

CARMAN WELLNESS CONNECTIONS (CWC)

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

ANNUAL REPORT

January 1 – Dec. 31, 2020

Approved May 20, 2021

COMMON VISION: Together, creating a community where everyone has the opportunity and supports to flourish where they live, learn, work and play.

COMMON VALUES: Common values will guide our behavior, inspire our actions, and encourage conversation within every component of this community initiative.

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------|
| Empowerment | Sustainability | Accessibility | Best Practice | Respect |
| Shared Responsibility | “Nothing about us, without us” | | “It takes a village” | |

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

In November 2019 one hundred citizens of Carman and Dufferin came together for a new conversation about poverty in our community, organized by an ad hoc Poverty Advisory Committee and facilitated by Health in Common. This Community Round Table to Address Poverty brought together people representing many different groups in our community, including a significant number of participants with lived experience of poverty. Carman Wellness Connections has received its mandate from this Round Table on poverty, working diligently to clarify a vision and values to guide this new organization. Within a few months of the Round Table, Carman Wellness Connections was formed. Many people have stepped forward to participate in the new Board and the Working Groups which were clearly identified during the Round Table. We have experienced the challenges of starting a new organization during a pandemic, but people have persevered, learning how to meet by conference calls, videoconferences and outdoor gatherings. We are so encouraged by the community ownership and energy demonstrated in the first annual reports of our active Working Groups. The pandemic has heightened community awareness about the immediate and long term impacts of poverty in our community, and continues to motivate many people to work for positive changes and imagine new responses to poverty in Carman and Dufferin.

Karen Tjaden and Lisa Lehmann (Co-Chairs)

The following Long Term Goals were identified from the information gathered at the Community Town Hall – Addressing Poverty Workshop held in Nov 2019. This Workshop was planned as a result of an initial informal grassroots conversation of interested community residents in March 2019.

- Goal 1: To Formalize the Poverty Reduction Committee and Create Working Groups.
- Goal 2: Establish a central community location/navigator for individuals to access information and navigate services.
- Goal 3: Community residents have access to a comprehensive, centralized Community Resource List.
- Goal 4: Increase options for accessible and affordable transportation
- Goal 5: Increase access and options for fresh affordable food.
- Goal 6: Increase educational and employment opportunities.
- Goal 7: Increase access and options to mental health and addiction services (link with the existing Mental Health Committee)
- Goal 8: Increase quality affordable housing options in our community.
- Goal 9: Access to affordable leisure and recreational activities for children, youth and adults.

A formal Steering Committee was established in Feb. 2020 to begin working towards achieving the identified goals, recognizing that progress would be driven by community interest and involvement for each goal identified.

The following report is a celebration of the work and successes that have been accomplished over the past year. It is important to acknowledge and appreciate the many community volunteers and community partners who have given of their time, energy and resources to make things happen in a very different and challenging year due to Covid 19 pandemic.

CARMAN WELLNESS CONNECTIONS STEERING COMMITTEE

Steering Committee Members: **Karen Tjaden (Co-chair), Lisa Lehmann (Co-chair)**, Lorna George (Treasurer), Debbie Iverson (Secretary), Chantal Chevalier, Janet Fowler, Amy Johnson, Bruce Wood, Beth Bartley, Allison Abbott-Wiebe, Terra Huston, Wendy Durand, Louise Duncan, Susan Weppler, Carol Brown, Sheena Nakonechny, Darcy Redekopp, Nancy Clearwater, Jodi Laine Gaultier, Rachel Siemens, Colin Hay, Cecile Affleck.

Ex-officio: Jane Swanton, Dr Tyler Atchison, Nancy McFarlane, Kathy Findlay

| | ACTIVITIES | DATE COMPLETED | STATUS OR OUTCOME, COMMENTS |
|---|--|-----------------------|---|
| 1 | Establish a formal Steering Committee and appointed officers | Feb. 2020 | Co-chairs: Karen Tjaden Lisa Lehmann Treasurer- Lorna George Secretary- Debbie Iverson |
| 2 | Establish a local Bank Account with financial institution. | | Access Credit Union |
| 3 | Complete incorporation process | June 9, 2020 | Incorporation certificate received. |
| 4 | Develop CWC Bylaws | In process | Draft bylaws to be approved by Steering Committee in Jan. 2021 |

