

# HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3A5 Canada

**Item No. 11.1.5**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**April 20, 2021**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**   
Original Signed by \_\_\_\_\_  
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** March 9, 2021

**SUBJECT:** **Long Term Support for the Mobile Food Market, Years 6-9 (2021-2025)**

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## **ORIGIN**

The origin of HRM's support for the Mobile Food Market is based on multiple Council motions beginning in 2015 and outlined in Attachment A of this report.

This report is further to the following July 31, 2018 motion, directing staff to report to Council in 2021 on the next iteration of municipal support:

*THAT Halifax Regional Council:*

- 1. Approve the continued support for the Mobile Food Market through in-kind contributions for Years 3-5 (2018-2019 to 2020-2021), as outlined in the staff report dated May 18, 2018, including the addition of a staff member to the Mobile Food Market Advisory Team in Year 3 (2018-2019);*
- 2. Authorize the CAO to approve and enter into agreements with Mobile Food Market partners regarding the use of HRM transit and fleet vehicles;*
- 3. Direct staff to evaluate the option of donation of an HRM vehicle in Year 4 (2019-2020); and*
- 4. Direct staff to explore further options, and report to Council in Year 5 (2020-2021) with a recommendation for Council's consideration, regarding the long-term support of the Mobile Food Market.*

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*

The Municipality may spend money for municipal purposes in accordance with section 79A of the HRM Charter which states:

*79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if*

**RECOMMENDATIONS ON PAGE 2**

- (a) *the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality;*
- (b) *the expenditure is in respect of an emergency under the Emergency Management Act; or*
- (c) *the expenditure is legally required to be paid.*

The municipal purposes are set forth in section 7A of the HRM Charter:

**7A The purposes of the Municipality are to**

- (a) *provide good government;*
- (b) *provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and*
- (c) *develop and maintain safe and viable communities.*

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Approve the continuation of annual funding of \$75,000 to the Mobile Food Market, for three years from 2022/23 to 2024/25, as outlined in this report.
2. Approve continued support for the Mobile Food Market through in-kind contributions, for four years from 2021/22 to 2024/25, as outlined in this report.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Since 2016, HRM has been a founding partner and champion of the Mobile Food Market (MFM), which brings healthy and affordable food to communities with food access issues. To date, the majority of HRM's support has been in the form of in-kind contributions. As the MFM has evolved to serve more people and offer new services to meet need, the focus has shifted from establishing the MFM to developing a solid base for sustainability and responsiveness of the service. While MFM has excelled at operations, serving 19,000 people and 164,000 pounds of food this year alone, capacity for long range planning and strategy has been an ongoing challenge.

Staff are recommending that municipal support be extended to provide dedicated funding of \$75,000 per year, for the next three years. \$75,000 has been allocated in the proposed 2021/22 budget and if approved would continue through until 2024/25. This stable funding will permit the hiring of a dedicated staff member to manage the strategic development of the MFM to strengthen its sustainability and resilience.

**BACKGROUND**

With estimates of one in seven to as high as one in five households, HRM has consistently ranked among the lowest of three Canadian Census Metropolitan Areas with the highest rates of household food insecurity<sup>1</sup>. With the rising cost of food continuing to outpace income, these rates could worsen<sup>2</sup>.

Municipalities across Canada have developed creative ways to increase food security, often through bringing food into vulnerable communities and subsidizing costs to increase affordability. The concept of a mobile food market in HRM was originally raised at the Mayor's 2013 Conversation on Healthy and Livable Communities. Recognizing the need to work together to get the market rolling, this resulted in a partnership

<sup>1</sup> Tarasuk, V., Mitchell, A., Dachner, N. (2016). Household food insecurity in Canada, 2014. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from: <http://proof.utoronto.ca> .

<sup>2</sup> Dalhousie University and University of Guelph. (2020). 10th Edition: Canada's Food Price Report.

between HRM, the Ecology Action Centre (EAC) and Public Health (Central Zone, Nova Scotia Health Authority- NSHA). The Mobile Food Market (MFM) was founded on a mission to bring healthy and affordable food to communities with food access issues, which still holds true today. In addition to increasing access to healthy and affordable food, the MFM strengthens local capacity to address food security and creates opportunities for community connections and the development of food skills (recipe sharing, cooking classes, communal meals, etc.) and other work/life skills for a range of ages and abilities.

A Summer Pilot was launched in May 2016 and Regional Council continued to extend support for the Winter Pilot in 2017, year-round markets in Year 2 (2017/18) and Years 3-5 (2018-2021) and for the purchase of dedicated delivery vehicle in 2020 (Attachment A). The MFM has greatly matured during this period, moving beyond the growing pains of establishing markets to expanding services to becoming a leader in food distribution and community building.

#### **Collaborative Leadership & Operation**

Partnerships are foundational to the MFM's success. The MFM is based on a collaborative leadership model with oversight and planning by an advisory body and operations support from staff and a team of volunteers (Attachment B). NSHA, HRM, and MetroWorks (and formerly the EAC) make up the Leadership Team, providing strategic guidance and access to in-kind resources like vehicles, staff and administrative support. In addition to its role on the Leadership Team, MetroWorks acts as the host organization, responsible for human resources, banking, and other administrative functions, and is compensated for this contribution.

In general, the MFM visits communities on a two-week rotation, typically serving 3-4 communities a day. Community members host the MFM and are supported to offer on-site markets and distribute produce pack deliveries. The MFM relies on two full time staff who coordinate all the logistics such as food supply, deliveries, partnerships, volunteers and communications. Host teams run their local markets and act as ambassadors for the MFM by recruiting volunteers and spreading the word. COVID-19 has impacted MFM operations with all in-person markets being put on hold and focus shifting to bulk deliveries and emergency food distribution.

The challenge of accessing healthy and affordable food is worse for some HRM communities. The MFM has established criteria for the communities served, including demographics associated with higher risk for food insecurity such as income, proportion of seniors, etc. as well as the absence of food outlets. Partner communities must also have local capacity to operate food markets and/or manage deliveries. The MFM works with community hosts to design the services that best suit the needs and interests of the communities; each market is unique and tailored to its community. Figure 1 shows the evolution of sites and communities served by the MFM. Due to COVID-19, some sites and partnerships have changed in 2020/21 as some community hosts were unable to continue to participate in the market.

Figure 1: Communities Served by the MFM



The MFM has expanded beyond the initial fresh food markets on a Halifax Transit Bus in 2016. In 2017 (Winter Pilot), the MFM began to use a Corporate Fleet truck to deliver goods to indoor markets and distribute produce packs. Years 2-5 (2018/19-2020/21) utilized a hybrid delivery model, with a Halifax Transit bus and operator in warmer weather and a Corporate Fleet van for year-round deliveries and markets in cooler months (Attachment A). The addition of produce packs and the Corporate Fleet van for deliveries was a turning point in improving the efficiency of the MFM, providing a cost-effective way to serve many customers. Produce packs have been particularly effective for sites with established programs, allowing community members to pick up their food when coming to the area for other reasons.

In addition to the original fresh food markets, the MFM has expanded to offer:

- produce packs;
- bulk deliveries;
- frozen meals & staples beyond produce;
- mentorships to other regions outside of HRM; and
- emergency hampers and free food during COVID-19.

