"know what's out there!"

Clients' interest in purchasing low-cost staple products at the Venture Centre Marketplace, and suggested prices

Prepared for

Good Shepherd Venture Centre Marketplace

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Background

The Good Shepherd Venture Centre Marketplace provides emergency food and clothing services to those in need in the Hamilton community, serving 5,500 to 5,800 people on a monthly basis. The Venture Centre primarily relies on donations for their product offerings; as such, many staple items including meat, dairy, and produce, as well as household items, are not regularly available to clients. The Venture Centre is considering selling these products at or below wholesale costs in order to improve clients' abilities to access these staple food and non-food items. The Good Shepherd enlisted the help of the McMaster Research Shop to conduct a survey assessing clients' interest in and willingness to pay for this possible new service at the Venture Centre.

Methods, measures, and limitations

A group of five student volunteers from the McMaster Research administered a survey at the Venture Centre to collect data for this project. As clients arrived in the Venture Centre waiting area, a volunteer approached them to ask if they would like to participate in the survey. Volunteers advised clients that filling out the survey would not interfere with their shopping time, and that they could either fill it out themselves or with the assistance of one of the volunteers. Research Shop volunteers analyzed 90 surveys in total.

On the survey, food items were listed in a chart format with a check box beside each item, where the participant could indicate whether or not they would be interested in purchasing each individual item. Participants were also asked how much they would pay for each item. The survey additionally included questions about preferred payment methods, housing costs, income, and demographics.

The survey has some important limitations. Clients whose preferred language was not English were less likely to participate in the survey, and all clients who were offered phone translation services declined this option. Only 3% of participants reported following a Halal diet, and so the preferences and needs of clients who follow a Halal diet are not represented in our results. Clients who were strongly opposed to the idea of the pilot also declined to fill out the survey, meaning their voices are also not represented in the survey results.

Findings

Of the 90 clients who completed the survey, 61% were female and 39% were male. 23% were born outside of Canada, and 71% receive social assistance.

Participants were interested in the option of purchasing fresh food at the Venture Centre: 85 participants were interested in buying eggs, with most choosing $2 per dozen as their preferred price; 84 were interested in fresh fruit, with $1/lb as the most commonly chosen price; and 80 would buy milk, with $2 per 2L as the most commonly chosen price. Fresh vegetables and meat were also popular choices. Many participants were also interested in purchasing low-cost household goods, most notably toilet paper, laundry soap, and dish soap.

Conclusions and recommendations

Venture Centre clients expressed a high interest in the opportunity to purchase fresh foods and household goods for low prices at the Venture Centre.

We recommend that, if the Venture Centre proceeds with this pilot, they expect fluctuations in clients' abilities to purchase items. Therefore, actual uptake may not reflect the level of interest seen in this survey. We also recommend engaging with clients from groups under-represented in our survey, including English language learners and clients who follow a Halal diet, in order to assess purchasing preferences in these groups. Lastly, we encourage the Venture Centre document and evaluate this novel program. Collecting and sharing this data could allow other service providers to assess the feasibility of developing similar programs.

Introduction

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal of "Zero Hunger" states that the world should work to eliminate hunger, improve nutrition, and achieve food security for all by 2030 (United Nations, 2018). Yet, over 12,600 individuals in Hamilton, Ontario alone require the services of a food bank on a monthly basis (Hamilton Food Share, 2018).

While food banks provide an important emergency food option, clients may still be unable to meet their dietary needs. A 2007 study of Canadians receiving food hamper donations found that the non-perishable items donated to families within the hampers were unable to provide even three days' worth of nutrients, highlighting the importance of supporting access to perishable and nutritious food items for low-income individuals (Irwin, Ng, Rush, Nguyen, & He, 2007). High cost, healthy foods, including perishable items (i.e., meat, dairy, eggs, fresh fruit and vegetables), are much less likely to be donated, in comparison to non-perishable, low-cost items. This may be a barrier to maintaining an adequate diet, especially for individuals who have religious and/or health-related dietary restrictions. Additionally, culturally-relevant foods and common household items, such as toilet paper and cleaning products, may be inaccessible to food bank clients based on a lack of donations.

The Good Shepherd Venture Centre Marketplace provides emergency food and clothing services to those in need in the Hamilton community, serving 5,500 to 5,800 people on a monthly basis. The Venture Centre relies largely on community members and local businesses to stock its shelves. The Venture Centre is aiming to bridge the gap between need and supply by procuring high demand items and allowing clients to purchase them at wholesale prices. This model would allow for greater sustainability and the ability for individuals to access items that are not readily available by donation (McCullum, Desjardins, Kraak, Ladipo, & Costello, 2005). The Good Shepherd enlisted the help of the McMaster Research Shop, a group of research volunteers affiliated with McMaster University, to conduct a survey assessing clients' interest in this possible new service at the Venture Centre.

