

# Groceries from The SEED Evaluation Report

September 20, 2021

**PREPARED FOR**

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## Introduction

Groceries from The SEED is an online grocery store designed to increase access to fresh and healthy food for everyone in the Guelph-Wellington community. Customers can choose to pay retail price or 25%, 50%, or 75% of the retail price for groceries based on what they can afford. After ordering groceries through the online store customers can choose to have their purchase delivered free of charge on one of two delivery days, or they can pick up their purchase from The SEED's physical location in downtown Guelph. By creating a social enterprise model in which retail-paying customers support discounted memberships<sup>1</sup>, The SEED hopes to strengthen community ties and create a sustainable way to provide fresh groceries to the community.

Based on the success of The SEED's Sliding Scale Community Food Markets program and The SEED's Emergency Food Home Delivery program, The SEED developed a business model for Groceries from The SEED as a social enterprise. The program received funding from The Maple Leaf Foundation's Centre for Action on Food Security and many other businesses, organizations, and individuals. The pilot of Groceries from The SEED began in January 2021. The SEED intends to run the program as a self-sustaining social enterprise beyond the end of this funding period (in August 2021).

### *About the Program Evaluation*

In February 2021, The SEED partnered with Taylor Newberry Consulting (TNC) to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of Groceries from The SEED. The evaluation was designed to promote ongoing learning by developing tools that could be used by The SEED to generate useful data both during the pilot, and in the future. The current evaluation report shares findings from the Groceries from The SEED pilot evaluation over its first few months in operation. It aims to examine the preliminary outputs, and the benefits that Groceries from The SEED has for its customers and the broader community. The evaluation additionally explores Groceries from The SEED's potential to function as a self-sustaining social enterprise. This report includes recommendations for the continued development of Groceries from The SEED to improve customer experience, as well as insights and suggestions from the TNC team that reflect on the current business model and future sustainability and expansion beyond the Maple Leaf Foundation's funding period.

## Evaluation Methods

The Groceries from The SEED evaluation used a mixed-methods research approach that generated quantitative and qualitative data. The goal of using these methods was to document key outcomes and findings associated with the social enterprise's implementation.

### *Logic Model*

A logic model of Groceries from The SEED that was collaboratively designed by TNC and staff from The SEED is presented below (Figure 1). The logic model outlines how the inputs and day-to-day activities and operations of Groceries from The SEED translate into the short-, medium- and long-term outcomes that the social enterprise aims to

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<sup>1</sup> The number of discounted memberships available at any time depends on the number of retail price memberships.

achieve. These outcomes pertain to both customer and system outcomes for the sustainability of the business model. The findings section below will address both types of outcomes individually.

By offering a discounted membership to community members, Groceries from The SEED hopes to provide customers who may face food insecurity with consistent access to affordable and nutritious foods. The option for free home delivery additionally aims to reduce the amount of time and travel-related costs and remove physical barriers associated with getting groceries. It is anticipated that increased access to nutritious foods would also improve customers' physical and mental health and wellbeing. When joining Groceries from The SEED, customers are able to self-select (without being questioned or asked to provide proof of income) the membership category that best meets their financial needs and that makes it possible for their household to afford good food. The store aims to maintain customers' dignity and provide them with a non-judgemental way to access food assistance. Groceries from The SEED also aims to foster a sense of community, where retail-paying customers know that their contributions are supporting others in the community, and discount membership customers feel connected to their community and know that they are not alone in their experiences.

With a commitment to strengthening the local food system, The SEED hopes that the growth of the program and its user base and formation of new partnerships will lead to a sustainable and scalable social enterprise that can serve the larger community.

PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL FOR GROCERIES FROM THE SEED

\* Dark green outcomes = focus on broader community  
Teal outcomes = focus on food-insecure population

