the three important elements. Communicate so we know what each one is doing because we can’t keep to ourselves...Collaboration, work with each other and recognize that there are some things that one group does well, some things that the other organizations do well. Let’s appreciate that and honour what they’re doing.” The emphasis placed by participants on collaboration and relationship-building is in accordance with food hub research

“Communication, collaboration, cooperation. Those are the three important elements.”

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conducted in the United Kingdom that, as discussed above, found this element to be of even greater importance in the initial stages of project development than a physical location (Horrell et. al., no date).

With respect to volunteers and staff, a significant number of participants stated that volunteers would be a crucial part of the development of a food hub. Citing the Cambridge model as an example, Participant A suggested that food hub clients could contribute volunteer hours: “Each neighbourhood group would have to contribute volunteers. You’d need volunteers to make a hub work. Though sometimes we have trouble getting volunteers, but then again, if you want to create this centre to run then you need to help. It’s about neighbours helping neighbours, so if you’re going to get food from here, then give back. And that also makes people feel good. So, if there was a hub, to get food twice a month, you’d have to help make it happen. So we’d have to call out to our volunteers.”

Along with the potential for volunteer work to create win-win dynamics, participants also expressed the need for paid staff and stressed that complete reliance on volunteers could threaten the long term viability of a food hub initiative. For instance, Participant D pointed out that there are certain duties required at a food hub that would not be appropriate for a volunteer to carry out. As an example: “[delivering] a large order, it puts wear and tear on a volunteer’s car and some don’t have the space.” Furthermore, Participant F warned that one thing “[we would] need to be careful of is relying too much on volunteer support because, you know, people get burned out.” Lastly, Participant A summed up the need for paid staff, noting “...you’d need to think about resources for paid staff, so it wouldn’t just be volunteers. 80% volunteers might work, but paid staff is really important to make sure things are running properly.” In other communities, food hub projects have received funding and support for their activities from organizations such as public health offices, municipal governments, foundations (e.g. the McConnell Foundation and Metcalf Foundation), private business, user fees paid by member agencies, and social enterprise projects.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS


### SUMMARIZING THE RESEARCH RESULTS

This project took as its starting point a need identified by those working in the area of emergency food provision and food security to improve the current system in Guelph-Wellington. Research results demonstrated that the three most pressing concerns regarding emergency food provision and food security are: 1) insufficient funding and resources; 2) inadequate access to a variety of high quality, nutritious foods, and; 3) continued stigmatization of emergency food service users, coupled with restrictive eligibility requirements. There was a strong sense amongst research participants that it is now important to begin shifting the discussion away from describing the challenges facing existing

“ [T]he three most pressing concerns regarding emergency food provision and food security are: 1) insufficient funding and resources; 2) inadequate access to a variety of high quality, nutritious foods, and; 3) continued stigmatization of emergency food service users, coupled with restrictive eligibility requirements.

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 An action-oriented project should be undertaken as soon as possible.

services, and towards how to address these challenges through the generation and development of creative, innovative solutions.

Both a review of best practices in other communities and the community consultation that occurred as part of this research project indicate that a potentially useful way forward lies in the concept of the food hub. The emergency food hub model (identified by participants as a short-term priority) would help address the aforementioned challenges primarily by maximizing use of limited resources. The eventual development of a more holistic community food hub (identified by participants as a longer-term goal) would help decrease the stigma surrounding emergency food provision, by incorporating it into a project that included other activities. Although a small minority of participants felt that a food hub project would be redundant and/or logistically impossible, a clear majority (20 of 23 people interviewed) expressed support for the idea. Within that majority, there was a general consensus amongst participants on the following points:

1. An action-oriented project should be undertaken as soon as possible.
2. The primary objective of such a project should be the creation of a centrally located emergency food collection and storage centre, along with a system of distribution to smaller neighbourhood centres (i.e. an emergency food hub).
3. Although the initial focus should be on ensuring effective, coordinated emergency food collection, storage and distribution, programs beyond basic emergency food services are also important, and planning for their inclusion (either in the present or future) should be part of any project proposal. These complementary services include community gardens and kitchens, nutrition education programs, and other social services, and represent movement towards a community food hub.
4. Ideally, an independent board will eventually be created to manage a food hub initiative; however, during the early phases of project development there is hope that a group such as FAWG, the GWFRT, the PTF, and/or a committee of community partners, could spearhead action.
5. Project development must be conducted in a collaborative manner, and include on-going community consultation with:
  - 1) existing emergency food programs;
  - 2) organizations that work with vulnerable populations experiencing food access problems;
  - 3) potential service users, and;
  - 4) organizations engaged in other activities related to food security.
    - a. In particular, to the extent possible, a food hub project would ideally be conducted in collaboration with the Guelph Food Bank – an organization whose capacity and experience put it in a unique position to contribute to a successful initiative.
    - b. Additionally, it would be beneficial to develop or strengthen connections with local organizations that have already begun to explore the food hub idea

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(specifically, Guelph Wellington Local Food and the Guelph Food Co-op).

6. The majority of participants in the study expressed high levels of willingness to participate in the development and implementation of a food hub project, to the extent that their personal capacity, or that of their organization, permits.