Background: food insecurity in Canada

Household food insecurity is defined as a household having inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial limitations (Tarasuk, 2017). The average Canadian family spends around $7035 on food per year, with food only making up approximately 10% of the household's expenditures. In comparison, households in the poorest 20% of the population spend around $3870.00 on food a year, with food comprising approximately 17% of the household's expenditures (Kerstetter, 2009). In 2015, buying healthy food for a family of four in Hamilton was estimated to cost $827 each month (City of Hamilton, 2018). Beyond food costs, housing costs also play an important role in driving food insecurity. A survey in Toronto found that among families that spend over 30% of their income on housing, 61.4% experienced food insecurity (Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk, 2011). Poverty is the root cause of food insecurity, and it must be addressed to ensure that nutritious food is economically accessible (Hamilton Food Share, 2018; City of Hamilton, 2018).

Prevalence and risk factors

Approximately 1 in 8 households in Ontario are affected by food insecurity (Hamilton Food Share, 2018). Food insecurity increases if the household is headed by individuals who do not have a high school education and/or post-secondary diploma or degree, or by individuals who hold low wage jobs, part time jobs, and/or multiple jobs (Tarasuk, 2017). Households headed by individuals who receive social assistance are also at a higher risk for food insecurity. 62.7% of households receiving social assistance reported food insecurity in 2014 (Tarasuk, 2017). There have been mixed findings as to whether recent immigrants have an increased risk of food insecurity; some studies have found that recent immigrants experience similar or lower levels of food insecurity than the general population (Tarasuk, 2017), but other data suggests that recent immigrants are at a higher risk (Health Canada, 2012). Indigenous people, including those living off-reserve, are consistently found to have a higher risk of food insecurity than non-Indigenous Canadians (Health Canada, 2012). While income is a major determinant of food insecurity, there is not always a direct correlation between household income and household food security. Not all low-income families face food insecurity and not all higher income families are food secure (Tarasuk, 2017).

Physical and mental health consequences

Research has shown that experiencing food insecurity may have negative effects on both physical and mental health (Tarasuk et al, 2018; Tarasuk et al., 2015; Hamelin & Hamel, 2009). A recent cross-sectional study of 90,368 adults in Ontario found that food insecurity was associated with early mortality, with those experiencing the most severe levels of food insecurity at the greatest risk (Gundersen et al, 2018). Food insecurity may also increase individuals' risk of chronic health conditions (Tarasuk, 2017). Asthma, migraines, heart disease, mood disorders, anxiety, bowel disorders, and hypertension are all more common among individuals experiencing food insecurity, as is experiencing multiple chronic conditions at once (PROOF: Food Insecurity Policy Research, 2016). Food insecurity can also affect individuals' ability to manage chronic health conditions. For example, an individual who is HIV positive may be required to increase their protein and energy food intake, but may not be able to access the food required to do so (PROOF: Food Insecurity Policy Research, 2019). Moreover, one in three mental health-related hospital admissions concern an individual who is experiencing food insecurity (Tarasuk et al, 2018).

Innovative approaches

Food banks are increasingly called on to address chronic, rather than transitory, food insecurity (Greater Vancouver Food Bank, 2016). This poses new challenges: research consistently shows that, despite dedicated effort, food banks are unable to meet clients' ongoing needs for nutritious and culturally appropriate food (Bazerghi, McKay, & Dunn, 2016).

In response to unmet needs, organizations have attempted to replace or supplement food banks with innovative approaches. Some food banks began to decline donations of unhealthy products like soda or candy in the early 2000s (Campbell et al, 2015). Other food banks, including the Venture Centre, have implemented a marketplace model where clients choose food rather than receiving a pre-packed hamper. This approach recognizes that food bank clients prefer healthy and culturally relevant food (Campbell et al, 2011), and will choose these options if available. However, increasing choice may not be sufficient to improve the nutritional adequacy of food received, due largely to limitations in the donated supply (Mukoya, Mckay, & Dunn, 2017). Regardless, choice over food selection can contribute to a greater sense of dignity and empowerment (Greater Vancouver Food Bank, 2016).

Other approaches move beyond emergency donated food to address these issues. Toronto's FoodShare Good Food program aims to increase access to affordable, culturally-relevant produce through distributing low-cost "Good Food Boxes" and supporting "Good Food Markets." An evaluation of the Good Food program found that participants increased their consumption of fruits and vegetables, and that the program helped them to save money (FoodShare, 2018). This suggests that programs offering staple products at reduced prices can create tangible benefits for participants. However, based on our search of the literature, we were unable to find any studies examining the effectiveness of selling low-cost products in a food bank setting. Thus, the program proposed by the Venture Centre appears to be a novel approach to increase emergency food service users' access to nutritionally adequate and culturally appropriate food.

Methods

McMaster Research Shop volunteers designed a 40-item survey that assessed participants' interest in purchasing 24 food and household items at the Venture Centre, and how much participants would be willing to pay for these items (from three pricing estimates). The survey provided examples of retail costs for these items of a given quantity, which were obtained based on site visits to a low-cost grocery store and a dollar store, to better inform the participants' choices. Volunteers used visual aids to provide a representation of specific food items and to demonstrate what the given quantity would like look (for example, an image of 1lb of meat or 1lb of fruit). The survey also asked participants to optionally list three additional items that they would be interested in purchasing from the Venture Centre and to list the prices that they would be willing to purchase these items at. Additionally, the survey included questions about demographic information, dietary restrictions and other food services they accessed, housing, and preferred payment method. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix 1.

