

Campus Community Market

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<https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/xmlui/handle/10214/2501>

Campus Community Market Pilot Project



Background

The Campus Community Market Pilot Project was a six-week, student-led initiative that aimed to bring local, healthy food to campus and was modeled from the SEED's sliding scale community food markets. To evaluate the impact of the market this research explored the subjective experiences of using the market and gained insight into the aspects that influence healthy eating and shopping habits among the local community. The market had two main objectives:

1. Identify barriers and influences to acquiring, selecting, purchasing, and consuming nutritious local foods
2. Identify opportunities to support members of the campus community in accessing and consuming nutritious foods via the market

The organizers of the Campus Community Market recognized the need for a market on campus as food insecurity is an important issue affecting students at the University of Guelph. Additionally, the cost of living is increasing, which affects the budget that students spend on nutritious foods. COVID-19 affected the operation of the Food Bank on campus as well, so there was a need for another food insecurity intervention. Finally, nutrition was not the only factor, but the organizers also wanted to build community on campus through the market, especially where international students could feel welcomed and included on a greater scale.

Given the need for the market on campus, The Arrell Food Institute, the Sustainability Office, the SEED, and the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute collaborated to run the market for six



weeks from March – April 2022 as a pilot project. To evaluate the outcomes of the market, the organizers collaborated on a survey analysis of market attendees (n=278) and a series of in-depth interviews (n=6) that explored customer and organizer experiences. The result of this evaluation is presented in this report.

Methodology

The market evaluation included both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The participants were both market attendees and market organizers.

Quantitative Data Collection

Participants were recruited to fill out a Qualtrics survey when leaving the market by scanning a QR code that was available at the cash. Participants were incentivized to complete the survey by being entered for a draw to win 1 of 50 grocery gift cards. The survey questions included demographic questions, Likert scale questions about perceptions of the markets, and open-ended questions to gather feedback about the market. In the end, we received 247 completed surveys and 31 partials, resulting in a total survey count of 278.

Qualitative Data Collection

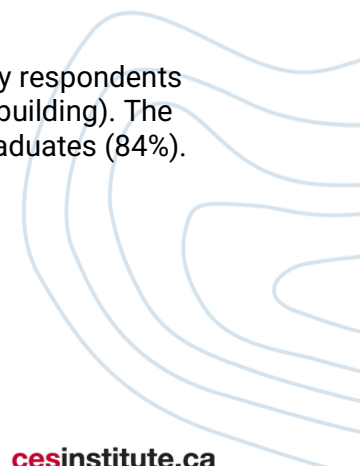
Qualitative data collection occurred over three virtual group interviews. Each interview group had two participants, resulting in a total of six participants. We specifically focused on participants who were actively involved in planning and running the market, both staff and student organizers. The interview questions focused on the need for the market, successes, challenges, and future opportunities for continuing the project. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and there was a note-taker present to record the results.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was organized in Excel to provide descriptive statistic of the market attendees and their perceptions of the market. Qualitative data, the notes from the group interviews, were organized and coded for main themes. All the data was compiled into a PowerPoint presentation and a two-page summary that was presented to the organizers of the market. This presentation was followed by a facilitated discussion group to analyze the results and strategize how to move forward on establishing the market.

Successes of the Market

The market was well attended, averaging 117 paying customers per week. Survey respondents deemed the market to be convenient, affordable, and in a good location (the UC building). The majority of respondents were first time visitors to the market (65%) and undergraduates (84%).