Figure 2: The New MFM Truck



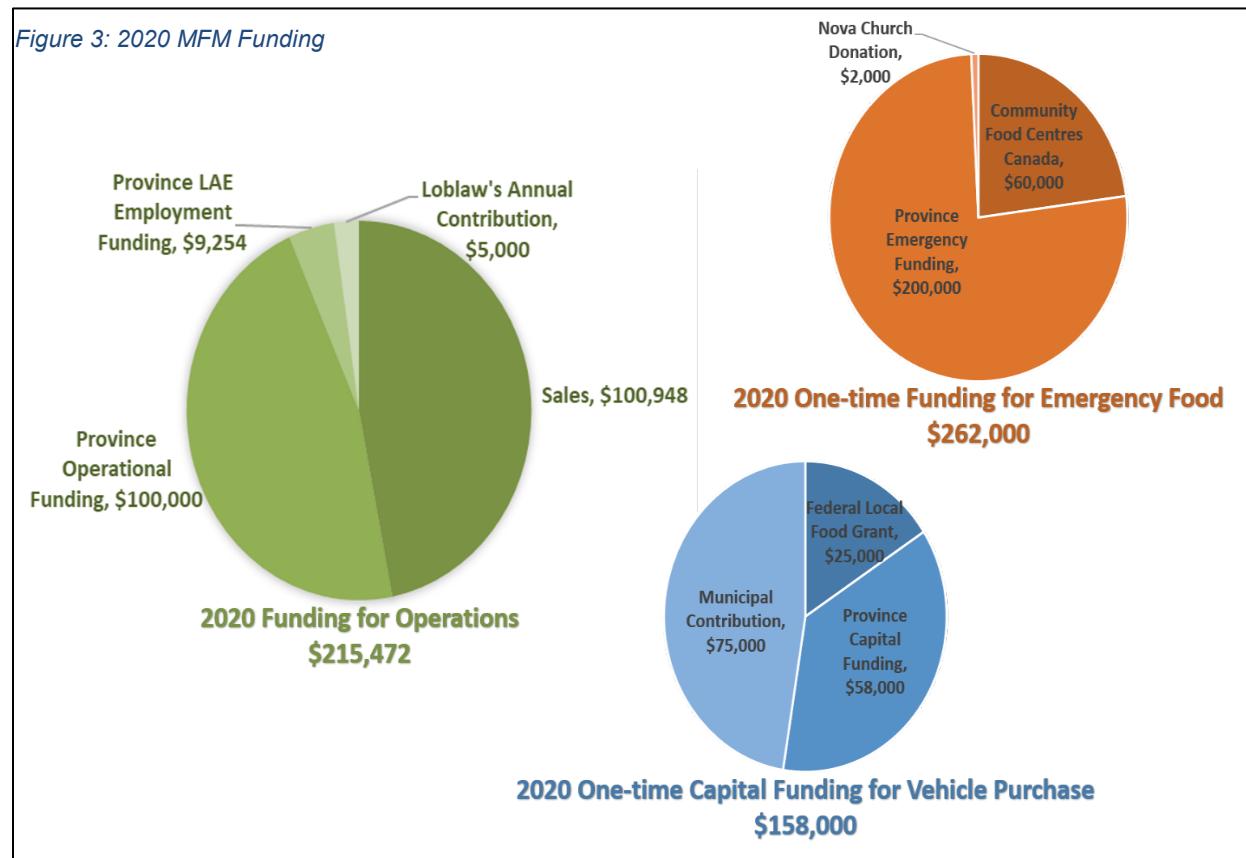
2021 has seen another important transition for the MFM with the arrival of a dedicated, custom built food delivery vehicle becoming operational in March. Council's January 24, 2017 motion requested consideration of donating a surplus HRM vehicle to the MFM. Upon weighing the options, it was determined that the most suitable vehicle would be a custom built, delivery-style truck with optimal payload, durability and flexibility. The MFM purchased the vehicle using a Federal Local Food Infrastructure Fund grant of \$25,000, a \$58,000 capital contribution from the Province of Nova Scotia and \$75,000 from HRM in March 2020. For more information on the vehicle, see the March 11, 2020 [Report](#) and Attachment C.

### Funding & Partnerships

The MFM has partnered with Loblaws (Superstore), Noggins, Stonehearth Bakery and other local suppliers to purchase food at discounted rates. The MFM is also actively seeking more partnerships with local producers and to increase the volume of local food purchased. The MFM minimizes food waste and shares this precious resource by donating unsold food to local shelters or selling to local restaurants, thereby generating funds for the market.

MFM operations are sustained through direct funding, indirect contributions from partners and volunteers, successful grant applications and the sale of food. Figure 3 provides a breakdown of MFM's direct funding in 2020. Generally, the MFM aims for food sales to cover at least a 1/3 of the operating costs, with funders and grants covering the balance. The Province of Nova Scotia has consistently been a major funder of the

MFM, providing operational funding in the range of \$100,000 per year. The Province has committed to continuing this level of funding in 2021/22.



The operating budget for the MFM is approximately \$220,000 per annum, not accounting for in-kind contributions. In-kind contributions from the Leadership Team (HRM, Ecology Action Centre, NSHA-Central Zone and MetroWorks), community organizations, corporate sponsors, etc. are estimated at approximately \$130,000 per annum. 2020 has been a very unusual year for the MFM Budget, with an income of \$635,472 from the addition of one-time funding of \$215,472 for emergency food distribution and capital contributions of \$158,000 for the new vehicle. COVID-19 has also impacted the ability of some partners to provide their usual in-kind contributions and it is estimated that this value will be lower for 2020/21.

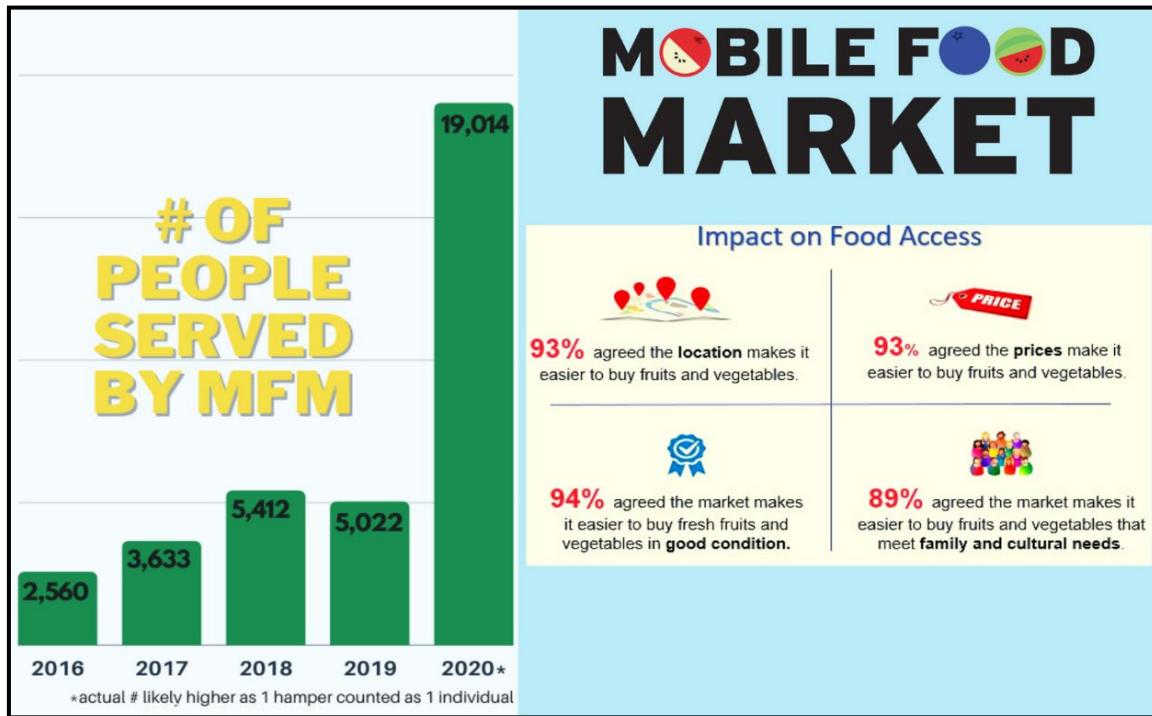
### **Impact of MFM**

The impact and outreach of the MFM continues to grow. Since it began, the number of people served has increased more than seven times and the MFM is consistently making it easier for people to buy and consume good food (Fig. 4). The MFM continues to offer vibrant spaces for communities to gather and build connections, while 100% of participants surveyed agreed that the MFM is a fun and welcoming place in their community. Additional program evaluation results can be found in the July 20, 2018 staff report or MFM's evaluation page. The MFM also continues to receive awards and recognition for its great work (see Attachment D for recent accolades).