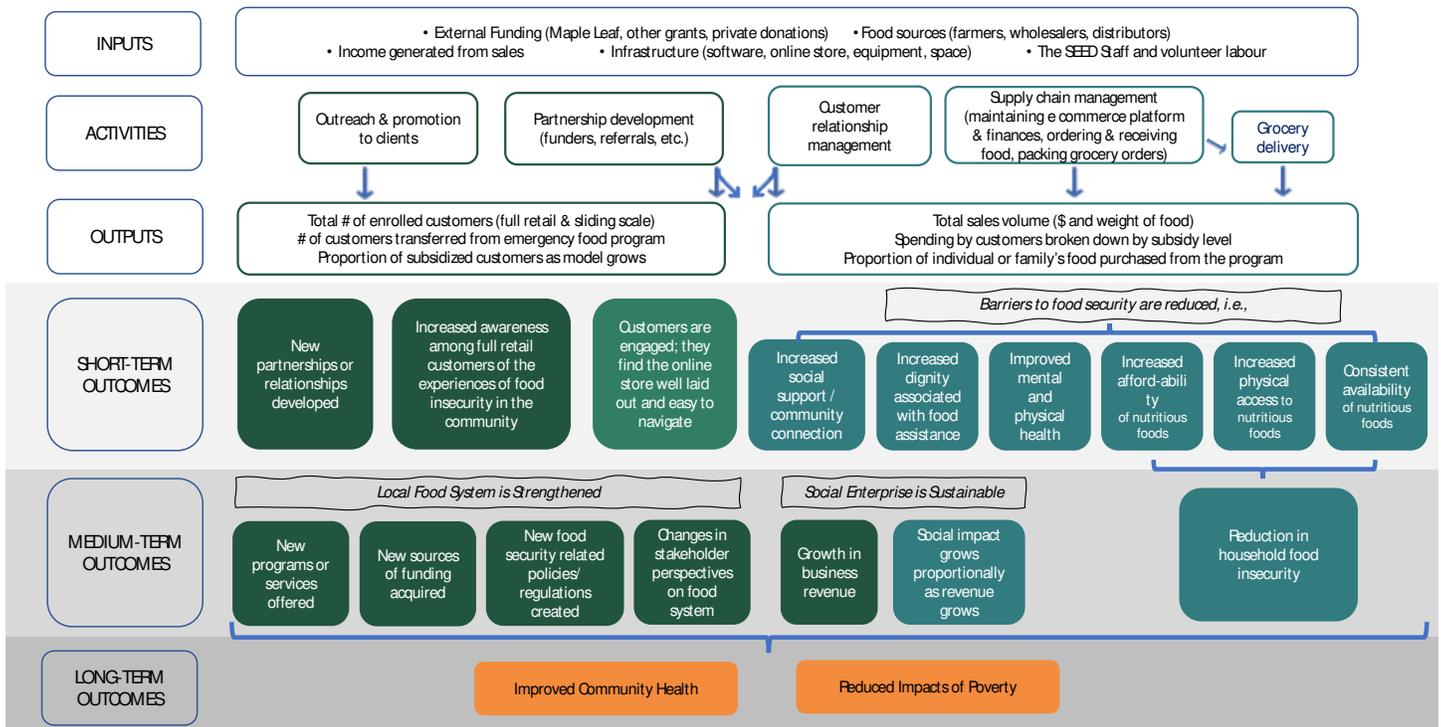


Figure 1. Program Logic Model for Groceries from The SEED

## Surveys

### Baseline Survey

In late June 2021, a link to a baseline survey was distributed through an email notification to customers in HubSpot, the customer relationship management software The SEED uses to send emails and track communications with its customers. The baseline survey asked customers about their grocery shopping experiences prior to joining Groceries from The SEED. This included a mix of multiple choice and open-ended questions about the time and money spent getting groceries, their experiences shopping in-store and online, and the affordability of food in-store and online. For each multiple-choice question, customers had the option to choose “prefer not to say”, in which case their response was omitted for the analysis of that question. For this reason, the total number of responses varied slightly from question to question. The Findings section below reports survey responses as a percentage based on the number of non-omitted numbers.

Four identical surveys were sent to the corresponding four membership categories (retail price, 25% OFF, 50% OFF and 75% OFF<sup>2</sup>) to allow for comparisons between groups. A total of 195 surveys were completed: 70 from retail-paying customers, 12 from 25% OFF, 16 from 50% OFF, and 97 from 75% OFF customers. The number of surveys completed from each membership category is roughly proportional to the total number of customers in these categories. Given that there are far more customers in the retail price and 75% OFF categories, it was expected that responses from these membership categories would be the bulk of responses.

### Follow-up Survey

In early August 2021, all registered customers were invited to complete a follow-up survey (even if they did not complete the baseline survey) through another email notification in HubSpot. This survey asked similar questions to the baseline survey but with a specific focus on their shopping experiences with Groceries from The SEED. Additionally, this survey asked about benefits that customers experienced (e.g., to health and wellbeing) since shopping with Groceries from The SEED, satisfaction with the store's offerings, and some additional questions about their income and food budget.

Like the baseline survey, four identical surveys were sent to the different membership categories. A total of 140 surveys were completed: 48 from retail-paying customers, 5 from 25% OFF, 14 from 50% OFF, and 73 from 75% OFF customers. Although both surveys were anonymous surveys, one question asked participants for a survey-matching ID to allow anonymous comparisons between baseline and follow-up responses. Roughly 30% of the follow-up survey response IDs matched with responses from the baseline survey.

## Finance Dashboard

The finance dashboard is a document which is maintained by SEED staff and tracks finance-related statistics such as registration numbers by membership category, customers' week-by-week spending, amount of subsidized groceries received compared to their retail price, and the list of costs, expenses and revenue involved in maintaining the store.

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<sup>2</sup> The percentages in the discounted memberships refer to the discount that they take from the retail price. For example, 25% OFF means that they pay 75% of the retail price.

TNC used information from the finance dashboard to measure the outputs listed in the logic model. These quantitative results are used in combination with the quantitative and qualitative survey data and discussed in the Findings section.

### Monthly Evaluation Dashboard

Beginning in April 2021, TNC used data from the finance dashboard to create monthly evaluation dashboards. The purpose of these evaluation dashboards was to provide a visual overview of specific program outputs (e.g., registration numbers, total sales, number of orders, amount purchased by each membership group) as they related to the evaluation outcomes. These monthly dashboards are attached in Appendix B.

### Key Informant Interview

To supplement survey and finance dashboard data about system-level outcomes of the Groceries from The SEED social enterprise model, TNC conducted an informant interview with Tom Armitage, Social Enterprise Development Coordinator at The SEED. As the person who focuses on refining Groceries from The SEED's social enterprise model, he is the most qualified person to share insights about the ongoing successes, challenges, and upcoming plans of Groceries from The SEED from an informed perspective. This information is integral for evaluating the outcomes and implementation of the social enterprise model.

## Findings

This section presents evaluation findings as they relate to a) customers of Groceries from The SEED and b) Groceries from The SEED as a social enterprise model.

### Customer-related Outcomes

Regardless of membership category, Groceries from The SEED customers reported very positive outcomes because of their involvement in the social enterprise. Some of these outcomes include feeling an **increased sense of community**, **maintained dignity**, facing **significant reductions in barriers to food access**, and having an **overall positive shopping experience** at the store.

#### Customers felt an increased connection to their community

Through being part of Groceries from The SEED, customers across all membership categories often mentioned that they felt like they were connected to their community. Retail-paying customers frequently mentioned that they **felt good to be able to help others** when they make their purchases.

*"I am getting some of my groceries from The Seed for both the convenience and as a way to give back with a 100% paying account. Even though this is a small contribution on my part, I feel good that I can do something I need (buy groceries) and support others in the community." (Customer, retail price membership)*

*"Ordering from GFTS makes me feel part of my community because it is a local initiative, delivered by a local person, and allows me to participate in supporting a great program that helps my community." (Customer, retail price membership)*

Customers with subsidized memberships also felt **more connected to their community**. In the follow-up survey, 47% of respondents reported that they felt a change in their sense of belonging to their community.

*“[I feel like] I am part of a place where people are in the same situation as me.” (Customer, 75% OFF membership)*

*“I enjoy seeing the delivery volunteer each week. I also love the notes that are occasionally tucked inside my groceries wishing me well. I feel like part of The SEED community! It makes me feel good and less alone.” (Customer, 50% OFF membership)*

### Customers with subsidized memberships have an increased sense of dignity

Groceries from The SEED also helped members feel respected and not ashamed of having a subsidized membership. Compared to the baseline survey, in which members in the 75% OFF category were most likely to say that they did not feel respected while shopping at other retail stores (56% rated their experience a 5/10 or less), **all customers across membership categories said that they felt respected when using Groceries from The SEED** (All participants responded over 6/10, and 76% rated the service as 10/10).

