

**HAMILTON EMERGENCY  
FOOD SYSTEM ASSESSMENT  
PHASE 1**

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**Prepared for the City of Hamilton**

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Emergency Food System Assessment Survey  
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## 1.0 BACKGROUND

In the city of Hamilton there are over 17,000 people per month who access local food banks that are part of the emergency food system. According to Greater Hamilton Food Share<sup>1</sup>, close to half of the local food bank users (43%) are children. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of food bank users are families.

Many food banks in the city belong to Greater Hamilton Food Share (GHFS) which operates as the "hub", procuring food from both provincial and national food distribution systems and distributing it to the member agencies who operate food banks or hot meal programs. Food Share distributes food to the Good Shepherd Centres, Mission Services of Hamilton, Neighbour to Neighbour, Wesley Urban Ministries, St. Matthew's House, Living Rock Ministry, Welcome Inn and The Salvation Army. (They also support some local community and student nourishment programs.)

Many other emergency food programs exist in the city through various agencies and faith communities. These rely on their own connections to access food.

Originally set up as temporary "stop-gap" measures to assist people facing emergency situations, food banks have become a more permanent fixture in the emergency food system. The City of Hamilton and the Community Advisory Board on Homelessness has recognized that the food banks in the community are currently an integral piece of the puzzle when it comes to people staying housed. In fact, the City's Community Plan gave food security priority as a method of preventing homelessness. They have also realized that food banks do not have the necessary financial resources to invest in the capital needs of their operations.

For these reasons the City decided to initiate Phase 1 research in which the current infrastructure and capital needs of a sample of agencies in the emergency food system was assessed. Phase 2 will look at food security in the community more generally.

The research which makes up Phase 1 was commissioned with the objective of identifying strategies and making recommendations that would strengthen the emergency food system in the following areas: Data Collection and Information Management; Recovery, Storage, and Distribution; Staffing and Volunteer Resources; and Enhancing Accessibility and Dignity for Clients.

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<sup>1</sup> Hamilton Food Share began in 1988 as a collective effort of six emergency food centres to develop more effective ways to increase their food supplies. The main objective was to create a food recovery operation that would increase the quality and quantity of food to their emergency food programs.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

This research was overseen by a reference group made up of representatives of the City of Hamilton, the Community Advisory Board on Homelessness, Wesley Urban Ministries, Good Shepherd Centres, and Greater Hamilton Food Share. The reference group met three times over the course of the project: once to review the research design; once to review the assessment tool and survey; and once to review the findings and give input into the recommendations.

The reference group identified seven (7) food banks and two (2) hot meal programs to serve as the sample for this research: Good Shepherd Centres, Mission Services of Hamilton, Neighbour to Neighbour, Wesley Urban Ministries, St. Matthew's House, Living Rock Ministry, Welcome Inn and The Salvation Army. Each of these agencies belongs to Greater Hamilton Food Share (GHFS). An interview with GHFS was also conducted to gain perspective from the system-level food distribution perspective.

There are several limitations of this research. These limitations should be taken into account when considering how to best address community needs.

- Phase 1 was intended to provide a picture of infrastructure and capital needs of a sample of the emergency food system. Phase 2 will look at food security needs more generally. It is expected that Phase 2 will provide more context for the findings of Phase 1.
- Seven (7) food banks and two (2) hot meal programs were identified for interviews by the City of Hamilton with the assistance of the reference group. This research is not an exhaustive list of infrastructure needs in the Emergency Food System, as it is based on a sample of agencies. Food banks or meal programs that primarily serve the Aboriginal community, small faith-based food banks, and food banks and meal programs in other community agencies were not interviewed.

An assessment tool was designed by the SPRC with input from the reference group. (See Appendix A). Researchers then conducted on site visits to each of the identified agencies where the survey was completed with the executive directors and/or food bank or hot meal program coordinators.

Each agency had an opportunity to prepare ahead of time for the visit by gathering recent building assessments and other relevant information that would be needed to address the questions in each section.

A trends analysis was then conducted and recommendations were made. The purpose of this report is to present those findings in each of the following categories:

- Data Collection and Information Management
- Recovery, Storage, and Distribution
- Staffing and Volunteer Resources
- Enhancing Accessibility and Dignity for Clients

### 3.0 DATA COLLECTION AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The questions in this initial section were formulated to assess how well equipped agencies in the emergency food system were to collect data and manage information electronically.

**Do you collect client intake information? Do you collect service usage information? Do you keep inventory information? If yes, how do you collect this information?**

All but two (2) of the sample programs indicated the use of computers to some extent for their food bank or hot meal program. Three (3) organizations indicated they had specifically designed software to track data but one (1) of those organizations had a very outdated computer on which to load it.