### **Evolution of Municipal Support**

Prior to the \$75,000 contribution towards the purchase of the custom-built food delivery vehicle, HRM's support for MFM was through in-kind contributions. This support has included assistance from many HRM business units. The overall value of HRM's in-kind contribution is estimated at approximately \$40,000-\$42,000 per annum for 2017/18 to 2020/21. Approximately 60% of this contribution was in the form of staff support including Mayor's Office and Planning & Development staff participation on the Leadership Team

*Figure 4: MFM Impact*



and Library and Recreation Staff providing support for markets. 40% of the contribution was for HRM vehicles (Fleet Services truck, Halifax Transit bus & operator), goods (space for markets) and services (printing). For a breakdown and description of in-kind contributions, refer to the July 20, 2018 staff [report](#).

HRM's contributions have changed during 2020/21 due to COVID-19. The additional demand for MFM services, operational challenges and losses at the Leadership Team required staff to contribute more time than the typical 10 hours per month. With the closure of many facilities and shutting down of in person markets, Library and Parks and Recreation staff were not called on to support markets. While some of the traditional municipal contributions changed, the last year has also seen opportunities for new and strengthened relationships with the MFM. These are summarized as follows:

**Vehicle Supports:** In addition to HRM's contribution of \$75,000, Corporate Fleet Services were heavily involved in sourcing and designing the custom-built food delivery vehicle with the features to serve the MFM for many years. The switch from providing vehicles at an annual in-kind cost of \$8,800 to a one-time contribution towards a vehicle with a 25-30-year average lifespan, represents significant savings to HRM over time.

**People Supports:** In April 2020, the CAO recognized the MFM's crucial role in food distribution during COVID-19 and approved the redeployment of Youth Live Program staff:

- May to July 2020- Youth Live Program team of three:
  - assembled emergency food hampers;
  - provided space at Youth Live for the assembly;
  - occasional use of Youth Live vehicles;

- in-kind contribution valued at \$30,000 (includes work on municipal supports for food production during COVID-19);
- July to October 2020: Youth Live team returned to Parks & Recreation:
  - allocated money from the Canadian Federation of Municipalities emergency funding for stipends to recent Youth Live grads to work with the MFM;
  - valued at \$3,040.
- October to December 2020: Youth Live Program:
  - reallocated a student to the MFM, due to COVID restrictions on Youth Live Program
  - valued at \$686 to cover wages beyond the original \$3500 employment grant.

Service to the Eastern Shore: Food security is a significant challenge on the Eastern Shore. MFM, MusGo rider and the Eastern Shore Community Health Board (ES-CHB) have come up with an innovative plan to work together in 2021. Twice a month, MusGo will deliver Good Food Boxes filled with fresh fruit and vegetables supplied by the MFM. Deliveries will rotate between Musquodoboit Valley and Sheet Harbour, beginning on January 20, 2021. MusGo's travel costs are covered under the Rural Transit Funding Program; other costs are covered by MusGo and an ES-CHB contribution. As 1 in 5 road trips are related to food, bulk food delivery is an efficient use of MusGo. Community members can purchase boxes for \$10 and there will also be 15 free boxes per delivery.

### **COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenging time for the Mobile Food Market. With escalating barriers to accessing good food and rapid shifts in the local food environment and supply chains, the MFM worked with safety experts, food suppliers and community connections to identify needs, opportunities and connection points. The MFM has acted as a community food broker, developing tailored food access interventions through:

- supporting community embedded organizations to distribute food to individuals in need;
- linking surpluses, donations, and time sensitive food opportunities to a network of service providers; and
- providing guidance on safe practices.

While demand sky-rocketed, services pivoted, and emergency funding flowed, MFM's capacity decreased with losses at the Leadership table and from the volunteer pool. The loss of student placements, closure of facilities and limits on gathering have been challenging as the MFM relies heavily on volunteer labour. The people power from the Youth Live Program and municipal support were significant for the MFM continuing to provide services during COVID-19.

NSHA staff were redeployed for the pandemic response and their participation was limited to recommendations for safe operations and high-level oversight. NSHA is still invested in the MFM and committed to a more active role, when roles return to "normal". The Ecology Action Centre (EAC) who were founding members of the MFM had to leave the Leadership Team with the end of federal funding for their food program. The EAC continues to be strong supporters and are actively seeking alternative funding to resource their program and participation in the MFM. EAC's staff were crucial to the MFM's strategic planning and grant writing. MFM staff and remaining Leadership team members worked to fill the gaps but the main focus this year was pandemic operations and not future planning.

Despite setbacks, MFM has risen to the challenge of COVID-19 and proven that it is a leader in community food distribution. Figure 5 provides a snapshot of the impact of COVID-19 on food security, contrasted with how the MFM has been responding. Since March 2020, the MFM has served three and a half times the volume of food and four times as many people as the previous year. MFM mobilized emergency funding and other operational funds to deliver almost 2,000 free hampers (staples, produce, grocery cards and safety materials) and 164,000 pounds of healthy food across the region.

COVID-19 created opportunities to work with communities which the MFM had been aiming to serve. MFM began providing bulk deliveries to North Grove, the Dartmouth North community food centre, who served 10,000 people with this food. A steady increase in the Spryfield/Sambro loop area, served through

partnership with Chebucto Connections, was also a significant contributor to the increase. Emergency funding also allowed MFM to provide free food, in addition to the usual low-cost options, which opened doors to new partners. Another interesting shift is that while MFM is working with a smaller number of partners, those who stayed open during the pandemic are serving double or more their usual numbers.

Figure 5: Impacts of COVID-19 & MFM Response



In addition to working more closely with existing partners, MFM actively sought new partners. In September 2020, they surveyed community partners to understand how the service supported their work during the pandemic and how it could be enhanced for future waves and beyond. A summary of responses can be found in Attachment E.

The majority (88%) tapped into MFM's services during COVID-19, either through bulk food delivery or emergency hampers. Most respondents (58%) had not worked with the MFM prior to COVID-19, even though many of them (64%) were doing food related work. Responses align with the stats in Figure 4, with 86% reporting an increased need for food for their clients and no reports of decreased need. Eighty-three (83) percent of respondents also indicated that food access needs for their clients had changed during this time.

The survey demonstrates that the MFM has continued to provide dignified access to healthy and affordable food during COVID-19. It supported organizations through filling gaps, providing reliable food and extending the reach of their programs. Their clients were supported through improved access to food and increased nutrition. More broadly, organizations felt that the MFM supported their communities and provided a sense of belonging. The survey also provides guidance for future planning, such as the need to continue and increase the service, expanding partnerships with local producers, and returning to in-person markets.

Regional Council has provided preliminary funding support through the 2021/2022 base budget in the amount of \$75,000, subject to final budget approval.