*“I feel so much less stress and anxiety not having to worry about having enough money for groceries. I feel like a normal person who can shop without the stress and shame I felt from not having enough money to get what we needed. Grocery shopping was a negative stressful experience and now it is a positive one.” (Customer, 75% OFF membership)*

*“It also feels good/dignified when people ask where my groceries come from, to say it’s The SEED. No one has to know that we’re struggling for food as The SEED is accessible to everyone. I also have to say, I’ve never received an expired pantry item from The SEED, which feels good. There’s no kick in the gut like relying on a charity for food, only to be given cans that expired 1-3 years ago and your choice is to eat expired food.” (Customer, 75% OFF membership)*

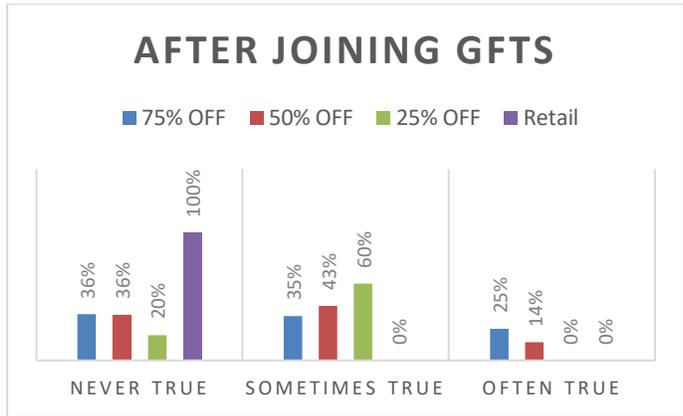
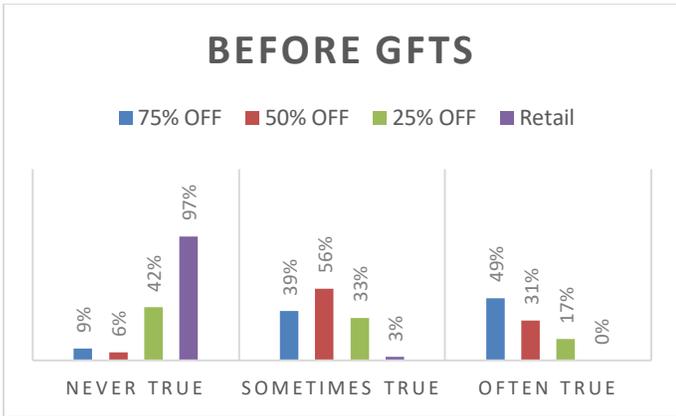
### Customers who faced food insecurity have increased access to affordable and nutritious food

#### *Subsidized customers experience reduced worry about running out of food*

In both the baseline and follow-up survey, customers were asked 1) whether they worried about whether their food would run out before they had money to afford more, and 2) whether they felt like the food that they bought was not enough or did not last long enough. These are two out of a series of questions that the Health Canada uses in the Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) to assess a household’s experience of food insecurity<sup>3</sup>. Although it is not possible to determine a customer’s level of food insecurity based on their responses to these two questions, it can be understood that customers who respond “often true” or “sometimes true” to either or both questions could be facing some level of food insecurity.

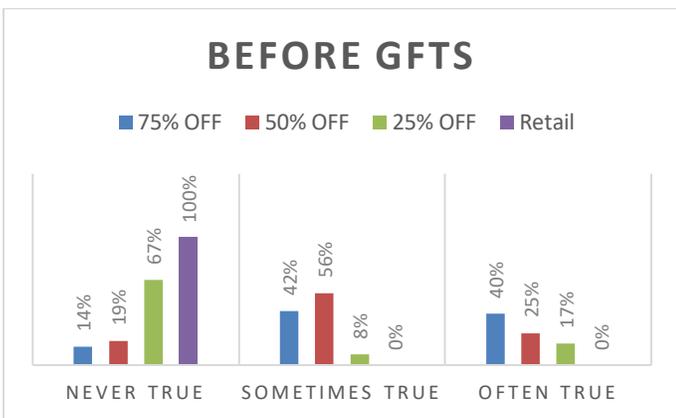
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<sup>3</sup> For more information about the Household Food Security Survey Module see <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-nutrition-surveillance/health-nutrition-surveys/canadian-community-health-survey-cchs/household-food-insecurity-canada-overview/determining-food-security-status-food-nutrition-surveillance-health-canada.html#as>



Figures 2A and 2B. Breakdown of responses by membership category to the question – BEFORE joining Groceries from The SEED (GFTS), we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more (left) and AFTER joining GFTS, we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more (right)

Figures 2 (a and b) above and 3 (a and b) below show the breakdown of responses to the two questions according to membership category. The left graph represents customers’ responses from the baseline survey about before they joined Groceries from The SEED, while the right graph was collected from the follow-up survey and asks about customers responses after they joined Groceries from The SEED. For both questions, almost all customers in the retail price category (purple column) said that the statements were “never true” for them both before and after shopping with Groceries from The SEED. In comparing the before and after graphs, there is a shift in the three subsidized membership categories, where customers were less likely to respond “often true” after joining Groceries from The SEED.



Figures 3A and 3B. Breakdown of responses by membership category to the question – BEFORE joining GFTS, the food we bought just didn’t last and we didn’t have money to get more (left) and AFTER joining GFTS, the food we bought just didn’t last and we didn’t have money to get more (right)

### *Food from Groceries from The SEED is affordable and nutritious*

Groceries from The SEED increased access to affordable and nutritious food among all customers. Several customers mentioned that the **convenience of the free delivery** made it easier for them to order healthy groceries rather than ordering takeout.

*“I appreciate being part of the community of people supporting the program and look forward to being able to get certain items that are healthier than quick foods available in the stores nearest to me, from the available selection.” (Customer, retail price membership)*

Many of the customers with subsidized memberships also mentioned that Groceries from The SEED **enabled them to buy fresh fruits and vegetables** (and milk and cheese) that would otherwise be unaffordable.

*“If you only have \$5 to spend, you can get 5 bags of chips at \$1 each or 6 apples. With four children I need the spread food as far as possible so I would get the chips over apples. The Seed has helped my family get affordable healthy options. My children are loving the fresh food vs packaged” (Customer, 75% OFF membership)*

*“I can afford the quantity of food needed by shopping at the Seed. From a grocery store I could not. Having so many healthy choices is wonderful.” (Customer, 75% OFF membership)*

When asked about the affordability of food at Groceries from The SEED, **68% of customers said that it was “very affordable”**. It is worth noting that 5% of participants (5 with 75% OFF memberships and 2 with retail price memberships) selected “very unaffordable”, but this could be due to their dissatisfaction with the program or with the price of groceries as a whole.

### *Shopping with Groceries from The SEED reduces the amount of time needed to get food*

An additional barrier to food access is often time. For people who face some level of food insecurity, time could be a barrier for several reasons such as the lack of access to a vehicle for transportation, working long hours to make ends meet, travelling to multiple locations for sales/discounted food, and the physical distance of food retailers and food banks from their homes. By providing a service which includes home delivery, **Groceries from The SEED reduces the amount of time customers needed to get groceries**.