| | | | |
|----|---|---|--|
| 5 | Obtain CWC charitable status | In process | To be completed in 2021 |
| 6 | Establish Working Groups – Invitation to all community residents. Follow up with all those who attended the Community Round Table. | Ongoing | Based on community volunteer interests, the Food Security, Supporting Emotional Health, and Employment and Education and Community Resource List Working Groups were established in 2020. |
| 7 | Hold regular CWC Steering Committee Meetings. | Minimum of 8 mtg/year. | Meetings held on Jan. 9, Feb. 13, Mar. 5, Apr.9, May 7, June 11, Sept. 10, 2020, Nov and Dec mtgs cancelled due to Covid restrictions. |
| 8 | Explore grant funding options and potential partnerships. | Apr. 2020 Sept. 2020 July/Aug 2020 | Secured HLT grant through SH-SS (\$10,000) Carman United Church received a grant to align and collaborate with CWC for community resource/peer support pilot project. -Carman United Church received a grant for summer employee and partnered to assist with CWC Food Security Working Group activities. Secured funding through some of the Covid 19 Emergency Community grants through the Foundation. |
| 10 | Develop communication strategy and resources to support the work of CWC Working groups and communicate with the public. • Establish a Communication Working Group. | Dec. 2020 In progress | Purchased a one year Zoom subscription to host online education sessions and committee, working group meetings as an option during covid restrictions. |
| 11 | Communicate work of the Carman Wellness Connections with provincial and local government and community. | Jan. 2020 June 26, 2020 Sept. 2020 TBD | Media article in local newspaper in follow up to the Community Town Hall to Address Poverty. Met with Blaine Pederson, MLA as link with the provincial Poverty Reduction Committee. Written report provided to the Carman Chamber of Commerce due to Covid restrictions. Presentation to Town and RM Councils delayed due to Covid 19. |
| 12 | Explore potential options for a community resource centre staffed with a community resource navigator | Ongoing | Invited into partnership with Carman United Church – the church received a grant to work along side CWC for a pilot project to provide social connection and support within the community. |

WORKING GROUPS:

SUPPORTING EMOTIONAL HEALTH WORKING GROUP

Working Group Members: **Lisa Lehmann**, Linda MacNair, Cecile Affleck, Tyler Friesen, Lisa Martin, Lorna George, Donna Bruce, Chantal Chevalier, Jackie Leyenhorst, Jaqueline Rudd, Julie Hesketh, Kiera Unger, Les Vanderveen, Linda Sylvester, Monica Halbesma, Rob Bryson, Terry Warburton, Val Giesbrecht, Warren McCutcheon, Wendy Clark

| | ACTIVITIES | DATE COMPLETED | STATUS , OUTCOME or COMMENTS |
|---|--|------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Mental Health Literacy - Peer Support group - 3 Sessions | March 2020 | 8 Participants, (2/3 sessions took place, last was cancelled due to covid) |
| 2 | Circle of Security – partner with PRSD - 8 Sessions – geared for parents, foster parents and childcare providers. | March 2020 | Cancelled prematurely due to low enrollment – likely would have had to cancel due to Covid) |
| 3 | Established a Community Connections – Support Line providing local phone support daily from 9am to 8pm | Established April 2020 and ongoing | 4 Participants – 6 calls, to be reviewed in 2021 as currently low volume of calls. |
| 4 | Making Sense of Adolescence – 3 sessions provide insight for parents to navigate the challenges while preserving the relationship., | May 2020 | 8 Participants. Course Evaluation -Survey Monkey completed by 4/8 participants. Well received, positive feedback |
| 5 | Understanding Emotions of Children and Teens | October 2020 | 15 Participants |
| 6 | Understanding Anxiety – ADAM (Anxiety Disorders of MB.) - 6 online sessions | October- Nov 2020 | 3 Participants |
| 7 | Promotion and awareness of other programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keystone Agriculture Producers (KAP) Webinar on Suicide Prevention • Getting Better Together – SHSS • Woman’s Group – Genesis House | June 2020 Fall 2020 | No data available |

FOOD SECURITY WORKING GROUP

Working Group Members: **Terra Huston, Alita Montgomery**, Edith Rook, Julie Ruban McDonald, Jacquie Paton, Kelsey Paton, Dianne Unruh, Jan Derksen, Brenda Bryson, Beth Bartley, Heidi Sandulak, Janet Fowler, Nancy Clearwater

| | ACTIVITIES | DATE COMPLETED | STATUS, OUTCOME or COMMENTS |
|----|--|--|---|
| 1 | Build a community vegetable stand where community residents can donate or pick up locally grown garden produce. | Summer of 2020, will be ongoing each summer. | Vegetable stand was set up in NW area of Carman. Looking at building a second vegetable stand in 2021 for south area of Carman. <i>See ***"GROW A ROW, VEGETABLE STAND REPORT" at end of this report.</i> |
| 2 | Provide small container garden kits with supplies and instructions to community residents | Spring/summer of 2021 | 10 garden container kits were distributed. Garden seeds were also distributed to individuals with garden spaces. |
| 3 | Promote Grow a Row in conjunction with the Community Vegetable Stands. | Spring/Summer of 2020 | Due to timing of plan, did not have much time to promote before spring planting, will promote for 2021 spring planting. |
| 4. | Establish Tractor Tire Gardening on available space in community for those who are not able to access the community garden plots and also make available for anyone wishing to have one at their home. | Deferred to 2021 | Not able to achieve due to timing of plan and Covid 19 restrictions. Planning to proceed with project in spring of 2021. |
| 5 | Take on care of raised garden beds at Carman Elementary and Carman Collegiate | Spring/summer of 2020 | Due to Covid 19, students were not available to complete, so school appreciated having someone oversee the beds for this year. Community Families took on planting and care of all them. |
| 6 | Promote use of new Carman Community Garden. | | Community Garden club donated 2 garden plots for CWC use. |
| 7 | Provide the Food Currency program with the local Farmers Market through Direct Farm Manitoba pilot project. | Summer 2020 | 10 weekly participants for 12 weeks. Well received, planning to do again in summer of 2021. Funding received from Covid – emergency grant, printed resources provided by Direct Farm Manitoba. <i>***SEE ATTACHED "Statistical Report for the 2020 Pilot Season of MB. Community Food Currency Program" – Direct Farm MB.</i> |

| | | | |
|---|---|-----------------|---|
| 8 | Bread program for low income families in partnership with Carman Bakery and Access Credit Union | Apr – June 2020 | 18 households received bread on a weekly basis. |
|---|---|-----------------|---|

EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION WORKING GROUP

Working Group Members: **Allison Abbott-Wiebe, Bruce Wood**, Chris Hazel, Darcy Redekopp, Colin Hay, Louise Duncan

This working Group was able to develop their Action plan however due to Covid 19 restrictions over this past year activity completion was limited and will continue in 2021 as restrictions allow.

| | ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION | DATE COMPLETED | STATUS, OUTCOME or COMMENTS |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Centralized and accessible resource location to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to promote/display and peruse work opportunities available in Carman and area; accommodate an employment consultant/coach to support Carman and area residents in their work search; access a computer/Wi-Fi | Ongoing, delayed due to Covid 19 | Identified the following resources needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible location for Carman and area residents to be able to work on job search tasks. Purchase a computer, printer for accessible use |
| 2 | Employment consultant/coach to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to look for work; Coordinate subsidized rides to work; Resume writing; Direct counselling towards suitable work – based in interest & abilities | Ongoing, delayed due to Covid 19. | Will be connecting with Regional Connections who may have originally had a satellite office/coach in Carman |
| 3 | Build awareness of/enhance what Carman already has for education and training: High School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> internship opportunities – support transition from laborer to certified/accredited credit for employment | Ongoing, delayed due to Covid 19. | Identified first steps to be completed in 2021: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To meet with Superintendent/CEO Terry Osiowy, PRSD Explore what has been successful in other communities. |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partnership opportunities between local businesses, post secondary institutes and local school systems • math & employability skill development as requirement for success in trades <p>Post Secondary (target age group 17-30 yrs.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education opportunities for trades & Manitoba standards • Challenge the test <p>Evening skills development opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in developing an evening welding course to generate interest | | |
|--|---|--|--|

COMMUNITY RESOURCE LIST WORKING GROUP

Working Group Members: **Debbie Iverson**, Wendy Durand, Carol Brown

| | ACTIVITIES | DATE COMPLETED | STATUS OR OUTCOME |
|---|--|-----------------------|--|
| 1 | Explore options for a comprehensive community resource listing | Nov. 2020 | Connected with 211 Manitoba, current provincial resource accessible online and new phone line access. |
| 2 | To promote awareness and use of 211 Manitoba locally | In progress | Will be receiving posters from 211 Manitoba in 2021 to post in Carman and surrounding communities to increase awareness. |
| 3 | To add more local resource information into the 211 MB directory | Ongoing | Delayed due to covid 19. 2021: Will start to contact and encourage organizations to input info on 211 MB website. |

DID YOU KNOW:

- Grocery Assistance Program – Carman and Area Ministerial Association – Local community churches work together to provide grocery assistance vouchers within Carman and nearby surrounding communities.

Annual Grocery Assistance Vouchers:

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| ❖ 2020 - \$24,386.11 | General Voucher: \$100/family, \$75/single |
| ❖ 2019 - \$22,316.02 | General Voucher: \$75/family, \$50/single |
| ❖ 2018 - \$15,370.77 | General Voucher: \$75/family, \$50/single |
| ❖ 2017 - \$11,839.79 | |

Additional Note:

Jan. 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021 - \$8,502.61 General Voucher: \$100/family, \$75/single

- Carman Wellness Connections is a member of **Make Poverty History Manitoba**.
Make Poverty History Manitoba “is a multi-sector collaborative coalition committed to changing public policy to achieve a Manitoba without poverty.”
Check out their website at makepovertyhistorymb.com for valuable information and ways you can get involved and lend a voice for advocacy.

Grow A Row Stand REPORT

Colin Hay, Sept. 3rd, 2020

Carman Wellness Connections (CWC) is a nonprofit organization, formed out of the roundtable to address poverty that took place last year in Carman. Within CWC, 8 community working groups were established; one of which is the Food Security working group (FSWG). After establishing the members of the FSWG, a meeting was held to establish an action plan; including projects to work on, time frames and necessary funding. This report is meant to indicate the effectiveness of the Grow a Row Stand this first year, one of 3 other projects started, and how funding these projects has and can help our community

Heidi Grant, a member of the FSWG, was the main leader involved in this project. She elected to have the stand placed on her and her family’s property on the corner of 8th Street and 4th Avenue, NW. With a cost of \$400 for materials, provided by Southern Heath-Santé Sud through their Healthy Living Together Grant, construction labour and stain for the wood donated (Brad Dunn), the stand was built. An Instagram page, run by Heidi, was made on June 21st. As of Sept. 3rd, it is followed by 140 people, including businesses, many local. A poster was made and distributed, it can be seen in many locations around town. On July 22nd, CBC interviewed FSWG member Terra Houston about the stand.