Four (4) programs had access to computers in their organizations to put the information gathered on paper into a spreadsheet or table. However, these were generally computers in the administration part of the overall agency in which the program was housed or, as in one case, a volunteer's home computer.

All programs in some way gathered client information. However, one of the hot meal programs is located in a shelter and only takes client information if she or he is sleeping in the shelter.

All programs also gathered service usage data in some way except for one hot meal program.

Only three (3) programs gathered inventory information and each of those did so using paper. Other programs noted keeping a general sense of inventory through memory and experience.

**What types of computers does your food bank or meal program use for data management?**

Out of the three (3) sample agencies that have computers dedicated for the food bank program, only two (2) had fairly new Pentium level computers. The other had specifically designed software for the food bank but kept it on an older 486 system.

The programs that used computers within other areas of the agencies were generally using older clones or rebuilt Pentiums.

**Are your computers networked? Does your food bank or meal program have Internet access?**

There were only two (2) programs that had full access to the agency network and Internet and made use of it for their programs. All but one food bank or meal program was both networked and had access to the Internet or was housed in an agency that was networked

and had Internet access. This did not necessarily mean the program used the network or internet for support or information but simply that there was already a system in place should the food bank or meal program acquire computers or software dedicated to their programs.

**On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being "very inadequate" and 4 being "very adequate", how adequate are your computers for managing data?**

Out of the nine (9) sample programs, five (5) indicated their computers were inadequate or very inadequate for managing data. Four (4) programs reported being adequate or very adequate in terms of computers for managing data.

**What type of software does your food bank or meal program use to manage data?**

Only three (3) programs had specifically designed software for their programs. The others who did use computers used a spreadsheet or word processing program for entering and maintaining data.

**On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being "very inadequate" and 4 being "very adequate", how adequate is your software for managing data?**

Four (4) of the nine (9) sample programs, indicated their software was very inadequate for managing data while five (5) programs stated their software was adequate or very adequate.

**How many paid staff or volunteers are trained in managing food bank or meal program data?**

While one program did not have any staff involved in managing food bank or meal program data, another program had eight (8) staff and yet another had five (5) staff members involved in data management. The remaining six (6) had between one (1) and three (3) staff that was trained in managing data for the program.

With regard to volunteers, four (4) programs had one (1) or two (2) volunteers who were trained in managing food bank or meal program data while five (5) did not have any volunteers involved in this capacity.

**On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being "very inadequate" and 4 being "very adequate", how adequate is your human resource capacity in terms of managing data?**

Two (2) programs identified their human resource capacity as being very inadequate in terms of managing data while the other seven (7) reported having adequate human resources to manage data.

### **Does your food bank or meal program need more computers?**

Three (3) of the programs did not have any need for more computers. The other six (6) all indicated a need for more computers, particularly if they were required by the City of Hamilton or GHFS to have a more consistent data management system.

### **3.1 Key Findings - Data Collection and Information Management**

Only three (3) out of the nine (9) sample programs identified having adequate computer systems and software for data collection and information management indicating a high need for improvement if consistency is a goal in this area of the emergency food system in Hamilton. Six (6) of the sample group specified a need for more computers in their food bank or meal program.

The majority of the sample programs, seven (7), indicated having enough staff and volunteer resources for data collection for their current needs.

Hot meal programs are reluctant to take client information because of the nature of the program where anonymity is valued and clients are simply coming in for a meal. However, if the client is accessing the hot meal program as well as staying at the attached shelter overnight, intake information is gathered.

## 4.0 Maximizing Recovery, Storage, and Distribution

This section was designed to gather information about what might help a program maximize the amount of food brought in, its storage capacity and its ability to distribute food items effectively.

### Recovery

**Approximately what proportion of the food your program recovers comes from Greater Hamilton Food Share?**

There was a wide range of responses to this question with one (1) program receiving ninety (90%) of its food from GHFS and two (2) others receiving fifteen percent (15%). On average, the remaining programs received sixty percent (60%) of their food from GHFS.

The vast majority of food that comes from GHFS needs to be picked up from their Stoney Creek location by the food bank or meal program itself. When GHFS does deliver, it is often because the food is close to reaching its "best before date" and there is an urgency to get it into the system.

This process of picking up food places a large burden on the food bank or meal program as the majority of the sample programs only had one vehicle and many were in varying states of disrepair. The cost of maintenance to the vehicles and fuel charges, on top of having staff available for driving, is a concern for many of the programs.

**How else does your program recover food?**

An average of fourteen percent (14%) of the food recovered by the sample food banks is delivered by faith communities, businesses, agencies or individuals, leaving the majority, approximately eighty six percent (86%) having to be picked up by the staff and/or volunteers of the program itself from GHFS or other sources.