Figure 4 shows the average amount of time that customers with 75% OFF memberships spent getting groceries each week before and after joining Groceries from The SEED. The percentage of customers who spent four or more hours per week getting groceries fell from 17% to 3%, while the percentage of customers who could get groceries within an hour or less rose from 14% to 38%. Members in the 50% OFF and 25% OFF categories also experienced similar trends of time saved, however this pattern was not as clear as the 75% OFF group because of the smaller number of responses from 50% OFF and 25% OFF members. Retail price customers did not have any changes in amount of time spent getting groceries before and after joining Groceries from The SEED.

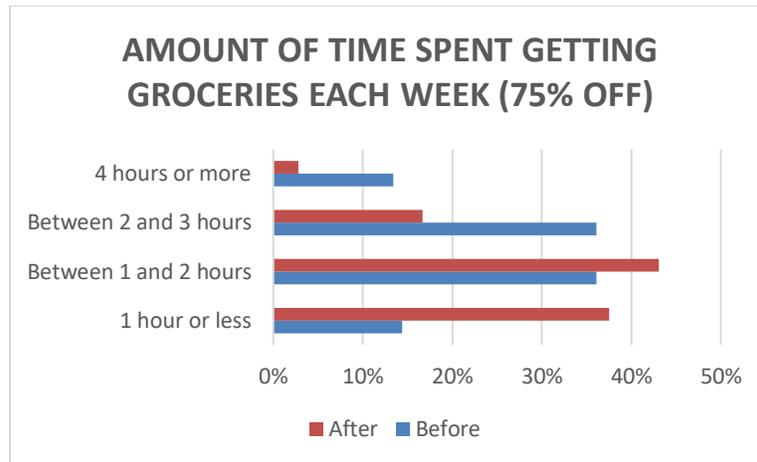


Figure 4. Customers with 75% OFF memberships' reported average time spent per week getting groceries before (blue columns) and after (red columns) joining Groceries from The SEED

Regularly scheduled delivery times also enabled customers to have more consistent access to fresh produce.

*"[Without Groceries from The SEED] I would be buying for 2 weeks to a month at a time (more likely the case as in the past) because I depend on cab service. I would run out of certain foods earlier than next shopping."  
(Customer, 75% OFF membership)*

### Customers have increased mental, physical, and overall health and wellbeing

One of the biggest impacts of Groceries from The SEED was improved overall health and wellbeing among customers. When asked about the impact that the social enterprise had on different elements of their health and wellbeing, customers with subsidized memberships especially reported that they noticed many positive changes for themselves and for other members of their household.

*"I feel so relieved knowing that I can afford some fresh vegetables as my children often complained about not having vegetables in the fridge. I used to feel sad about not being able to purchase fresh vegetables and fruits needed for my family. I felt as though I was not doing a good job at providing nutritious meals for them."  
(Customer, 75% OFF)*

*"Eating healthy food more often has improved my cognitive function on many levels, improved my sense of awareness & retention. Physically the food kept me full for a long time which controlled cravings and reduced them. I have been able to lose some fat and pack some lean pounds."  
(Customer, 50% OFF)*

*"I have lost 60 pounds since joining The Seed and I am not as depressed; it definitely has made a difference."  
(Customer, 75% OFF)*

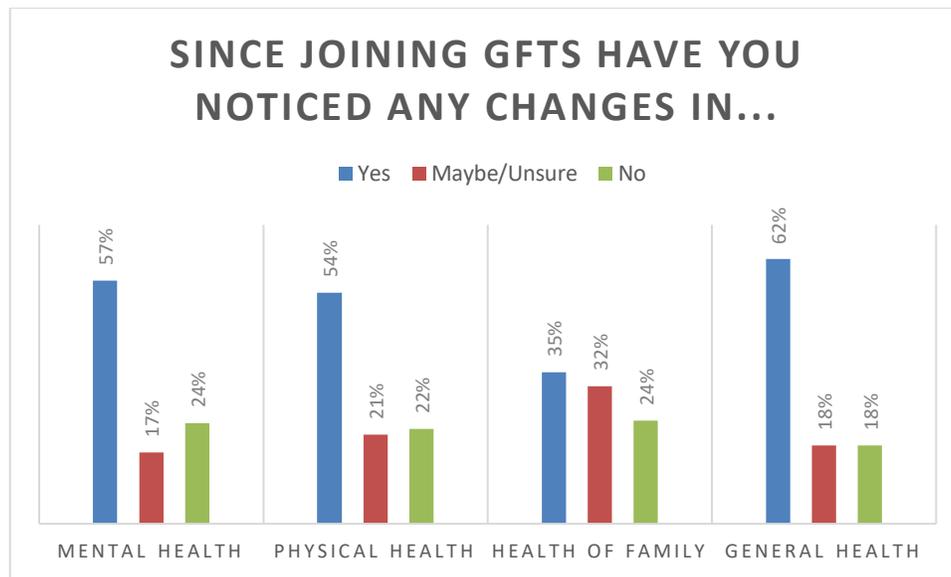


Figure 5. 75% OFF customers' self-reported changes to their health and wellbeing

### Customer-identified challenges with Groceries from The SEED

In general customers had very positive feedback about Groceries from The SEED. When probed about any challenges or barriers that they faced using Groceries from The SEED, most responded that they had no problems. Some commonly stated barriers that some customers mentioned include:

- Somewhat limited store selection – need to shop at multiple places to get everything
- Forgetting to order by the deadline
- Some challenges with order and delivery times, dates, and frequencies

## System-related Outcomes

### Program growth

Since launching at the start of the year, the number of customers who registered with Groceries from The SEED continued to grow. There were 333 total registered customers across all four membership categories at the start of April. By the end of July (when TNC completed the final evaluation dashboard) that number had grown to 1,115 registered customers. It should be noted that, since the number of subsidized memberships available is directly related to the number of retail-paying memberships, there is also a growing waitlist for prospective customers who wish to participate in the program.

### New partnerships developed

Groceries from The SEED continues to form new partnerships and relationships. In our conversation with the Social Enterprises Development Coordinator, he mentioned that several of these new partnerships with suppliers helped increase the store's access to a wider range of products. Since the pilot began, the social enterprise has also been able to use some additional funding to improve their storage areas, which has increased their capacity to store and manage food for customers.