Grow A Row Project Sharing Garden Produce

Give a wonderful donation of fresh nutrition and encourage gardening within your community. We have a drop off/pick up stand location open for residents of Carman/Dufferin to use.

Got seeds & soil? Grow a row for your community! When you have extra fruits and vegetables from your garden that you can't use, you can drop it off at the 'Grow a Row' stand in Carman.

Freely Give, Freely Take. Fresh support for our community. There's nothing better than fresh garden fruits & vegetables. Pick up the food you need when you want. Food will also be distributed to Community Suppers & Back Door.

Drop off / Pick up
Fruit & Vegetable Stand
Corner of 8th St. NW & 4th Ave. NW, Carman, MB

Carman Wellness Connections Food Security Working Group

@growarowproject

CARMANWELLNESSCONNECTIONS@GMAIL.COM TEXT: 204-750-2726



TUNE IN TO:
CBC radio
@ 12:30 Pm Today!

To hear about Our Community 'Grow A Row' Vegetable Stand

food into the hands of folk who may not have access to purchasing it on a frequent basis, or lack access to growing it themselves. This is this first year the stand has been in use, built after the timeframe of garden seeding. Despite that, it can safely be said the donations to the stand have surpassed all expectation. From the generosity of local gardeners, to the beauty of the local farmers who grow food for a living, donating without the thought of losing business. The stand has not been empty, once, since the beginning of August. Some of those local farm businesses include: Kroeker Farms, KAN Grow Farms and Dufferin Market Gardens.



We have noticed a huge range of persons that use this stand; people of all ages, cultures, diets, economic backgrounds, and different ability. Many kids come from around the neighborhood on foot collecting for their families. People who do canning. Many seniors are using the stand, who once had gardens or were raised around gardening their whole lives but cannot physically labour in the garden anymore. Folk with housing situations that do not allow them to plant a garden. On August 20th, an anonymous note was found tucked in the stand, this inspired a note bucket to hear about who uses the stand and what they think of it.



We believe it is safe to say the stand has surpassed our expectations in it's first year. From the generosity of local gardeners and farmers, to the gratitude of the people taking food from the stand, this project has been a complete success. Thank you to all involved in making the stand a reality, and for your continued support



Comments from individuals accessing the Vegetable Stand:

- ❖ *Thanks so much, you made me healthy!!*
- ❖ *Great selection, great idea, food security is so important.*
- ❖ *Thankyou. Able to make a lovely meal from items donated.*
- ❖ *I love the stand. You are doing wonders for the community.*
- ❖ *Thanks for doing this. I pick up cucs for fridge dills to give away to others*
- ❖ *Good idea. Hope it is here again next year.*
- ❖ *What a wonderful idea. Thanks for thinking of it!*
- ❖ *I have enjoyed the fresh veggies. Thanks*
- ❖ *Thanks to all the gardeners. Much appreciated. Great idea.*
- ❖ *This is a great idea. Thank you.*
- ❖ *Thank you for free food.*
- ❖ *It is very nice. Thank you.*
- ❖ *It is great. Thanks a lot!*
- ❖ *Thank you for the good Heart!*
- ❖ *Thank you kindly. I think this is a wonderful thing. There are some of us who can't afford to buy this stuff often.*
- ❖ *I am on income assistance and I love getting to pick through fresh veggies.*
- ❖ *Sad winter is coming, but hope to see you next year.*
- ❖ *Best thing ever. So thankful I have a place to bring extra produce*
- ❖ *Great idea. I have had fresh veggies often, thanks so much.*

Carman Wellness Connections Inc

Financial Statements

December 31, 2020

Carman Wellness Connections Inc

December 31, 2020

Table of Contents

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Notice to Reader | 1 |
| Statement of Financial Position | 2 |
| Statement of Operations | 3 |
| Statement of Changes in Net Assets | 4 |

George & Associates Chartered Professional Accountants Inc.
Box 567, 113 2nd Street SW
Carman, Manitoba R0G 0J0

Notice to Reader

On the basis of information provided by the organization's management, we have compiled the statement of financial position of Carman Wellness Connections Inc as at and the statement of operations and statement of changes in net assets for the year then ended.

We have not performed an audit or a review engagement in respect of these financial statements and, accordingly, we express no assurance thereon.

Readers are cautioned that these statements may not be appropriate for their purposes.

A partner of this accounting firm signed cheques on the bank account of Carman Wellness Connections Inc and has made management decisions during the year.

Prior to compiling the financial statements of Carman Wellness Connections Inc, this partner performed bookkeeping services, which included the preparation of journal entries and a trial balance.



George & Associates Chartered Professional Accountants Inc.