Two weeks prior to the survey, the Venture Centre posted flyers informing clients that the research would be taking place. Volunteers conducted the research on March 11, 2019 from 9:00-3:00, March 13 from 12:30-3:00, and March 15 from 9:00-3:00. On each day, two Research Shop volunteers approached clients in the Venture Centre waiting room and asked if they were interested in completing the survey. Volunteers offered participants the choice of completing the survey either in the waiting room or in a private location, as well as on their own or with the assistance of the volunteer. Volunteers only surveyed clients who reported being 18 years old and over. As the survey was in English, when applicable, volunteers offered participants phone-based translation services. However, all participants declined use of the translation service. Participants provided verbal consent to complete the survey and were instructed that they could skip any questions that they did not feel comfortable answering or withdraw their consent at any time. Participants were advised that they would receive a $5 Tim Hortons gift card as an incentive for completing the survey.

96 Venture Centre clients took part over the three-day period. Of the 96 surveys, we excluded six excluded due to the participant responding to less than half of the survey questions. Therefore, we analyzed a total of 90 participant surveys.

The survey asked participants to provide any comments or feedback that they had regarding on the Venture Centre program. The survey also asked if they would be inclined to participate in a survey of this nature again, having participated in the current survey. 79 participants (88%) responded to this question; of these 79 participants, 92% stated they would take a similar survey, 3% stated that they would not, and 5% were unsure. Finally, the survey asked participants to provide any comments/feedback they had on the survey itself. See Appendix 2 for participant feedback. Appendix 3 lists additional concerns and recommendations that participants stated verbally to volunteers, which we did not formally record in our data collection process.

Limitations

There are several limitations that should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of this survey.

First, language barriers made it difficult to include clients who preferred a language other than English. While volunteers offered participants phone translation, no participants chose to use it. As a result, the data collected only represents the responses of food bank users who felt comfortable speaking to volunteers in English; therefore, other groups including newcomers may be under-represented in the survey. This language barrier likely also led to an under-representation of participants who follow a Halal diet, since many recent newcomers to Hamilton, who may not yet be comfortable communicating in English, come from predominantly Muslim countries (Social Planning and Research Council, 2017).

Another limitation we encountered was that Venture Centre clients were more likely to participate in the survey if they supported the idea of Good Shepherd selling low-cost foods and household items at the Venture Centre. A few clients expressed strong opposition to the idea of paying for foods and household goods at the Venture Centre when approached by volunteers. These clients declined to fill out the survey. The voices of these clients are therefore not represented in the survey, and results should be interpreted with this bias in mind.

Additionally, some Venture Centre clients may not have understood all questions in the way the volunteers intended. For instance, it is unclear whether some participants were familiar with products like Halal meat or gluten-free foods. A few food bank users sought clarification, but many answered “yes” when asked if they would purchase these goods, despite not having any dietary restrictions. In this case, it becomes unclear if they would in fact buy these products at the Venture Centre (it is possible participants may be interested in purchasing these products for members of their household with dietary restrictions). The survey also did not provide participants with the option to indicate that they had no dietary restrictions, making it difficult to draw inferences as to how many of the participants had no restrictions and how many had simply skipped the question.

Finally, another limitation pertains to the comparative prices listed on the survey. We based these prices on in-store prices at Food Basics, No Frills, and Dollarama in Hamilton. However, many participants expressed that the price range listed was higher than the prices they typically pay for foods or household products. Hence, in some cases, participants stated that the lowest price option on the survey was too high, indicating that they may be finding lower prices elsewhere. As well, fruit and vegetable prices would be subject to seasonal price fluctuations; grocery store visits were conducted in winter when prices are typically at their highest.

Results

Research Shop volunteers entered all data into an Excel spreadsheet. We calculated measures of frequency or central tendency (i.e., mean, median, mode) for each question based on data collected from 90 surveys. The data is presented in chart, graph, and narrative format in the results section below.

About the participants in this survey

Demographics

90 participants fully completed the survey. 61% were female and 39% were male; no participants self-identified as any other gender. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 74, with an average age of 45. 21 participants, or 23% of those who filled out the survey, were born outside of Canada. Participants born outside of Canada had been in the country for an average of 16 years; half had been in Canada for 8 years or less. Participants were born in the following countries: Azores, Bahamas, Colombia, Egypt, El Salvador, Germany, Hungary, India, Iraq, Nigeria, St. Lucia, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela, Vietnam, and Somalia. The largest proportion of participants born outside of Canada were from Latin American and Caribbean countries, accounting for 8 of these 21 participants.