### Some customers reported an increased understanding about the food system

Through its operations, Groceries from The SEED hopes to spread awareness in the community about Guelph's local food system. This includes an understanding about where and how the groceries are sourced, and the people and processes involved with getting it to the places where these groceries are purchased. When asked about whether they felt that they learned about the local food system through being a customer of Groceries from The SEED, survey respondents had mixed responses. While some customers responded "yes", an almost equal proportion of customers responded with "maybe/unsure" or "no". Given that the pilot for Groceries from The SEED focused on establishing the system for customers to order and receive groceries through the online store, next steps could include finding ways to share knowledge about the food system throughout the process.

## Program Implementation

### Customers had a positive experience shopping with Groceries from The SEED

Taken together, feedback from the follow-up survey suggests that customers had a positive experience shopping with Groceries from the SEED. **99% of customers reported that the online store was easy to navigate.** As previously mentioned, customers reported that they **felt respected** in their interactions with volunteers and staff. Customers also reported that the quality of the food delivered was good. Over 90% of customers rated the quality of food received as 7/10 or higher. Amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, most customers also felt that ordering from the online store was a **safer option than shopping in-person.**

### Challenges identified through the pilot phase

The challenges outlined in this section were identified by The SEED and are thus ongoing challenges that the team is aware of and are actively developing solutions for.

#### *Growing waitlist with an indefinite timeline*

As Groceries from The SEED ends its initial funding period, The SEED has identified several challenges with the social enterprise model that they will continue to navigate moving forward. One of the biggest challenges has been that there is a growing waitlist for customers hoping to register for a subsidized membership. For the social enterprise to remain self-sufficient, the number of subsidized memberships available is directly linked to the number of retail price memberships. Due to these arrangements, The SEED is unable to offer prospective customers any estimates about when they will have more memberships available.

#### *Operations are challenged during times when there are fewer volunteers*

Groceries from The SEED relies on volunteers who dedicate time to support much of the order processing and delivery tasks. As operations at Groceries from The SEED continue to expand and increase, a constant and increasing number of volunteers will be required. Understandably, one of the challenges that the social enterprise model faces is finding ways to continue operating at full capacity during times when there are not enough volunteers.

### *Concerns with the long-term stability of the business model under current operating conditions*

Throughout monitoring Groceries from The SEED's progress and operations during its pilot phase, there is concern that the existing social enterprise model would not be sustainable if the store continues with its current operations. This is a concern that The SEED is aware of, and they are actively exploring adjustments and solutions. The next section on Program Implementation outlines some options and suggestions that the management team could explore to address some of the challenges from the pilot phase.

Even as the number of retail-paying and subsidized memberships increased throughout the pilot phase, several the evaluation measures suggest that subsidized customers rely on Groceries from The SEED for a larger proportion of their groceries and order much more than retail-paying customers. The total sales graph of the monthly evaluation dashboards in Appendix B show that, in July, customers in the 75% OFF group collectively spent roughly 3X more than the retail price group each week. After factoring in the discounted rate, this means that **the 75% OFF group is purchasing roughly 12X more groceries than the retail price group**. This difference is much greater compared to earlier in the pilot (e.g., April or May) when the total value of groceries purchased was roughly one to one between the 75% OFF and retail-paying groups.

## Recommendations

Through correspondences over the evaluation period, The SEED shared that there is a need to make changes to the model to allow the Groceries from The SEED social enterprise to be financially self-sustaining. As they near the end of the pilot phase, they identified a need to further test the model and their goals to scale up their model and expand their service area to match the community need over time.

Based on the evaluation findings, this section presents a list of recommendations that operate under the assumptions that: 1) The existing operations of Groceries from The SEED are not self-sustainable because there are not enough retail-paying customers to subsidize the other memberships and 2) some of the customers in the highest discount membership—the 75% off category—rely heavily on Groceries from The SEED and would not be able to afford enough food otherwise. The second assumption is based on responses to the follow-up survey, which asked customers what they would do without Groceries from The SEED, their weekly food budget, annual household income, and the proportion of groceries that they currently get from the store.

- **Try to find a way to preserve the 75% OFF category for some participants.** Through communications with SEED staff, it has been suggested that one possible avenue forward would be to move all members from the 75% OFF category to 50% OFF, thus eliminating the 75% OFF category.<sup>4</sup> Some survey data suggests that some customers who are currently in the 75% OFF category depend on this discounted membership to provide food for their household and would struggle to make ends meet if moved to the 50% category. In contrast, the same data also suggests that there are some members in the 75% OFF category who may not be as impacted by the shift in subsidized category. TNC recommends that The SEED explores options to reduce the number of members in the 75% OFF category rather than removing the group altogether. Some suggestions for how to do this could include:
  - Add a few sentences to the member sign-up form to encourage member to select the smallest discounted membership that they can afford to enable the sustainability of the store and allow as many people as possible to participate
  - Appeal to existing members to self-select to move to a less discounted membership category if possible
  - Have some guidelines or limitations for who can register for the 75% OFF membership
- **Advertise for Groceries from The SEED with a focus on recruiting volunteers and retail price customers.** This recommendation could include posting flyers online, on social media and in retail areas where people shop. Highlighting the philanthropic opportunities when getting involved could motivate people to get involved. Many retail-paying customers gave survey feedback that they felt good knowing that they could help others simply by shopping with Groceries from The SEED. They also mentioned their support for Groceries from The SEED's vision and cause.
- **Continue to seek out new and innovative partnerships and opportunities to strengthen Groceries from The SEED's network.** As it was mentioned in the key informant interview, The SEED is already actively involved in talks with other organizations about opportunities to develop new partnerships. Some additional suggestions that they may or may not have already considered include:
  - Partner with local grocery stores or businesses who might be willing to contribute products or advertising space to spread the word about Groceries from The SEED
  - Work with local post-secondary institutions to advertise for volunteers through official communication channels

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<sup>4</sup> On September 27<sup>th</sup>, The SEED implemented changes to their discount memberships. These changes and some preliminary observations are discussed in the next session.

- Apply for corporate grants or funds that are available to organizations that do humanitarian work
- Leverage customer testimonials and information from the current evaluation report to help apply for funding or create promotional materials about Groceries from The SEED

### *Observations from the September 27<sup>th</sup> Discount Membership Adjustments*

Following several weeks of projections, forecasting, and discussions and consultations with Board members and key stakeholders, on September 27<sup>th</sup>, The SEED implemented adjustments to their discount categories. These adjustments were made for several reasons, some of which include ensuring that the social enterprise model remains financially self-sustainable and enabling the program to grow to welcome new customers who are on a waitlist for discount memberships. Customers were notified about the changes through an email, which also included a link to a document of Frequently Asked Questions. In addition to the changes to the discount ranges, Groceries from The SEED also added some high-quality donated food items to their selection which are available to all customers free of charge and are working to implement a system to offer weekly specials. Table 1 below outlines the original and adjusted discount memberships, along with their new membership category names. Discount membership customers were also told that, after the changes came into effect, they would automatically be registered at the highest discount rate available in their category (17%, 33% and 50% for the three groups respectively).

