

Hunger Count 2014

Summary

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to summarize the survey information obtained from the respondents of the 2014 Hunger Count Questionnaire. A survey was sent out to various organizations in Medicine Hat to discover what types of food services were being provided by the organizations. An invitation to take part in the Hunger Count discussion on May 27, 2014 was included with each survey. The primary goal of the Hunger Count was to start discussion around hunger in the City of Medicine Hat. Another goal was aimed towards establishing a baseline for the types of services being provided and what organizations can do to move individuals/families towards food security and out of crisis.

THE FOOD COUNT

METHODS

A six question survey was mailed out to 106 agencies/organizations in April 2014 in addition to an invitation to the Hunger Count discussion. The organizations were asked to respond to the survey through email or mail by May 2, 2014. The six questions were as follows (Appendix A):

1. What kind of food services do you provide to community members? I.e. Hot meals, food/grocery vouchers, food items, community/collective kitchens, food buying clubs, community gardens/urban

agriculture, creating and/or promoting food policy?

2. How often do you provide these services in your organization? Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Annually?

3. How many people are served?

4. What is the dollar value or weight of the services provided?

5. In what capacity are your services being provided – crisis or ongoing food support?

6. Are there other agencies that you work with or refer to? Do you track the referral? If so, how many people have you referred to other organizations?

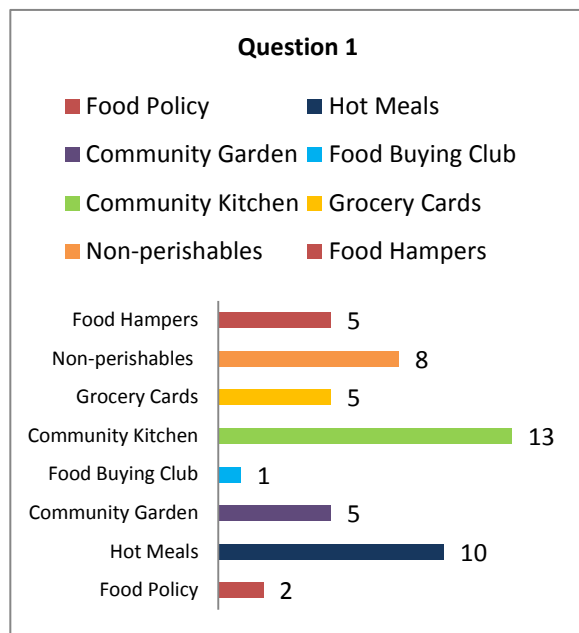
FINDINGS

The following is a summary of the data collected from the six questions based on the 23 respondents, resulting in an overall response rate of 22%.

Two of the surveys were returned unopened. 7 surveys were answered by May 2, 2014. At this time emails were sent out and phone calls were made to those organizations who had not responded. On the date of the Hunger Count Meeting, May 27, 23 organizations had responded to the survey and the invitation to attend the meeting.

Question 1: What kind of food services do you provide to community members? I.e. Hot meals, food/grocery vouchers, food items, community/collective kitchens, food

buying clubs, community gardens/ urban agriculture, creating and/or promoting food policy?



Question 2: How often do you provide these services in your organization? Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Annually? Consistent themes that were identified are as follows:

	Hot meal	Grocery cards/ voucher	Food Hampers	Community Kitchens	Community Gardens	Food Buying Club	Provide Food Source from Food Bank	Non-perishable	Food Policy
Needs Basis		2	1				1		
Annually			1		5				
Monthly		2	1	11		1			
Bi-weekly				2					
1day/wk	4	1	1					1	
2-3 days/wk								2	
5 days/wk)	5	2	1				2		
7 days/wk	1							1	1

Question 3: How many people are served?

Each theme had varied responses to this question.

Hot Meals - For respondents that serve one or more hot meals per week, there were varied responses. They will be listed for easier reading. Respondents reported serving:

- 55-70 people a day (one meal)
- 125 people per week
- 650 people daily
- 60-85 people once per week; increases to 90-110 during summer months; 120-140 for the Christmas meal
- One respondent serves up to 500 women and children annually

Grocery Cards/Vouchers –ranging from 1-5 cards per week to 6-10 per month.

Christmas Hampers – one respondent reported giving out 1160 Christmas Hampers in 2013.

Community Kitchen – one respondent reported serving approximately 30 per month and another respondent reported serving 45 women and children annually in their community kitchen. There are an additional 11 kitchens which serve varying numbers of participants each month

Food Buying Club- One respondent recorded approximately 172 people ordered food at wholesale prices each month.

Community Garden – It was difficult to quantify the amount of people served,

though there were 56 garden plots reported.

Non-perishables (various donors) –15 people daily, 10-50 individuals per week, another respondent reported serving 25-30 per month and the other respondent reported serving 608 individuals since February 2013.

Food Hampers (sourced from various donors) – one respondent reported serving 5 families per week and another reported serving 45-65 individuals per month.

Food Policy – the food policy respondent reported serving individuals region wide in four school districts. The CFCA Food Charter has 23 signatories representing various organizations and municipalities. It was difficult to quantify the amount of people served.

Food Hampers (non-perishables, meat and produce) – one respondent reported serving 5,459 adults and 2,285 children from July 2013 to May 2014.

“Our work is done in collaboration and consultation with the school districts. We advocate that healthy children are better learners. Therefore food security and nutrition are the priorities that have ongoing precedence in every meeting with the school jurisdiction”

Taryn Neva – Alberta Health Services:
Healthy Children and Youth

Question 4: What is the dollar value or weight of the services provided?