Carman, Manitoba
March 24, 2021

Carman Wellness Connections Inc

Statement of Financial Position

December 31, 2020

| | <u>2020</u> |
|---|-------------------------|
| Assets | |
| Current Assets | |
| Bank | \$ 12,200 |
| Accounts receivable | |
| Province of Manitoba receivables | |
| GST receivable | <u>48</u> |
| | <u>12,248</u> |
| Total Assets | <u><u>\$ 12,248</u></u> |
| | |
| Liabilities and Net Assets | |
| Current Liabilities | |
| Accounts payable | <u>\$ -</u> |
| Total Liabilities | <u>-</u> |
| Net Assets | |
| Unrestricted net assets | <u>12,248</u> |
| Total Liabilities and Net Assets | <u><u>\$ 12,248</u></u> |

Approved on Behalf of the Board:

_____, Director

_____, Director

Carman Wellness Connections Inc

Statement of Operations

For the Year Ended December 31, 2020

| | <u>2020</u> |
|--|-------------------------|
| Revenue | |
| Grants | \$ 16,930 |
| Donation | <u>520</u> |
| Total revenue | <u>17,450</u> |
| Expenses | |
| Interest and bank charges | 4 |
| Professional fees | 373 |
| Other operating expenses | <u>4,825</u> |
| Total operating expenses | <u>5,202</u> |
| Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenses | <u><u>\$ 12,248</u></u> |

Carman Wellness Connections Inc

Statement of changes in net assets

For the Year Ended December 31, 2020

| | <u>2020</u> |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenses | <u>\$ 12,248</u> |
| Net Assets - closing | <u><u>\$ 12,248</u></u> |



Statistical Report for the
2020 Pilot Season of the
Manitoba Community
Food Currency Program

Prepared by Direct Farm Manitoba
October 2020



Table of Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Introduction..... | 3 |
| Farmers' Market Data..... | 4 |
| Vendor Data..... | 7 |
| Participant Data..... | 9 |
| Conclusions and Next Steps..... | 14 |

Introduction to the Manitoba Community Food Currency Program

The Manitoba Community Food Currency Program is a community building initiative that empowers members of our community who frequently experience barriers to accessing healthy whole food by providing them with access to community food currency to purchase food directly from participating farmers' markets across Manitoba. Together, Direct Farm Manitoba, market coordinators, and community partner organizations promote food literacy and food security by making local, seasonal food more accessible to participants. The Manitoba Community Food Currency Program is modelled after the highly successful British Columbia Association of Farmers' Markets (BCAFM) Coupon Nutrition Program, which has been running for over a decade.

Participating farmers' markets engage with health and social service organizations within their community who are already connected with people who would benefit from better access to healthy whole foods. These community partner organizations select individuals and families who would benefit from increased food security and decreased social isolation. Direct Farm Manitoba provides small denomination community food currency to their community partners to be distributed to participants, who can use the community currency to purchase food from participating farmers. Farmers are reimbursed by Direct Farm Manitoba through program funding. Care and attention were paid to how community currency is designed, accepted and redeemed to ensure that use is not stigmatizing nor impacts anybody's right to privacy. The program also includes limited funds for community partner organizations to create local solutions to transportation barriers for participants.

Direct Farm Manitoba exists to represent and advocate for the direct marketers of our agricultural sector. The Manitoba Community Food Currency Program is a win for producers, farmers' markets, and their communities, and therefore fits perfectly within our mandate.

This program aims to provide these positive outcomes:

- Access to fresh, local, whole foods and increased overall food security outcomes for members of the community facing poverty and food insecurity
- Strengthened communities through relationship building, increased health outcomes, and improved overall mental health resulting from inclusion, decreased social isolation, positive community experience, and healthy eating habits
- Support local resilient agriculture through the direct support of Manitoba farmers and producers through increased sales

The Manitoba Community Food Currency Program was piloted during the 2020 farmers' market season, partnering with five community partners, three farmers' markets, and one food hub to support organizations who would have been otherwise unable to participate to due to Covid-19-related changes to their operations, or lack of proximity to a farmers' market. Partner organizations distributed \$21 in food coupons weekly to each participant for 15 weeks, from mid-June to mid-October. Towards the end of the season, participants, vendors, and market coordinators were surveyed for their feedback regarding the pilot season. The following is a collection of their responses, and an analysis of the numerical data they provide.

Farmers' Market Data

Market coordinators at the St. Norbert Farmers' Market, Carman Farmers' Market, and Morden Farmers' Market, as well as equivalent staff at Fireweed Food Co-op, were surveyed as the 2020 pilot season came to close. Direct Farm Manitoba inquired about their experiences delivering the program – how difficult it was, how supported they felt in the process, how the program impacted their markets. These are some of their responses.

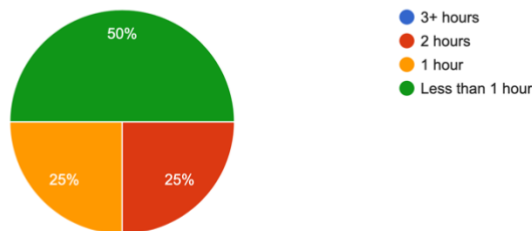
Availability of Eligible Items

Program participants were able to purchase fruit, vegetables, eggs, dairy, meat, fish, cut herbs, and nuts with their currency. Of these eligible items, 100% of markets had participating vendors selling fruit, vegetables, cut herbs, and meat. 50% of markets had participating vendors selling eggs, dairy, and fish, and none had nuts available.

