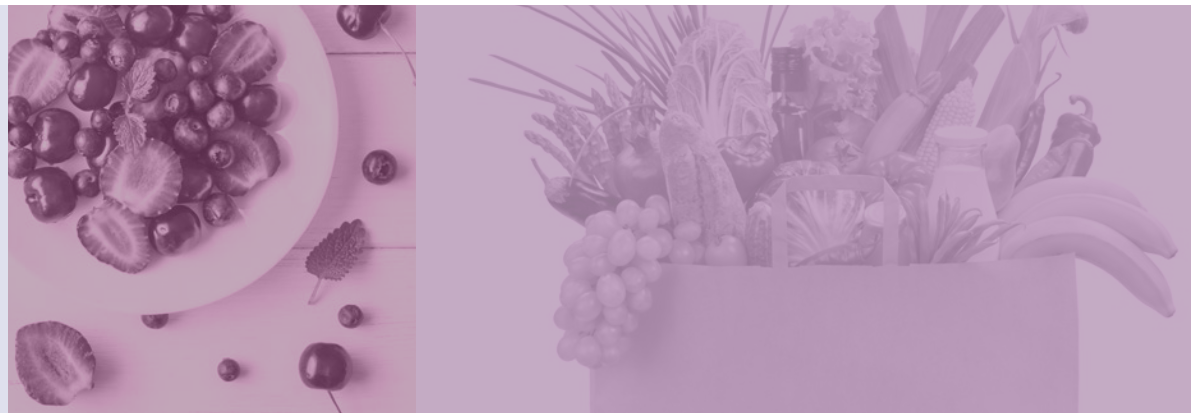


# Brampton Food Providers

## Data Collection Project

FINAL REPORT



Prepared for Region of Peel, United Way  
Greater Toronto & the City of Brampton

## Table of Contents

Honouring Canada’s First Peoples . . . . .	<b>3</b>
Acknowledgements . . . . .	<b>4</b>
Executive Summary . . . . .	<b>5</b>
Project Background . . . . .	<b>7</b>
Scope of Work & Approach / Methodology . . . . .	<b>8</b>
Deliverable One - Design Data Collection Tools and Processes	
Deliverable Two - Implement Data Collection Process and Capacity Building Plan	
Deliverable Three – Analysis / Results and Final Report	
The Brampton Food Story . . . . .	<b>12</b>
Observations and Recommendations . . . . .	<b>17</b>
Conclusion . . . . .	<b>21</b>
Appendices	
Appendix A - Message to the community . . . . .	<b>22</b>
Appendix B - Brampton Food Provider Table Facilitation Questions . . . . .	<b>24</b>
Appendix C - Capacity Building Assessment Questionnaire . . . . .	<b>25</b>
Appendix D - Capacity Building Volunteer Training Module . . . . .	<b>27</b>
Appendix E - Point-in-Time Flyer . . . . .	<b>30</b>
Appendix F - Point-in-Time QR Postcard . . . . .	<b>31</b>
Appendix G - Peel Food Map . . . . .	<b>32</b>

## Honouring Canada's First Peoples

We acknowledge that the land we are standing on is the traditional territory of many Nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

We acknowledge all Treaty peoples – including those who came here as settlers, as migrants either in this generation or in generations past, and those of us who, as forcibly dis-planted Africans, came here involuntarily, particularly as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. Today, we also pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.

We also acknowledge that a shared understanding of how our collective pasts have brought us to where we are today will help us walk together into a better future.

## Acknowledgements

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**Annie Bynoe** – Knights Table

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**Giovanni Rico** – Region of Peel

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## Executive Summary

This report summarizes the findings, observations and recommendations of the Brampton Food Providers Data Collection Project, undertaken in partnership with Region of Peel, United Way Greater Toronto, the City of Brampton and Brampton food providers. The project was initiated in 2020 by Peel Regional Council. They were concerned about food insecurity and hunger in Brampton, and requested greater understanding of the service providers who ensure residents have access to emergency food and residents ability to access the services.

According to Food Banks Canada, Hunger and food insecurity continues to be a widespread problem in Canada. While it started to stabilize in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic reversed that trend. Even with supports such as the Canada Emergency Relief Fund (CERB), in March 2021 alone, there were over 1.3 million visits to food banks across Canada—an increase of approximately 20% compared to 2019.<sup>1</sup> It is against this backdrop that the Brampton Food Providers Data Collection Project was undertaken.



**20%** more visits  
to food banks

This report sets the context for use of immediate hunger relief services like food banks within the broader issues of food insecurity and poverty. Specifically, it focuses on outlining the process of the project including a literature review, key informant interviews, community engagement strategy and, co-design of a point-in-time survey for food service providers and their clients/guests. The participating service providers represent the diversity of food banks and food programs in Brampton; they range from formal full-time operations, to informal and faith based providers that operate from one to seven days per week. The report recognizes the important role they play individually and collectively in addressing hunger in Brampton, their assets, barriers and challenges.

In addition to the food service provider perspective, the report summarizes results of the client/guest point-in-time survey.

The report makes several observations, including nine specific to service providers and six specific to clients/guests. In addition, there are the following ten recommendations organized into six broad themes:

### 1. Engage in Relationship Development

- Considering the informal/grassroots/faith-based service provider community is a large portion of the food providers in Brampton, gain a better understanding of who they are and what their needs are. Meet them where they are at and start building relationships in which their assets and work is recognized and valued. There are opportunities for further dialogue with each organization individually and collectively.

### 2. Increase Capacity in Data Collection

- Develop options to provide access to training / knowledge transfer on the importance and benefits of collecting and using data that are over and beyond receiving funding or reporting to a funder. Utilizing technology, create a Knowledge Hub/Learning Hub, where organizations can access information on their own time.

<sup>1</sup>Food Banks Canada. Hunger Count 2021.

### 3. Support Education and Awareness

- Co-design a multi-pronged targeted public education campaign with Brampton Food Providers Table focused on the variety and quality of food donations from restaurants, businesses, and residents at large. The campaign should address best before dates, expired foods, healthier choices, and cultural needs.
- Co-design a multi-pronged public education campaign with the Brampton Food Provider Table membership focused on clients/ guests to increase their understanding of the meaning of best before versus expired foods.

### 4. Support Community Infrastructure

- Examine the feasibility of developing/ purchasing/renting a storage space that could be used by many organizations, especially the smaller grassroots groups; this would be viewed as a concrete response to one of the challenges faced by the sector and often shared.

### 5. Explore Funding and Resources

- Funding is an absolute for all of the providers. The Region of Peel, United Way Greater Toronto and the City of Brampton must consider more financial support for these organizations that serve the most vulnerable populations in the city.
- Strategies must be developed to address the gap(s) in service provision that will emerge once the COVID Relief Emergency Fund has ended. This is a systems challenge.
- Funders must reflect on and review resource gaps among service providers once the Covid Relief Emergency Fund is finished. Conversations need to consider any additional barriers families may face in accessing food after emergency funding and how they can be addressed.