**Could you recover more food with more resources? If yes, what are those resources?**

Eight (8) out of nine (9) programs said they would be able to recover more food if more resources were available.

The resources that were suggested to assist in this area included vehicle maintenance or replacement and fuel, increased staff and volunteer time, and increased delivery from GHFS. Six (6) programs indicated the need for vehicle repairs, upgrades, or replacements.

### Storage

**Is the size of your storage area adequate to hold the amount of non-perishable food you currently collect? If "no", could this be overcome on your current premises? How would these challenges be overcome?**

Seven (7) out of the nine (9) sample programs reported having inadequate storage to hold the amount of non-perishable food that was being collected. Three (3) programs stated their storage issues would best be solved by moving to a new location or through major renovations. However, all seven (7) programs had possible solutions to their storage issues that could be implemented on site.

Examples include minor renovations such as removing old shelving or other structures to be replaced with new shelving, redesigning the space, and/or obtaining new lifting equipment.

**Is the size of your storage area adequate to hold the amount of perishable fresh and frozen food your agency currently collects? If "no", could this be overcome on your current premises? How could these challenges be overcome?**

A total of six (6) programs reported lacking sufficient storage area to hold the fresh and/or frozen food they currently collect. Although two (2) of those stated their storage issues would best be solved by moving to a new location or through major renovations, all six (6) programs had possible solutions to their storage issues that could be implemented on site.

Most required a new refrigerator or freezer while one indicated the need to do minor renovations in order to fit a refrigerator in and another noted the need to replace existing shelving within a walk-in refrigerator.

**Is your storage area adequate/safe (from moisture, mold, rodents, insects, etc.) to store non-perishable food items? If "no", could this be overcome on your current premises? How could these challenges be overcome?**

Five (5) out of the sample programs reported having a safe storage area in relation to this question. For those who did not, minor renovations such as repairing an outside wall, floor, or obtaining more storage bins would help overcome this situation.

**Is your storage area adequate/safe to store perishable food items? (i.e. proper refrigeration)**

Programs reiterated the need for more refrigerated storage but did not indicate any issues about safety with regard to this area.

### **Distribution**

**What challenges does your program face in terms of distributing food? (i.e. bags for bulk items, containers, transport carts, other)**

In the area of distribution, hot meal programs have different needs than food banks. For example, one hot meal program indicated a need for a vegetable chopper and a dishwasher while the other noted the need for a separate area for food preparation away from the cooking area of the kitchen.

On the other hand, five (5) out of seven (7) food banks reported that a shortage of shopping bags in which to hand out the food is always a problem.

Six (6) of the sample programs suggested that distribution, as with storage, could be enhanced by a new space design. For example, one program indicated the need for some room dividers and a desk.

Five (5) programs proposed overcoming their distribution challenges by purchasing new equipment such as transport carts, a movable workspace, or a dolly.

**What challenges do you have around the safe distribution of food? (i.e. prior to expiration/best before dates, rotation of food, donation standards)**

All programs identified the challenge of distributing food when there is a lack of consistency in the quantity, quality and delivery patterns of food. Many spoke about the realities of receiving pallets of fresh vegetables on a Friday afternoon when the program does not function on the weekends. Adequate storage space is directly related to this issue. For example, if Food Share delivers a large quantity of yogurt with a close to expired "best before date", a program needs enough refrigerator or freezer space to store it before it can be distributed to clients safely.

**Do you have other equipment needs that would aid recovery, storage, and distribution of food?**

Other equipment needs that were identified include scales, fuel for vehicles, and truck parts particular to each program's vehicle.

**4.1 Key Findings - Recovery, Storage and Distribution**

Very little food in the emergency food system in Hamilton is delivered to the food banks directly, placing a large burden on the financial, staff and volunteer resources, and vehicles of a program. The majority of the food in the sample programs is picked up from GHFS.

The majority of programs in the sample (7 out of 9) reported a lack of adequate storage space. Three programs did not think they could overcome storage issues on current premises and have explored purchasing other space or major renovations to the current location.

Examples of how to address the issues on current premises include minor renovations such as: removing old shelving or other structures to be replaced with new shelving, redesigning the space, and/or obtaining new lifting equipment. Inadequate refrigeration and freezing capacity affects six (6) out of nine (9) programs.

There are several agencies that require minor capital renovations to address safety issues or storage area concerns.

A shortage of shopping bags for distribution of the food to the clients affects five (5) of the sample programs. Minor changes to the space design were also identified by five (5) programs as ways in which distribution could be made more effective.

Naturally, the needs a hot meal program differ from food banks when it pertains to distribution. For example, hot meal programs indicated the need for equipment related to food preparation such as a vegetable chopper or dishwasher. Another identified the need for a separate area for food preparation away from the cooking area of the kitchen.