It should be noted that there is considerable difference between Guelph and Wellington in terms of the degree of support and/or enthusiasm for a food hub project. This is primarily because, as mentioned earlier in this report, Wellington food banks and pantries are currently able to access the Food Bank of Waterloo Region, which already exists as an emergency food hub recognized by the OAFB. The significant physical distances that exist between communities in Wellington, coupled with a lack of public transportation, is another factor that makes a potential food hub in Guelph-Wellington a more challenging prospect for Wellington-based organizations. Finally, the most pressing barrier to accessing emergency food services in Wellington is the stigma attached to it – an issue not necessarily directly addressed by the emergency food hub model. Nevertheless, there is some interest in Wellington in a potential food hub project for the Guelph-Wellington area.

### LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Over the course of this project, it became clear that there is widespread support for the idea of developing a food hub project as a means of improving emergency food service and food security work in Guelph-Wellington. The fact that the degree of support for the food hub idea was unknown at the project's outset limited the scope of the work presented here, as it meant that research was primarily exploratory in nature, as opposed to focusing in a more concrete way on how to best move forward with the idea. Nevertheless, given that community consultation was identified as one of the most important elements of any potential food hub initiative, this research project could be considered a necessary step in this consultative process.

Another limitation to the study is that not all emergency food programs in Guelph-Wellington took part and, more importantly, relatively few organizations engaged in food security work not directly related to emergency food provision were included. As a result, broadening future discussion – especially to include actors with an interest in food security work beyond emergency food provision – will be important.

A third issue is that the report on best practices in emergency food provision presented in Appendix I was not available for study participants to read prior to being interviewed. As such, there was no opportunity for their responses to reflect the knowledge and experiences collected in the best practice work. As this report is made public, and efforts to improve the emergency food system in Guelph-Wellington move forward, on-going efforts to assess how people's

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opinions about emergency food, community food security and food hubs, develop and evolve would be beneficial.

Finally, it is worth noting that a number of projects are currently underway that could provide information complementary to this report in the future. The first is a province-wide study on food hubs being conducted by researchers at a number of universities (including the University of Guelph's Dr. Karen Landman). With a final report scheduled to come out in the Spring of 2012, the results of that project will include a toolkit for organizations interested in developing food hubs. Although the focus is not specifically on emergency food provision, that toolkit will likely include useful information and resources regarding topics such as potential sources of funding and governance structures for food-related initiatives. A second development that might be kept in mind for future consideration is that the Stop Community Food Centre recently implemented satellite projects in the communities of Stratford and Perth, Ontario. Because these two locations are much closer in size and scale to Guelph than the original Toronto location, the way in which those projects proceed could provide useful information for those seeking to work towards a Stop-like model in Guelph-Wellington.

## 6. POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the interview and survey data that was collected and analysed over the course of this project, and on the review of best practices found in Appendix I, the research team identified a number of items that could be viewed as potential implications of the research that has been conducted:

1. It is important to take advantage of the current momentum around making improvements to existing services by initiating action-oriented activities.
2. The “food hub” concept (both the more basic “emergency food hub” and more holistic “community food hub” models) provides a useful framework for moving forward. It should be reiterated that the term “food hub” is exceptionally broad, and any initiative in Guelph-Wellington would be highly context-specific. At its heart, a hub is about bringing people together to help increase collaboration and coordination, thereby maximizing the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of food security work.
3. An important first step would be identification of key people and organizations enthusiastic about championing a food hub project, and with the capacity to move a project forward. The most common spearheading organizations in other communities have been public health units, well-established food banks, and municipal governments; however, the specific organization(s) or person(s) identified are less important than the motivation and ability of those actors to be effective champions.
4. Following the identification of capable and committed leaders, an important step in a possible food hub project would be the formation of



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a planning committee inclusive of a variety of interest groups. This planning committee could be involved in establishing the details of what kind of initiative would be best-suited to the Guelph-Wellington context, and what steps might be followed to move such an initiative forward.

5. As a potential project is developed, the maintenance and strengthening of collaborative relationships between organizations engaged in emergency food provision, those doing other food security work, and those working with vulnerable populations, will be essential. Of particular importance is broadening the discussion to include a wide variety of food system actors beyond the emergency food providers who were the primary focus of this study. These actors could include:
  - a. Local farmers, including ones already connected to emergency food programs, such as Ignatius CSA, Cedardown Farm, and Everdale Organic Farm and Environmental Learning Centre. These linkages could involve the development of gleaning programs and the use of farmland to grow food for emergency provision.
  - b. Organizations that have demonstrated an interest in the concept of a food hub (specifically Guelph-Wellington Local Food and the Guelph Food Co-op project).
  - c. The University of Guelph. This linkage could involve student projects and volunteer work, land for growing food, and potential project-based funding opportunities.
  - d. The corporate sector, particularly food retailers such as grocery stores.
  - e. Organizations that have functioning food hubs or other innovative projects (e.g. The Stop Community Food Centre, and particularly its new locations in Perth and Stratford, Waterloo Region Public Health, the Food Bank of Waterloo Region).



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### 8. APPENDIX I: REVIEW OF BEST PRACTICES IN EMERGENCY FOOD PROVISION

#### Introduction

A review of some of the literature on emergency food provision and food security in North America reveals that, in recent years, there has been a gradual shift in thinking regarding how to best ensure that all members of a community are able to meet their nutritional needs. The main thrust of this shift has been a movement away from a charity-oriented model, in which food banks are the main actors, and towards a more holistic model, in which emergency food provision is incorporated into a set of broader actions and programs aimed at building and maintaining sustainable, equitable food systems and communities.