- Recommend that Funders explore the broadening role food providers are being asked to assume in providing *wraparound supports* to clients.

### 6. Leadership to Affect Change

- Knights Table and Regeneration Outreach Community are seen by many, as the leaders in the food sector in Brampton. Both organizations support dozens of smaller food providers and have processes in place for organizations to connect, be supported and share data (either formally or informally). The recommendations which follow are based on this observation:
  - There are opportunities for further dialogue regarding processes that can be developed to collect data and engage the Brampton Food Providers Table with both Regeneration Outreach Community and Knights Table.
  - Funders and policymakers should leverage their relationship with sector leaders such as Knights Table and Regeneration Outreach Community to continue gathering information and other opportunities in which they can partner to support more system-level conversations.
  - Funders and policymakers should work with Knights Table and Regeneration Outreach Community to identify the supports they require to continue supporting and influencing their smaller food provider partners.

## Background

For many years, emergency food providers in Brampton have responded to ongoing food insecurity through a strong and informal network comprised of small and large non-profit and faith-based organizations. In this setting, some providers have been collecting service-level data, while others utilize simple counts to identify their clients' needs.

At the January 9, 2020 Peel Regional Council meeting, the findings of the "Who's Hungry" report was presented, profiling food bank usage in the Greater Toronto Area. At this meeting, it was acknowledged that developing a similar profile for Brampton to assess the gaps and opportunities in the system can be challenging as there is no formal data collection strategy among Brampton food providers. As a result, Regional Council requested staff work with the City of Brampton and food organizations on approaches to obtain data that would provide greater understanding of food bank usage in Brampton (Resolution 2020-13).

Region of Peel staff convened the Brampton Food Providers<sup>2</sup> Table in February 2020 where organizations noted that it was important to tell the Brampton's "food story" and to "debunk myths" about data collection in Brampton. At the same time, food providers advised that the process take into account data that is already being collected and be mindful that gathering new data could be time consuming and invasive for clients.

In partnership with the United Way Greater Toronto, the City of Brampton, the Region of Peel and food providers, the Brampton Data Collection Project was launched. This project, would support community-based research into the Brampton "Food Story", the opportunities, challenges and an analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. This report is a summary of the project.

Given the reported increases food insecurity and corresponding reliance on food banks, this project, its findings and recommendations are more urgent and may lay the foundation for further strengthening of the sector in Brampton.

<sup>2</sup>Brampton emergency food providers were convened to help in the development and implementation of this research project. the table met on two occasions at the request of the United Way Greater Toronto and the Region of Peel

## Scope of Work & Approach

The project focused on co-creating and conducting a point-in-time exercise with Brampton food providers to support a larger narrative regarding the state of food insecurity in Brampton. In addition, the project identified and implemented a capacity building strategy to support food service providers to effectively collect data as part of the process.

The consultants' approach to this work was intentional, sensitive, inquisitive, data-minded, and collaborative. They began the work using an appreciative inquiry approach as they built on existing relationships and assets. There was an understanding that the data collected would inform and expand partners' understanding of the systemic barriers and challenges that exist

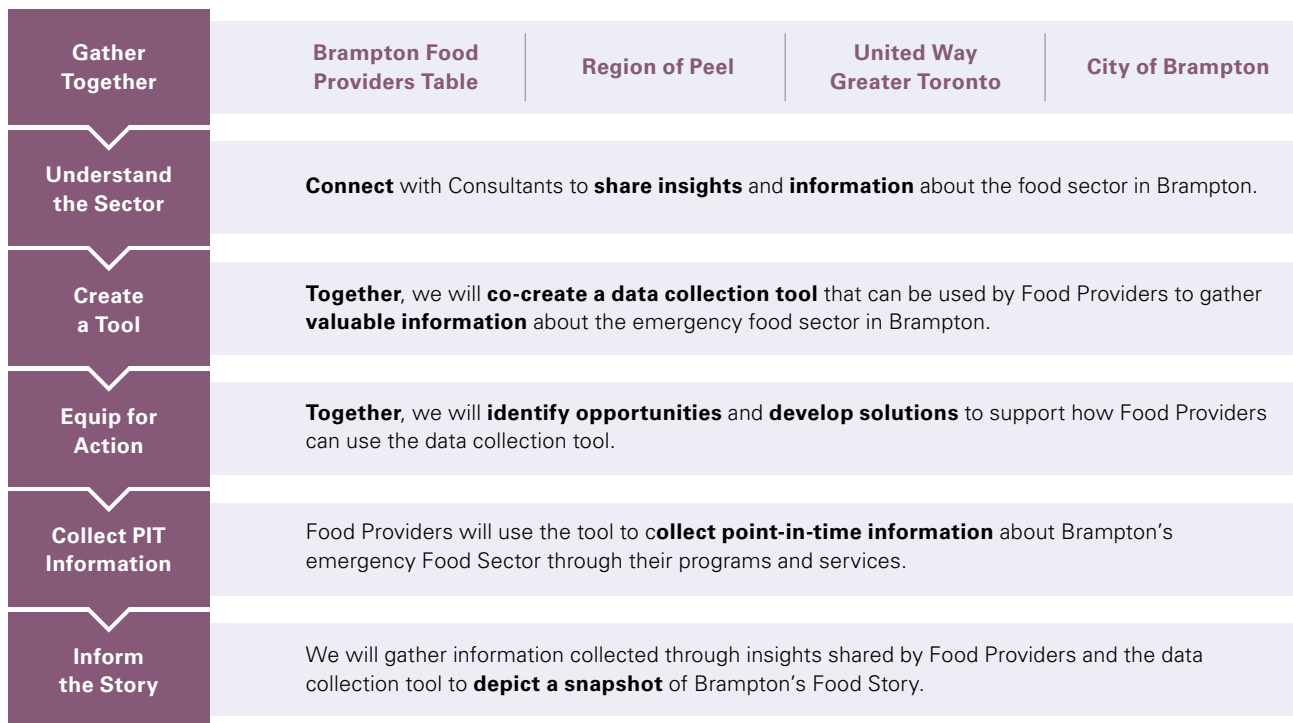
in delivering and accessing food programs. Data would also speak to the client/guest experiences of the intended outcomes of food programs and highlight the layers of complexities that exist in the provision of food in Brampton.

The consultants' approach to building capacity was both through an educational and informative lens. They understood that the first step in any data collection process is building an awareness and appreciation of the value and necessity of collecting data. Central to this work was the support required by agencies in building their individual and collective capacities to collect data to tell their own **'food stories'**.

## Methodology

The consultants utilized a few broad approaches to achieve the desired outcomes detailed below.

### (Appendix A)





## Literature Review

A literature review of local and regional reports about the emergency food sector was conducted to identify key themes, the current realities, gaps, assets, opportunities, and innovative solutions.

The review also included scanning the literature for any benchmarks and promising practices in data collection that support understanding the needs and complexities of the food sector.