Many of the suggested improvements in the area of storage would also have a positive effect in the aspect of distribution.

## 5.0 STAFFING AND VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

This section of the survey was designed to assess the needs of programs in training, recruiting, and retaining staff and volunteers.

**In terms of staff/volunteer development, have your paid staff and volunteers at the food bank or meal program participated in the following training programs? Does your program devote adequate resources to ongoing staff development? What other training programs might increase the effectiveness of staff and volunteers in your program?**

The first question contained a chart with the following training programs listed with a place to indicate whether all or some of either staff or volunteers had participated in the particular training:

- Health and Safety
- First Aid
- CPR
- Attending Skills (Basic Interviewing)
- Cultural Sensitivity
- Food Safety
- Other

The majority of agencies are offering a wide variety of training opportunities to both staff and volunteers to varying degrees. Programs lack resources to ensure that all staff and volunteers are trained in all categories but each one indicated they have done what they can with limited resources. For example, most agency paid staff have First Aid, but the training volunteers received was much more sporadic.

Other training programs that were noted as increasing the effectiveness of staff and volunteers included further cultural sensitivity, crisis intervention and computer training if they were required by the City of Hamilton or GHFS to have a more consistent data management system.

**Are there improvements that should be made to maximize workplace health and safety regarding the physical environment and service provision? If yes, what are these improvements?**

Seven (7) of the sample programs responded yes to this question indicating changes to space design or acquiring equipment such as lifts as necessary to improve workplace health and safety. Two (2) agencies named flooring as another area where changes could be made to maximize workplace health and safety.

**What challenges does your agency face in terms of recruiting and retaining paid staff and volunteers?**

The majority of responses in this area (8 out of 9) pertained to having the financial resources to reimburse staff adequately for the kind of work in which they are engaged. Particularly noted was the high level of client need and the frustration that is often felt by staff or volunteers in not being able to meet those needs.

Lack of financial resources to increase staff size was also reported as a challenge. Five of the programs indicated that a coordinator of volunteers would assist in the challenge of recruiting and retaining volunteers.

**5.1 Key Findings - Staffing and Volunteer Resources**

Staff and volunteer training is considered a priority by the programs but can only offer these opportunities with limited resources. If more resources were available, enhanced cultural sensitivity training and crisis intervention training would be offered. If the City of Hamilton or GHFS required a more consistent data management system for each program, computer training would also be required.

Many of the suggested improvements that maximize workplace health and safety, were the same or similar to improvements suggested in the areas of food recovery, storage and distribution.

Agencies reported a lack of financial resources to pay staff adequately or hire more staff as one of the greatest challenges faced in recruiting and retaining staff. Of particular note was the desire of five (5) programs to be able to hire a coordinator of volunteers.

## **6.0 ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY AND/OR DIGNITY FOR CLIENTS**

**Does your food bank or meal program currently provide a private area to conduct intake interviews with new clients? If "no", could a private area be created with modifications to your existing space? How?**

Of the nine (9) sample programs, three (3) reported having a private area to conduct intake interviews with clients. Three (3) others, two (2) of which are hot meal programs, do not conduct what they consider to be verbal intake interviews. Meal programs are reluctant to do intake interviews because of the nature of the program. That leaves three (3) other programs that indicated they conduct intake interviews but do not have a private area in which to do them.

For those programs that do not have a private area for intake interviews all three (3) reported that with minor renovations or space redesign, including to the storage area, this challenge could be overcome.

**Where do your clients currently wait for service?**

A checklist was presented including: Waiting room standing, Waiting room sitting, Line-up indoors, Line-up outdoors and Other.

Six (6) programs reported that clients wait inside in a waiting room but that they often had to stand at peak times. Six (6) programs also indicated that clients lined up inside while waiting and four (4) others said that clients sometimes had to line up outside. Two (2) programs reported the need to lock the doors at times with clients outside because of a lack of space in the waiting room or corridor.

**Could modifications to your existing space provide a more comfortable environment and help to promote dignity among your clients?**

Modifications to existing space could be made by five (5) programs to provide a more comfortable environment and promote dignity among their clients. Minor renovations to bathrooms and waiting room areas were identified as changes that could be made.

**How does your program currently address language barriers between staff and clients? How could this situation be improved?**

Each of the sample programs identified "creativity" as the way in which language barriers between staff and clients are most often overcome. For example, two (2) programs reported the use of drawing images to explain items to clients. Others were able to find staff in different areas of the agency that spoke the client's language and could provide translation.

The most common response to how the situation could be improved was by having financial resources available in the system for translation of materials particular to each food bank or meal program. Other suggestions included recruiting volunteers who speak more than one language, enhanced cultural sensitivity training (including the reception of nutrition resources that would help with "cultural food needs") and partnering with SISO and other agencies that offer translation.