This review of trends and best practices highlights some examples of organizations and programs that seek to improve food security, in part through the provision of emergency food, but also by other means. It begins with a brief overview of how and why thinking about emergency food provision and food security have changed over the last several decades. It then presents a number of cases that have been identified as “success stories”, and these experiences are analysed in terms of: 1) key actors involved; 2) funding and resources; 3) food supply and quality, and; 4) accessibility and eligibility. Finally, this review summarizes the results, with the goal of providing information useful for the improvement of emergency food provision and community food security in Guelph-Wellington.

#### Trends in Thinking About Food Security

In the early 1980s, the first food banks opened in Canada in response to an economic recession that had left significant numbers of people without sufficient income to meet their food needs. At the time, the creation of food banks was intended to be a short term solution that would address the gaps in food security until economic recovery was achieved; however, throughout the 1980s and 90s food banks continued to be the primary response to hunger in communities across the country (Power, 1999). More than two decades later, the province of Ontario alone now has approximately 200 functioning food banks, and March, 2010 saw the highest level of food bank usage ever recorded in Canada (Food Banks Canada, 2010).

The high levels of use demonstrate that food banks continue to serve a function when it comes to helping people meet their nutritional needs on a short term basis. At the same time however, the capacity of the food bank model to adequately address food insecurity is limited. In Guelph, a study of food banks and pantries found that they face a series of challenges, including insufficient food donations, storage space and human resources, inaccessible locations and/or opening hours, stigma associated with use, and shortages of high quality, fresh, nutritious food (Martin, 2010). In addition to these issues, the very fact that food banks continue to exist is also often cited as evidence that broader actions are necessary in order to more fully address the problem of food insecurity.

Ideas about food security that seek to move beyond a charity-based model tend to be organized around the concept of “community food security”, which includes, but is not limited to, emergency food services such as more traditional food banks and pantries. In addition to these services, the community food security framework encompasses support for community-based food production (e.g. urban agriculture, community gardens, collective kitchens), sustainable farming, community empowerment, and education and advocacy work (Community Food Security Coalition, 2011).

Because it includes such a broad range of objectives, those working from a community food security perspective place a high priority on building coalitions that can work collaboratively to tackle the challenging issue of food insecurity in a holistic, systemic manner (Riches, 1999). Because this requires a certain amount of coordination, and potentially some level of centralization as well, it has become increasingly common to use the concept of a “food hub” when thinking about community food security work.

Many different types of food hub projects exist and, as such, there is no one definition for the term. Rather, the food hub framework is about bringing multiple actors and programs together to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of a variety of food-related programs and activities (Morley et al., 2008). Some food hub initiatives are more market-oriented, with a focus on for-profit sale of local agricultural and processed goods, while others are more community-oriented, with a



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focus on education, community development, and emergency food services. Within this latter category, a range of models also exists, from projects that focus more narrowly on storage and distribution of emergency food, to ones that incorporate a wide range of elements, including education and resource centres, classes and workshops, community kitchens, community gardens, and more.

### Summary of Initiatives Included in the Report

As noted in the introduction, this report examines the workings of a number of food security organizations and initiatives, with the aim of providing some insight into what makes them effective. Most of the initiatives could, in one way or another, be considered examples of work being done from the community food security perspective. Some specifically define themselves as a hub, while others do not. It should be noted that the list provided here is far from exhaustive, but is meant to give some idea of what might be considered “best practices” in current food security work.

#### Summary of Assessed Organizations and Initiatives

<b>Stop Community Food Centre</b>  Toronto, ON	Mission: “increase access to healthy food in a manner that maintains dignity, builds community and challenges inequality.” Programs include food bank, community cooking, nutrition education, sustainable food production (urban farming), advocacy <a href="http://www.thestop.org">www.thestop.org</a>
<b>Foodshare</b>  Toronto, ON	Mission: “multifaceted, innovative, and long-term approach to hunger and food issues” to ensure good, healthy food for all. Programs include community gardens, food production, processing and nutrition education, subsidized fresh food boxes, subsidized fresh food markets <a href="http://www.foodshare.net">www.foodshare.net</a>
<b>Just Food</b>  Ottawa, ON	Mission: “to work towards a vibrant, just and sustainable food system in the Ottawa region.” Programs include promoting production and consumption of local food, research, education, networking and advocacy for food security <a href="http://www.justfood.ca">www.justfood.ca</a>
<b>Food 4 All</b>  Cobourg, ON	Mission: “to ensure a higher level of food security in Northumberland County.” A non-profit centralized food distribution warehouse that acquires food and essential items and redistributes them to local programs <a href="http://www.food4all.ca">www.food4all.ca</a>
<b>Food Action Network</b>  Thunder Bay, ON	Mission: “to create awareness, support food projects, advocate for policies that support community food security, and act as an information centre for community food security.” Programs include gleaning, community gardens, a good food box, nutrition education, policy work and promotion of available emergency food and food security services <a href="http://www.tbdhu.com/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/FoodSecurity/">www.tbdhu.com/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/FoodSecurity/</a> (Thunder Bay District Health Unit website)