Ease of Implementation, Market Time Commitment

All market coordinators responded that the program was simple to implement, with one commenting that “the initial handing out of the flyers and explanation at that time took the most time, but was not onerous.” When polled regarding their weekly staff and volunteer time commitment required to run the program, 75% were found to spend one hour or less per week. Fireweed Food Co-op reported a greater time commitment of two hours per week, perhaps

How much staff/volunteer time did the currency program require per week?
4 responses



owing to the alternative model being used (direct purchases from the food hub by community partner organizations, rather than participant purchases over the course of a weekly market) and to the fact that they served two community partners, while markets worked with only one community partner each.

Impact on Markets

All markets saw net-positive impacts from the Currency Program over the course of the pilot season. At a mid-season check-in, representatives from the Carman Farmers' Market commented that the program was driving traffic to the market, and had added an additional sense of community. As a result of that shift in the market atmosphere, an unconnected Free Food Stall project was launched, allowing vendors to donate food and community members to “shop” there at no cost. This program was used by many of the participants in the currency program to further stretch their food budgets. In the final survey, a representative from

Carman noted that “there were new customers, and a great appreciation for what was available.”

In Morden, a similar experience was had, with new customers being attracted to the market through the program, and vendors experiencing increased sales as a result. Morden’s market coordinator shared that “[the Currency Program] greatly increased the traffic to our market and vendors sold more products because of this program. It was a huge benefit to our market! It exposed our market to customers that normally would not shop at our market.”

St. Norbert observed a particular interest among program participants in purchasing from meat vendors, indicating the importance of affordable proteins to household food security. St. Norbert’s market coordinator writes, “We were very pleased to see a focus on proteins through the program, with many of the coupons going to meat vendors,” and adds that vendors noted that many program participants seemed to be new attendees of the market.

Fireweed Food Co-op’s experience was different again in this regard, as they were not operating the Currency Program at a weekly market, but were nonetheless able to see a significant positive impact from the program on their operations. They shared the following:

“It was extremely helpful to us, in this first season running the food hub, to have the boost in guaranteed weekly demand for our food hub suppliers.... it was a helpful anchor customer that created some stability in our weekly orders, and gave our farmer suppliers confidence in the prospect of sales. It was also really great to work with especially Norwest Co-op, who we are now planning to continue working with after the Food Currency program wraps up.”

Additionally, 100% of markets observed the same program participants returning to the market week after week, indicating that community partners accurately identified participants with a need and desire to be involved in this program, and to shop locally.

Fine-tuning Processes

Feedback from participating farmers’ markets about their experiences managing the Manitoba Community Food Currency Program at their individual markets will help us expand the program efficiently to serve more communities throughout the province in the future. While all markets responded that they felt prepared to implement the program through the training provided by Direct Farm Manitoba, and that training their vendors to receive currency was quite simple, we received several suggestions to further simplify the process for future program seasons. These include:

- Providing stands for program signs at vendor tables, as unweighted paper was unwieldy
- Further emphasizing the Currency Program in advertising and public engagement, eg. Social media posts highlighting farmers’ markets’ experiences of the program, signage for markets to display advertising their participation

- Providing pre-prepared forms for tracking currency vouchers received and reimbursement owed to vendors

Among the goals of the Manitoba Community Food Currency Program is to support the success of farmers' markets in Manitoba, and as such these suggestions will be strongly considered for next season.

Final Thoughts

"Excellent program. We hope you will be able to continue on a larger scale in the future. It is an important support for those who might otherwise not access quality local food, at the same time supporting our local producers when they need it the most."

- Le Marché St. Norbert Farmers' Market

"The program was well received by vendors and customers alike! Thank you!"

- Carman Farmers' Market

"We were very appreciative to be able to be part of this program this year, and would love to continue to be part of it into the future. If you ever need extra human-power for grant writing, or would like a letter of support for further funding, we'd be more than glad to provide the help. Thanks for your work!"

- Fireweed Food Co-op

"Great Program! Hope to see it continue."

- Morden Farmers' Market

Vendor Data

Vendors at each of the participating markets - Le Marché St. Norbert Farmers' Market, Carman Farmers' Market, and Morden Farmers' Market – responded to an online survey regarding their experiences with the Manitoba Community Food Currency Program throughout the 2020 farmers' market season. Vendors were the first contact with the program for participants, outside of the community partner organizations they were already frequenting. They were key in creating a welcoming environment, and ensuring the success of the program. The following are their reflections.

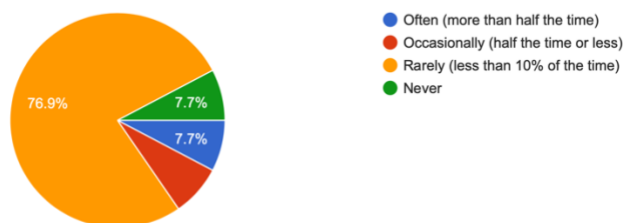
Impact on Sales and Operations

Vendors unanimously reported that currency was easy to accept during the course of the market, which indicates that training of vendors by markets and of participants by community organizations was sufficient to streamline the program. While three of the thirteen respondents (23%) indicated that they had had no or few sales through the Currency Program, the remaining ten vendors indicated that sales were somewhat or dramatically increased (77%). Several vendors commented that they believed word-of-mouth between participants was driving additional traffic to their stalls, and others mentioned the community-building they experienced as they got to know participants throughout the season. One vendor writes:

“We thought it was a great opportunity to educate everyone about quality, local products and ingredient and to promote the importance of eating well. Participants probably would never otherwise have the chance to try these delicious local products, speak to someone directly to have some of their questions answered without this initiative.”