**Is your food bank or meal program accessible to persons with disabilities (in particular physical disabilities)? If "no", what modifications would be required to make your program fully accessible?**

Only three (3) of the sample programs were not currently accessible to people with physical disabilities and one of those programs was in the process of rectifying the situation. Both of the other programs would have to move in order to become accessible.

**Does your program have the capacity to distribute food to individuals and families who cannot "walk in"? If "no", what would help you to deal with this challenge?**

While all the food banks had, on rare occasions, delivered food to individuals or families who could not access the programs, none of them were able to consider expanding their current services to be able to do this more readily as resources are not available for this level of service.

One suggestion of how agencies could deal with this challenge was to have the financial resources to provide taxi "chits" for clients who needed them to access the programs.

### **6.1 Key Findings - Enhancing Accessibility And/Or Dignity For Clients**

In the areas where improvements were identified as necessary to enhance accessibility or dignity for clients, most programs indicated they were able to make minor renovations to overcome the issues. This included enhanced waiting space and washrooms. However, with regard to making their program space accessible to clients with physical disabilities, two (2) programs reported they would need to relocate, as their space could not be modified in this way.

With regard to language barriers between staff/volunteers and clients, all agencies noted the need for translated resources to have program materials accessible for more of their clients. Partnerships with SISO or other agencies with translation services were suggested to assist in this area, as was the need for nutrition materials identifying "cultural food needs."

Making arrangements for clients that could not "walk-in" to a program had been done on rare occasion by all the food banks but it was clear that the resources are lacking to do this on a more regular basis.

## 7.0 PHYSICAL BUILDING ASSESSMENT

This section was developed to seek information about any deficiencies in the building conditions where the sample food banks or hot meal programs are housed. The participants were asked to describe any physical deficiencies in the following areas:

- Plumbing
- Heating
- Cooling
- Electrical
- Windows
- Lighting
- Kitchen/Food Preparation
- General Building Structure (roof, etc.)
- Other

In most cases the researcher viewed the deficiencies in the building.

The information gathered from this section of the interview was clearly very particular to each building and cannot represent the overall food system. All programs identified a variety of deficiencies in their buildings that are in varying needs of repair. These physical infrastructure needs ranged from caulking or otherwise repairing windows to replacing furnaces or renovating the entire building.

### **7.1 Key Findings - Physical Building Assessment**

From the gathering of the information in this section it is evident that all the programs in this sample are currently housed in buildings that need capital funding to address capital renovations.

## 8.0 CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

In concluding the interview, representatives of the food bank or hot meal programs were asked to reflect on the overall challenges and priorities they identified for the entire emergency food system in Hamilton as well as for their individual programs. This included an opportunity to name capital expenditures, particular to each agency, identified as most urgently needed to maximize effectiveness.

**Overall, what would you see as the two biggest challenges facing the emergency food system in Hamilton?**

The majority of the sample, seven (7) programs, identified "supply and demand" or level of need not matching resources, as one of the biggest challenges facing the emergency food system in Hamilton.

Lack of consistent, sustainable funding was named by four (4) other agencies as one of the biggest the challenges. Other issues included quality of food, timing regarding food distribution, lack of coordinated service and the need for a collaborative, integrated, web-based system for client data management.

**What would you see as the two biggest challenges facing your food bank or meal program?**

Five (5) program representatives identified the following three issues as the biggest challenges facing their individual programs: lack of funding for food; lack of funding for staff; and storage issues.

Other challenges identified by programs included client space, variety of food and lack of protein, volunteer training issues, dependence on Food Share, infrastructure improvements, and dealing with the diversity of clients.

**Overall, what would you consider as the top two capital priorities for your agency, in terms of maximizing your effectiveness?**

This question appropriately garnered responses that were particular to each program. However, some commonalities existed in the responses with five (5) agencies naming some aspect of storage as a priority, and two (2) identifying computers and minor renovations as their priority.

**What would you consider as the top two capital priorities for your agency that could be realistically addressed by March 31, 2006?**

Due to possible funding from the federal SCPI program that ends March 31, 2006, agencies were asked if capital priorities could be completed by that date. Most agencies repeated their priority from the previous answers. However, there were several agencies that identified shorter term solutions that could be implemented within this time frame.

## 9.0 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Data Collection and Information Management Needs

Only three (3) out of the nine (9) sample programs identified having adequate computer systems and software for data collection and information management indicating a high need for improvement if consistency is a goal in this area of the emergency food system in Hamilton. Six (6) of the sample groups specified a need for more computers in their food bank or meal program.