## **DISCUSSION**

As the MFM has evolved, focus has shifted from establishing a viable service to longer term sustainability and quality of service. As a founding champion, it is logical that HRM's role evolve as well. Staff are recommending that HRM transition from historically in-kind support to annual dedicated funding. While Regional Council has approved one year of support through the proposed 2021/22 base budget, a multi-year, financial contribution would provide a stable base for MFM's future growth and enrichment. While the benefits and impact of the MFM are clear, shifts in funding and partnerships make it vulnerable, potentially impacting its ability to provide consistent service and meet changing community needs. MFM partners and communities have the agency to shape MFM's operations, but functionality is dependent on consistent and sufficient funding<sup>3</sup>.

COVID-19 has demonstrated the agility of MFM in responding to community needs. However, the ongoing challenge of capacity for strategic planning has worsened during this time. Staff are recommending that HRM contribute \$75,000 in direct funding to the MFM for each of the upcoming three years (2022/23 to 2024/25) to fill this gap. This funding would continue to cover reasonable compensation and mandatory employment costs for a senior manager of strategic development. The manager would diversify funding sources to ensure a robust budget, increase awareness and recognition of the service and work with partners to explore how to further increase access to healthy and affordable food to better serve the people of HRM. Their role would be to lead the fundraising, communications, partnership development, and strategic planning for the MFM. While guided by the Leadership Team on significant matters, the manager would have responsibility for the day-to-day strategic management of the MFM.

The hiring of a senior manager will reduce municipal in-kind contributions with less staff time devoted to the Leadership Team and focused more on higher-level oversight. Table 1 estimates the value of continuing in-kind contributions, decreasing from \$42,000/year of Years 4-5 (2019-2021), as detailed in the July 19, 2018 [Report](#), to \$19,625 for Years 6-9 (2021-2025). The continued in-kind contributions would support on-site markets and participation on the Leadership Team, assuming in person markets can continue to be offered and municipal facilities remain open.

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<sup>3</sup> MacQuarrie, Madison. (2019). *The Power of Participation: How Can Community Partners Sustain the Halifax Mobile Food Market?* Dalhousie University.

*Table 1: Estimated In-Kind Contributions for Years 6-9 (2021-2025)*

Municipal Department	Estimated Annual In-Kind Contribution	Total In-Kind Contribution Years 6-9
<b>Leadership Team: Mayor's Office</b>	\$3,275 (60 hours)	\$13,100
<b>Leadership Team: Planning &amp; Development</b>	\$4,200 (100 hours)	\$16,800
<b>Market Support: Parks, Recreation &amp; Communities (staff, room rental &amp; supplies)</b>	\$6,550	\$26,200
<b>Market Support: Halifax Regional Libraries (staff, travel &amp; supplies)</b>	\$5,600	\$22,400
<b>TOTAL IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION</b>	<b>\$19,625</b>	<b>\$78,500</b>

### **Governance**

An important component of future success will be establishing an effective governance model. Currently, MetroWorks is the administrative host and home for the MFM. In February of 2021, an updated Partnership Agreement was finalized, outlining the roles of the Leadership Team, reflecting the evolution of the service, changes to the Leadership Team and the acquisition of assets such as a dedicated vehicle for food distribution. The MFM benefits from efficiencies, cost reductions and a shared “farm to plate” philosophy with MetroWorks. The current structure has supported the operational focus of the MFM. Moving forward, there may be the potential for differences in mandate and competing funding, as the MFM evolves. The Leadership Team has been weighing the current governance model against establishing the MFM as its own not-for-profit, charitable organization. Being on its own could increase funding opportunities, open new relationships and offer increased mandate control and autonomy. Risks could involve additional costs and time commitments.

The Province of Nova Scotia has been a consistent supporter of the MFM. In addition to approximately \$200,000 in extra funding in 2020 to support emergency food distribution, the Province has funded the MFM in the range of \$100,000-\$150,000 per year. The Province is in support of the hiring of a senior manager of Strategic Development and has also been engaged in the conversations around governance. The Province is recommending that the Leadership Team take additional time to make this crucial decision and thoroughly investigate the pros and cons of various options. To support this due diligence, the Province is offering to procure a consultant to work with the Leadership Team on governance. A consultant could be retained in fiscal 2021/22, working with MFM staff, the Leadership Team and the new senior manager to chart the best governance path forward for the MFM by summer 2021. The Leadership Team is in support of this direction.

### **Conclusion**

Staff are recommending that HRM shift from the in-kind contribution model as practiced through to fiscal year 2020/21, to providing annual funding to enable the hiring of a senior manager of Strategic Development and continuing in-kind contributions to support community markets. The MFM has grown into a significant player in community food security, increasing access to healthy and affordable food for more than 19,000 people in the last year alone. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the service’s ability to adapt to changing needs and work with diverse partners to provide dignified access to food and strengthen community resilience. The hiring of a senior manager will address how the MFM will serve the community and grow their reach while minimizing the burden on HRM and other partners, and return Leadership Team focus to high-level guidance, as originally intended.

While COVID-19 has been a serious challenge for food access and has highlighted significant issues in our local food system, it has provided for new ways for HRM and the MFM to work together. The MFM was a key component of HRM’s COVID-19 response and there are ongoing discussions on how to continue sharing resources to be more resilient and mobilized together. In 2020, HRM launched JustFOOD, an action plan for the Region, in partnership with the Halifax Food Policy Alliance (see [Report](#) for more detail). The MFM is a tangible example of the actions envisioned by JustFOOD, recognizing that collaborations and

collective impact is the key to improving food security. Staff anticipate that the relationship between HRM and the MFM will continue to grow with strengthened connections to Halifax Regional Libraries, Emergency Measures, Parks & Recreation, JustFOOD and other municipal initiatives.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Planning and Development have allocated \$75,000 for the MFM through its 2021/22 operational budget. Funding for the first year for the senior manager of Strategic Development position will be covered within Account C320. Funding for 2022/23 to 2024/25 would be allocated as part of future municipal budgets, under the appropriate departmental budget.

The 3- year estimated financial implications are summarized as follows:

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>
<b>Operating – Cost Centre C320</b>	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000

The municipal costs of the in-kind supports proposed for Years 6 to 9 (2021 to 2025) can be accommodated within existing operating budgets. The estimated annual value of the municipal in-kind contribution is \$19,625 for staff participation on the Leadership Team and on-site support for community markets.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

To ensure a measure of control over the multi-year funding for the MFM, a contribution agreement will be executed. The Municipality's standard contribution agreement will be used as this agreement requires the recipient of a financial contribution from the Municipality to, for example, provide certain reports about the progress and financial position of the recipient organization, understand the contribution is subject to the availability of funds from the Municipality and agree that the Municipality's contribution may not be used for certain costs and expenses.

The lack of capacity for strategic planning could impact the sustainability of the MFM and its ability to respond and evolve. Without direct funding from HRM, the MFM will have to expend additional time seeking funding, as opposed to distributing food. Additional support is required to enable the shift from operations to expand and enrich the service. There is also the risk that if HRM does not provide direct funding, other funders may not be prepared to continue providing direct funding and that MFM will not be able to leverage municipal funding for other opportunities.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

As the MFM is operational in nature, there was no targeted community engagement associated with the preparation of this report. However other municipal initiatives such as the Mayor's Conversation on Healthy and Livable Communities, Poverty Solutions, Public Safety Plan, HalifACT and JustFOOD demonstrate strong public support for HRM's involvement in the promotion of food security and increasing access to healthy food. In addition, MFM regularly engages with participants and partners through surveys and interviews, which illustrates staunch support for the MFM and its importance to communities.