Former Membership Name/Discount	New Membership Name	New Discount Range
Retail	Retail	(No change)
25% OFF	Discount	10-17% off
50% OFF	Deep Discount	17-33% off
75% OFF	Deepest Discount	33-50% off

Table 1. Discounted Membership Changes as of Sept 27, 2021

At the time of writing, the new discount memberships have been in effect for three weeks. While this is not sufficient time or data to draw conclusions, preliminary observations from these first three weeks suggest that the changes to the discount memberships have not reduced the number of orders placed by customers nor the volume of goods ordered. Table 2 below shows the total number of orders made by customers in each membership category.

BEFORE	Retail	25% OFF	50% OFF	75% OFF	Total # Orders
06-Sep-21	18	23	8	141	190
13-Sep-21	31	25	8	158	222
20-Sep-21	18	24	14	127	183
AFTER	Retail	Discount	Deep Discount	Deepest Discount	Total # Orders
27-Sep-21	31	7	6	116	160
04-Oct-21	26	7	7	163	235
11-Oct-21	37	4	4	112	157

Table 2. Weekly number of orders before and after the membership change.

In the follow-up survey, some members mentioned that, without Groceries from the SEED, they would need to reduce the amount of food that they purchase or the kinds of foods (e.g., fresh fruits and vegetables) that they buy. However, it is possible that the new discount membership—which The SEED hopes will be more sustainable in the long run—would still allow customers to get access to the kinds and types of food that they need. Moving forward, TNC recommends that The SEED continues to monitor customer purchasing trends and continue to have conversations and communications with customers, to understand how these changes might affect different customers on an individual level.

## Conclusion

During its pilot phase, Groceries from The SEED has been able to offer customers a service which reduces barriers to food access and gives people who may be experiencing food insecurity a dignified way to access affordable and nutritious food that meets their households' needs. Through being a customer of Groceries from The SEED, many people experienced positive health-related outcomes as well as an increased sense of community. Within the pilot phase over the past few months, the social enterprise model has achieved many of its short-term goals, but it is not without several logistical challenges and adaptations which must be made to make the model sustainable in the long run.

Taylor Newberry Consulting hope that this evaluation will be informative to The SEED as a summary of the outcomes from the first few months of the store's pilot phase. We also hope that this evaluation will help guide other community organizations who may hope to pursue similar initiatives within their communities.

## Appendix A

### Baseline Survey:

We are interested in learning about your experiences with accessing food in the community *BEFORE* you joined Groceries from the SEED. Unless otherwise stated, for each question try to think about your experiences *BEFORE* joining.

1. Where did you get your food from? (Check all that apply)
  - a. Big-box grocery store (e.g., Walmart, Food Basics)
  - b. Retail grocery store (e.g., Market Fresh)
  - c. Farmers market
  - d. Food bank
  - e. Other (please specify)
2. How affordable were nutritious foods at your previous shopping locations?
  - a. Very unaffordable
  - b. Somewhat unaffordable
  - c. Neither unaffordable nor affordable
  - d. Somewhat affordable
  - e. Very affordable
3. In general, how respected did you feel when you got groceries from other retail locations? [10-point scale from 1 (Not at all respected) to 10 (Very respected)]
4. If you ever got your food at a food bank or other food assistance program, how respected did you feel there? [10-point scale from 1 (Not at all respected) to 10 (Very respected)]
5. Before signing up for Groceries from The SEED, how much of your food did you receive through in-person shopping versus a grocery delivery service?
  - a. Since March 2021:
    - i. 0%
    - ii. 25%
    - iii. 50%
    - iv. 75%
    - v. 100%
  - b. Before March 2021
    - i. 0%
    - ii. 25%
    - iii. 50%
    - iv. 75%
    - v. 100%
6. Around how much time do you spend getting groceries each week, including any travel time to and from stores or food banks?
  - a. 1 hour or less
  - b. Between 1 and 2 hours
  - c. Between 2 and 3 hours
  - d. 4 hours or more
7. For these shopping experiences, were transportation or delivery costs a barrier (e.g., cost of a taxi, public transit, delivery fees, etc.)?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Prefer not to say

8. How easy or difficult was it for you to physically access nutritious foods (consider whether you faced barriers due to transportation, distance from stores, accessibility issues, etc.)?
  - a. Very difficult
  - b. Somewhat difficult
  - c. Neither difficult nor easy
  - d. Somewhat easy
  - e. Very easy
9. Were the following statements never true, sometimes true or often true for your household BEFORE joining Groceries from The SEED?
  - a. We worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more
    - i. Never true
    - ii. Sometimes true
    - iii. Often true
    - iv. Prefer not to say
  - b. The food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more
    - i. Never true
    - ii. Sometimes true
    - iii. Often true
    - iv. Prefer not to say
10. Do you identify with a racialized group (e.g., Black, Person of Colour, First Nations, Métis or Inuit)
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Prefer not to say
11. Are you a person with a disability?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Prefer not to say
12. What is your main source of income?
  - a. Employment Income
  - b. Ontario Works
  - c. ODSP
  - d. OSAP
  - e. No income
  - f. Other (please specify)

## Follow-up Survey:

We are interested in learning about your experiences with accessing food in the community SINCE you joined Groceries from the SEED. Unless otherwise stated, for each question try to think about your experiences AFTER joining.

1. Is the online store easy to navigate?
  - a. No
  - b. Kind of
  - c. Yes
2. In general, how respected do you feel when using Groceries from The SEED? [10-point scale from 1 (Not at all respected) to 10 (Very respected)]
3. How affordable are nutritious foods that you get through Groceries from The SEED?
  - a. Very unaffordable
  - b. Somewhat unaffordable
  - c. Neither unaffordable nor affordable
  - d. Somewhat affordable
  - e. Very affordable
4. As a customer of Groceries from The SEED, around how much time do you spend getting groceries each week, including time to place an order, additional food shopping, etc.?
  - a. 1 hour or less
  - b. Between 1 and 2 hours
  - c. Between 2 and 3 hours
  - d. 4 hours or more
5. As a Groceries from The SEED customer, how easy or difficult was your experience
  - a. Arranging deliveries on a time/day that was convenient to you
    - i. Very difficult
    - ii. Somewhat difficult
    - iii. Neither difficult nor easy
    - iv. Somewhat easy
    - v. Very easy
    - vi. Prefer not to say
  - b. Getting to the location to pick up your groceries (if applicable)
    - i. Very difficult
    - ii. Somewhat difficult
    - iii. Neither difficult nor easy
    - iv. Somewhat easy
    - v. Very easy
    - vi. Prefer not to say
6. Are there any barriers which prevent you from using Groceries from the SEED (e.g., inconvenient delivery times, difficulty accessing the online store, etc.)? If so, please list them here [open-ended]
7. Are nutritious and culturally appropriate foods available through Groceries from The SEED?
  - a. Very limited availability
  - b. Somewhat limited availability
  - c. Moderate availability
  - d. Somewhat available
  - e. Always available
8. Are there types of food that you would like to have available through Groceries from The SEED that aren't currently available? What would you like? [open-ended]
9. How would you rate the quality of the food available from Groceries from The SEED? [10-point scale from 1 (very poor quality) to 10 (excellent quality)]