The majority of the sample programs (7) indicated having enough staff and volunteer resources for data collection for their current needs.

Hot meal programs are reluctant to take client information because of the nature of the program where anonymity is valued and clients are simply coming in for a meal. However, if the client is accessing the hot meal program as well as staying at the attached shelter overnight, intake information is gathered.

### **Recommendations**

- ⇒ Most agencies did not feel that data collection and information management was an urgent need, although it was recognized there would be long term benefits to having a computerized and consistent data collection system.
- ⇒ Agencies need assistance bringing their hardware systems up to a basic level.
- ⇒ If a common data collection system is implemented, additional assistance in hardware, software, and staff training will be required.
- ⇒ Agencies need assistance in computerizing and tracking inventory.
- ⇒ From a community systems perspective it would be useful to have regular and consistent data collection.

### Maximizing Recovery, Storage, and Distribution

Very little food in the emergency food system in Hamilton is delivered to the food banks directly, placing a large burden on the financial, staff and volunteer resources, and vehicles of a program. The majority of the food in the sample programs is picked up from GHFS.

The majority of programs in the sample (7 out of 9) reported a lack of adequate storage space. Three programs don't think they can overcome storage issues on current premises and have explored purchasing other space or major renovations to the current location. Examples of how to address the issues on current premises include minor renovations such as: removing old shelving or other structures to be replaced with new shelving, redesigning the space, and/or obtaining new lifting equipment. Inadequate refrigeration and freezing capacity affects six (6) out of nine (9) programs.

A shortage of shopping bags for distribution of the food to the clients affects five (5) of the sample programs. Minor changes to the space design were also identified by five (5) programs as ways in which distribution could be made more effective.

Naturally, the needs of hot meal programs differ from food banks when it pertains to distribution. For example, hot meal programs indicated the need for equipment related to food preparation such as a vegetable chopper or dishwasher. Another identified the need for a separate area for food preparation away from the cooking area of the kitchen.

Many of the suggested improvements in the area of storage would also have a positive effect in the aspect of distribution.

### **Recommendations**

- ⇒ The purpose of this study was to identify strategies and make recommendations to strengthen the emergency food system. Given the feedback of agencies, it is clear that recovery, storage and distribution were the priority areas.
- ⇒ Agencies need assistance with food recovery in the form of funding for vehicles and/or vehicle maintenance or upgrading.
- ⇒ Agencies need assistance with redesigning and improving storage space. There is a range of capital needs in this area: refrigerators and freezers are needed by many; minor capital renovations for some agencies; and major capital purchases for a few. Similarly, the space design that would assist with improving storage space would, in most cases, positively affect the issues programs are having with distribution space. This includes modifications to the space where clients wait for service.
- ⇒ Agencies are consistently short of bags for distribution and need resources to obtain more on a reliable basis.

### **Staffing and Volunteer Resources**

Staff and volunteer training is considered a priority by the programs but can only offer these opportunities with limited resources. If more resources were available, enhanced cultural sensitivity training and crisis intervention training would be offered. If the City of Hamilton or GHFS required a more consistent data management system for each program, computer training would also be required.

Many of the suggested improvements that maximize workplace health and safety, were the same or similar to improvements suggested in the areas of food recovery, storage and distribution.

Agencies reported a lack of financial resources to pay staff adequately or hire more staff as one of the greatest challenges faced in recruiting and retaining staff. Of particular note was the desire of five (5) programs to be able to hire a manager of volunteers.

### **Recommendations**

- ⇒ Agencies need support in increasing training opportunities for staff and volunteers.
- ⇒ A Manager of Volunteers is needed at the majority of agencies. This would help with consistency of program delivery. Some consideration to a shared position between agencies should be given.

### **Enhancing Accessibility and/or Dignity of Clients**

In the areas where improvements were identified as necessary to enhance accessibility or dignity for clients, most programs indicated they were able to make minor renovations to overcome the issues. This included enhanced waiting space and washrooms. However, with regard to making their program space accessible to clients with physical disabilities, two (2) programs reported they would need to relocate, as their space could not be modified in this way.

With regard to language barriers between staff/volunteers and clients, all agencies noted the need for translated resources to have program materials accessible for more of their clients. Partnerships with SISO or other agencies with translation services were suggested to assist in this area, as was the need for nutrition materials identifying "cultural food needs."

Making arrangements for clients that could not "walk-in" to a program had been done on rare occasion by all the food banks but it was clear that the resources are lacking to do this on a more regular basis.

### **Recommendations**

- ⇒ Some capital renovations can be made to a few of the agencies that would enhance the dignity of clients with regard to waiting space.
- ⇒ Agencies need assistance to translate materials. These must be agency-specific due to different languages at different programs and agency-specific information (hours of operation, type of food available, etc.)