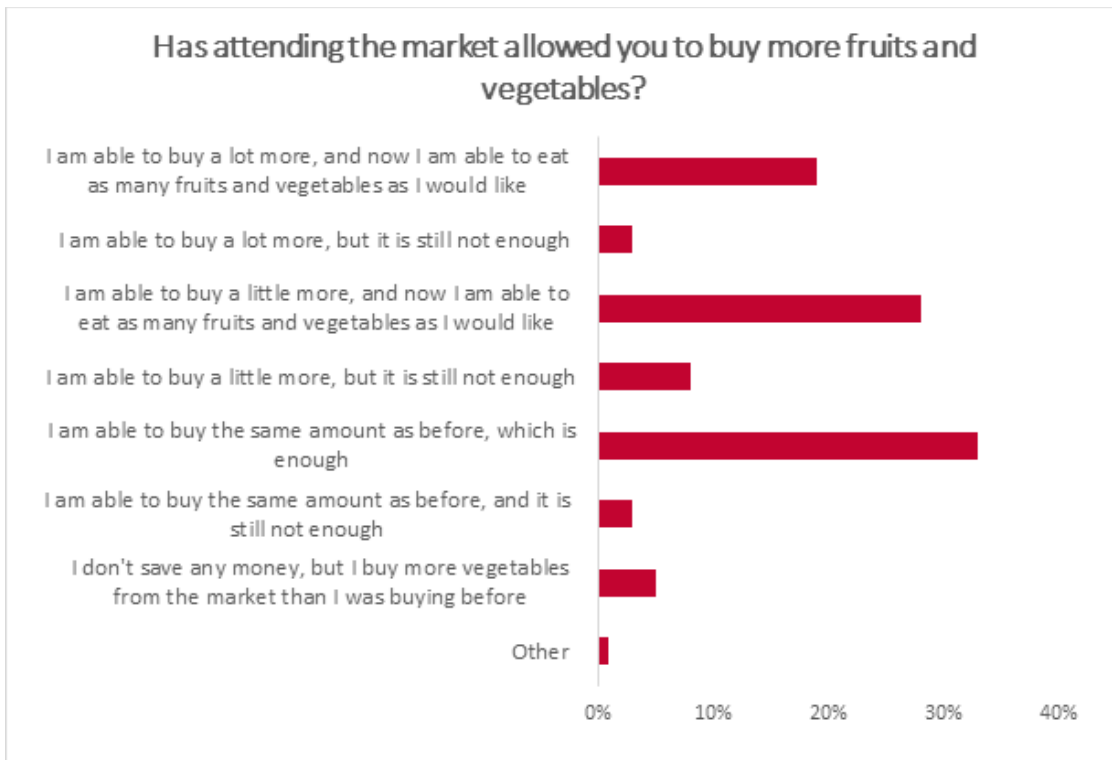
"I love this initiative, and it has really helped me stretch my money further when it comes to groceries!" – Survey Respondent

According to the data from the in-depth interviews, partnerships were key to the market's success. Partnering with the SEED and adopting their sliding scale model was an important part of ensuring that there would quality fresh foods available each week.

Some key benefits of the market included:

- Overwhelmingly positive feedback
- Increased community connections
- Face to face interactions
- Spread awareness of food insecurity
- People were buying more fruits and veggies
- Location and convenience

One of the goals of the market was to address student food insecurity and build positive food experiences for students. 63% of respondents said that they were now able to buy more fresh fruit and vegetables, with some buying a little and some buying a lot more. Of the 63% of respondents, 11% stated that they were still not able to buy enough fresh fruits and vegetables.



Suggestions for Improvement

As the market moves forward, the results demonstrate demand for more market days, starting earlier than 1pm, and with a greater diversity of foods available. Some of the most requested foods included avocado, a variety of onions, dairy products, mushrooms, cabbage, and more seasonal fruits and vegetables. Additionally, the sliding scale concept was new to many individuals, and there is a need to increase the sensitivity around the sliding scale market. 30% of survey respondents reported that they did not feel comfortable telling the cashier that they would like to pay the lowest amount of the sliding scale.

Word Cloud of the Most Requested Foods



Conclusions and Recommendations

The Campus Community Market is a viable way to address student food insecurity and provide the campus community with positive food experiences and increased access to nutritious foods. Securing funding will be key to ensuring the market can become a permanent initiative on campus. In the strategic discussion group after sharing the results of the evaluation, the organizers recognized that running the market took more time from staff and student volunteers than originally estimated. Ideally, future funding could create a paid position for a market coordinator. The partnership with the SEED was also identified as a key aspect of the success of the pilot project. Future iterations of the market will have to determine whether this partnership will continue, given the SEED's capacity, or if the resources available on campus, potentially through Hospitality Services, will suffice to let the Campus Market be self-sufficient from a logistics perspective. The suggestions offered by this evaluated study will ensure the market is meeting the needs of the campus community in the future.