The literature review informed the development of the questions for the first facilitated meeting with the members of the Brampton Food Provider Table, key informant interviews, point-in-time exercise, and the community engagement strategy by giving it direction on the barriers, gaps, assets, and ideas to probe for during the life span of the project.

## Key Informant Interviews

The literature review was used as a basis to create questions for the key informant interviews. The key informant interviews were conducted to validate and situate the literature review as compared to the realities in Brampton. The results of the key informant interviews provided further information for the development of the capacity building assessment questionnaire and the point-in-time tools. There were 18 key informants' interviews conducted with emergency food providers in Brampton.

## Community Engagement Strategy

The results of the literature review and key informant interviews informed the engagement strategy. The community engagement approach ranged from informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering partners with the anticipated outcome of co-designed data collection tools that would reflect community input and approval.

A digital community engagement strategy was implemented because of COVID-19. The members of the Brampton Food Provider Table and other identified partners were the focus of the engagement plan. However, this phase did not require a robust engagement strategy as originally proposed as the membership was small, informal,

and willing to meet periodically via telephone and video conferencing platforms.

## Meetings and Consultations with Brampton Food Provider Table

Throughout the project, two meetings were held with the members of the Brampton Food Provider Table to:

- learn more about their agencies
- raise awareness and an understanding of the project and its anticipated outcomes
- hear about the challenges facing Brampton food banks as well as assets
- gain support in co-designing the point-in-time data collection tools to develop collective solutions to support food providers
- participate in the implementation of the data collection process

Both meetings supported greater engagement with the Table to gain buy-in for the project and to encourage participation in key informant interviews and in the point-in-time data collection process.

## Point-in-Time (PIT) Surveys

The initial phases of the project set the groundwork to gain a deeper understanding of what data needed to be collected. In collaboration with the Advisory Working Group and based on the advice and expertise of the community-based Research Working Group (established April 2021), the consultants co-designed the point-in-time data collection tools. The anticipated outcome was to share a snapshot of Brampton's food story that included illustrating the assets, gaps in food service provision, potential opportunities for partnership and capacity building, barriers to accessing food and areas for growth in the food sector in the City of Brampton.

It was determined that two point-in-time data collection tools would be developed:

- One survey for the *Service Provider* to share their stories and experiences; the organization would complete the survey once.

- One survey for *Clients/Guests* to share their stories and experiences; more than one person in the same family / residence could complete the survey. It was important to capture and reflect the voices, perspectives, and experiences of clients/guests.

It is important to note that consideration had to be given to how the tools would be administered as the pandemic was still underway. Consensus was reached that both service providers and their clients/guests would complete the surveys online as much as possible, with agency staff, summer students and volunteers assisting the clients/guests in completing the survey onsite if needed and following all COVID-19 guidelines. Clients/guests also had the option to take home a hard copy of the survey to complete and return it to the organization they received it from by July 31st.

Postcards were also created that communicated the project and the client/guest survey. Clients/guests had access to a QR code that directed them to the survey. Incentives for clients/guests in the form of a raffle for gift cards were offered as a token of gratitude for participation. Organizations such as Regeneration Outreach Community and Knights Table also promoted the point-in-time survey with their partnering agencies.

Both the service provider and client/guest surveys took approximately 7-10 minutes to complete. Based on the advice of service providers, both surveys were open from July 5th to July 31st, 2021. Service providers determined the best time to share the tool with their clients/guests during the month as they knew the peak times for services.

Service providers were able to access trained volunteers to support them in administering the survey to their clients/guests. A one-page flyer announcing the point-in-time launch, the purpose, incentives, and closing date of the surveys was created. Participating organizations were asked to post the flyer in their locations where it would best be seen. In addition, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) sheet was developed and disseminated electronically to provide ease of access to information for any questions posed.

The consultants were cognizant of the need to interview a diverse representation of service providers to get an accurate picture of the sector in Brampton. As a result, eighteen (18) key informant interviews were conducted with small and large organizations, established food service providers, new food providers including those who were established in response to the pandemic (also known as 'pop-ups'), faith-based and ethno-specific providers. These key informants provide a variety of services: hot meals, hampers, drop-ins, food bank, food delivery, soup kitchen, and wraparound supports.



**1,284** individuals completed the surveys

In addition, eighteen (18) or 68% of the invited service providers responded to the point-in-time survey. 1,284 individuals completed the client/guest point in time surveys. The majority (925) of client surveys were completed through Knights Table. The data results from the client/guest point-in-time surveys indicates that of the 751 client/guests who chose to disclose their ethnicity, 49% identified as Black, 25% White/European and 13% South Asian. Over half of the respondents indicated that they found out about the food supports through word of mouth.

### Black



### White/European



### South Asian



## Limitations of the Report

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a digital engagement strategy was implemented to engage key informants and for the Point in Time data collection process. Utilizing a digital engagement strategy as the primary means of collecting data limited the consultants' ability to connect face-to-face, leverage existing community events and visit service providers at their physical locations, all key to ensure maximum participation. Furthermore, all promotion and marketing, participation and consultations were primarily conducted through emails and telephone calls.

In addition, both formal and informal food service providers had to adjust service delivery, in some cases working with limited capacity in a constantly changing climate. Changing organizational processes and ensuring access for those most vulnerable was the priority. This further impacted the ability for consistent participation by service providers over the life span of the project.

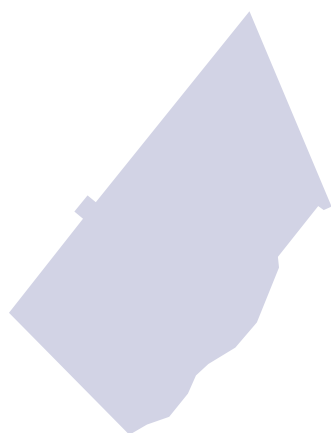
The other key concern was that there was little interest or incentive among many food providers to engage in a formalized data collection process.

The consultants tried to address this limitation at some of the discussions with providers by including a peer-sharing component around the impact of data collection. Although most of the service providers collect basic data such as: number of clients, amount of food required, family status, and address or postal codes, service providers did not see the direct benefit to their organizations of participating in a broader data collection strategy at both an organizational and systems level. Many providers had previously shared their concerns, challenges, and stories in other contexts which leads us to suggest that consultation/survey fatigue might have also been a contributing factor.

Despite these limitations, the project was able to garner diverse perspectives, honest feedback and a sharing of lived experiences. We believe that the data can be used to inform, guide and tell Brampton's food story at a point-in-time. We strongly encourage continuous engagement with food service providers in relationship building, co-designing and implementing activities to strengthen, expand and obtain a deeper understanding of the '*story*' as the community continues to grow and experience the consequences and impact of the pandemic.

