



HOME FOOD DELIVERY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT – SUMMARY OF RESULTS

THE OTTAWA FOOD BANK

OCTOBER 2022

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1. ENGAGING THE FOOD SECURITY COMMUNITY

In June 2022, the Ottawa Food Bank (OFB) engaged a third-party consultant, [Laridae](#), to lead the process of finding an organization to develop and support a centralized home food delivery system for food security organizations across Ottawa.

As part of this process, Laridae was engaged to connect with stakeholders—to enable OFB to ensure that the voices of those connected to, responsible for providing, and/or who are current or potential recipients of home food delivery are considered. We asked questions to hear what is going well, as well as the challenges and barriers to service, to understand the current landscape of home delivery across Ottawa, and to build an understanding of what the ideal centralized home food delivery organization would look like.

Much of the engagement input will inform the RFP launch in October 2022, by helping define the vision of the home delivery process moving forward and the ideal organization to lead this work.

Additional input was also received from stakeholders that pertains to the current home delivery processes across Ottawa in ways that extend beyond the scope of the RFP process, and the hope is that this information will help support the continuous improvement of food bank services. In this report, we have focused on this additional input.

2. PROCESS

2.1. Audiences

During the engagement process, we engaged the primary internal and external stakeholders connected with home food delivery.



2.2. Stakeholder Participation

Overall, the process engaged **172 participants** through focus groups (*inc. one in French*), key person interviews, and a survey (*English and French*).



3. HERE'S WHAT WE HEARD

3.1. An Invaluable Service

Participants emphasized that home food delivery:

- Is essential to support those who would otherwise be unable to access food support services.
 - *"It's sometimes the last resort for them."*
 - The need is very apparent and extends beyond the capacity of existing food bank services.
- Increases accessibility across the food security sector.
- Helps preserve a level of dignity and privacy for many clients.
- Supports wellness checks, increases social cohesion, and enables organizations to provide wrap around care and support that extends beyond food delivery.

It was noted that having support for last mile delivery takes pressure off the staff and volunteers of local food banks.

- Participants spoke to increasing demand and decreasing capacity and resources (financial, volunteer, etc.) post-pandemic.

3.2. Professional and Compassionate Staff

- Participants shared their appreciation for the organizations, staff, and volunteers who enable home deliveries to operate.
- In particular, participants recognized the skillsets of staff and volunteers who manage complex delivery logistics.
- Individuals who have interacted with those doing delivery shared their appreciation for the level of professionalism and compassion displayed, noting that staff and volunteers have been kind, patient, empathetic, courteous, supportive, and non-judgemental.
 - *“...services and staff and volunteers are wonderful individuals. They truly care and they are a joy.”*
- Many participants highlighted the value of the human interaction that those doing delivery provided, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The value of consistency and familiarity with staff and volunteers was emphasized, for safety, comfort, and social connection.

Overall, participants felt staff and volunteers involved in home deliveries were reliable and considerate.

Organizations spoke to challenges with attracting and retaining a sufficient number of volunteers for deliveries, and some provide gas compensation to help reduce volunteer costs.

Participants spoke to an opportunity for volunteers to receive increased and/or additional training so they are better equipped to understand, and work alongside, vulnerable and marginalized populations.

3.3. Increasing accessibility, equity, and inclusivity

Participants recognized the achievements of the existing home delivery system to accommodate the most vulnerable populations.

Inconsistencies and areas where there's a lack of equity were identified across the system, from amounts and variety of food provided to the criteria for selecting who is eligible for food delivery.

- 48% of survey respondents felt home deliveries were comparable to the service they receive in person (20% selected “no” and 32% selected “unsure/NA”).
- The need for clear criteria for inclusion in home deliveries was emphasized, noting inconsistencies between the organizations.

Several persisting barriers that impact the accessibility of home delivery services across Ottawa were identified, including:

- Language and/or cultural barriers to understanding (specifically in intake)
- Unreliable or limited access to a telephone or internet connection to place an order, or lack of familiarity with technology
- The requirement to self-advocate every time they require support/services
- Those with severe mobility restrictions who require delivery to their door or into their home
- A lack of awareness of home food delivery or even food bank services in general
- An unclear or inconsistent understanding of the role of food banks.

When asked about which accessibility factors are the most important, survey respondents selected the following as their top four (in order):

- The frequency of delivery meets the needs
- It is easy to place an order
- It is clear when it'll be received
- The timing of the delivery matches recipient availability

A halfway option between pick-up and delivery, for those who can physically get to the food bank but have challenges with getting the food home or affording transportation, was identified, as well as opportunities to improve the accessibility of the food bank facilities.

It was noted that home delivery services are not actively advertised by the agencies and organizations offering them. It was identified that this often means it is not clear which food banks or agencies offer this service. Organizations, however, identified capacity challenges meeting the needs of existing client volumes.

On the whole, participants felt there are opportunities to further strengthen accessibility and inclusivity across home delivery services in Ottawa.

3.4. Effective and efficient systems and processes are essential

In conversations with participants, many emphasized the importance of effective systems and processes to support intake, deliveries, communications, route planning, preparation of the orders, and volunteer management.

- The tools and systems presented to delivery partners and member agencies are largely considered effective and user friendly.
- In particular, a number of participants praised the efforts taken by organizations and staff to ensure routes are efficient, the workload is manageable, and channels of communications are clear.
- Many organizations spoke to processes they've implemented to help ensure deliveries are successful (reminder calls, details for when to expect the delivery, relationships with building superintendents, etc.).
- A variety of platforms were identified that organizations use to support deliveries, communications, and volunteer management (e.g., MapTag, InttLive, Speedy Delivery, Routific, etc.).

- *“From a volunteer driver point of view, it is very well organized and runs very smoothly. Boxes are labelled and set out for ease of loading, and the routes don’t take nearly as long as anticipated.”*

Participants felt that overall, home delivery services in Ottawa are well thought out, but opportunities to further develop along these lines were identified, to streamline processes and improve the client experience.

3.5. Accommodating dietary, nutritional, and cultural food needs

Participants acknowledged that the variety of food stuffs received in home delivery boxes could be improved to better meet a range of nutritional and dietary needs.

- In particular, for those with medical and/or health needs that require certain diets.
- The importance of offering cultural relevant food stuffs was emphasized.
- The ability to influence items included in a food delivery would reduce waste.

It was noted there is an inconsistency across services, as select delivery services within the network allow recipients to select the food that goes into their boxes, while others don’t.

There was support for an incoming organization to explore how this personalization might be incorporated into a centralized home delivery service.

When asked about which quality factors are the most important, survey respondents selected the following as their top three (in order):

- Orders include both fresh and perishable items
- Items meet dietary and nutritional needs
- There is enough food in each delivery

4. WHAT'S NEXT

Informed by the feedback and suggestions gathered from the Ottawa community, the Ottawa Food Bank (OFB) and Laridae have launched a Request for Proposal process as the next step in ensuring a centralized home delivery service exists in Ottawa.

OFB is inviting organizations to submit proposals for the development and operation of a centralized system for home food deliveries in the Ottawa area.

The successful organization will be responsible for developing systems and processes to facilitate deliveries from the various community food banks and food security programs across the city to their clients. Their work will be informed by the many home delivery processes currently in existence, with support from OFB.