Chart 1: Gender

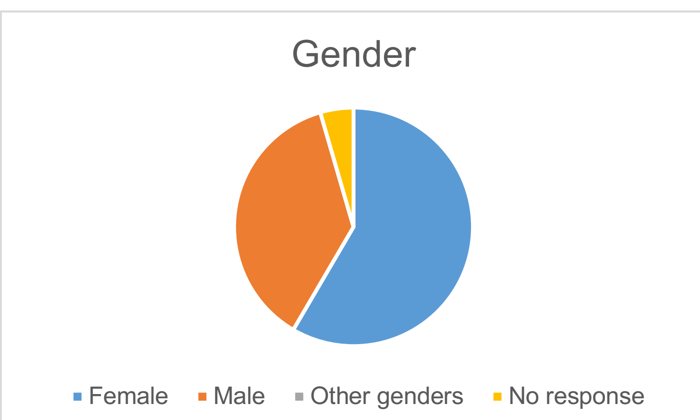
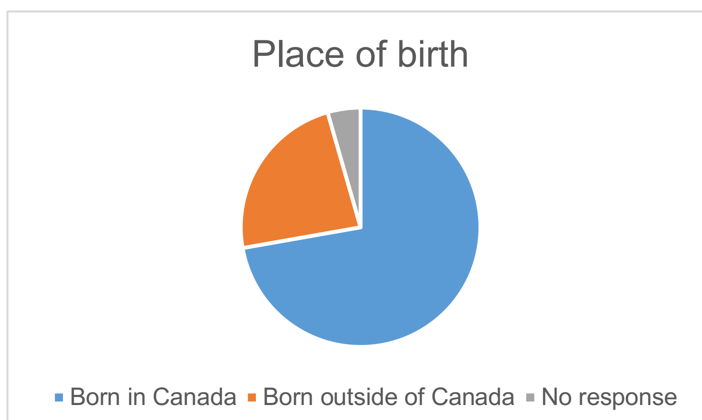


Chart 2: Place of birth



Food needs

More than half of participants reported accessing multiple food banks to meet their nutritional needs. 41% of participants reported having at least one dietary restriction. The most commonly reported restriction was diabetes (11%). Only 3% reported following a Halal diet[1].

Housing

76% of participants reported renting market-rent homes, and a further 9% reported renting subsidized housing. Average housing costs were $795/month, with half of the participants paying more than $733 per month. 65% of participants reported that their housing costs include some utilities.

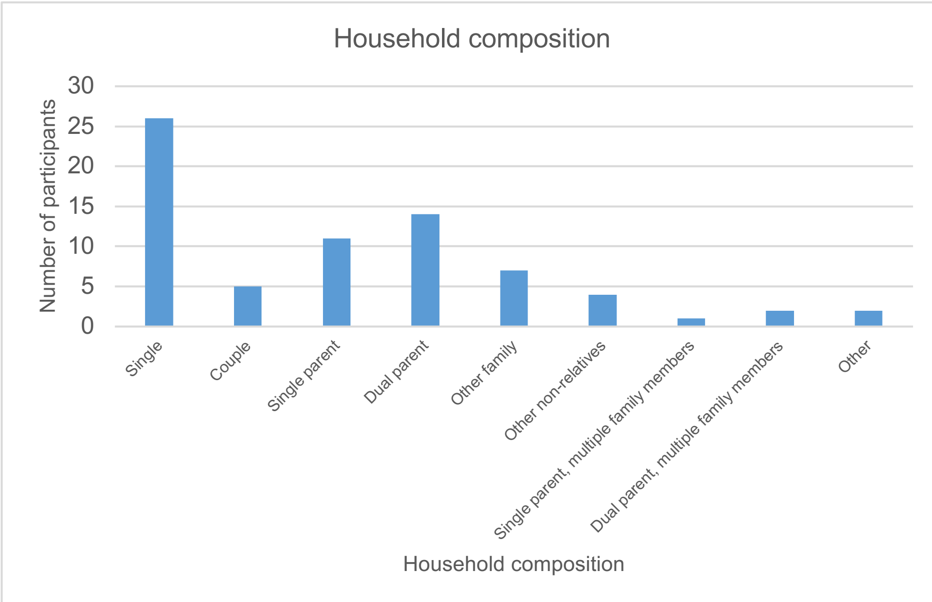
Chart 3: Housing costs

Household composition

Almost one third of participants in the survey have children under the age of 18. This includes the 13% of participants who are single parents. Both single and dual parent households have an average of 2 children. 29% of participants live alone, and other participants live with a partner, with other family members, or with non-relatives like roommates or friends.

[1] The low number of participants reporting a Halal diet likely reflects our difficulty engaging participants who were English language learners, since as mentioned above Hamilton has recently become home to many newcomers from predominantly Muslim countries.

Chart 4: Household composition



Income

76% of participants receive some form of social assistance. 21% are employed. This includes the 7% of participants who reporting having income both from employment and from social assistance. 71% of participants reported that their yearly household income is $20,000 or less.