# The Brampton Food Story

The City of Brampton, an area municipality in Peel Region, is one of Canada's fastest growing cities with a population of 603,346.<sup>3</sup> Brampton is not immune to the issues that impact growing cities across the country; rapid population growth, underemployment and precarious employment, high rates of poverty, high housing costs and lower levels of social capital among low-income residents, all have an impact on quality of life.<sup>5</sup>



City of Brampton  
population  
**603,346**



Levels of poverty

**11.3%**<sup>4</sup>

families are more likely to experience adverse effects to their health and well-being. The impact of this is restricted mobility, chronic conditions, poor mental health, and mental distress. This impacts individuals, families and communities and incurs considerable costs to the health care system. Community partners have created an invisible food network to try and increase food security and it is a vast network that spans across not only the city of Brampton but across the Greater Toronto Area.<sup>6</sup>

The Brampton food providers encompass approximately 70 diverse players, including Knights Table and Regeneration Outreach Community, that operate as "Food Distribution Hubs" for the small and medium sized organizations in Brampton.

Food insecurity is also a pressing problem in Peel with 14% of households experiencing marginal, moderate or severe food insecurity (*2018-2028 Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy: Community Action Plan*). Layered onto this, is the current economic impact of the pandemic as more and more people in Brampton are being forced to choose between paying rent and buying food.

The Peel Food Charter articulates that food security exists "when all people, at all times of their lives have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." (*2018-2028 Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy: Community Action Plan*). We know from research and anecdotal stories that food insecure



**33.6%** of the population is spending more than **30%** of their income on shelter/housing.

<sup>3</sup>Based on 2016 Census

<sup>4</sup>City of Brampton, CityDashboard, <https://geohub.brampton.ca/pages/livability>

<sup>5</sup>United Way Greater Toronto. Peel Region Social Capital Study. 2021

<sup>6</sup>Second Harvest Report, Canada's Invisible Food Network, 2021

Approximately 50% of providers are informal and faith-based and collectively they operate meal programs, food pantries, food banks, delivery programs, community gardens, among others. Food supply is obtained from federal and provincial sources, including Food Banks Canada, Feed Ontario, Link 2 Feed, as well as through residents and local food suppliers. Food banks also rely on donations, food drives, fundraising, distribution centres and the agricultural sector.

It is important to note that there is no service system manager for the emergency food sector. To fulfil their mandate, organizations rely on funding from individual and corporate donors; funders, including the Region of Peel's Community Investment Program and United Way Greater Toronto; and volunteers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the food service providers throughout this project. Before the start of the project, providers indicated that they had adapted their operations to the new circumstances and created new partnerships and collaboration. Agencies also adjusted service delivery to operate within the context of the pandemic; for example, they changed operating hours, created COVID-19 protocols and, in some cases, pivoted to delivery and hamper pick-up, providing a range of options and access for their clients/guests.



**55%** of service providers indicated no decrease in food donations during pandemic

All service provider responders indicated no decrease in food donations during pandemic. In fact, 10 (55%) of them indicated an increase in food donations and a third indicated they received increased funding for their food programs during the pandemic. While a third of service providers noted they needed to rely more heavily on food businesses and community partners during this period, more than half indicated that their

partnerships with the community are usually the greatest organizational assets.

However, the pandemic also reduced the number of volunteers available to support the various food programs which is critical as service providers had identified volunteers as one of the top organizational assets.

## Partnerships Across the Brampton Food Sector

When asked about the core strengths and successes in Brampton's food sector, service providers expressed that the diversity of their partnerships and collaborative work were a significant asset. They told stories that illustrated the need and vast benefits of their relationships and how their service and supports are shaped and impacted by these partnerships. Providers spoke with pride about their ability to support their communities and congregations with limited resources and attributed this to the informal, need-based relationships they each had. Furthermore, they spoke about the resilience of these partnerships or networks, including the ability to mobilize and respond quickly. Collaboration and partnerships amongst providers have been the driver that enables providers to support residents to get the food they need. This was also confirmed by the point-in-time data that indicates that 36% of providers partner with seven or more organizations in Brampton, allowing them to provide food to their clients/guests.

## Challenges and Barriers

When asked about the challenges and barriers, both service providers and clients/guests shared their experiences in delivering and accessing food programs in Brampton. The challenges faced by service providers and clients/guests in Brampton are not unlike those faced by millions of food insecure Canadians across the country. Service providers and clients shared the same challenges, just different sides of the same coin.

Clients expressed several challenges such as the need and importance of fresh, nutritious, culturally specific food, transportation to collect food, the hours of operation of some food providers, their limited knowledge of programs and services in the community, and the stigma and discomfort associated with accessing food programs. Many survey respondents shared that their first-time accessing food programs in an agency, church, temple and/or mosque was during the pandemic; 70% of respondents noted that the pandemic has increased the number of times they access food supports.

Service providers spoke to similar challenges: obtaining donations of fresh, nutritious and culturally specific food products; transporting and storing foods due to the lack of physical space, refrigerators, refrigerated trucks; and, financial and human resources. These same challenges are clearly articulated in a recent report released by Second Harvest entitled: Canada's Invisible Food Network, that states:

“People need good quality food for proper nutrition and health. The invisible food network has the biggest shortfall in providing fresh produce, eggs, meat, fish, and milk to clients. These items are perishable and cannot be distributed without proper refrigeration and cold-chain delivery infrastructure for safe storage and handling. Refrigeration technologies are widely used in the food industry but due to the cost factor, they're mostly out of reach for organizations in the invisible food network.”

The barriers and challenges faced by clients/ guests and service providers are larger than a loose network of well intended organizations collaborating to fill gaps in their communities.

The Brampton Food Provider Table members understand the sector, they know the challenges and issues and are committed to increasing their effectiveness, efficiencies and seeking more resources to respond to the growing needs of their clients/guests. Most provide a multitude of services over and above food provision, and this is not unusual based on the results of the service provider point-in-time survey results.

Consideration must be given to the broadening role food providers across Brampton are being asked to assume in providing wraparound supports to clients. Providers, big or small, established, or new, mainstream, or ethno-specific, are being looked at by residents to be a 'one stop hub.' This trend overextends providers, and the burden is being felt and now exasperated due to the increased needs because of the pandemic. Just over half of the service provider respondents (53%) from the point-in-time survey indicate they have been providing services for more than 8 years in the City of Brampton. However, because of the pandemic, many were forced to change their services and programs due to Public Health COVID-19 health and safety mandates. Some of the organizations in the community had to close their doors while others joined forces with existing mainstream food providers, some restructured their program offerings and implemented a gift card system. In some cases, non food agencies such as faith based and settlement services began providing food as a result of the pandemic ('pop-ups').

Responses from service providers indicate that they decreased their provision of community gardens, community kitchens, drop-in breakfast and drop-in lunch programs as a result of the pandemic and do not foresee a return to these services to the same extent as they were providing before the pandemic. This has and will continue to create gaps in the system. Fifty-three percent (53%) of providers indicated that they had access to new



temporary funding (i.e., COVID Relief Emergency Fund). Many providers are concerned that families that depended on their services and supports will have nowhere to go once funding comes to an end.