In 2021, the MFM will be distributing emergency hampers, which will include information about JustFOOD and an invitation to work together towards a stronger local food system and increased access to healthy and affordable food.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

While there are no direct environmental benefits from the hiring of a senior manager of Strategic Development, increasing efficiency and reducing environmental footprint will be an important component of the role.

**ALTERNATIVES**

Regional Council may choose to:

1. Approve the in-kind supports for Year 6 (2021/22) without supporting Years 7-9 (through to 2024/25).
2. Refuse the recommendation for direct funding (2022/23 through 2024/25) and continued in-kind support for the MFM.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Municipal Support for the Mobile Food Market

Attachment B: Current Governance Model

Attachment C: MFM New Vehicle

Attachment D: MFM Accolades

Attachment E: Summary of 2020 Community Partner Surveys

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by:      Leticia Smillie, Planner III, Planning & Development. 902.266.4958

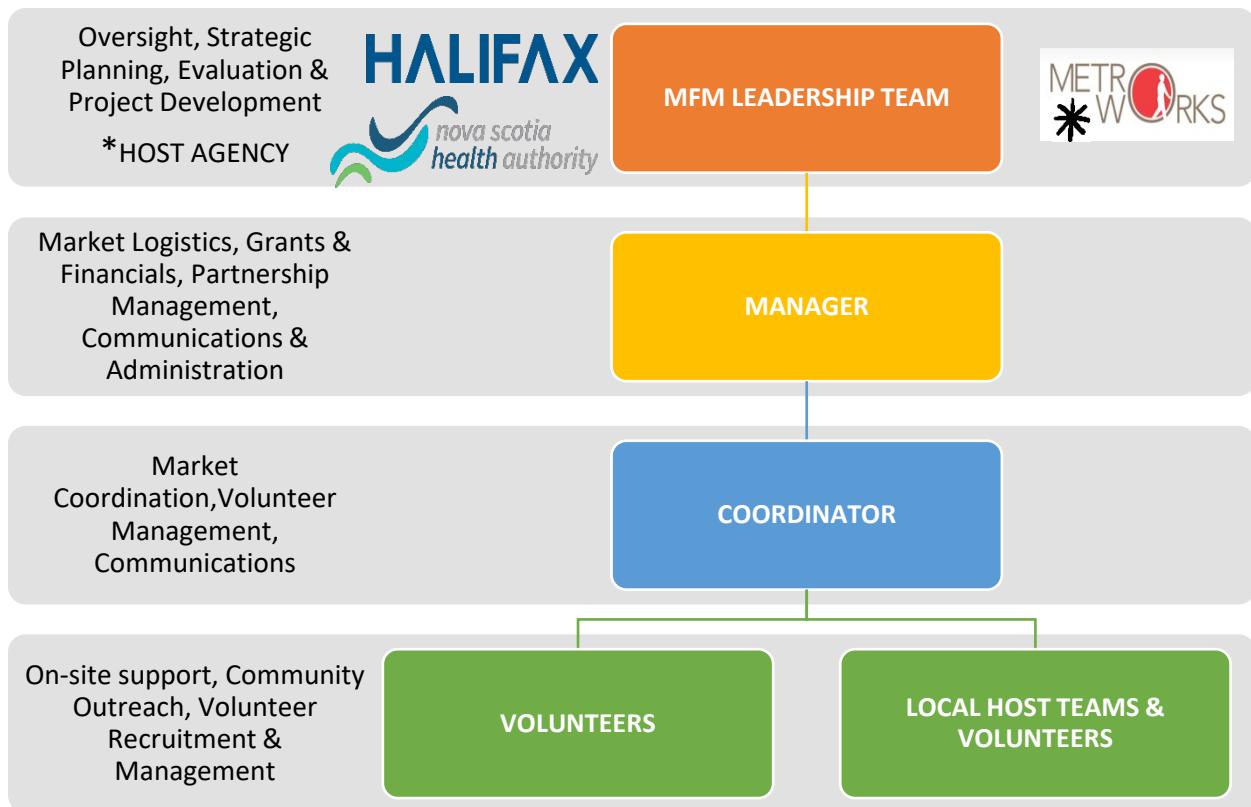
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**ATTACHMENT A: MUNICIPAL SUPPORT FOR THE MOBILE FOOD MARKET**

DATE	MOTIONS/APPROVALS	MODEL	MUNICIPAL CONTRIBUTION
04 Aug 2015 Summer Pilot	<p>1.Approve the one-time in-kind donation of the use of a Halifax Transit bus to the Mobile Market Project Team Coalition of Public Health, Ecology Action Centre and HRM, for use one day per week, for a 21-week mobile market pilot program; and</p> <p>2.Direct staff to develop a policy lens through which to assess municipal responses and actions to social support, health and liveability initiatives.</p>	Markets on HFX Bus	Staff: Mayor's Office (MO), Site Support, Vehicles: Bus & Operator, Communications Support
24 Jan 2017 Years 1-2 (2015/16-16/17)	<p>1.Approve an in-kind contribution of the use of an HRM fleet vehicle and other supports to enable a 16-week Mobile Food Market Winter Pilot, in partnership with the Mobile Food Market Advisory Team, as outlined in the staff report dated December 20, 2016;</p> <p>2.Approve a further extension to the in-kind contribution of the use of an HRM vehicle and other supports to enable a transition year for the Mobile Food Market (June 2017 to April 2018), in partnership with the Mobile Food Market Advisory Team, as outlined in the staff report dated December 20, 2016; and</p> <p>3.Direct staff to explore further options, and report to Council for its consideration, to support the long-term viability of the Mobile Food Market, including continuing to provide in-kind supports, and/or permanently conveying a surplus bus to the Mobile Food Market.</p>	HYBRID: Markets on Bus when warm, Fleet truck year-round deliveries & cool weather markets	MO + P&D Staff, Site Support, Bus & Operator, Fleet Vehicle  \$59,000 in-kind for 1.5 years
31 July 2018 Years 3-5 (17/18-20/21)	<p>1. Approve the continued support for the Mobile Food Market through in-kind contributions for Years 3-5 (2018-2019 to 2020-2021), as outlined in the staff report dated May 18, 2018, including the addition of a staff member to the Mobile Food Market Advisory Team in Year 3 (2018-2019);</p> <p>2. Authorize the CAO to approve and enter into agreements with Mobile Food Market partners regarding the use of HRM transit and fleet vehicles;</p>	HYBRID plus additional services + COVID pivot	MO & P&D on Leadership Team, Bus & Fleet Vehicle, On-site Market Support  Approximately \$40,000 in-kind, per annum

<b>DATE</b>	<b>MOTIONS/APPROVALS</b>	<b>MODEL</b>	<b>MUNICIPAL CONTRIBUTION</b>
	<p>3. Direct staff to evaluate the option of donation of an HRM vehicle in Year 4 (2019-2020); and</p> <p>4. Direct staff to explore further options, and report to Council in Year 5 (2020-2021) with a recommendation for Council's consideration, regarding the long-term support of the Mobile Food Market.</p>		
02 April 2020 Year 5 (2020/21)	<p>1. Authorize the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or designate to enter into a Contribution Agreement with MetroWorks Employment Association, as the designate member organization of the Mobile Food Market, defining HRM's requirements for the contribution, as outlined in the Discussion section of the staff recommendation report dated February 25, 2020; and</p> <p>2. Approve an unbudgeted reserve withdrawal in the amount of \$75,000 from the General Contingency Reserve Q421 for the purchase of a food distribution vehicle in 2020, replacing HRM's in-kind vehicular contributions, pending the CAO's approval of a contribution agreement with MetroWorks Employee Association.</p>	Contribution towards vehicle purchase	Direct Contribution of \$75,000 K
	<p>Emergency Food Distribution- Approved by CAO in March 2020</p> <p>CAO approval of redeployment of YouthLive 2-3 staff</p> <p>FCM funding- honorarium for 2 YouthLive participants to support MFM</p> <p>Summer Student Grant- moved from YL program not happening during COVID-19 to MFM</p>		In-kind Contribution

## **ATTACHMENT B: CURRENT GOVERNANCE MODEL**



#### **ATTACHMENT C: NEW MFM VEHICLE**

The Leadership Team worked with fleet vehicle experts at HRM and fabricators at MetroWorks to design a robust mobile market and delivery vehicle. The vehicle will serve all the Markets' needs year-round and MFM will no longer need to access HRM vehicles, estimated at a \$8,800 saving in in-kind contributions. The truck will give MFM the flexibility to expand to new areas of the municipality, including rural communities, additional capacity (i.e. new delivery days/times) at existing Markets and ability to explore new services.