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<p><b>Food Bank of Waterloo Region</b></p> <p>Kitchener, ON</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission: “Through community partnerships, we obtain and distribute emergency food from our neighbours for our neighbours.”</li> <li>• Collection of perishable and non-perishable items from community and industrial sources, storage, and distribution to regional food provision organizations and programs</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.thefoodbank.ca">www.thefoodbank.ca</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Waterloo Region Neighbourhood Markets</b></p> <p>Kitchener and Preston, ON</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission: “to increase access to fresh, local produce in neighbourhoods that have limited food access, to increase people’s consumption of fresh produce, to increase social connections in neighbourhoods, and to support local farmers.”</li> <li>• Currently, 3 weekly markets are selling local produce in neighbourhoods with food access problems</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona</b></p> <p>Tuscon, Arizona</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission: “through education, advocacy, and the acquisition, storage, and distribution of food, we will anticipate and meet the food needs of the hungry in our community.”</li> <li>• Programs include community garden, community market, and emergency food collection, storage and distribution to individuals and regional agencies</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.communityfoodbank.com">www.communityfoodbank.com</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Peterborough Community Food Network</b></p> <p>Peterborough, Ontario</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission: “address and prevent hunger in Peterborough [and] ensure that everyone in Peterborough has enough healthy food to eat”</li> <li>• A network of organizations implementing food security initiatives including: gleaning, collective kitchens, cooking lessons, community gardens, and fresh produce boxes.</li> <li>• <a href="http://pcchu.peterborough.on.ca/CFN/CFN-home.html">http://pcchu.peterborough.on.ca/CFN/CFN-home.html</a></li> </ul>

### Theme 1: Key Actors Involved

Although each best practice case has a unique history, a cursory examination of the main actors involved in each organisation indicates that there are a number of similarities among the initiatives. The first striking similarity is that, in five of the nine initiatives examined, the local public health unit played a key role. In some cases, it was integral to the initiation and ongoing implementation of the project, while in others its role seemed confined to the provision of funding.

The second most common key actor among the organisations reviewed was the municipal or regional government. Food Share, for example, was initiated in 1985 by then mayor of Toronto Art Eggleton (FoodShare, n.d.2). Similarly, according to their website, Ottawa’s Just Food began through discussions between community members and departments of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa Carleton.

The third most common category of actors involved in the organisations reviewed was food banks. In three cases (the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, the Food Bank of Waterloo Region and Food 4 All) regionally strong food bank organisations played important roles in spearheading the transition away from a more narrow focus on emergency food provision and toward the development of more broad-based community food security initiatives. They did so by providing funds and other resources, and acting in a convening role to bring in other collaborative partners. Other actors that were found to be important, although less common, include church groups and charitable foundations.



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### Theme 2: Funding and Resources

#### *Funding*

Funding is an ever-present challenge in any organisation working to address food insecurity. Each of the organisations reviewed addressed their funding challenges in a different way. For the organisations more exclusively focused on distribution of food, food donations tend to represent the largest resource received. For example, for the Community Food Bank of Arizona and the Food Bank of Waterloo Region, the value of donated food represents 81.05% and 78.14% respectively of each of their overall budgets. For these organisations, the main sources of funding beyond food donations came from private donations, fundraising or events (The Food Bank of Waterloo Region, 2009; Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, 2010).

For a number of initiatives examined, foundations were a main source of funding. In the case of The Stop, for example, donated food continues to be an important component of the organisation's revenue (representing 20% of the budget for 2009-2010); however, a significant proportion (31%) of The Stop's annual budget comes from foundations such as the Metcalf Foundation (The Stop Community Food Centre, 2010, p.3). A number of other organisations also depend on funding from foundations. For the Waterloo Region Neighbourhood Markets for example, funding from the Lyle S Hallman foundation accounted for 51.4 % of the initiative's total funding in 2007 (Region of Waterloo Public Health, 2008, p. 17). Other foundations that were prominent funders for initiatives in Ontario include the Trillium Foundation and George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation. Financial (as well as in-kind) support from non-profits such as the United Way, as well as assistance from government bodies – particularly municipal government and public health units – was also important.

Beyond food donations, foundation grants and some public and/or non-profit assistance, an important source of funding for a number of initiatives is revenues from social enterprise activities and/or special events. Simply put, a social enterprise is any organisation or activity that uses business models to achieve a social or environmental mission (The Canadian Social Entrepreneurship Foundation, 2006). For The Stop, for example, social enterprise activities and special events together accounted for 23% of their revenue in 2009-2010 (The Stop Community Food Centre, 2010, p.3). In addition, for FoodShare, sales of produce and catering service profits made up 32% of their revenues in 2009 (FoodShare, 2009, p.2). While it should be kept in mind that these two organisations have a larger potential for revenues from such enterprises considering they are located in Toronto, it is worth noting that, in Waterloo Region, which is closer in size and demographics to Guelph, sales of produce made up 24% of the budget for Waterloo Region Neighbourhood Markets in 2007 (Region of Waterloo Public Health, 2008, p. 17).

While some organisations, such as Waterloo Region Neighbourhood Markets, seemed to have a fairly simple funding model, with funding coming from 3 main sources (sales of produce, the Region of Waterloo Public Health, and a foundation grant), for most organisations the funding formula appeared more complex and varied. In the case of Food 4 All, for example, the initiation and continuing success of the program was attributed to support from over 15 different government, foundation and corporate funders as well as membership fees. Their list of supporters, which includes such varied sources as Kraft Canada, The Ontario Association of Food Banks, local District School Boards and the United Way, demonstrates that, in some cases, initiatives require the involvement of a great variety of organisations and funding sources.