Another vendor commented that their “sales increased significantly [and their] experience with participants was very pleasant,” noting that participants “seemed excited about being able to purchase goods at the market.”

How often did you observe program participants purchasing items in addition to what they bought with currency?
13 responses

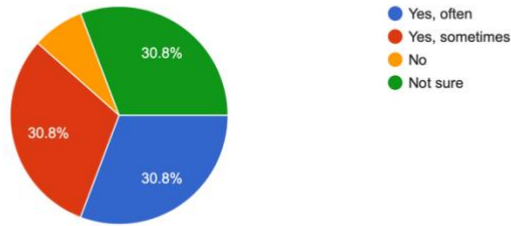


Twelve of thirteen respondents (92%) noted that participants purchased additional goods besides what they bought with their currency vouchers at least some of the time, adding further economic benefits to vendors beyond what the program itself provided.

Vendors also commented that they enjoyed getting to know participants, and 8 of 13 (62%) reported seeing the same participants return week after week. This may indicate some relationship-building between vendors and participants, as well as potential variation in prices between vendors, leading price-conscious participants to choose some vendors repeatedly. Regardless of the reasons, these responses are encouraging and point to the success of the

Manitoba
Community Food
Currency Program in
addressing
community building
and social isolation
alongside the issues
of food security and
access.

Did you observe the same participants coming back to purchase food from you week after week?
13 responses



One vendor at the St. Norbert Farmers' Market summed up their experience as follows:

“We thought it was wonderful. We think the program should definitely continue and expanded in the future. There should be more initiatives like this at more local farmers' markets.”

Participant Data

Direct Farm Manitoba asked community partner organizations to distribute surveys to their program participants partway through the pilot season. Demographic information was gathered, as well as feedback regarding the benefits of the program for individuals and families. Some community partners were unable to distribute all the currency they received to individuals, and opted to use the remaining vouchers to purchase supplies for group activities. These experiences are captured and reported below, separately from the data for individual currency use.

Demographics

Morden (Many Hands, Community Partner; Morden Farmers' Market; 46 respondents)

- 70% of participants were shopping for their families, and 30% were shopping as individuals
- 93% of participants were non-Indigenous, and 7% identified as Indigenous, Inuit, or Metis
- 100% of respondents said they used their currency at the farmers' market almost every week
- 61% of participants already shopped at farmers' markets before becoming part of the Currency Program, while 39% were not market shoppers before accessing currency
- 57% of participants drove to the market, while 9% carpooled and 30% walked/biked/rolled/skated/etc.; an additional 4% used another unspecified form of transportation
- 89% of participants purchased food at the market in addition to what they bought with currency, and 11% did not
- 91% of respondents said they/their families ate more vegetables and fruit because of their participation in the Currency Program, while 9% said they ate the same amount as before the program

Carman (Carman Food Security/Carman United Church/Carman Wellness Connections; Carman Farmers' Market; 7 respondents)

- 86% of participants were shopping for their families, and 14% shopped as individuals
- 71% of participants were non-Indigenous, and 29% identified as Indigenous, Inuit, or Metis
- 100% of respondents said they used their currency at the farmers' market almost every week
- 14% of participants already shopped at farmers' markets before becoming part of the Currency Program, while 86% were not market shoppers before accessing currency

- 71% of participants drove to the market, while 14% carpoled and 43% walked/biked/rolled/skated/etc. (respondents were able to select multiple options, and sums will not add to 100%)
- 86% of participants purchased food at the market in addition to what they bought with currency, and 14% did not
- 100% of respondents said they/their families ate more vegetables and fruit because of their participation in the Currency Program

Winnipeg (Behavioural Health Foundation; Le Marche St. Norbert Farmers' Market; 9 respondents)

- 100% of participants were shopping as individuals (not for families)
- 67% of participants were non-Indigenous, and 33% identified as Indigenous, Inuit, or Metis
- 44% of respondents said they used their currency at the farmers' market almost every week, while an additional 44% used their currency monthly, and 11% used their currency less than once per month
- 22% of participants already shopped at farmers' markets before becoming part of the Currency Program, while 67% were not market shoppers before accessing currency
- 100% of participants walked/biked/rolled/skated/etc. to the market; one respondent used the bus as well
- 44% of participants purchased food at the market in addition to what they bought with currency
- 56% of respondents said they ate more vegetables and fruit because of their participation in the Currency Program (only 56% of respondents answered this question; 100% of respondents to this question said they ate more vegetables and fruit because of their participation)

Community Partner Feedback

"We've been able to provide high quality protein in hampers (60+per week) and meals (60 per day); and this program has also supported our daily sandwich program (distributed to 60 people each day who are experiencing homelessness). This program has really improved the nutritional value of what we are able to offer the community; at a time when food security has plummeted."