Service providers also spoke about being offered pallets of food by donors but often needed to decline because the food was not nutritious, and the “best before” date was close to expiry. This poses significant challenges for them as clients/guests are concerned about the quality of the food so will not accept it. Providers feel they are considered the “dumping ground” by some donors. Both clients/guests and service providers identified the need to advocate broadly about the kind and quality of food that should be donated.

## Engagement and Participation

The majority of the 18 key informants who met with the consultants noted that funding or other benefits were not provided as part of this project, and did not see how the results would support their work. Moreover, more than half of the members of the Brampton Food Provider Table are faith-based groups who stated that they depend on their congregants for volunteer support, fundraising activities and monetary donations. As a result, engagement and consistent participation was a challenge throughout the whole project.

In addition, some key informants noted this project was similar to previous initiatives aimed at increasing the understanding of the food sector in Brampton and expressed that there is little evidence that previous recommendations were addressed.

The consultants observed that it appeared there is limited dedicated funding that addresses food insecurity. Funding for food providing organizations is usually allocated under broader categories such as poverty, unemployment or homelessness therefore, until recently, it has not been given the attention as a population level priority issue/gap that needs to be addressed.<sup>7</sup>

## Data Collection Capacity

A key deliverable of the project was to work collaboratively with organizations to increase their capacity to collect data. The intention was to build the individual and collective capacities of the Brampton Food Service Providers to empower and position them to collect relevant data and information. The key informant interviews were a vehicle to capture people’s uncertainties, sensitivities, and perceptions regarding data collection and capacity challenges.

A key deliverable of the project was to work collaboratively with organizations to increase their capacity to collect data. The intention was to build the individual and collective capacities of the Brampton Food Service Providers to empower and position them to collect relevant data and information.

What we heard was that many of the key informants were concerned about the administrative burden of collecting data, uncertain about who in the organization would collect data consistently (as many food providers are volunteer driven), where and how data would be stored, limited knowledge about data collection tools and processes and how the data could be used to benefit their organizations, clients/guests, community and the Brampton food sector at large.

The project co-created and administered a Capacity Building Survey and a total of 18 service providers participated. Fifty percent (50%) of respondents expressed interest in learning how to ask demographic questions and 50% also indicated that they wanted information about privacy concerns to reinforce confidentiality.

<sup>7</sup>Nikkel, L., Summerhill, V., Gooch, M., Bucknell, D., LaPlain, D., (2021). Canada’s Invisible Food Network; Second Harvest and Value Chain Management International; Ontario, Canada

Although individual organizations such as Knights Table have a robust data collection process and share their data into a larger provincial system (Feed Ontario), most of the service providers collect data only to gauge how much food they need each month to support their client/guest base. There is a good understanding of how many clients/guests access services each month.

It is critical to understand the data needs of the food providers, especially as they operate to address immediate need and often in the context of a crisis. Their data collection needs are focused on knowing their clients, their service needs, and the ways in which these can be met. Providers see some value in data collection in general but don't see the value in it for them. Faith providers focus on ensuring that their congregation is looked after.

Especially in this context, providers know each of their clients/guests better than anyone else; they do not see them as "clients" but rather as people who they have come to know through their interactions and conversations. Considering many of the providers are ethnic or faith specific, it is clear they know cultural needs, stigmas, and barriers to accessing food better than a survey could gauge. The providers have adapted to the needs of their clients primarily through the qualitative information gleaned from their interactions with their service users. These conversations usually yield more nuanced information that is often missing in formal data collection strategies.

These limitations to implement formal data collection are characteristic of a volunteer driven crisis sector with limited resources, that is usually reactive in nature.



## Observations and Recommendations

### Observations

The following observations are in no particular order and are a result of the many conversations and key informant interviews with service providers.

The information we heard from members, key informants, and survey respondents was consistent across each stakeholder group. Due to the pandemic, there were no opportunities to meet with clients/guests who would have provided the consultants with some primary source data.

Given a number of staffing changes within the three partner organizations, there was limited relationships with the majority of food providers across Brampton but only with a handful of mainstream food providers. Considering a key outcome of the project was to get point-in-time data from providers and their clients, stronger relationships between stakeholders and Brampton food providers would have been helpful to ensuring the initiative aligned with their needs, current understanding of the benefits of data collection and increase buy-in and engagement.

Interestingly, there is a sense of know how, understanding, and nuanced communication that keeps these food providers' partnerships going - the consultants described it 'sophisticated chaos'. They rely on informal partnership structures that enable them to support one another without feeling like there are protocols and processes put in place that can slowdown their work. The partners know where to seek out supports and are relatively confident that their needs will be met through their relationships.

### Service Providers Perspective

1. Food service providers in Brampton are very proud of and celebrate their partnerships and collaborative work. There is an informal network of organizations that know of one another, support one another and communicate regularly. It is through these trusting relationships that organizations meet the needs of their clients/guests.
2. Faith-based and grassroots collectives, and community networks are quite often the first gateway for supports. These organizations have a vested interest in understanding the issues from different perspectives and supporting their communities, however they are only accountable to themselves and their clients. This poses a challenge for funders, data collection strategies, formal vs informal service delivery structures, and engagement strategies as these stakeholders do not see the need to abide by practices that they do not see as useful to them.
3. Informal faith-based service providers make up just over half of the membership of the Brampton Food Provider Table suggesting that a new assessment on how service delivery, partnership and accountability is required. These informal providers operate from a religious value base that is guided by faith and charity to the most vulnerable members of their congregations. They are not easily influenced or concerned with funder requests and requirements. Many expressed to the consultants "we are not interested in changing how we do business, nor do we want to".
4. The biggest challenges faced by Brampton food service providers are the lack of funding available directly for food provision, food pick up/delivery transportation and logistics support, and the lack of storage space both in terms of a warehouse and refrigeration. These are not new challenges; however, they continue to plague the sector as we were told several times.

5. Many providers are challenged to see why they should work with the project's funders/partners as they are not accountable to them. Many providers indicated that the Brampton food sector does not need 'fixing.' They expressed that they are often called to the table when funders need something and would like to see funders build relationships with them and support them before asking for things.
6. There was minimum interest and buy-in to the project concept from the get-go. Though some believed there was some value in data collection, and it could be useful, they were not willing to commit.
7. The majority of the Brampton Food Provider Table membership were not accountable to any of the lead partners implementing this project, so engagement, commitment and accountability was a challenge throughout the duration of the project. However, many were/are affiliated with Regeneration Outreach Community and Knights Table – they participated and came to the table because of them.
8. Knights Table and Regeneration Outreach Community are seen by many as the leaders in the food sector in Brampton. Both organizations support dozens of smaller food providers across Brampton and have processes in place for organizations to connect, be supported and share data (either formally or informally).
9. To meet the needs of clients, especially ethno-specific needs, many expressed interest in a grocery store model instead of the hamper model of food provision.