#### *Facilities and Infrastructure*

A critical issue identified in the Survey of Guelph Emergency Food Programs put together by the United Way was the question of facilities and infrastructure required for effective emergency food services. In part because it is seen as a useful means of addressing this challenge, the community food hub model (including hub-style emergency food distribution centres) has been advocated by the Metcalf Foundation, as well as community-based organizations in, for example, the Greater Toronto Area, Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, London, and Sudbury (The Metcalf Foundation, 2010a).

In addition to a well-known emergency food distribution centre (based on the hub model) in Waterloo Region, smaller communities such as Cobourg have also implemented similar initiatives with great success. In the case of Cobourg, Food 4 All manages an emergency food warehouse and distribution centre that is accessed by 170 different community groups of different stripes. The warehouse distributes items to member agencies throughout Northumberland County (Food 4 All, 2010). Food 4 All is responsible for the distribution of food products to member groups depending on their reported hunger



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count numbers. It is worth noting that any non-profit within Northumberland County can apply to be a member agency of Food 4 All (Food 4 All, 2010).

While the hub-style emergency food distribution centres in Waterloo Region and Cobourg maintain a relatively narrow focus on meeting basic emergency food service needs (i.e. storage and distribution), The Stop in Toronto has developed a more holistic approach. Although it began as a food bank, The Stop has been able to gradually build new infrastructure and expand into the provision of a variety of food-related services, including the production of healthy organic produce, public education and community development (The Stop Community Food Centre, 2008). Additionally, The Stop's Good Food Market offers low-cost food in collaboration with FoodShare Toronto, which, as previously noted, obtains food from local sources whenever possible by purchasing food directly from Ontario farmers and at the Ontario Food Terminal (The Metcalf Foundation, 2010a).

### *Human Resources (Staffing and Volunteers)*

Regardless of what model they are based on, emergency food services tend to be highly dependent on volunteer labour to run effectively. For example, volunteers are indispensable in the functioning of the Food Bank of Waterloo Region where, in 2008, 1875 volunteers provided 21 240 hours of service to the organization (The Food Bank of Waterloo Region, 2009). In the case of the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, in 2009-2010 volunteers contributed approximately 106 000 hours of labour. According to the Community Food Bank, this volunteer service is approximately equivalent to 50 full time employees or 37% of their total workforce (Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, 2010, p.2).

Considering the integral role that volunteers play, the organisations assessed employ a number of strategies to maintain a steady and reliable network of volunteers. These tactics include, but are not limited to lunches, volunteer training, volunteer appreciation events and service awards. At The Stop for example, volunteer compensation includes a food voucher system that allows volunteers to access healthy food at The Stop's Good Food Market (The Metcalf Foundation, 2010a). In addition to employing 30 staff members, The Stop manages a network of hundreds of volunteers. In 2009, 409 volunteers spent nearly 20,000 hours contributing to the organization's various programs. The vast majority (300) of these volunteers were low-income community members who received valuable skills training and work experience (The Metcalf Foundation, 2010a). The food voucher system allows volunteers to literally put food on the table while gaining valuable and transferable work experience. The Stop's Board of Directors is also volunteer-run, and is responsible for both the financial viability and the policies implemented by the organization.

### **Theme 3: Food Supply and Quality**

One of the primary problems with food bank donations generally, and something identified as an issue by the Survey of Guelph Emergency Food Programs, is a lack of fresh, healthy food supplies for emergency food recipients. The initiatives reviewed provide a number of key examples of programs that are attempting to address issues of food supply and/or quality in creative, innovative ways. In order to address the concern of overall availability of food, three programs (Food 4 All, Food Bank of Waterloo Region and The Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona) have pursued a hub and spoke distribution model for emergency food. This means that they serve as a central storage and distribution centre for smaller food banks or pantries.

One benefit of this model is reduced expenses due to cost-sharing for storage space and transportation equipment, as well as bulk purchasing. In addition, these hub-based emergency food distributors are able to commit a significant amount of time to acquiring food donations and creating relationships with grocery stores, or other corporate or government partners. Food 4 All and the Food Bank of Waterloo Region are specifically relevant models for the Guelph context, as they demonstrate that this type of model is feasible within Ontario and in towns similar in size to Guelph. As centres which focus exclusively on distribution for smaller food banks or pantries, these hubs have the additional advantage of being able to distribute food fairly among partner organisations without conflict of interest in trying to serve their own populations. It is worth noting that both of these initiatives are members of the Ontario Food Banks Association.

Beyond simply the quantity of food available, a number of initiatives in Guelph-Wellington (e.g. community gardens run by neighbourhood groups, subsidized Garden Fresh Boxes) are designed to address the problem of *fresh* food availability,



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and many communities around the country are seeking to move in the same direction. The local fresh food programs available to food insecure community members in Peterborough serve as an important example of a collection of programs to improve the availability of fresh food. Programs include a Local Economic Trading System (LETS) wherein goods and services can be bartered and exchanged for green dollars (and Canadian dollars) and used to buy local vegetables, meats, breads, and baked goods. Peterborough also has a gleaning system that involves buses, paid for by religious organizations, bringing community members to farms where leftover harvests are available to be picked (Peterborough County-City Health Unit, 2010). Collective kitchens meet monthly and community members are invited to plan and cook three to five meals, which they are allowed to take home free of charge. Peterborough has also implemented a fresh produce box program similar to Guelph's Garden Fresh Box. This broad-based approach is an example of ways that healthier food can be made more accessible, or at least more affordable, for those in need of emergency food in Peterborough.