# APPENDIX A

## Emergency Food System Assessment Survey

This survey is being carried out by the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton for the City of Hamilton. This survey was developed in consultation with a reference group overseeing this Needs Assessment. The Reference Group consists of representatives of the City of Hamilton, the Community Advisory Board on Homelessness, Wesley Urban Ministries, Good Shepherd Centres, and Greater Hamilton FoodShare.

The following food banks were identified by the City of Hamilton and Reference Group to be included in the survey:

- Mission Services
- Living Rock
- Good Shepherd Centre
- Neighbour to Neighbour
- St. Matthews House
- The Salvation Army
- Welcome Inn

The following Hot Meal programs were also identified to be surveyed:

- Good Shepherd Centre
- Wesley Urban Ministries

Greater Hamilton Foodshare was also surveyed as a community distribution hub.

## Section 1: Data Collection and Information Management Needs

We are interested in the capacity of your food bank (or meal program) to manage information electronically (such as client intake information, service use, inventory).

1. Do you collect client intake information? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_

If yes: How do you collect this information?

Paper\_\_\_Computer\_\_\_Other\_\_\_

2. Do you collect service usage information? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_

If yes: How do you collect this information?

Paper\_\_\_Computer\_\_\_Other\_\_\_

3. Do you keep inventory information? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_

If yes: How do you collect this information?

Paper\_\_\_Computer\_\_\_Other\_\_\_

If any of questions 1-3 are answered yes, please complete the following questions. If not, proceed to question 9.

4. What type(s) of computers does your food bank (or meal program) use for data management (ie. 386, 486, Pentium 2, 3, 4, etc) ?

Computer 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Computer 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Computer 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Computer 4: \_\_\_\_\_

4a. *If more than one computer* - Are your computers networked? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

5. Does your food bank (or meal program) have internet access? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

6. On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being "inadequate" and 4 being "very adequate", how adequate are your computers for managing data?

1\_\_\_\_\_2\_\_\_\_\_3\_\_\_\_\_4

7. What type of software does your food bank (or meal program) use to manage data?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

8. On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being "inadequate" and 4 being "very adequate", how adequate is your software for managing data?

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_

9. How many paid staff or volunteers are trained in managing food bank (or meal program) data?

# of paid staff: \_\_\_\_\_

# of volunteers: \_\_\_\_\_

10. On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being "inadequate" and 4 being "very adequate", how adequate is your human resource capacity in terms of managing data?

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_

11. Does your food bank (or meal program) need more computers? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Additional Observations about Data Collection and Information Management

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## Section 2: Maximizing Recovery, Storage, and Distribution

We are interested in what might help your agency to maximize the amount of food you bring in, your storage capacity, and your ability to distribute food items effectively.

### Recovery

12. Approximately what proportion of the food your program recovers comes from Greater Hamilton Foodshare? \_\_\_\_\_%

13. How else does your program recover food?

Dropped off (from churches/businesses/agencies/individuals) \_\_\_\_\_%

Picked up (from churches/businesses/agencies/individuals) \_\_\_\_\_%

Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_ %

14. *Could you recover more food with more resources? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_*

If yes, what are those resources?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Storage

15. Is the size of your storage area adequate to hold the amount of non-perishable food you currently collect?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If "No": Could this be overcome on your current premises?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

How could these challenges be overcome? (does not have to be on your current premises)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

16. Is the size of your storage area adequate to hold the amount of perishable fresh and frozen food your agency currently collects?

Fresh: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Frozen: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If "No": Could this be overcome on your current premises?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

How could these challenges be overcome? (does not have to be on your current premises)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

17. Is your storage area adequate/safe to store non-perishable food items? (i.e. safe from moisture, mould, rodents, insects, etc.)

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If "No": How could this situation be improved?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

18. Is your storage area adequate/safe to store perishable food items? (i.e. proper refrigeration)

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If "No": How could this situation be improved?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Distribution**

19. What challenges does your program face in terms of distributing food? (i.e. bags for bulk items, containers, transport carts, other)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

How could these challenges be overcome?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

20. What challenges do you have around the safe distribution of food? (i.e. prior to expiration/best before dates, rotation of food, donation standards)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

How could these challenges be overcome?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

21. Do you have other equipment needs that would aid recovery, storage, and distribution of food? Yes\_\_\_\_No\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

22. Additional Observations about Recovery, Storage, and Distribution of Food

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### Section 3: Staffing and Volunteer Resources

23. In terms of staff/volunteer development, have your food bank (or meal program)'s paid staff and volunteers participated in the following training programs?