10. During the pandemic, do you feel that ordering Groceries from The SEED is a safer option than:
- In-person shopping?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Prefer not to say
  - Other curbside pickup options
    - Yes
    - No
    - Prefer not to say
  - Other delivery options?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Prefer not to say
11. Since joining Groceries from The SEED, how true were the following statements for your household?
- We worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more
    - Never true
    - Sometimes true
    - Often true
    - Prefer not to say
  - The food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more
    - Never true
    - Sometimes true
    - Often true
    - Prefer not to say
12. Without Groceries from the SEED, would you have to change the kinds of food or amount of food that you buy? Please explain. [open-ended]
13. Roughly how much of your or your family's food do you purchase through Groceries from the SEED each month?
- 0%
  - 25%
  - 50%
  - 75%
  - 100%
14. Roughly how much do you budget to spend on food each week? [open-ended]
15. Since joining Groceries from The SEED:
- Have you noticed any changes to your mental health?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Maybe/Unsure
    - Prefer not to say
  - Have you noticed any changes to your physical health?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Maybe/Unsure
    - Prefer not to say
  - Have you noticed any changes in the mental or physical health of any of your family members?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Maybe/Unsure
    - Prefer not to say

- d. Have you noticed any changes in your general health and wellbeing?
  - i. Yes
  - ii. No
  - iii. Maybe/Unsure
  - iv. Prefer not to say
- e. Have you experienced any change in your sense of belonging within your community?
  - i. Yes
  - ii. No
  - iii. Maybe/Unsure
  - iv. Prefer not to say

16. If you answered yes to noticing any changes to your health, well-being or sense of belonging since joining the Groceries from the SEED, please describe those changes here. [open-ended]

*The following questions are about your perspectives about the food system. Some examples of things about the food system could include how food arrives at stores, reasons why some people do not have access to nutritious food, etc.*

17. Have you learned anything about the food system from being a customer?
- i. Yes
  - ii. No
  - iii. Maybe/Unsure

18. Have your perspectives on the food system changed?
- i. Yes
  - ii. No
  - iii. Maybe/Unsure

19. If you answered yes to having changed perspectives about the food system, please describe how your perspectives changed [open-ended]

20. Roughly how much is your annual household income?
- a. \$0-\$10,000
  - b. \$10,000-\$20,000
  - c. \$20,000-\$30,000
  - d. \$30,000-\$40,000
  - e. \$40,000-\$50,000
  - f. \$50,000-\$60,000
  - g. \$60,000-\$70,000
  - h. \$70,000-\$80,000
  - i. \$80,000-\$90,000
  - j. \$90,000 or more
  - k. Prefer not to say

21. How many adults are in your household?
- a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
  - d. 4
  - e. 5 or more

22. Do you have any other thoughts that you would like to share? [open-ended]

## Appendix B

### Monthly Evaluation Dashboards

#### Evaluation Dashboard Preface

The monthly evaluation dashboards were created as a visual overview of outputs from the evaluation framework which were collected from GFTS's the finance dashboard. These dashboards do NOT include information pertaining to the short- or long-term outcomes which will be gathered from the client surveys which are currently ongoing.

The acronyms for the four membership categories which are used throughout the evaluation dashboards refer to the following groups:

- 100%: Members who purchase groceries at retail price through Groceries from the Seed
- 75%: Members who pay 75% of retail price (later known as 25% OFF)
- 50%: Members who pay 50% of retail price (later known as 50% OFF)
- 25%: Members who pay 25% of retail price (later known as 75% OFF)

Note that, based on the month, there were either 4 or 5 weeks of recorded data. The number of weeks recorded for each month is as follows:

- April: 4 weeks
- May: 5 weeks
- June: 4 weeks
- July: 4 weeks

## April Evaluation Dashboard

### Part 1: Membership numbers

Total number of enrolled customers by membership category

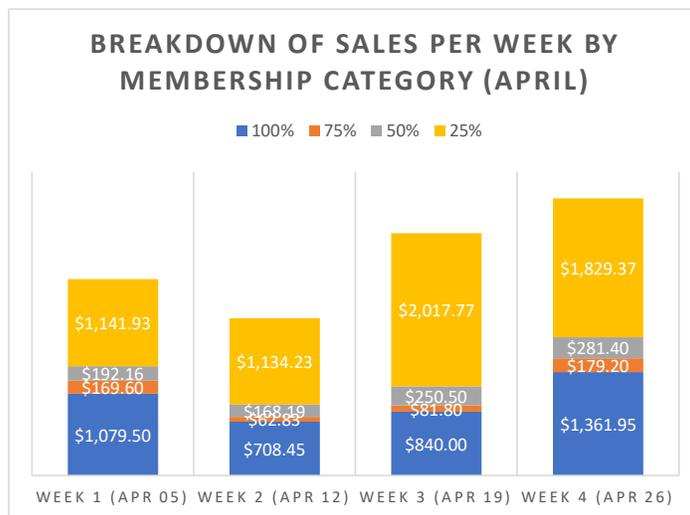
	100%	75%	50%	25%	Total
New in April	93	6	25	110	234
Cumulative*	220	13	50	284	567

\*cumulative total is the number of registered members in each category since the program began in January 2021.