Chart 5: Income source

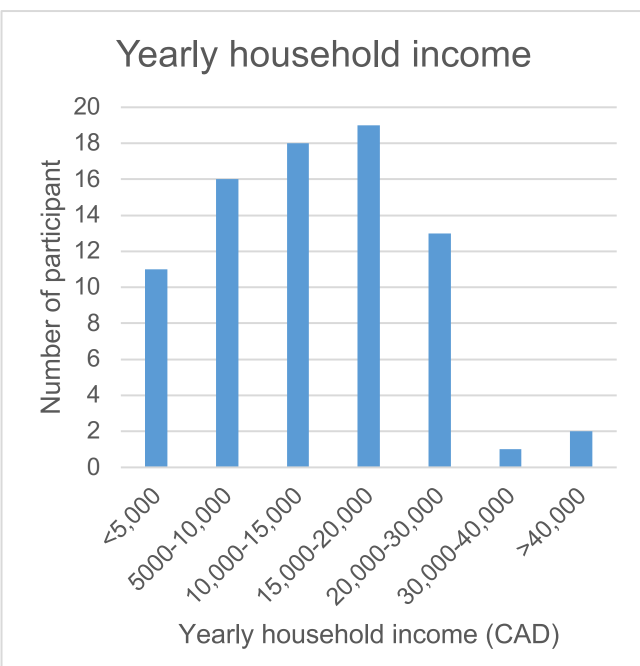
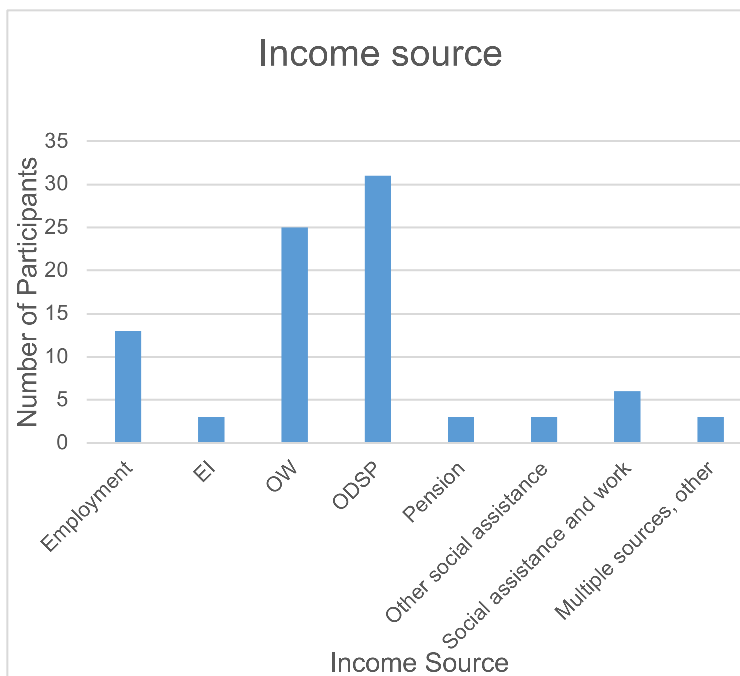


Chart 6: Income source



Purchasing preferences

Food Items

The following table lists the food items in which participants expressed interest, in order from highest to lowest number of interested clients. The table also includes suggested prices and the percentage of interested participants choosing each price, with the most commonly selected price displayed in bold.

Table 1: Food item purchasing preferences

Food Item	**Number of participants indicating interest**	**Price 1 and % participants**	**Price 2 and % participants**	**Price 3 and % participants**
Eggs (I dozen)	85	**$2: 42.4%**	$1: 36.5%	$0.5: 21.2%
Fruit (1lb)	84	$2: 32.1	**$1: 44.0**	$0.5: 23.8
Milk (2L)	80	$4: 20.0	$3: 28.8	**$2: 51.3**
Vegetables (1lb)	78	$2: 32.1	**$1: 43.6**	$0.5: 24.4
Meat (1lb)	78	$4: 32.1	**$3: 34.6**	$2: 33.3
Spices	77	**$1: 48.1**	$0.5: 28.6	$0.25: 23.4
Cooking oil (1L)	73	**$2: 42.5**	$1: 30.1	$0.5: 27.4
Frozen meals	65	$3: 29.2	$2: 27.7	**$1: 43.1**
School snacks	60	**$2: 36.7**	$1: 31.7	$0.5: 31.7
Diabetic juice	33	$3: 21.2	$2: 30.3	**$1: 48.5**
Halal Meat (1lb)	27	$4: 18.5	$3: 37.0	**$2: 44.4**
Gluten-free bread	24	$4: 8.3	$3: 20.8	**$2: 70.8**
Lactose free milk	24	$4: 25	$3: 33.3	**$2: 41.7**
Gluten-free pasta	21	$3: 9.5	**$2: 90.5**	$1: 0

The five items that participants were most interested in would all be considered fresh food, and are items which are typically not offered in traditional food banks. 85 participants were interested in eggs, followed closely by fresh fruit (84 participants), and then milk (80 participants), fresh vegetables (78 participants), and meat (78 participants). The items with significantly less interest (fewer than 30 participants expressing interest) were Halal meat[2], gluten free bread, lactose free milk, and gluten free pasta.

Participants varied in terms of how much they would be willing to pay for the items described above. 42% of participants who expressed interest in eggs were willing to pay the highest price listed on the survey ($2.00 for one dozen), while 37% were willing to pay $1 and 21% were willing to pay $0.50. 44% of participants who expressed interest in fresh fruit were willing to pay $1.00/lb, the middle price suggested on the survey. Just over half of participants (51%) who expressed interest in milk were willing to pay the lowest price suggested ($2.00/2L). 44% of participants who expressed interest in fresh vegetables were willing to pay the middle price ($1.00/lb). Finally, 35% of participants who expressed interest in meat were willing to pay the middle price ($3.00/lb); however, responses in this in this category were almost evenly split as around 30% of participants chose each price option.

Non-food Items

The following table lists the non-food items in which participants expressed interest, in order from highest to lowest number of interested clients. The table also includes suggested prices and the percentage of interested participants choosing each price, with the most commonly selected price displayed in bold.