- ❖ Dollar amount per month- approximately \$5105-\$5405
- ❖ Dollar amount per year- approximately \$121,355
- ❖ Weight (lbs.) per year- 231,816lbs

Question 5: In what capacity are your services being provided – crisis or ongoing food support?

- ❖ Ongoing support 43.5%
- ❖ Crisis Support 13%
- ❖ Ongoing and Crisis Support 39.1%
- ❖ No response 4.4%

Question 6: Are there other agencies that you work with or refer to? Do you track the referral? If so, how many people have you referred to other organizations?

- ❖ No response 50%
- ❖ Referrals Tracked 13%
- ❖ Referrals not tracked 37%

Referrals

Of the respondents that stated that they do referrals (tracked or not), the following agencies were named as referrals – Food Bank, the Link Pantry, McMan Emergency Food Distribution, Mental Health, AADAC, Community Worker, Christ the King Church, Hope Street Compassionate Ministry, Alberta Health Services, Alberta Works, Crisis Assistance Network, Medicine Hat Community Housing Society, Metis Trading

Company, Medicine Hat Youth Action Society, Hillcrest Church, Salvation Army, Sobeys, Meals on Wheels, St. John's Presbyterian Church, Dream Centre and the Medicine Hat College Students Association Food Bank.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On May 27, 2014 the Hunger Count Meeting was held at the Provincial Building. All respondents were invited to attend. The meeting was co-facilitated by Rob and Laurie Benn, of Positive Culture. Rob and Laurie facilitated the meeting as a World Café; a sorting of ideas about a Food Security Continuum with themes such as Crisis Assistance, Capacity Building, Leadership, Education and Policy. Rob and Laurie put together a 'graphic snapshot' of surveys that were received by May 18, 2014. Perhaps this visual could be used in demonstrations and presentations in the community to create more awareness and support of this project and the food security issue in Medicine Hat.

Some solutions that the participants at the Hunger Count Meeting identified were:

❖ **Coordinated Business Support:**

Participants identified that this solution would prevent donor fatigue, promote ownership of the issue and stable funding and sustainability in addition to creating a positive image and add value for business advertising. This solution would also allow for business to use

tax receipts and promote products that help their brand.

Participants identified the next steps needed to put this idea into action:

- Identifying potential business
- Approach Chamber of Commerce
- Develop promotional materials
- Education- sharing specific quality data

❖ **Crisis Access Linked to Capacity Building:**

Participants identified that by linking crisis access to capacity building, this would promote independence of consumers in addition to the collaboration and sharing resources. Economic benefit would result of the increased use of community resources. Initiatives would be community focused and ensure universal access.

Participants identified the next steps needed to put this idea into action:

- Identify agencies who can participate
- Collaboration with those agencies/businesses
- Pilot project
- "A Perfect World"

❖ **Improve awareness, education, volunteers for all:**

For people to collaborate there needs to be awareness of services that already exist. The cause of

hunger needs to be identified and solutions on how to solve it in addition providing education that people can do more than just give money or food is important.

Participants identified the next steps needed to put this idea into action:

- Increase our “who” list
- More action meetings- in person networking
- Promote/ better use of services/resources that currently exist
- Identifying what a “middle ground” that currently exist
- Budget planning program

❖ **Information (website) & Education:**

Accessible community resources are important. This solution encourages each agency keeps their page current and offer printable resources. This solution is a way to involve the consumer taking initiative in meeting their needs. This solution promotes less turn around and is more economical and time efficient.

Participants identified the next steps needed to put this idea into action:

- Advise all agencies of idea
- Need someone to spearhead honorarium provided by agencies
- Generic page for all input (map of the site)
- Trial run and feedback

- Continuous updates and improving

Quantifying the numbers of people served by services and agencies was a difficult task. Each agency that provides services to the community could contribute more quantifiable data in future evaluations by keeping track of people served by their agency.

For agencies that provide food items to consumers it is suggested that keeping track of where the food came from would be beneficial at quantifying the amount of food donated (i.e. public donations, food banks, other agencies).

There was inconsistency with answers of the survey that suggested some of the questions were not understood. Revisiting the evaluation to ensure consistent understanding of questions is needed.

The response rate of participants was low; however, being that this is the first Hunger Count this group has completed, the hope is that in future evaluations there is more participation from community agencies and services. Perhaps there will be more awareness created aiding in the increase of support and contribution of agencies.

It is recommended an annual Hunger Count should be completed for the City of Medicine Hat. With the growing amount of evidence in addition to the tools such as the ‘graphic snapshot’, this project has potential to gain momentum.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

Evidence from the responses received from the survey and meeting shows that agencies are providing food support; either crisis or ongoing food support and in some cases, both. It is clear that agencies and individuals in Medicine Hat recognize the food security problem. The goal of the survey and meeting was to identify a baseline of support services in Medicine Hat in hopes to assist agencies in identifying how to focus on moving individuals towards a more food secure quality of life rather than providing temporary relief.

Appendix A

Medicine Hat Hunger Count 2014

Please email the completed questionnaire found on the CFCA website (www.foodconnections.ca), by May 2nd, 2014 to aimee.sarsons@mymhc.ca. If you have any trouble finding the form, please contact Aimee. We are asking organizations to help us by completing the form electronically so that the information is easily accessible to compile a report and facilitate sharing.

Please respond to the questions below as they apply to your organization. If you need more room to respond due to multiple sub-groups, please use multiple copies of this document and use one questionnaire per group.

Organization Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

1. What kind of food services do you provide to community members? I.e. Hot meals, food/grocery vouchers, food items, community/collective kitchens, food buying clubs, community gardens/urban agriculture, creating and/or promoting food policy?

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