In Thunder Bay, a similar network of programs exists (including a Good Food Box program, community kitchens, and gleaning), which helps to provide access to fresh food through the cold months in this northern region (Thunder Bay District Health Unit, n.d.). Referred to collectively as The Food Action Network, these programs are run by a wide variety of organizations seeking to improve access to affordable and healthy food (n.d.). Additionally, Thunder Bay promotes a plant-a-row grow-a-row program, in which local gardeners are encouraged to donate a row of vegetables to their local food bank or other food action programs. Finally, the Food Action Network also implements a healthy school meal and snack program that ensures school children have access to a nutritious breakfast and snack to fuel their education (Thunder Bay District Health Unit, n.d.).

Looking back to The Stop in Toronto, urban agriculture is being incorporated in such a way that it provides both education and emergency food to vulnerable community members. The organization's combined sites yield more than 4,000 pounds of fresh organic produce for its programs, while also offering community members the opportunity to learn how to grow fresh foods year round in a sustainable way (The Stop, n.d.). Similarly, Toronto's FoodShare distributed 4,000 monthly boxes to 200 neighbourhood drop-off centres in 2003, buying nutritious fresh fruit and vegetables from local farmers and the Ontario Food Terminal (FoodShare, n.d.). FoodShare buys local Ontario food whenever possible and subsidizes distribution overheads, leaving the consumer with a reduced cost for fresh food.

Another method that the organisations surveyed have employed to improve access to fresh food for low income community members is through neighbourhood markets in or near low income neighbourhoods. Although there are a number of potential approaches to running community markets, Waterloo Region Neighbourhood Markets and FoodShare's Good Food Markets provide two promising examples. In the case of FoodShare's Good Food Markets, bulk purchasing and subsidies allow the markets to sell produce at reduced rates for community members. While bulk purchasing, volunteer labour and donated resources help keep costs low, the Waterloo Region Neighbourhood Markets also employ a voucher system that provides low income community members with vouchers to assist them in purchasing items from the markets.

### Theme 4: Accessibility and Eligibility

#### *Accessibility*

Particularly in rural areas, the (in)accessibility of emergency food services has been identified as a problem. Food deserts remain a prevalent problem in Southern Ontario, as many residents are unable to access grocery stores where fresh foods are available (The Metcalf Foundation, 2008). A relevant and ongoing project that may help alleviate this problem is the previously mentioned institution of neighbourhood markets in Waterloo Region. These markets specifically target community members with limited access to fresh food (Region of Waterloo Health, 2008). A significant challenge identified by the Region of Waterloo Public Health after reviewing similar initiatives in other areas was the difficulty of maintaining economically self-sustaining markets in low-income areas with limited revenue (2008). A review of this project, which was managed by Waterloo Region Public Health, led to a series of recommendations, including: seeking additional partnerships with public institutions and business to improve local market viability; more thorough tracking to assess whether revenues would cover the subsequent year's produce; strengthening ties with more well-established regional



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farmers' markets, and; seeking funding for an organization that could continue to foster the establishment and maintenance of neighbourhood markets (Region of Waterloo Public Health, 2008). In addition to addressing issues of food availability, the aforementioned hub and spoke model of emergency food distribution employed by Food 4 All and the Food Bank of Waterloo Region also help to address problems of accessibility. This is due to the fact that, by serving as distribution centres to smaller food banks and pantries in specific communities, these programs help to reduce distances that community members have to travel in order to access emergency food.

### *Eligibility*

Eligibility requirements are a way to ensure that the community members most in need of support are able to access a portion of the limited emergency supplies available. In the case of The Stop, applicants must provide an ID card with their name and address, as well as an ID for anyone else sharing the food. For the Stop, these relatively simple requirements are part of the organization's philosophy of ensuring that emergency food recipients are treated with dignity.

For some organisations, the use of self-help models such as cooperative buying systems, collective kitchens and community gardens are employed in order to deal with issues of eligibility. For organisations like FoodShare, such self-help approaches can remove the shame and stigma that individuals experience when accessing emergency food. In addition, these approaches are highlighted for their capacity to address short term issues of hunger while also working to provide longer term sustainable solutions to hunger (FoodShare, n.d.2).

### **Summary**

This report sought to present a number of organizations, initiatives and ideas that are relevant for the provision of emergency food services, with a focus on experiences that have been identified as particularly successful or innovative. Based on these 'best practice' experiences, a number of conclusions can be drawn:

- In Ontario, regional public health units have been the most common organization to spearhead effective and innovative initiatives that take a broad-based approach to addressing food insecurity. Other important actors include local government and food banks and, to a lesser extent, church groups and other non-profit foundations.
- When it comes to funding, the most important source of support for successful initiatives has been food donations, some but not all of which are obtained through membership in the Ontario Association of Food Banks. Other necessary financial and in-kind support has been secured from government agencies (particularly local level actors, such as public health units and city councils), charitable foundations (notably the Metcalf Foundation, Trillium Foundation and Hallman Foundation), and through profits made by social enterprise and/or special events.
- Funding for staff as well as effective volunteer mobilization and coordination is key for project success. In many cases, volunteers are rewarded with access to services (including the waiving of fees for food program participation), as well as skills-training.
- The food hub model (both the more holistic community food hub, and the emergency food distribution centre) provides a useful framework for maximizing the effectiveness of available facilities and infrastructure, and for minimizing the distance that service users must travel to access emergency food.
- Integrating emergency food services into broader strategies designed to support regional food systems (e.g. community gardens and kitchens, gleaning programs, food skills training, nutrition education) is an effective means of increasing the availability and consumption of fresh, healthy food.