Table 2: Non-food item purchasing preferences

Food Item	**Number of participants indicating interest**	**Price 1 and % participants**	**Price 2 and % participants**
Toilet Paper	82	**$2: 51.2%**	$1: 48.8%
Laundry Soap	80	**$2: 63.8**	$1: 36.3
Dish Soap	80	$2: 30	**$1: 70**
Garbage Bags	78	$2: 38.5	**$1: 61.5**
Paper Towel	77	$2: 41.6	**$1: 58.4**
Kleenex	76	$1: 48.7	**$0.5: 51.3**
Cleaning Products	75	$2: 49.3	**$1: 50.7**
Food Storage	64	$2: 28.1	**$1: 71.9**
Sponges	64	**$0.5: 54.7**	$0.25: 45.3
Pet Products	50	**$1: 60**	$0.5: 40

[2] Low interest in Halal meat likely reflects our survey limitations as discussed above.

The top three items (with at least 80 participants expressing interested) were toilet paper, laundry soap, and dish soap. Participants were typically willing to pay the higher price for both toilet paper ($2.00) and laundry soap ($2.00). For the third most popular item, dish soap, most participants (70%) were only willing to pay the lower price ($1.00).

Other requested items

Participants provided a diverse range of responses when asked if there are any other products that they would be interested in purchasing at the Venture Centre. The most common responses are listed below. See Appendix 4 to view the full list of items that participants suggested as items they would be interested in purchasing at a cost below the retail price.

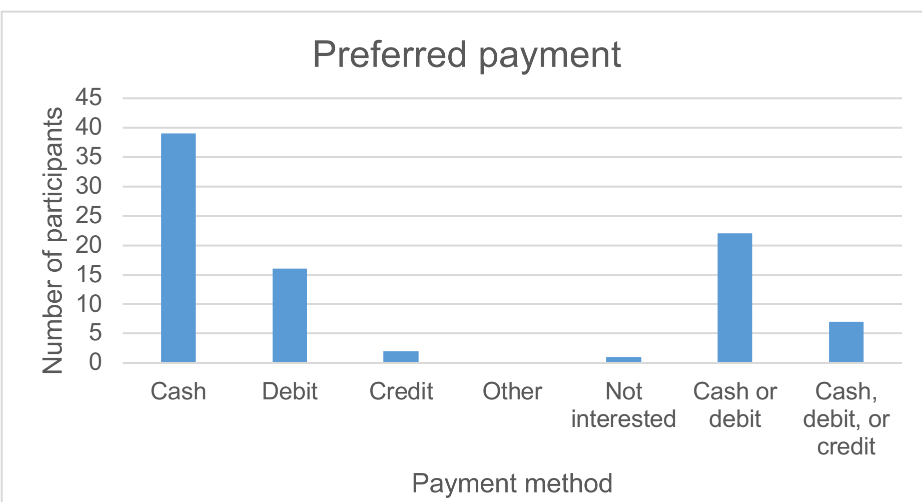
Table 3: Additional requested items

Item	**Number of participants**
Cheese	5
Bread	5

Preferred method of payment

The largest proportion of participants stated that they would prefer to pay in cash, followed by debit, then cash or debit.

Chart 7: Preferred method of payment



Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the results of this survey, Venture Centre clients are highly interested in purchasing food and household items for prices lower than the average retail price. Clients appeared most highly interested in fresh products such as eggs, milk, fruit, vegetables, and meat. Participants expressed willingness to pay $2 per dozen eggs, $1 per pound for fruit and vegetables, $2 per two litres of milk, and $3 per pound of meat. The relationship of these prices to retail prices vary: $2 approaches the retail cost of a dozen eggs but is substantially below the cost of a two-litre carton of milk in a grocery store. Participants also expressed interest in purchasing daily necessities like toilet paper, laundry soap, and dish soap. These are items that can be costly in store; participants stated that they would pay $2 for toilet paper and laundry soap, and $1 for dish soap. While $2 is close to the cost of six rolls of toilet paper or a one-litre container of laundry soap at a dollar store, participants' chosen price for dish soap was much lower than retail costs.

Our survey has some important limitations. First, while interest was high, there will likely be fluctuations in clients' ability to purchase items. Responses to a hypothetical scenario are not necessarily predictive of actual behaviour, especially when different factors come into play. For example, clients may be more likely to purchase items in the week coinciding with the depositing of their Ontario Works or ODSP payments, an important factor given that nearly three quarters of the survey participants receive social assistance. Likewise, given that 85% of participants rent their home, they may be less likely to purchase items in the week that their rent is due.

A second important limitation concerns the representativeness of those who participated in the survey. Our survey does not represent clients who were opposed to the idea and declined to participate. Additionally, no participants were willing to use the translation services, and as a result our survey does not fully represent the diversity of Venture Centre clients. Only 3% of participants reported following a Halal diet; the largest proportion of the 21 newcomers who responded to the survey were from Latin American and Caribbean countries, while more recent newcomers to Hamilton are more likely to be from Asia and the Middle East (Social Planning and Research Council, 2016). Therefore, our data may underestimate or overestimate the demand for some products–in particular, Halal meat, as well as other culturally relevant foods.

