



growing community

**FOOD
PROCUREMENT
GUIDE**

INTRODUCTION

Community agencies often have limited access to fresh and nutritious food. Their access to healthy food is affected by funding constraints within the community sector as well as food distribution and procurement practices. As a result of existing practices, many community agencies in Toronto pay higher prices, spend more time on food procurement, and offer foods of lower nutritional quality than necessary.

Community sector stakeholders have realized that the use of collaborative purchasing solutions can support increased buying power as well as better nutrition and health outcomes. Community agencies have options besides the mainstream-market based food distribution services.

The Growing Community Food Procurement Guide aims to build understanding of the current challenges in food procurement within the community sector and highlight solutions that can support the sector's needs. Though the Guide reports on a variety of options available to agencies including community and private sector options, a particular emphasis has been placed on the community sector solutions. Non-profit community based solutions have been seen to be the most cost efficient solutions, and ones that often provide the most user friendly community service. They often offer food system change, namely non-profit collaborative purchasing solutions that offer increased buying power as well as better nutrition and health outcomes.

This guide is of particular interest to program coordinators and managers of community agencies in Toronto that provide food programs and services. It is meant to help stakeholders understand the complexity of community food distribution and procurement, highlight some of the common challenges faced by community agencies, and identify some of the available solutions.



KEY ISSUES

LIMITED AGENCY FUNDING & RESOURCES

Insufficient funding and resources contribute to the current food procurement challenges experienced by community agencies (Miller, et al, 2013). Staff are often responsible for both the task of programming and food procurement. Due to pressures of convenience and price, staff often struggle to ensure their purchasing aligns with healthy food goals. The sector's food procurement challenges are further compounded by the lack of adequate organizational infrastructure (e.g. storage spaces), and challenges coordinating food procurement at the organizational level.

HIDDEN COSTS OF TRADITIONAL RETAIL SOLUTIONS

The majority of organizations use mainstream, market based food procurement solutions, often on an ad-hoc basis. This creates inefficiencies in the use of agencies' limited funding and time. A high percentage of community agencies rely on chain grocery stores for food supplies. While retail stores offer convenience when purchasing small amounts of food and specialty food, community agencies pay retail rather than wholesale prices and incur considerable staff time and related overhead costs.

USE OF LARGE FOOD SERVICE DISTRIBUTORS

Large food service distributors, such as Sysco, also contribute to a sizable portion of food supplies used by community agencies. These distributors are often used for convenience, because food is delivered to the organization and orders can include other supplies, such as paper products, saving staff time. However, research has found these prices to be on average higher than independent wholesalers or non-profit solutions, and may offer foods of lower nutritional quality (Miller, et al, 2013). Most agencies source from more than one supplier, sometimes including expensive options such as local, organic suppliers or an online website from a retail store.

DELIVERY MINIMUMS

Agencies often rely more heavily on retail solutions because they are concerned that their purchases are too small to warrant a supplier delivery. However, research has found that agencies tend to over-estimate the size of the order that a non-profit supplier would require for delivery (based perhaps on the high minimums required by food service companies) (Miller, et al, 2013). FoodShare and Food Reach's minimums for delivery are much lower than the minimum that would be common for downtown deliveries from mainstream suppliers.

PRICING SCHEMES OF FOOD DISTRIBUTORS

Many large food service distributors fix prices for a while and then increase them after the relationship with the customer has been established. These increases are not necessarily apparent to agencies. Large suppliers also provide salespeople that help agencies shape their menu and drive their purchases, without due accountability or competition. Many large food service distributors also use rebate schemes as an inducement to purchase food. Although the rebate seems enticing, the distributor inevitably marks up the original price and the community agency pays an inflated price.

DIFFICULTY UNDERSTANDING THE OPTIONS

Supply decisions within the community sector are often made without exploration of the range of options. Because food distributors do not tend to disclose their prices online, unless customers set up an account, it is difficult for community agencies to compare current prices with other options. Many community agencies report a lack of knowledge about supply options. They often choose to continue with suppliers they have had long-standing contracts with, or make arrangements with suppliers that staff knew from previous workplaces.

COMMUNITY FOOD PROCUREMENT SOLUTIONS

Sector-specific suppliers can support efficient food procurement practices of community agencies and help them achieve their healthy eating goals. Although increasing the efficiency and quantity of fresh food supply will help address community food distribution and procurement challenges, system level solutions, and collective efforts are required to build a sustainable and equitable local community food system.

This guide highlights two dedicated non-profit distributors for the community sector, FoodShare and FoodReach, that are working towards food system change for the sector by offering solutions that aggregate purchases across community agencies to increase buying power for the sector as well as support better nutrition and health outcomes. FoodShare and FoodReach provide alternatives that can meet more of the community sector's specific product needs in category, format, service model, and price. This guide also lists other local private-sector food suppliers that: understand and are responsive to the needs of the community sector; the community sector has had positive experiences with; and share some of the values of the community sector (healthy, local-produced food where possible).