The truck arrived in HRM in January 2021 and has been readied for deliveries. The MFM has negotiated with HRM Fire Services to park the vehicle at the West Street Station, providing natural surveillance and a convenient location. The Leadership Team worked with partners, funders, and other levels of government for a celebratory soft launch. For footage and social media on the vehicle launch, please visit:

- [Global TV interview](#)
- [Communications NS longer video](#)
- [MFM at Province House with Minister Lohnes-Croft](#)
- [MFM at City Hall with Mayor Savage](#)
- [MFM at Atlantic Superstore](#)
- [MFM at MetroWorks Employment](#)



#### **ATTACHMENT D: MFM ACCOLADES**

Recent recognitions of the Mobile Food Market's positive impacts on increasing access to healthy and affordable food and community well-being:

- February 2018: received national recognition, winning silver in the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC)/Deloitte Public Sector Leadership Awards for its innovative and collaborative approach to addressing food insecurity;
- November 2019: received national award from the Bhayana Family Foundation, in partnership with the United Way, recognizing work to deliver nutritious food to seniors in need, and building bridges across ages and cultures, the importance of service and leadership in food security; and
- November 2019: awarded the YMCA Peace Medal, which honours those who demonstrate the values of PEACE (Participation, Empathy, Advocacy, Community and Empowerment) in all they do and inspire others in their community to do the same.

Additional awards and media recognitions can be found in the July 20, 2018 [Report](#).

## Attachment E: Summary of 2020 Community Partner Surveys

### September 2020

Prepared by Madeleine Waddington & Heather Monahan,  
Public Health Central Zone, NSHA

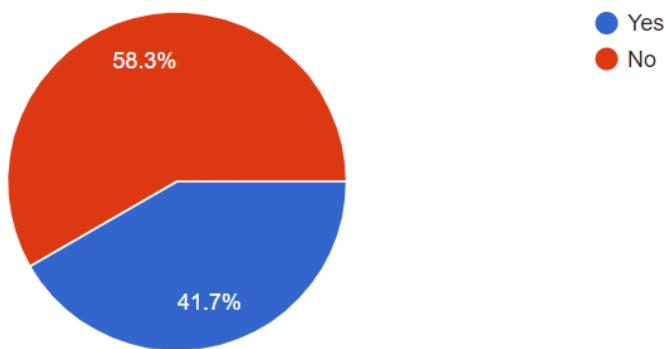
Mobile Food Market (MFM) community partners were invited to participate in a survey to help the MFM understand partners' perspectives on the best features of the MFM service and opportunities to enhance MFM response to support food access during potential future waves of COVID-19 and beyond. The survey was shared with 35 community partners for completion between August 20 to September 3, 2020.

Overall 26 responses were received, however two responses were removed as they were duplicates leaving a final sample size of 24.

#### Question 1

Did you and/or your organization use Mobile Food Market services before the pandemic (before March 2020)?

24 responses



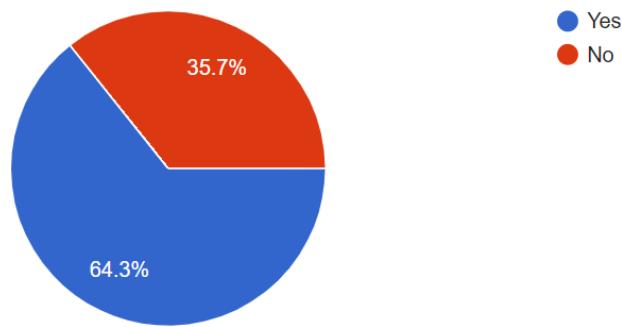
Of the 24 total participants, **10 (41.7%)** used the Mobile Food Market (MFM) services before the pandemic, whereas **14 (58.3%)** participants reported that they did not use the MFM service before the pandemic.

## Question 2

### Food-related work before March 2020

If you did not use the Mobile Food Market services, were you doing any other food-related work before March 2020 (e.g. food pantry, snack program, market, hot meal program, etc.) ?

14 responses



Of the 14 participants who did not use the MFM services before the pandemic, **nine (64.3%)** were doing other food-related work before March 2020 and **five (35.7%)** were not doing any food-related work before March 2020.

## Question 3 – If yes, please describe the type of food work you were doing

(9 responses)

Participants that were doing other food related work before March 2020 were asked to describe this.

Themes for the types for food-related services included:

- Emergency Food (community food bank, gift cards, food pantry, food bags) (6)
- Community meals/lunch program (6)
- Snack programs (3)
- Food markets (2)
- Community garden/farm (2)
- Community kitchens (1)

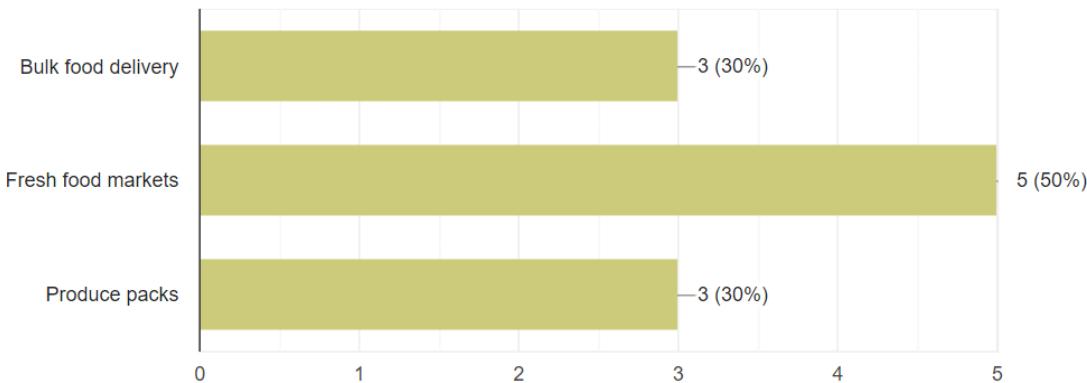
## Question 4

### Use of Services Before the Pandemic

Which of the following Mobile Food Market services did you and/or your organization use?

Please select all that apply.