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## 9. APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW AND SURVEY PARTICIPANT LIST

### **Guelph Organizations**

1. Salvation Army
2. St. Vincent de Paul
3. Brant Neighbourhood Group
4. Guelph Food Bank
5. West Willow Woods and Parkwood Gardens Neighbourhood Groups
6. Crestwick Church
7. Chalmers Church
8. New Life Church
9. CSA Food Bank
10. Food and Friends Student Nourishment
11. Garden Fresh Box Program

### **Wellington Organizations**

1. Palmerston Food Bank (interview and survey)
2. Centre Wellington Food Bank (interview and survey)
3. Arthur Food Bank (interview and survey)
4. Mount Forest Community Pantry (interview and survey)
5. Harriston Food Bank (interview and survey)
6. Community Resource Centre of North and Centre Wellington (interview only)
7. East Wellington Community Services (interview only)
8. Drayton Food Bank (survey only)

### **Organizations Active in both Guelph and Wellington**

1. Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health
2. Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County
3. Guelph-Wellington Immigrant Services
4. Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis
5. Guelph-Wellington Local Food

*Total number of participating organizations: 24*



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## 10. APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Please describe briefly the range of activities engaged in by your organization/project that are related, either directly or indirectly, to emergency food provision or improving food security for low income people in Guelph-Wellington.

- In your opinion, what are the most important factors that contribute to your organization's/project's effectiveness? (What you do well)
- In your opinion, what are the most important factors that constrain the success of your activities? (Problems/challenges)

What other emergency food/food security organizations/projects do you currently have a relationship with? (See checklist below)

- Formal partnership/joint projects/collaboration
- Regular communication/information sharing
- Other (e.g. informal resource sharing)

In addition to the constraints already mentioned, what other major problems or gaps in service can you identify with respect to emergency food provision and food security in Guelph-Wellington?

- To the best of your knowledge, what strategies (if any) are currently being employed to address these problems and/or gaps?

Are you aware of any best practice programs and/or projects that exist in other communities that address some of the constraints/challenges/gaps you have identified in the Guelph-Wellington context?

- What organizations were/are involved?
- What additional support was available/provided (e.g. policy, funding, infrastructure)
- Do you think this kind of model could be useful/feasible in Guelph-Wellington?

Are you aware of the food hub concept? (If not, provide brief description)

- What does this concept mean to you?
- Do you think the food hub model could be useful/feasible in Guelph-Wellington?
- What elements/programs/services would you like to see included?
- How would you envision the food gathering and distribution mechanisms? How would decisions about resource sharing/allocation be made?
- What resources/supports would be required? (e.g. policy, funding, infrastructure, staffing, volunteers, food sourcing, transportation)
- How would you envision the governance/decision-making structure/organization of this kind of initiative? (roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders/participating actors – e.g. food banks and pantries, neighbourhood groups, municipal government, churches, etc.)
- Besides storage and distribution, what other elements would you like to see in a food hub initiative in Guelph-Wellington?
- What *specifically* could your organization contribute to the development of this kind of model (e.g. facilities, staffing, volunteers, funding, organizational support, promotion, etc.)
- What other organizations would you like to see involved in a food hub project in Guelph-Wellington and what *specifically* do you think they could offer?
- What steps do you think need to be taken to begin building a food hub initiative?

Do you have any additional suggestions for improving emergency food provision and food security in Guelph-Wellington?



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## Checklist of Organizational Linkages

ORGANIZATION	FORMAL COLLAB	INFO SHARING	OTHER
<b>CITY FOOD BANKS &amp; PANTRIES</b>			
Guelph Food Bank			
CSA Food Bank (University of Guelph)			
Waverly Neighbourhood Group			
Grange Hill East Neighbourhood Group			
West Willow Woods Neighbourhood Group			
Brant Neighbourhood Group			
Two Rivers Neighbourhood Group			
Onward Willow Neighbourhood Group			
Parkwood Gardens Neighbourhood Group			
<b>COUNTY FOOD BANKS &amp; PANTRIES</b>			
Drayton Food Bank			
Harriston Food Bank			
Palmerston Food Bank			
Arthur Food Bank			
Mount Forest Community Pantry			
Clifford Food Bank			
Centre Wellington Food Bank			
<b>CHURCH-BASED PROGRAMS</b>			
Chalmers Community Services Centre			
Holy Rosary Church			
Trinity United Church			
St. Vincent de Paul			
Lakeside Church			



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Salvation Army			
<b>OTHER</b>			
Garden Fresh Box			
Food & Friends Student Nourishment Program			
Teenage Parents Supper Club			
Royal City Church Suppers			
Our Place Youth Centre			
Welcome In Drop-in Centre			
Community Resource Centre			
East Wellington Community Services			
Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health			
Other (please specify)			

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## 11. APPENDIX IV: SURVEY

### Introduction and General Programming Questions

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey on Emergency Food Programs in Guelph and Wellington. This research will help the local community to have a more thorough understanding of the current emergency food situation and help to inform decision for future improvement. The survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

1. Please enter your contact information below (we may request follow up to your survey responses)

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

2. What emergency food program do you run?

Food Bank       Pantry       Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. On average, how many different individuals, including all adults and children, access your emergency food program on a monthly basis? Only count people 1 time, and please estimate if exact number is unknown.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What are the eligibility requirements for accessing your emergency food program?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the physical size of your emergency food program in square feet? Please estimate if exact square footage is unknown.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Would you have any interest in expanding your capacity?