With the exception of two service providers (both in operation for less than 2 years), the other service providers rely on food and monetary donations for their food programs indicating a sector that is dependent on donations that are not always guaranteed.

A third of the service responders currently receive funding for their food programs, primarily from Region of Peel, Community Foundations and Faith groups.

### Client/Guest Respondent Perspective

1. More than 70% of clients/guests that participated in the point-in-time indicated that they are new (0-2 years) to accessing food relief services in Brampton and that they are accessing the food system more during the pandemic. This speaks to the need for a strategy to continue supporting these clients who may be accessing services that were only funded through COVID-19 emergency funding.
2. With 35% of clients/guests indicating they walk to access food services, an examination of the proximity to food services is recommended. The point-in-time survey included clients/guests postal code data and which services they are accessing. Furthermore, 35% of clients/guests indicated that transportation is a barrier to accessing food followed by the hours of operation (26%).
3. When asked where they are accessing services, respondents noted a total of 18 providers. Those mentioned, represented a mix of formal food banks, faith based organizations and community organizations.
4. Clients/guests also indicated that they access, along with food, a variety of different supports across the community such as housing, employment supports, and mental health. Future examination of co-location and/or proximity to multiple services may address the issues related to transportation and service accessibility.
5. Clients are expressing a need for more fresh, healthier and better-quality foods. There are currently system gaps that do not enable the storage of fresh foods and a lack of awareness from donors around the types of foods that food banks and their clients need.

6. Clients/guests (37%) indicated that they feel uncomfortable accessing food services and expressed that grocery store cards would be more beneficial than getting food from a food bank.

## Recommendations

The Peel Poverty Reduction Committee's Peel Food Charter articulates that "food security exists when all people, at all times of their lives have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." (*2018-2028 Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy: Community Action Plan*). We know from research and anecdotal stories that food insecure families are more likely to experience adverse effects to their health and well-being. The impact of this is restricted mobility, chronic conditions, poor mental health and mental distress. This impacts individuals, families and communities and incurs considerable costs on the health care system.

Data is the vehicle to creating a more efficient and responsive service delivery model at a systems and agency level. Food service providers play an important role in meeting the food needs of a very vulnerable and in some cases precarious and transient population. There is a lot of effort and good work taking place in Brampton in a very thoughtful, responsive, inclusive and collaborative manner. Considering this, opportunities still exist to deepen efforts and relationships with all existing food service providers.

The following recommendations are focused on increasing the understanding of the Brampton food story and its system.

### 1. Engage in Relationship Development

- Considering the informal/grassroots/faith-based service provider community is a large portion of the food providers in Brampton, gain a better understanding of who they are and what their needs are. Meet them where they are at and start building relationships in which their assets and work is recognized and valued. There are opportunities for further dialogue with each organization individually and collectively.

### 2. Increase Capacity in Data Collection

- Develop options to provide access to training / knowledge transfer on the importance and benefits of collecting and using data that are over and beyond receiving funding or reporting to a funder. Utilizing technology, create a Knowledge Hub/Learning Hub, where organizations can access information on their own time.

### 3. Support Education and Awareness

- Co-design a multi-pronged targeted public education campaign with Brampton Food Providers Table focused on the variety and quality of food donations from restaurants, businesses, and residents at large. The campaign should address best before dates, expired foods, healthier choices, and cultural needs.
- Co-design a multi-pronged public education campaign with the Brampton Food Provider Table membership focused on clients/guests to increase their understanding of the meaning of best before versus expired foods.

### 4. Support Community Infrastructure

- Examine the feasibility of developing/purchasing/renting a storage space that could be used by many organizations, especially the smaller grassroots groups; this would be viewed as a concrete response to one of the challenges faced by the sector and often shared.

## 5. Explore Funding and Resources

- Funding is an absolute for all of the providers. The Region of Peel, United Way Greater Toronto and the City of Brampton must consider more financial support for these organizations that serve the most vulnerable populations in the city.
- Strategies must be developed to address the gap(s) in service provision that will emerge once the COVID Relief Emergency Fund has ended. This is a systems challenge.
- Funders must reflect on and review resource gaps among service providers once the Covid Relief Emergency Fund is finished. Conversations need to consider any additional barriers families may face in accessing food after emergency funding and how they can be addressed.
- Recommend that Funders explore the broadening role food providers are being asked to assume in providing *wraparound supports* to clients.

## 6. Leadership to Affect Change

- Knights Table and Regeneration Outreach Community are seen by many, as the leaders in the food sector in Brampton. Both organizations support dozens of smaller food providers and have processes in place for organizations to connect, be supported and share data (either formally or informally). The recommendations which follow are based on this observation:
  - There are opportunities for further dialogue regarding processes that can be developed to collect data and engage the Brampton Food Providers Table with both Regeneration Outreach Community and Knights Table.
  - Funders and policymakers should leverage their relationship with sector leaders such as Knights Table and Regeneration Outreach Community to continue gathering information and other opportunities in which they can partner to support more system-level conversations.
  - Funders and policymakers should work with Knights Table and Regeneration Outreach Community to identify the supports they require to continue supporting and influencing their smaller food provider partners.

## Conclusion

To start addressing the recommendations contained in this report, ongoing conversations between funders, governments, and food providers must continue from a shared place of understanding and trust building, explore opportunities for collaboration among all players and options to enhance capacity and uptake around data collection, while facilitating improvements to infrastructure and services to better meet the needs of Brampton residents.

Additional resources, including funding, should support both the immediate needs of the food providers and clients/guests. There is a need for holistic data collection and analysis to help to identify populations that remain unserved while starting the work to address food insecurity at its root causes. Through ongoing and new relationships, and with trust established, it will be possible to tell a Brampton food story that values the significant work already done while expanding future possibilities.