FoodShare Toronto is an innovative non-profit food distribution hub and a community food education centre, working with a network of like-minded partners. It is Canada's largest community food security organization. FoodShare is committed to serving communities that experience the most food insecurity in Toronto.

FoodReach is a collaboration led by PARC, Toronto Foundation for Student Success, Toronto Public Health, and the Metcalf Foundation to increase food security for low income marginalized populations in Toronto by increasing access to healthy affordable food in community based programming, Toronto District School Board student nutrition programs, and City of Toronto led food service provision. FoodReach has partners from the non-profit and public sectors that are committed to working together to aggregating their purchasing power for food procurement. These include FoodShare, The STOP, Creating Health Plus, City of Toronto social procurement policy working group, and the Ontario Food Terminal.

FOODREACH OVERVIEW

Providing healthy food on a low budget can be tough and time consuming for organizations supporting Toronto's most vulnerable populations. FoodReach provides a solution that gives community agencies and student nutrition programs the opportunity to take control of their food supply.

WHAT FOODREACH OFFERS



Fresh, high-quality, local food



Wholesale prices



Timely, convenient delivery



Consistent, reliable food supply



Easy, efficient purchasing process



Values-based procurement



Shared food solutions



ITS IMPACT



Contributes to people's health



Saves organizations money



Ensures food is there when needed



Helps with planning and budgeting



Allows time to focus on other things



Supports an equitable food system



Collaboratively addresses urban hunger

Through a multi-sectoral partnership, FoodReach provides community organizations with reliable, affordable access to healthy food options. By building a more equitable and efficient food supply, FoodReach is helping to reduce hunger for those most in need within communities throughout Toronto.

For more information, visit: [FoodReach.ca](https://www.foodreach.ca)

FOODREACH FACT SHEET

ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS



OWNERSHIP
non-profit



DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL
on-line portal,
consolidator/distributor



SCALE
small

GOODS



RANGE OF PRODUCTS
fresh produce, dairy, eggs,
bread



STATED PRODUCT QUALITY
high



LOCAL FOODS
whenever possible



TRANSPARENCY & LABELING
none



PACKAGING
individual items, cases

SERVICE



PROCUREMENT METHODS
direct purchase



CUSTOMER SUPPORT
business hours, phone
support



ORDERING PROCESS
online



DELIVERY
direct to customer in Toronto,
next day (if order before 2pm)



PROCESSING
washing, peeling, cutting

ECONOMICS



VOLUME DISCOUNTS
N/A



DELIVERY CHARGE
none



MINIMUM ORDER
\$50



FoodReach

Foodreach.ca

FOODSHARE OVERVIEW

FoodShare has been operating a non-profit wholesale food distribution network for over 15 years. FoodShare distributes about two million dollars worth of fresh produce annually at an affordable rate to local communities.

As part of its wholesale food distribution network, FoodShare operates three Good Food Programs that community agencies can purchase fresh produce through: the Bulk Produce Program, the Good Food Markets, and the Good Food Box.

There are four aspects of FoodShare's model that help community agencies save money:



Large quantities of produce are purchased from farmers and the Ontario Food Terminal at affordable rates



Produce purchased through the Bulk Produce Program and Good Food Box are pre-ordered and each type of Good Food Box contains the same contents



Volunteers help package the produce



FoodShare subsidizes the cost of the staff, warehouse rent, and delivery costs through donations and grants from the public, governments, and foundations

BULK PRODUCE PROGRAM

The Bulk Produce Program is a wholesale food distribution program that allows customers to order fresh food items for delivery. Customers receive a list of available items weekly with prices and place an order with FoodShare. FoodShare then purchases the food, and delivers it to customers on a weekly basis for a weekly minimum order of \$75. Through this program, FoodShare currently distributes fresh fruits and vegetables to 200 schools, 13 non-profit child care centres, 81 parenting centres, and 45 non-profit agencies across Toronto. Recent research found FoodShare's Bulk Produce Program to offer the most consistently affordable produce among the various food procurement options to community agencies* (Miller, et al, 2013).

*This research was conducted prior to the establishment of FoodReach.

For more information, visit: [FoodShare.net](https://www.foodshare.net)

FOODSHARE FACT SHEET

BULK PRODUCE PROGRAM

ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS



OWNERSHIP
non-profit



DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL
food hub



SCALE
medium

GOODS



RANGE OF PRODUCTS
fresh produce



STATED PRODUCT QUALITY
high



LOCAL FOODS
whenever possible, 52%



TRANSPARENCY & LABELING
local items identified on order form and invoice



PACKAGING
individual packages, bags, crates, boxes, bins

SERVICE



PROCUREMENT METHODS
direct purchase



CUSTOMER SUPPORT
business hours, phone support



ORDERING PROCESS
online, email, phone, text, fax



DELIVERY
weekly, bi-weekly or monthly in Toronto*



PROCESSING
cutting

ECONOMICS



VOLUME DISCOUNTS
N/A



DELIVERY CHARGE
none



MINIMUM ORDER
\$75

*Deliveries are on Mondays and Tuesdays, 4 hour window. Delivery days are at the discretion of FoodShare with consideration given to customer requests.