Moving forward, the Venture Centre could address the lack of representation of recent newcomers through targeted engagement with clients from under-represented groups to assess the products and prices that these members would prefer. This may provide a more complete picture of staple items that Venture Centre clients would choose to purchase. We also recommend the Venture Centre plan for handling fluctuating demand, especially for perishable products including produce, milk, and meat.

Moreover, a search of academic literature and community organization reports did not reveal any evaluations of programs similar to what the Venture Centre has proposed. As such, we highly recommend that if the Venture Centre chooses to pilot this program, they document the process including planning, implementation, successes, and challenges. It is also important that the program's effectiveness is evaluated in terms of cost, sustainability, and client feedback. Assessing demographics and purchasing patterns of clients who participate, as well as experiences with the program and their perspectives on it, could help to ensure a tailored and effective program. Moreover, collecting and sharing this data could allow other service providers assess the feasibility of developing similar programs.

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Appendix 1: Survey

The Venture Centre is considering offering low-cost options to buy foods that they are currently not able to provide. We will read a list of items, and ask if you would be interested in buying each item if it was available. If you are interested, we will tell you how much it costs in stores then ask if you would pay certain prices for it at the Venture Centre. For example, if you are interested in buying milk, we would let you know that milk costs $4.50 at the store and ask if you would pay $2, $3, or $4 at the Venture Centre.

Food items

✓	Item	Potential Price			Cost at Grocery Store
	Meat	$4/lb	$3/lb	$2/lb	$4/lb-$10/lb
	Halal meat	$4/lb	$3/lb	$2/lb	$7-$11 per package (eg. frozen chicken nuggets) $3-5/lb
	Milk	$4/2L	$3/2L	$2/2L	$4.50/2L
	Lactose-free milk	$4/L	$3/L	$2/L	$5.50/2L
	Eggs	$2/dozen	$1/dozen	$0.50/dozen	$2.20/dozen
	Fresh fruit	$2/lb	$1/lb	$0.50/lb	$2-$3/lb
	Fresh vegetables	$2/lb	$1/lb	$0.50/lb	$2-$5/lb
	Gluten-free bread[EG2]	$4/loaf	$3/loaf	$2/loaf	$3.50-$8 loaf

	Gluten-free pasta	$3/package	$2/package	$1/package	$3.50/500g
	Diabetic-friendly juice[EG3]	$3/package	$2/package	$1/package	$2.50-$8.50 per package (eg. diabetic-friendly juice)
	Frozen prepared meals[EG4]	$3/package	$2/package	$1/package	$3-$9 per package[EG5]
	Snacks for children/ school snacks	$2/ package	$1/package	$0.50/ package	$2-$6 per package (eg. box of 6 granola bars or 6 applesauce cups)
	Cooking oil	$2/L	$1/L	$0.50/L	$2-$8/L
	Spices	$1/ package	$0.50/ package	$0.25/ package	$1-$6 per package
	Any other foods (top three) 1)_______________ 2)_______________ 3)_______________	1)_______________ 2)_______________ 3)_______________			

✓	Item[EG1]	Potential Price		Cost at Dollar Store[EG2]
	Toilet paper	$2	$1	$3
	Paper towel	$2	$1	$2.50
	Kleenex/tissue	$1	$0.50	$2
	Laundry soap	$2	$1	$2-$4

	Dish soap	$2	$1	$2.50
	Cleaning products	$2	$1	$1.50-$4
	Sponges	$0.50	$0.25	$1
	Tupperware/food storage	$2	$1	$1.50-$3.50
	Pet products	$1	$0.50	$1-$3
	Garbage bags	$2	$1	$2-$4

For the next few questions, we will read a list of options and ask which option applies to you.

If you would be interested in purchasing products at the Venture Centre, would you pay by:
a. Cash
b. Debit
c. Credit
d. Other: _______________
e. Not interested

About the foods you need

Do you have any dietary restrictions? Check off all that apply.
a. Religious (eg. Halal): _______
b. Diabetic:
c. Other medical:_______
d. Gluten free:
e. Allergy: _______
f. Lactose intolerant
g. Vegetarian
h. Vegan

Do you access any other services for food? Check all that apply.
a. Other food banks
b. Hot meal programs
c. Meals on Wheels
d. Good Food Box
e. Other: _______
f. None

About you and your household

How would you describe your living arrangements?

a. Home you own
b. Rental housing
c. Subsidized housing
d. Emergency shelter
e. Group home
f. Rooming house/boarding house
g. On the street
h. Hotel/motel
i. Vehicle
j. In a temporary housing situation with friends or family
k. Other: _________

How much does your housing cost each month (eg. rent): ______
Does this include (check all that apply):

a. Water
b. Heat
c. Electricity
d. Phone
e. Internet

Which group does your yearly household income fall into?

a. Less than $5,000
b. $5,000 to less than $10,000
c. $10,000 to less than $15,000
d. $15,000 to less than $20,000
e. $20,000 to less than $30,000
f. $30,000 to less than $40,000
g. $40,000 or more

What is the main source of your household's income?

a. Employment
b. Employment insurance
c. Ontario Works
d. Ontario Disability Support Program
e. Old age pension
f. Student loans, student grants, or scholarships
g. No income
h. Other income

Who lives in your household?

a. Single adult, no children living in the home
b. Couple, no children
c. Single person with children under 18
How many children? ___

d. Two parents with children under 18
How many children? ___
e. Other family members
How many? ___
f. Other people who are not relatives
How many? ___

How many people in total live in your household? ___

What is your gender? _____________

What is the year you were born? ___________

Where were you born? _________
If not born in Canada, what year did you arrive in Canada? ______

Other comments

Are there any other comments you would like to make about the Venture Centre?
____

Having taken this survey, would you be willing to participate in this type of survey again?
__ Yes
__ No
__ Unsure

Would you like to provide any feedback about the survey?