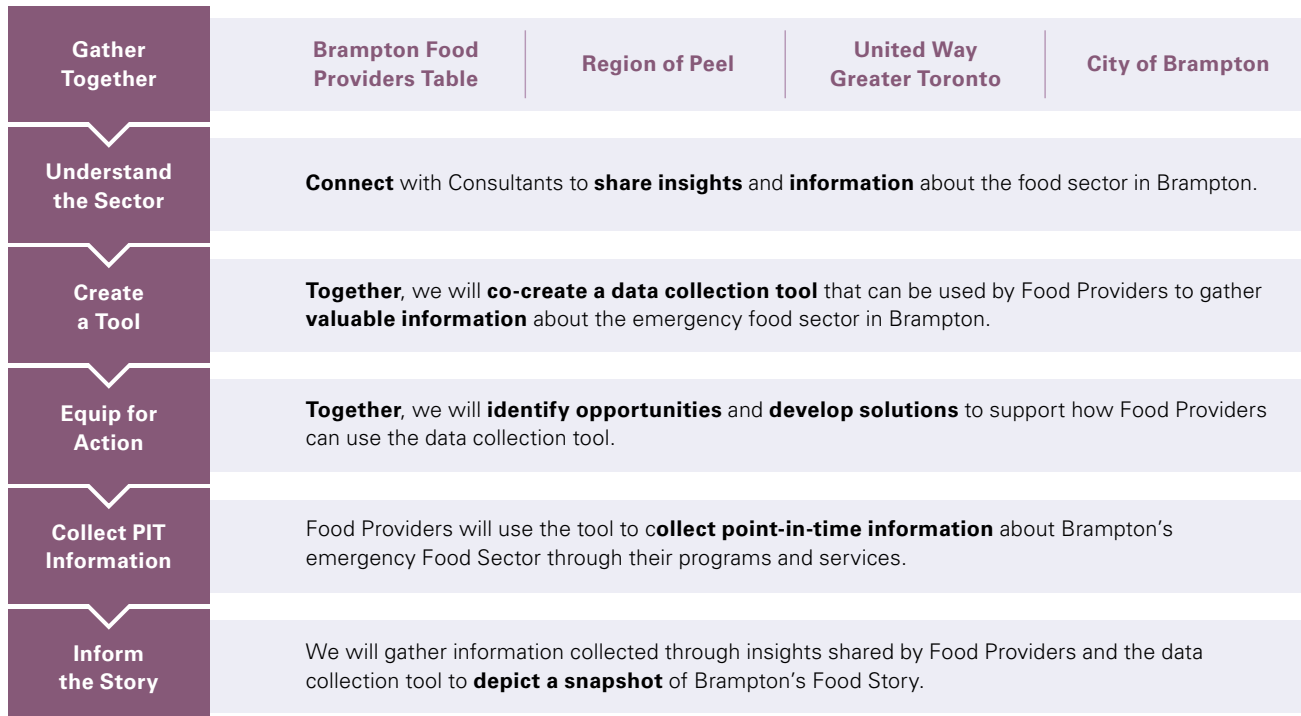
## Appendix A - Telling Brampton's Food Story

### Brampton Food Data Collection Project

The Brampton Food Data Collection Project is a partnership between the Region of Peel, United Way Greater Toronto, City of Brampton, and the Brampton Food Providers Table. **The purpose of the Project is to share a snapshot of Brampton's Food Story.** Through Brampton's Food Story, we can increase our shared understanding of the sector and identify:

- Shared gaps in food service provision,
- Potential opportunities for collaboration and capacity building,
- Barriers to access food, and
- Areas for growth in the sector.

### What Steps will We Take?



## Call to Action: How Can We do this Together?

**Food Providers are the experts in the sector**, providing people with access to food in their time of need. We are asking for your **expertise, valuable insights, and understanding of the sector** to:

1. Share your knowledge in one-on-one conversations about your agency/group. Who will be the agency's point of contact?
2. Co-create a data collection tool together, to collect valuable information about Brampton's emergency food sector.
3. Co-develop solutions that will support collecting information
4. Use the tool we create together to collect information through your programs and services

## Why Get Involved? Benefits of the Project

### Brampton works together

Brampton's emergency food sector is built on the strong relationships and hard work of Food Providers, ranging in size and sector. Telling Brampton's Food Story will depict Brampton's emergency food sector as one that comes together to ensure that residents have access to food in their time of need. We can identify opportunities to learn, share and work together.

### Building a case for resources and funding

Information collected through the point-in-time data tool will contribute to an increased understanding of strengths and gaps in Brampton's food sector. The information can be used to leverage supports and funding.

### More support for the community

Brampton's Food Story can identify the gaps and needs in the sector, which can be used to advocate for increased supports in the community.

## Support for the Project

Through the Project, we have hired third party consultants to:

- Connect with Food Providers to learn more about their agencies and build a stronger understanding of the emergency food sector
- Support co-designing a data collection tool
- Developing solutions to support Food Providers to implement the tool
- Support the information collection process

The consultants will work with the Brampton Food Provider Table and partners to build on the data that is already collected while recognizing that every organization involved has different capacities in carrying out this work.

## Appendix B - Brampton Food Data Collection Initiative

### Facilitated Conversation Questions:

The purpose of this project is to work with each of you to co-design and implement data collection tools that will illustrate the food story in Brampton. The tools and processes developed through this journey will assist in creating a 'point-in-time' snapshot. This snapshot will support in building an understanding/awareness of current food programs, community food needs, service gaps and opportunities and capacity building supports required by organizations in Brampton.

#### State of the Local Food System

1. From your perspective, what would you say are the 2 -3 key strengths/successes that local food service providers in the City of Brampton would celebrate? What is working well?
2. From your perspective, what would you say are the 2 - 3 top challenges faced by residents seeking food support in the City of Brampton?
3. From your perspective, what would you say are the 2-3 top challenges faced by local food *service providers*?
4. What is the current state of the food system in Brampton? What is working well? What is missing?
5. What are your suggestions on how to create an equitable and responsive food system?

#### Brampton Food Data and Story

6. Imagine yourself as part of a community that is effective at sharing its food story. What types of information would this story have in it? What mechanisms would be in place for them to be able to accurately tell their story?
7. What is the food story you want to be able to tell? What chapters have been written and what chapters are missing?
8. What do you think a data collection framework/tool should include when it comes to collecting data with/from food serving organizations in the City of Brampton?
9. What would you say are some of the potential capacity challenges that local service providers face when it comes to collecting data?
10. When planning with communities it is important to include all voices and perspectives (i.e., to ensure equity and equitable partnerships). What data is needed to create an equitable and responsive system? What barriers might there be in engaging a diverse population/ organization in the data process?
11. Who else in Brampton should be engaged in this conversation?



## Appendix C - Brampton Food Providers Data Project

### Capacity Building Needs To Support Point-In-Time Data Collection

Capacity building is a key component of the BFPDC project. The intention is to build the individual and collective capacities of the Brampton Food Service Providers to empower and position them to collect relevant data/information. This information will tell the Brampton Food story, identify service gaps and collective solutions, and provide more opportunities for further collaboration and partnerships.

Capacity building is about acquiring the skills, knowledge and experiences to enhance/assist you, your organization and community systems to build and co-create a collective Brampton Food Story. In this case, it is a two-pronged approach: one to support your understanding of the potential benefits in data collection and two to identify the supports your organization may require in completing the point-in-time (PIT) tools.

To this end, please share with us the kind of supports/assistance that you and your clients/guests will need in order to participate in the upcoming Point-in-Time (PIT) exercise.

Please also note that information and training sessions will be provided for those who will be administering the PIT questionnaires and have an interest in data collection in late June/July.

We would like to reinforce that client confidentiality is of the utmost importance.

### Questions: Note

1. Would you/your organization staff like to have training/a walk through/more information about what the PIT Tool(s) Questionnaire is?

Yes  No

2. Would you like to have training/information about asking demographic questions?

Yes  No

- 2b. Would you like to have information about privacy concerns to reinforce confidentiality?

Yes  No

- 3a. Do you require volunteers to assist in collecting the information from clients/guests?