FoodShare
Foodshare.net

GOOD FOOD MARKETS AND MOBILE MARKETS

Good Food Markets are community markets that sell high quality, culturally appropriate, affordable vegetables and fruits. FoodShare works in partnership with community organizations and neighbourhood leaders to run the markets. FoodShare passes on tools and provides training and ongoing support to community partners and residents who manage the operational aspects of the market. FoodShare delivers top-quality fresh produce to the markets which it purchases from local farmers and the Ontario Food Terminal. FoodShare supports 30 markets across Toronto. To get a better idea of where the Good Food Markets are located visit foodshare.net.

FoodShare also operates Mobile Good Food Markets, which are travelling community food markets filled with fresh, quality vegetables and fruits. Mobile Good Food Markets are established through consultation with local communities about gaps in good food access to identify ideal areas for starting a market. FoodShare partners with community leaders or agencies to identify accessible locations to park the mobile bus and operate the market. In 2014, FoodShare served 11 stops across Toronto.

Both of these types of markets bring healthy produce to neighbourhoods where it might not otherwise be available, and where farmers' markets aren't viable because sales are too low to cover farmers' costs.

HOSTING A MARKET



GETTING STARTED

agencies can express interest in starting a market in their community



OFFER

FoodShare can support a local market with high quality, culturally appropriate, affordable vegetables and fruits



IMPACT

the market improves access to health food in community and capacity building for agency and residents

GOOD FOOD BOX

FoodShare purchases the highest quality produce and delivers the Good Food Boxes weekly to almost 200 stops across Toronto. The boxes are brimming with fresh produce, carefully selected to ensure freshness, affordability, and variety. The contents of the box are always changing and feature Ontario-grown products whenever possible. To get a better idea of what a box may contain visit foodshare.net.

Customers from all over Toronto are welcome to join the program. To order a box, agencies can call FoodShare to get connected with the person who coordinates a drop off in their area. Customers decide which box they would like and pay for it in advance. On delivery day they just pick it up from their local stop. Community agencies can also become a volunteer coordinator by starting a drop-off stop at their agency. Agencies who order 10 or more boxes at their stop get a free box for volunteering as a Good Food Box coordinator. Another alternative for agencies is to consider subsidizing Good Food Boxes for their clients.

The content of the boxes are affordably priced. For example, the value of the \$18 box at a regular supermarket often ranges between \$25 and \$27, depending on the store and the time of year.

GOOD FOOD BOX OPTIONS

OPTIONS FOR AGENCIES



order good food box(es) to be used in the community food programs



start a Good Food Box delivery stop at their agency



subsidize Good Food Boxes for their clients to access

GOOD FOOD BOX CHOICES



Good Food Box – Box of fresh fruits and vegetables – Large \$18, Small \$13



Wellness Box – Selection of portioned fresh fruits and vegetables, some already cut-up – \$13



Organic Box – Sustainably grown produce – Large \$34, Small \$24



Fruit Box – Box of fresh fruit – Regular \$13

OTHER TORONTO SUPPLIERS

Providing Agency Bulk Deliveries

SUPPLIER	PRODUCTS	CONTACT
100KM FOODS INC.	Produce, dairy, eggs, dry goods, meat	Paul Sawtell and Grace Mandarano 416-203-2164 100kmfoods.com
AUGUSTA FRUIT	Produce, dairy, eggs, dry goods	416-593-9754 augustafruit.com
BARAKA	Halal meat	416-792-6060
BESPOKE BUTCHER	Sustainable meat	647-349-4911 bespokebutchers.com
ESSENCE FOOD SERVICE	Produce, dairy, meat, fish, dry goods, frozen goods	Paul DiGiammatteo (416) 742-2702
FRESH CITY FARMS	Produce, dairy, eggs, meat, fish, dry goods, baked goods	1-888-537-0333 freshcityfarms.com
KURTIS COFFEE	Organic fair trade coffee	416-505-5244 kurtiscoffee.com
MR. DAIRY	Dairy	info@mr dairy.com 416-741-6455
SABRINA WHOLESALE FOODS	Dairy, dry goods, frozen goods	416-665-1533 sabrinafoods.com

Note: This is a partial list just for information. We encourage agencies to seek out suppliers who deliver.

A project of:

Food  **Share**

Foodshare.net

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Ontario