Yes       No       Maybe/ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### Food Questions

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7. How many pounds (lbs) of the following food categories do you give out in total per year? You may use an alternative form of measurement if necessary, but be sure to specify the measurement used. Please estimate to the best of your ability.

Non-perishable (lbs/year) \_\_\_\_\_

Fresh Food (lbs/year) \_\_\_\_\_

Further explanation (if necessary) \_\_\_\_\_

8. How do you receive the food that you distribute? Check all that apply.

- Food Donors
- Buy food with monetary donations
- Receive from other food banks
- Private food donations
- Leftover from stores (grocery stores, markets, restaurants)
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

9. What types of items are available for recipients?

- Vegetables - canned
- Soy beverage
- Vegetables – frozen
- Yoghurt/kefir/cheese
- Vegetables - fresh
- Meat/fish
- Fruit – canned
- Tofu/meat alternative
- Fruit – frozen
- Beans
- Fruit – fresh
- Nuts/seeds
- Breads/bagels/flatbread
- Eggs
- Rice/bulgur/quinoa
- Condiments (salad dressing, ketchup etc)
- Cereal
- Baking products (flour, sugar, baking soda etc)
- Prepared food (soup, Kraft Dinner, meal helpers, etc)
- Snack food/candy
- Milk
- Baby products (diapers, formula etc)

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- Canned milk
- Powdered milk
- Pasta/couscous
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Cleaning products
- Hygiene/personal care products (soap, deodorant, toothpaste etc)

10. What types of items do you need more of to meet recipients' needs/requests/desires?

- Vegetables - canned
- Vegetables – frozen
- Vegetables - fresh
- Fruit – canned
- Fruit – frozen
- Fruit – fresh
- Breads/bagels/flatbread
- Rice/bulgur/quinoa
- Cereal
- Prepared food (soup, Kraft Dinner, meal helpers, etc)
- Milk
- Canned milk
- Powdered milk
- Pasta/couscous
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Soy beverage
- Yoghurt/kefir/cheese
- Meat/fish
- Tofu/meat alternative
- Beans
- Nuts/seeds
- Eggs
- Condiments (salad dressing, ketchup etc)
- Baking products (flour, sugar, baking soda etc)
- Snack food/candy
- Baby products (diapers, formula etc)
- Cleaning products
- Hygiene/personal care products (soap, deodorant, toothpaste etc)

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### Resource Questions

11. What equipment/resources do you currently have to run your emergency food program?

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freezer                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fridge                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shelving                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Storage Space                | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen/Preparation Space    |                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |                                     |

12. What equipment/resources do you need more of to run your emergency food program well?

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freezer                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fridge                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shelving                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Storage Space                | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen/Preparation Space    |                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |                                     |

13. How many paid hours of staffing specifically support your emergency food program per week?  
Please estimate # of paid hours/week if exact number is unknown.

\_\_\_\_\_

14. How many volunteer hours specifically support your emergency food program per week?  
Please estimate # of paid hours/week if exact number is unknown.

\_\_\_\_\_

### Access Questions

15. What days of the week and time of day can recipients pick up food from your emergency food program? Check as many boxes as apply.

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	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							
Only by appointment							

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

16. How much food can a recipient collect at each of the following time periods from your emergency food program? (i.e. nothing, only bread, a few items, 2 days worth of food, a box of food items, etc).

Daily \_\_\_\_\_

Once a week \_\_\_\_\_

Every other week \_\_\_\_\_

Once a month \_\_\_\_\_

Once every 3 months \_\_\_\_\_

Yearly/holidays \_\_\_\_\_

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

17. What do you think are the 5 most significant barriers that people experience in accessing your emergency food program? Please check 5 boxes.

Affordable transportation

Not enough food (quantity)

Transporting food/items

Not enough nutritious food

Location of program

Not enough ethnic food

Days/times of program operation

Not appropriate foods for meal planning

Awareness of program

Not enough prepared foods (lack of food skills)

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- Language barriers
  Not eligible for program  
 Allergies
  Stigma associated with emergency food  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

18. In your estimation, what percentage of people use each form of transportation to pick up their food from your program and take it home?

	No idea	0% (no one)	1-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81-100%
Walk							
Bike							
Bus							
Personal vehicle							
Taxi							
None – the items are delivered to their home							
Other							

19. In your estimation, what percentage of people come from within the neighbourhood where your emergency food program exists versus outside of the neighbourhood?

	No idea	0% (no one)	1-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81-100%
Within neighbourhood							



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Outside of neighbourhood							
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### Open Ended Questions

20. From your perspective, what are the main strengths of your emergency food program?

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21. From your perspective, what are the main weaknesses of your emergency food program?

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22. From your perspective, what are the main strengths of the emergency food system in Guelph and Wellington? What is working well?

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23. From your perspective, what are the main weaknesses of the emergency food system in Guelph and Wellington? What is not working well?

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24. From your perspective, what is the most important change/improvement that could be made to help reduce food insecurity in Guelph and Wellington? What resources would you need to do this?

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**Thank you for completing the survey!**

25. If you have any additional comments/questions, please write them below.

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