Yes  No

- 3b. If so, how many volunteers will you need: \_\_\_\_\_

- 4a. How do you plan to share the survey with your clients/guests during the lockdown?

Please check all that apply:

- Online (Email/shared link to survey)  
 In-person (on paper when they visit site/electronically)  
 On phone  
 Other (please specify)

- 4b. How do you plan to share the survey with your clients/guests if Covid restrictions loosen up?

5. Would you prefer hard copies of the PIT Tool(s) questionnaire if that is an option?  
**Yes**  **No**
6. Do you have the capacity to enter the data in an online platform if your client/guest completes a paper copy?  
**Yes**  **No**
- 7a. Do you require any technical support to administer the survey?  
**Yes**  **No**
- 7b. If you answered yes to question 7a, please indicate what type of technical supports you require:
- Devices to complete the survey
  - Access to wifi
  - Information on how to access the survey online
  - Other
8. Do you require translation services?  
**Yes**  **No**

If yes, in what language(s)? List top 3 languages please:

---

9. When is the best time for you to share the survey with your clients/guests to capture the majority of those who access your services? (end of the week/month?)

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10. To what extent do you feel like you can collect, analyze and use the data that you collected?

---

11. Would you like additional information/supports on what and how to collect data?

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12. Other, please specify

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**Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions.**

## Appendix D - The Brampton Food Data Collection Project

### Capacity Building Agency Volunteer Training

#### Introduction

The Brampton Food Data Collection Project (BFPDC) is a partnership between the Region of Peel, United Way Greater Toronto, City of Brampton, and the Brampton Food Providers Table.

#### Purpose:

This capacity building information session is provided to support the implementation of the BFPDC Point-in-Time data collection Project. The Point-in-Time (PIT) data collection tools give us a snapshot of food insecurity across Brampton.

This session aims to enhance and increase the understanding of what socio-demographic data collection is and why collecting socio-demographic data is an important component of the PIT questionnaires.

#### Learning Objective(s):

- You will leave the session with an understanding of what socio-demographic data collection means.
- You will leave the session with a better understanding of why collecting socio-demographic information is important and valuable.
- You will leave the session with an understanding of how the data collected will be and can be used.
- You will leave the session with a deeper understanding of how 'confidentiality' is maintained and protected.

### Let's Get Started

#### What is the purpose of the Project?

The purpose of the Project is to share a snapshot of Brampton's Food Story. Through Brampton's Food Story, we can increase our shared understanding of the sector and identify:

- Gaps in food service provision,
- Potential opportunities for partnership and capacity building,
- Barriers to access food, and
- Areas for growth in the food sector.

### What is a Point-in-Time (PIT) exercise?

- A PIT is a snapshot of an 'issue' at a point in time.
- Snapshots create a picture of what is happening with that issue.
- The data/information collected during the PIT will be used to better understand the issue, raise awareness and potentially help to develop relevant programs and services.

### What is 'socio-demographic' data collection?

The Ontario Human Rights Commission interprets the term 'data collection' broadly to include gathering information using both:

- quantitative research methods such as surveys.
- and qualitative research methods such as focus groups.

### Are organizations allowed to ask questions about race, religion, gender, income, etc.

Yes, they are.

Collecting data on Ontario Human Rights Code grounds for a Code-consistent purpose is permitted, and is in accordance with Canada's Human Rights legislative framework, including the Code, the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Federal Employment Equity Act and section 15(2) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The main consideration is to make sure that any data collected is done in a way that follows accepted data collection techniques, privacy & other applicable legislation and is collected for a purpose that is consistent with the Code.

Collecting socio-demographic data does not violate any privacy legislation!

### Why is collecting socio-demographic data an important exercise in building inclusive, equitable and integrated communities?

- *"If you don't count people, they don't count. So, if you don't collect socio-demographic data, then you really can't offer quality services and programs!" - Dr. Kwame McKenzie, CEO The Wellesley Institute (March 2015)*
- Data tells us who is accessing services, where in the community, how often and why.
- Data also answers the question, are the people who need the services most getting the services they require?
- Data collection is the beginning of a cycle whereby organizations can better understand and serve its clients/guest – evidence informed planning.
- Data tells us if the services provided are culturally appropriate and relevant to the people who need them most.
- Data helps in identifying inequities and vulnerable populations.
- Data enables communities, organizations and individuals to tell a story that is accurate and reflective of their experiences.

### How will the data collected be used?

- Data collection is used to gather information that will support – evidence informed planning.
- Data assists organizations in identifying gaps in services and barriers to accessibility.
- Data can also capture an organizations’ capacity to collect information & use it.
- Data can inspire/support the creation of innovative new programs and partnerships.
- Data supports the enhancement of existing programs and services that meet the needs of clients/guests.
- Data collected will inform and guide new and different conversations in and between communities.
- Data collected can also be used to advocate for change(s) in the community, organizations and for individuals too.
- Data can increase capacity to advocate for program resources and funding.

### What does ‘confidentiality’ mean when collecting socio-demographic data?

- This means that the ethics of collecting data does not permit sharing participant name, age, address and other identifying information beyond the people collecting the data.
- This means that confidentiality is of the utmost importance in any data collection strategy.
- This means not sharing any identifying information about who you are, such as: your name, address, age, sexuality, etc.
- This means that all of the information gathered from all the people will be compiled and themed, i.e. put into categories to help tell the whole story without using names.
- This means that the data collected is only seen and stored by the third-party consultants who have been contracted to do this work.

For more information, please feel free to contact Sharon Douglas at [Sharon.m.douglas@gmail.com](mailto:Sharon.m.douglas@gmail.com)

## Appendix E - Point-in-Time Flyer



Please share your stories and experiences  
with Food Services across Brampton

The survey is to gather information from you so we can paint a picture and tell Brampton's Food Story. We want to identify where more services, partnerships and supports may be developed and provided.

Complete the survey and you can be entered in a draw for  
Tim Horton's Gift Cards!

Survey will be open from July 5th, 2021 until July 31st, 2021

[surveymonkey.com/r/bramptonfoodstories](https://surveymonkey.com/r/bramptonfoodstories)

### For Additional Information

Please contact Sharon Douglas  
[sharon.m.douglas@gmail.com](mailto:sharon.m.douglas@gmail.com)





## Appendix F - Point-in-Time QR Postcard



**The Brampton Food Data Collection Project wants to hear from you!**

**Please share your stories and experiences with Food Services across Brampton**

The survey is to gather information from you so we can paint a picture and tell Brampton's Food Story. We want to identify where more services, partnerships and supports may be developed and provided.

Complete the survey and you can be entered in a draw for Tim Horton's Gift Cards!  
Please fill Survey beginning July 5th until July 31st 2021.

[surveymonkey.com/r/bramptonfoodstories](https://surveymonkey.com/r/bramptonfoodstories)

# Appendix G - Peel Food Map

<https://www.peelregion.ca/planning-maps/foodprograms/foodprograms.html>