10 responses



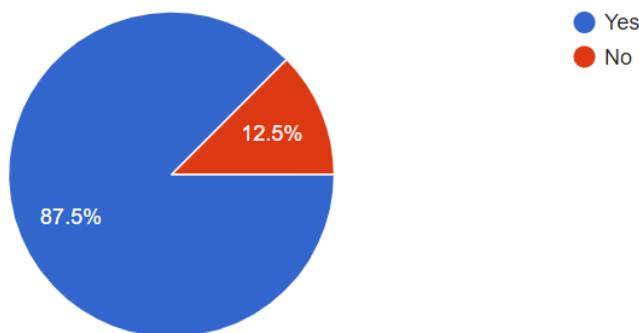
The graph above shows the use of MFM services by participating organizations before the pandemic (prior to March 2020). **Three** organizations reported using the bulk food delivery, **five** organizations reported using the fresh food markets and **four** organizations reported using produce packs. Only one of these organizations was using **both** the bulk food delivery and produce packs prior to March 2020.

## Question 5

### Use of Services During the Pandemic

Did you and/or your organization use the Mobile Food Market services during the pandemic (March 2020 to present)?

24 responses



Of the 24 total participants, **21 (87.5%)** reported using the MFM services during the pandemic, whereas only **3 (12.5%)** reported they did not use the MFM services from March 2020 to present.

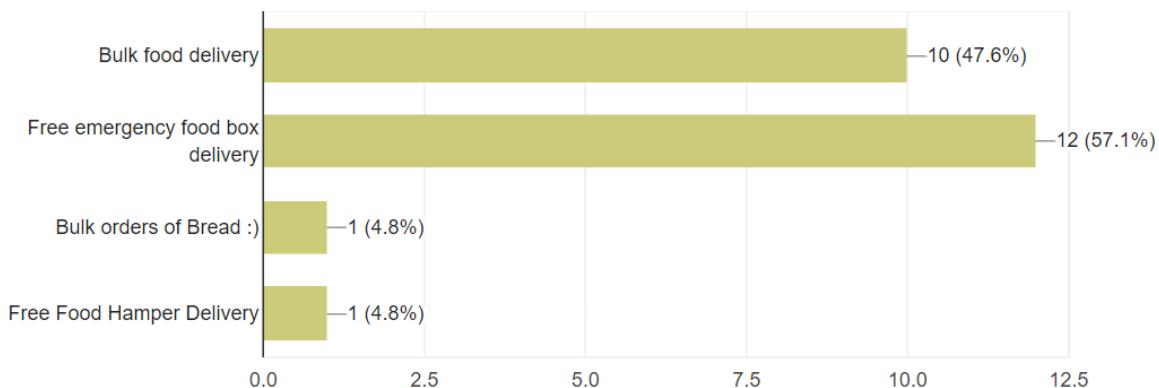
## Question 6

### Use of Services During the Pandemic (March 2020 to present)

Which of the following Mobile Food Market services did you and/your organization use?

Please select all that apply.

21 responses



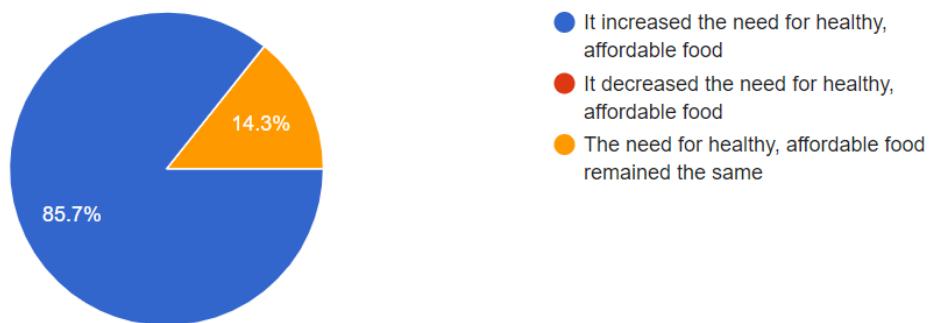
Of the 21 organizations that used services during the pandemic, **10** reported using the bulk food delivery and **12** reported using the free emergency food box delivery. **Three** of these organizations used **both** the bulk food delivery and free emergency food box delivery during this period. For the “other” response, **one** participant listed “free food hamper delivery” and **one** participant listed “bulk orders of bread”.

## Question 7

### Service Feedback

How did the pandemic impact your organization's need to access healthy, affordable food for your clients?

21 responses



The majority (**18 [85.7%]**) of participants reported that the pandemic had increased the need for healthy affordable food access among their clients, whereas only **three (13.6%)** reported that the need remained the same. None of the participants felt that the need for healthy, affordable food had decreased during the pandemic.

## Question 8 – How has the Mobile Food Market service helped your organization to improve dignified access to healthy, affordable food in your community/for your clients? (20 responses)

Ways that the MFM services helped to improve dignified access to healthy, affordable food could be grouped into the following themes.

- Filling gaps related to sufficient quantity/improved quality of food and/or providing reliable food access food for needs of organization (8)
- Supported nutrition/food needs of clients/community (7)
- Improved access to food/reducing need for transportation for clients (5)
- Expanding reach of food programs (3)
- Generally a supportive service for their community (3)
- Sense of belonging/commitment to food issues (2)

*"The flexibility of how the food is delivered and the opportunity for us to build caring relationships with those in our community, in the middle of this crisis, has been 'gold' for us."*

*"We were able to extend our offering of a Community Food Pantry with contributions from the Mobile Food Market at a time when resources from within the community were no longer available."*

*"This service has helped us to increase the amount of healthy foods we are able to add to our Produce Packs since we shifted to a free produce pack distribution from a subsidized community Market. The reliability of the delivery of bulk healthy and mostly local foods has been immensely helpful in pulling off our bi-weekly food pack distribution."*

## Question 9 – What did you like best about the service?

(21 responses)

Participants were asked what they liked best about the MFM services they used. Responses could be categorized into the following 7 themes:

- The MFM team (friendly, caring, committed, supportive, easy and efficient to work with) (8)
- Reliability/ease of use of service (delivery, packing the boxes, good communication) (8)
- Quantity/quality/variety of healthy food (6)
- Affordability (5)
- Improved accessibility for clients and vulnerable clients and communities (including rural communities) (4)
- Sense of community/shared goals (4)
- Additional supports available through MFM services (masks, gift cards, etc.) (2)

*"The high level of commitment from all personnel in caring, sharing and compassion"*

*"Since Covid started, the mobile market has helped us get food into the hands of the most vulnerable families"*

*"The amazing staff, the consistency, the timely responses, the communication and the shared goal of increasing food security in our communities."*

## Question 10 – How could the service be improved to meet your organization’s needs?

(16 responses)

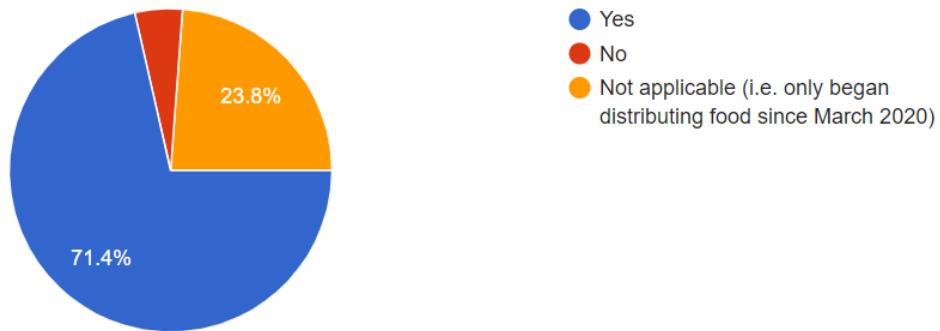
When asked about how the MFM services could be improved to better meet their needs, responses included the following.

- No improvements needed/satisfied (6)
- Maintaining models of service delivery/new partnerships set up through pandemic response (4)
- Increase frequency of delivery days (3)
- Restarting in person fresh food markets (2)
- Considerations of needs of specific community/partner (gift certificates for grocery store chain in the area, client privacy issues?) (2)

## Question 11

Has the way you distribute food to clients changed or been adapted?