- West Central Women's Resource Centre (partnered with Fireweed Food Co-op)

"With currency unused by participants, we planned three Saturday dinners where the participants worked with the BHF chef to make a fantastic meal from food purchased at the market. Participants learned new ways to cook food they do not normally eat. These participants thoroughly enjoyed the cooking demonstrations as well as the dinners! This has been a very beneficial program and we hope it will be offered again in the future."

- Behavioural Health Foundation (partnered with Le Marche St. Norbert Farmers' Market)

Participants' Experiences, in Their Own Words

Participants were asked to share how the currency benefitted them over the summer. Here are some of their responses:

- “It was a great help and savings to our family since we are newcomers. It is also an experience [of] something new that makes me feel proud to live here in Morden.”
- “As a single mother of 3, with a husband who hasn't been very supportive of his children yet, this program has been a tremendous blessing in aiding us to buy fresh fruit and veggies (and to be honest, the occasional steak I wouldn't normally be able to treat us all to!) The food hamper does the best they can, and while I am also extremely grateful for the Hub, having the option to feed my kids FRESH vegetables and not canned, is awesome!”
- “It was emotionally uplifting, helped me purchase meat to put in my freezer for the Winter. It was nice to have support - to see helping faces, and share smiles, chat. I am kinda a hermit - and this brought me out to meet some of our local helpers.”
- “It really helps us a lot especially this time of pandemic. We were able to buy food without worrying that's out of the budget.”
- “It help[ed] my family a lot especially now that I don't have a job[.] I can still put healthy food on our table without spending too much.”
- (Notes from staff conversation with a participant) “This program is lifechanging for him. He is very pleased with the food currency for the farmers' market. He was about to get a lot of produce.”
- “Some vegetables I could not grow I was able to get at the farmers' market. The currency I spent at the farmers' market eased my grocery bill at the local co-op grocery and allowed us to eat some foods we wouldn't have eaten otherwise.”

We asked participants to share something they learned through their participation in the currency program. They shared the following:

- “Canada is [a] northern country, but local harvest is great.”
- “I made some green bean soup and it was delicious!”
- “When different food is in the season, how to cook local foods.”

- “I bought a melon and to my surprise, the inside of it was color[ed] green and it’s my first time to taste it and it’s really sweet.”
- “We got to try different meat and vegetables for our family that is new for us [because] we're from a different country.”
- “I became familiar with the seasons fruit, especially the vegetables that we don't have in our country before.”
- “I have learned how to appreciate more every little thing and support our local farmers.”
- “It inspired me to eat healthier, and have vegetables at every meal!”

Participants had some other feedback, which may help inform future seasons of the Manitoba Community Food Currency Program. The following is a representative sample:

- (Notes from a staff conversation with a participant) “[Participant] visited the market for the first time – impressed by the signage, very inviting, natural and positive-looking, not stigmatizing. Participant commented on the high prices – they are not used to paying such premium prices for food.”
- (Notes from a staff conversation with a participant) “Don’t have to worry about change. Coupons are easy to use.”
- “I had a great experience. The vendors were familiar with coupons, no awkwardness on either of our parts. I felt good using coupons to support our community (and they were extremely helpful as prices can be hefty at the market). Always friendly vendors and extremely exceptional quality.”
- “My family are so thankful for this program. This also became our friends’ weekly meet up to chat and compare what was good that they bought from the Farmers’ Market a week before. Hope to be able to participate again next time. Thank you so much.”
- “Just a request, I tried to look for an egg but no one sell it in farmers market. I think this is one of the basics too! Thank you so much!” (Morden)
- “Bread would be nice.”
- “Could you extend the program to include some canned vegetables or fruits, as these last longer and some people don’t know how to can or have access to be able to can their own produce?”

- “Sometimes the signs were hard to see at the vendors.”
- “What a wonderful program this is and a blessing to our family! Thank you!”

Conclusions and Next Steps

Returning to the primary goals of the Manitoba Community Food Currency Program, it is clear that the 2020 pilot season was a success. Participants experienced increased access to fresh, local, whole foods and increased food security. Participants and vendors built relationships and enjoyed positive community experiences, which was especially important given the isolation felt by many as they self-isolated and social-distanced due to Covid-19. Farmers noted increased sales, new customers, and repeat business, and Fireweed Food Co-op benefited from regular orders in their first season, giving farmers more options to sell the food they grew and raised. Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic in delivering a program of this size, as well as the additional strain pandemic protocols placed on markets and community organizations, markets and community partners worked together to provide healthy, local food to community members who needed it more than ever.

Going forward, it is clear that programs like this are wanted and needed throughout the province. It is the intention of Direct Farm Manitoba to expand the Manitoba Community Food Currency Program for the 2021 farmers' market season, and funding will be sought to that end.

Direct Farm Manitoba is grateful for the support of the BC Association of Farmers' Markets, whose existing program inspired and informed the creation of the Manitoba Community Food Currency Program.

DFM would also like to thank the Winnipeg Foundation and the Canadian Agricultural Partnership Ag Action Manitoba Program, whose generous funding enabled the provision of this program to our communities.