Training program	Paid staff		Volunteers	
	All	Some	All	Some
Health & Safety				
CPR				
First Aid				
Attending Skills (Basic Interviewing)				
Cultural Sensitivity				
Food Safety				
Other:				
Other:				

24. Does your program devote adequate resources to ongoing staff development?  
Yes\_\_\_ Yes with limited resources\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

25. What other training programs might increase the effectiveness of staff and volunteers in your program?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

26. Are there improvements that should be made to maximize workplace health and safety regarding the physical environment and service provision? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_

If yes, what are these improvements?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

27. What challenges does your agency face in terms of recruiting and retaining paid staff and volunteers?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

28. Additional Observations about Staff and Volunteer Resources

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#### **Section 4: Enhancing Accessibility and/or Dignity for Clients**

29. Does your food bank (or meal program) currently provide a private area to conduct intake interviews with new clients?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

If "No": Could a private area be created, with modifications to your existing space?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

How?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

30. Where do your clients currently wait for service?

Waiting room standing

Waiting room sitting

Line-up in-doors

Line-up out-doors

Other (please

describe): \_\_\_\_\_

31. Could modifications to your existing space provide a more comfortable environment and help to promote dignity among your clients?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

If "Yes": How?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

32. How does your program currently address language barriers between staff and clients?

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How could this situation be improved?

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33. Is your food bank (or meal program) accessible to persons with disabilities? (in particular physical disabilities)

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

If "No": what modifications would be required to make your program fully accessible?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

34. Does your program have the capacity to distribute food to individuals and families who cannot "walk in"? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

If "No": What would help you to deal with this challenge?

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35. Additional Observations about Enhancing Accessibility and/or Dignity for Clients

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### **Section 5: Physical Building Assessment**

We are also interested in any deficiencies in your food bank (or meal program) building conditions. Can you describe any physical deficiencies in the following areas: (if possible, interviewer should view deficiencies as well)

Plumbing:

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Heating:

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Cooling:

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Electrical:

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Windows:

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Kitchen/Food Preparation:

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Lighting:

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General Building Structure: (roof, etc.)

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Other:

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### **Section 6: Challenges**

Overall, what would you see as the two biggest challenges facing the emergency food system in Hamilton?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

What would you see as the two biggest challenges facing your food bank (or meal program)?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

## Priorities

Overall, what would you consider as the top two capital priorities for your agency, in terms of maximizing your effectiveness?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

What would you consider as the top two capital priorities for your agency, that could realistically be addressed by March 31, 2006?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### Emergency Food System Assessment Survey - Results Challenges and Priorities - Aggregated

#### Challenges

Overall, what would you see as the two biggest challenges facing the emergency food system in Hamilton?

- Supply and demand - level of need (7)
- Lack of funding/resources - consistent, sustainable funding (4)
- Quality of food
- Timing issues re: food distribution
- Lack of coordinated service
- Collaborative/integrated effort web based system re: client data management

What would you see as the two biggest challenges facing your food bank or meal program?

- Lack of funding for staff (5)
- Lack of funding for food (5)
- Storage issues (5)
- Structural sin
- Client space
- Variety of food and lack of protein
- Volunteer Issues - training
- Recovery piece - dependence on FoodShare
- Infrastructure improvements (i.e. windows, program room, roof repair)
- Dealing with the diversity of the clients

#### Priorities

Overall, what would you consider as the top two capital priorities for your agency in terms of maximizing your effectiveness?

- Storage/bins/new floor
- Computer
- Significantly increased supply of food resources to meet the level of need
- Increased client reception area and food and clothing storage space
- New foodbank outside of warehouse
- New dining room/kitchen for hotmeal program

- Need a van
- Remodel to add refrigerator
- Expansion (i.e. food bank, warehouse, counseling area) \$60,000
- Heating & Cooling (\$150,000)
- Computers, maximizing staff time, therefore effectiveness for clients
- Room renovations including cold storage
- Storage (i.e. bring up to code, 3 options: \$6,700; \$43,755; \$64,000)
- Staff
- Windows
- Programming Room (i.e. large separate room)

What would you consider as the top two capital priorities for your agency that could be realistically addressed by March 31, 2006?

- Storage/bins/new floor
- Computer
- Repairs to block walls in food storage area for health, safety and energy conservation
- Replacement of recycled existing aged freezers with energy efficient ones
- Staff and volunteer training needs
- Buy new foodbank to address accessibility (\$60,000 needed)
- Cold storage - refrigerator and freezer (\$80,000 for freezer)
- Expansion (i.e. food bank, warehouse, counseling area) \$60,000
- Heating & Cooling (\$150,000)
- Computers
- Room renovations including cold storage
- Storage (i.e. bring up to code, 3 options: \$6,700; \$43,755; \$64,000)
- Tables/Chairs replaced (\$6,439.13)
- Windows
- Programming Room (i.e. large separate room)