21 responses



**15 (71.4%)** participants reported that the way they distribute food to clients has changed during the pandemic; only **one** participant reported no change in distribution methods. For **5 participants (23.8%)** question 11 was not applicable.

## Question 12 – Please describe how you have changed or adapted the service to meet the needs of your clients

(14 responses)

When asked to describe ways in which their organization changed or adapted their food-related services, participants responses could be categorized into the following themes:

- Take-out/delivery models replacing in-person meals/snacks/food or emerging as a new service (8)
- Pivoting to free food versus paid food services (3)
- Expanded/changing clientele (3)
- Developed new partnerships to address food needs of clients (MFM, Square Roots, Halifax Public Libraries, local farms (2)
- Exploring ways to expand partnerships and address food insecurity on a broader level (1)
- Virtual food programming (1)
- Improved communications (1)

*"Clients normally come in to the Centre to eat together. With the Centre closed during the pandemic we began sending out food hampers with homemade frozen meals & fresh bread, fruit & veg 2x month. Many of our seniors have barriers to cooking healthy meals at home."*

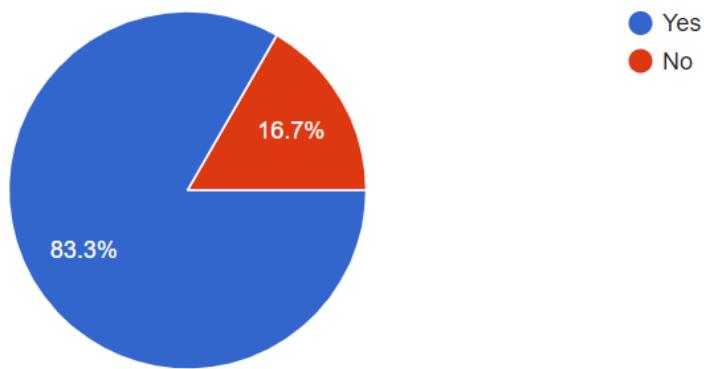
*"We will review how and who we partner with and ways that we can address food insecurities on a broader community level [in] a more effective way"*

### Question 13

#### Food access need changes

Have the food access needs of your clients/community changed since March 2020?

24 responses



The majority (**20 [83.3%]**) of participants reported that the food access needs of their clients/community have changed since March 2020. Only **4 (16.7%)** participants reported no change in food access needs.

### Question 14- How have the food access needs of your clients changed?

(19 responses)

Participants described the changes in the food access needs of their clients in four main ways:

- Increasing food access needs among clients due to loss of income/affordability, etc. (11)
- Increased isolation and demand for food delivery (often due to fear of COVID or barriers related to COVID) (8)
- Worsened accessibility challenges due to pandemic (i.e. lack of transportation, recommending only one grocery shopper per family, etc.) (4)
- Discontinuation of some food support services/networks due to COVID (3)

*"Many clients are not going out as often to access food, and some are not going out at all (still in Aug). We have clients who ate most/all of their cooked meals at Spencer House. Food hampers are filling that void."*

*"Folks were very afraid to leave their homes [and] transportation is so limited here in our community"*

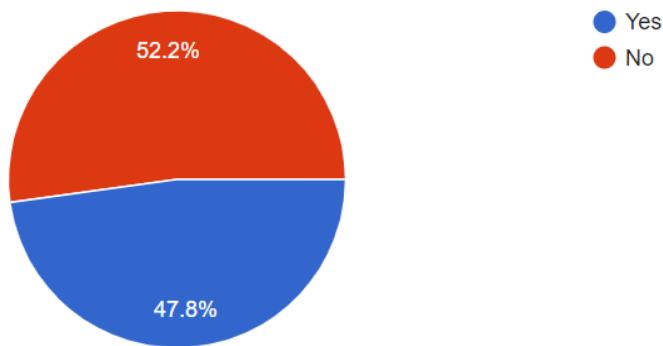
*"Since a lot of food programming has been put on hold or transitioned into virtual programming, there is an increased need to access emergency food support as well as access to food that meets peoples' dietary, cultural, religious needs."*

### Question 15

#### New/Worsening Gaps in Support

Have you observed any new or worsening gaps in support for food access since March 2020?

23 responses



Interestingly, approximately half (**12 [52.2%]**) of participants reported that they have not observed any new or worsening gaps in support for food access since March 2020.

### Question 16 – Please describe these new/worsening gaps in support for food access since March 2020

(12 responses)

When asked to describe any new or worsening gaps in food access, participants identified the following:

- Increasing food access needs among clients due to loss of income/affordability, etc. (6)
- Increased isolation and demand for food delivery (often due to fear of COVID or barriers related to COVID) (5)
- Worsened accessibility challenges due to pandemic (i.e. lack of transportation, recommending only one grocery shopper per family, etc.) (4)
- Discontinuation of some food support services/networks due to COVID (2)
- Food supply concerns (2)
- Lack of sustainability of government funds to support expanded emergency food supports (1)

*"In our community, we believe that the housing crisis is accelerating and causing a greater need for basic needs support, including food."*

*"The government has provided an abundance of funds in the beginning of Covid, that has changed and now there are limits to what the government is willing to do."*

*"We were initially supporting people in our neighbourhood who had insecure housing and found that our services broaden to include families whose parents lost one or more jobs due to the pandemic."*

## Question 17 – What role could the Mobile Food Market play to address these gaps?

(10 responses)

In addition, participants described 3 main roles the MFM could play to address these gaps.

- Maintaining regular food delivery of healthy food (5)
- Expanding partnerships to increase reach/connect to local producers/maintain relationships with “on-the-ground” providers (3)
- Increased presence in community/inclusion in conversations around possible solutions and opportunities (2)

*“Continue to leverage the on the ground community partners in reaching those who are under resourced.”*

*“We believe the MFM is already playing an integral role in increasing access to food. If it were possible to create more partnerships with local farms or some sort of food waste diversion program where excess food from food businesses (not expired) could be redistributed to non-profit food centres that would be amazing.*

*There is a service that exists like this in Toronto called Second Harvest.”*

## Question 18 – What role could other community partners play to address these gaps?

(10 responses)

Participants also described four main roles for other community partners to work collaboratively with the MFM to address these gaps.

- Improved collaboration/communication (4)
- Providing feedback to MFM on needs of clients/participatory approaches to programming (2)
- Providing support to continue/expand local distribution of MFM food (2)
- Sharing resources (1)

*“A more coordinated effort with other organizations in the same communities.  
Perhaps a Facebook group for improved communication?”*

**Question 19 - Looking ahead, what should the Mobile Food Market prioritize to improve access to healthy, affordable, high quality food in a dignified way?**

(19 responses)

Lastly, 9 different priorities were identified for the MFM to continue meeting its goal of providing access to healthy, affordable, high quality food in a dignified way.

- Keep up the good work! (5)
- Providing support/approaches for dignified food access and being responsive to community needs (3)
- Maintaining affordability for clients/small non-profits (2)
- Maintaining reliable delivery/infrastructure for reaching communities with physical accessibility challenges (2)
- Resuming in-person markets (2)
- Advocacy (2)
- Increased promotion of MFM (2)
- Increased partnerships around local food (2)
- Food literacy (1)

*"The community response displayed during the pandemic has shown that the people of Nova Scotia are more than capable to help reduce the "problem" of a lack of fresh/healthy food for all the people of Nova Scotia, with an end goal of eliminating the problem entirely given the guidance, support and leadership required."*