____

Appendix 2: Participant feedback

Responses to the question: Are there any other comments you would like to make about the Venture Centre?

Participant 3: “closer to house”
Participant 4: “very helpful”
Participant 6: “good idea”
Participant 8: “good idea”
Participant 10: “good idea”
Participant 12: “they've always been great”
Participant 15: “I like the venture centre”
Participant 16: “should be more than once a month”
Participant 17: “first time”
Participant 18: “good idea”
Participant 19: “good idea - need healthy food and can't afford healthy options”
Participant 20: “good idea”
Participant 21: “good feedback”
Participant 24: “used underwear are concerning-wished it were sanitary/unused”
Participant 27: “they're good, they're helping us”
Participant 29: “great job! Bring more fresh foods is possible”
Participant 32: “very helpful place for newcomers”
Participant 34: “really good and very helpful. I like appointments.”
Participant 37: “doing great awesome”
Participant 38: “nice people! Helpful”
Participant 39: “definitely good idea”
Participant 40: “good. Need meat, milk & juice ongoing”
Participant 41: “good program”
Participant 42: “good”
Participant 44: “they are great”
Participant 45: “it's a good place, helps a lot”
Participant 50: “it seems good”
Participant 52: “yes! Very interested”
Participant 54: “yes”
Participant 55: “prices on survey are very good”
Participant 56: “yes-good”
Participant 59: “no”
Participant 60: “prompt to respond to request to come in”
Participant 74: “Good people that work here.”
Participant 76: “Wonderful!”
Participant 80: “It's awesome. The people are amazing.”
Participant 83: “Would like to see less expired products. Milk, meat, veggies, dairy products to

have more access to these be good."
Participant: 89: "They should be happy when interacting with clients."

Responses to the question: Would you like to provide any feedback about the survey?

Participant 12: "hope to see it"
Participant 14: "good!"
Participant 15: "good survey"
Participant 16: "appreciate the concern"
Participant 24: "body wash, soap, deodorant, more personal products"
Participant 27: "good to know they're thinking about it"
Participant 29: "great job"
Participant 32: "Would it only be available during appointment times?"
Participant 33: "if guaranteed cheaper would save $ to use"
Participant 35: "would like to know more, first I have heard of this. Put out more posters to allow others plus myself all programs available"
Participant 37: "it's good"
Participant 44: "excellent"
Participant 45: "quick and easy"
Participant 48: "easy"
Participant 50: "perfect"
Participant 55: "really good, well looked after. Should open longer than 3pm, maybe 3:30pm. Likes Christmas market."
Participant 60: "polite, easy"
Participant 68: "great work"
Participant 70: "okay"
Participant 71: "great!"
Participant 72: "I wish prices were like this."
Participant 74: "Well explained."
Participant 85: "Great incentive. Hope it works out."

Appendix 3: Additional participant comments

Participants made additional verbal comments to Research Shop volunteers, regarding their hopes and concerns for the proposed program. While these comments were not formally recorded in our survey, and are based on volunteer recollection rather than a data collection process, they may provide helpful input. We summarize these comments below and make associated recommendations.

Participants who expressed interest in the proposed program noted that they would only purchase products if it could be guaranteed that the products are cheaper than retail price, and if food products are fresh and of good quality.

Participants also called attention to potential logistical issues. They were concerned that the checkout line would be slowed down; having a designated checkout line for those purchasing goods could alleviate this concern. Additionally, some participants expressed that it may be dangerous for clients to bring cash to the Venture Centre due to risk of being robbed outside of the facilities. Venture Centre staff will need to be aware of this concern.

Lastly, participants expressed interest in being able to budget and plan ahead to purchase products at the Venture Centre. To support this, the Venture Centre will need to provide notice far in advance of the implementation of the proposed program. This could include posting signs at least one month in advance, so clients know that products will be available to purchase at their next scheduled visit.

Appendix 4: Additional requested items

Item	Number of participants
Cheese	5
Bread	5
Rice	3
Olive Oil	3
Butter/Margarine	3
Ice Cream	2
Peanut Butter	2
Yogurt	2
Soft Drinks	2
Dog Food	2
Cat Litter	2
Deli Meat	1
Boost	1
Cultural Foods	1
Diapers	1
Rice/Corn/Grains	1
Beans/Lentils	1
Fish	1
Flour	1
Baking Soda	1
Baking Powder	1
Almond Milk	1
Gourmet Crackers	1
Chicken	1
Soy Milk	1
Canned Food	1

Cat Food	1
Pastries	1
Cereal	1
Pasta	1
Pasta Sauce	1
Baby Food	1
Juice	1