Cumulative number of subsidized members	347	61%
Cumulative number of non-subsidized members	220	39%

### Part 2: Monthly sales

#### REVENUE



	# of orders	Value
Week 1	86	\$2,583.19
Week 2	81	\$2,073.70
Week 3	110	\$3,190.07
Week 4	125	\$3,651.92
<b>Total revenue</b>		<b>\$11,498.88</b>

#### SAVINGS

Thanks to the Groceries from the SEED program, customers saved **\$19,426.62** in April

Savings of subsidized customers	
Week 1	\$3,674.48
Week 2	\$3,591.82
Week 3	\$6,331.08
Week 4	\$5,829.24
<b>Total savings</b>	<b>\$19,426.62</b>

## May Evaluation Dashboard

### Part 1: Membership numbers

Total number of enrolled customers by membership category

	100%	75%	50%	25%	Total
New in May	412	65	57	277	811
Cumulative*	505	71	82	387	1045

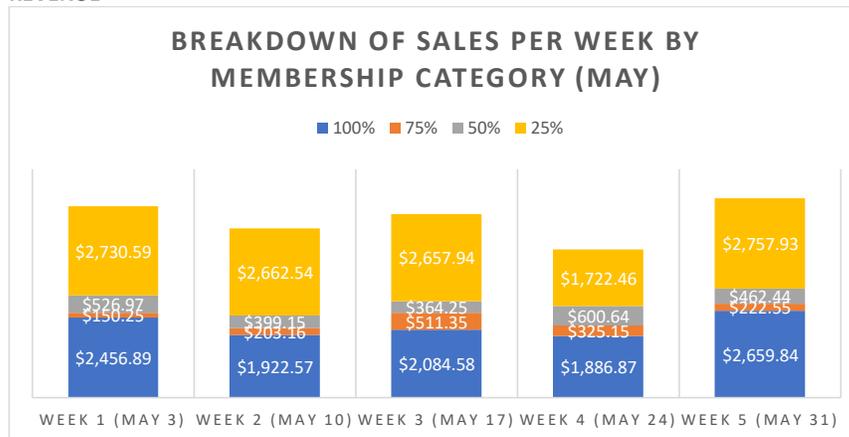
*There was a large jump in membership this month!*

\*cumulative total is the number of registered members in each category since the program began in January 2021.

Cumulative number of subsidized members	540	52%
Cumulative number of non-subsidized members	505	48%

### Part 2: Monthly sales

REVENUE



	# of Orders	Value
Week 1	171	\$5,864.70
Week 2	167	\$5,187.42
Week 3	169	\$5,618.12
Week 4	147	\$4,535.12
Week 5	178	\$6,102.76
Total		\$27,308.12

CUMULATIVE REVENUE (comparison across months)

April	\$11,498.88
May	\$27,308.12

### SAVINGS

Thanks to the Groceries from the SEED program, customers saved **\$40,418.64** in May

Savings of subsidized customers	
Week 1	\$8,768.82
Week 2	\$8,454.49
Week 3	\$8,508.52
Week 4	\$5,876.40
Week 5	\$8,810.41
<b>Total savings</b>	<b>\$40,418.64</b>

## June Evaluation Dashboard

### Part 1: Membership numbers

Total number of enrolled customers by membership category

	100%	75%	50%	25%	Total
New in June	28	1	1	11	41
Cumulative*	533	72	83	398	1086

\*cumulative total is the number of registered members in each category since the program began in January 2021.

Cumulative number of subsidized members	553	51%
Cumulative number of non-subsidized members	533	49%

### Part 2: Monthly sales

#### REVENUE

BREAKDOWN OF SALES PER WEEK BY MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY (JUNE)				
	100	75	50	25
	\$2,548.41		\$3,348.53	
	\$2,219.70			
	\$547.62	\$192.80	\$700.10	\$2,531.84
	\$448.36		\$276.17	
	\$304.79			
	\$2,273.23		\$1,781.62	\$390.80
	\$1,413.17			\$278.36
				\$765.96
Week 1 (June 7)	Week 2 (June 14)	Week 3 (June 21)	Week 4 (June 28)	

	# of Orders	Value
Week 1	149	\$4,386.02
Week 2	176	\$5,562.06
Week 3	201	\$6,106.42
Week 4	169	\$5,077.61
Total		\$21,132.11

#### CUMULATIVE REVENUE (comparison across months)

April	\$11,498.88
May	\$27,308.12
June	\$21,132.11

#### SAVINGS

Thanks to the Groceries from the SEED program, customers saved **\$39,011.47** in June

Savings of subsidized customers	
Week 1	\$7,209.06
Week 2	\$8,257.12
Week 3	\$15,466.18
Week 4	\$8,079.11

## July Evaluation Dashboard

### Part 1: Membership numbers

Total number of enrolled customers by membership category

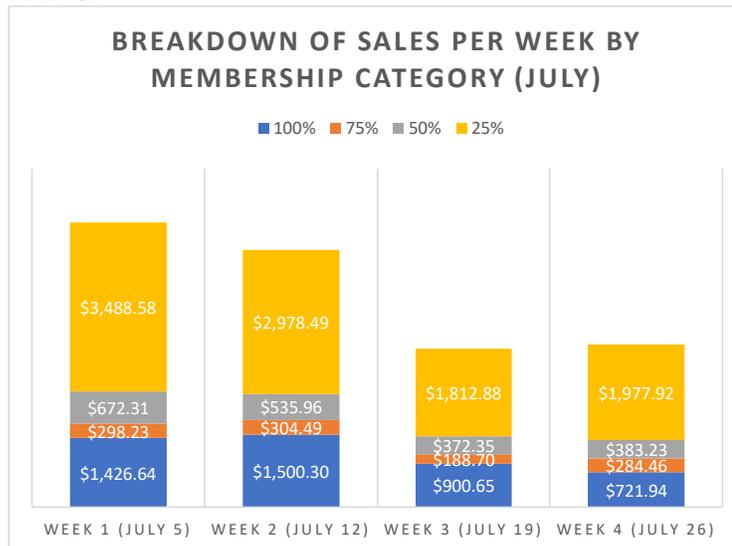
	100%	75%	50%	25%	Total
New in June	16	6	1	6	29
Cumulative*	549	78	84	404	1115

\*cumulative total is the number of registered members in each category since the program began in January 2021.

Cumulative number of subsidized members	566	51%
Cumulative number of non-subsidized members	505	49%

### Part 2: Monthly sales

#### REVENUE



	# of Orders	Value
Week 1	206	\$5,885.76
Week 2	185	\$5,319.24
Week 3	122	\$3,274.58
Week 4	122	\$3,367.55
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$17,847.13</b>

#### CUMULATIVE REVENUE (comparison across months)

April	\$11,498.88
May	\$27,308.12
June	\$21,132.11
July	\$17,847.13

#### SAVINGS

Thanks to the Groceries from the SEED program, customers saved **\$33,096.09** in July

Savings of subsidized customers	
Week 1	\$11,237.46
Week 2	\$9,572.93
Week 3	\$5,873.89
Week 4	\$6,411.81