

HARVEST BUCKS

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION (2013)

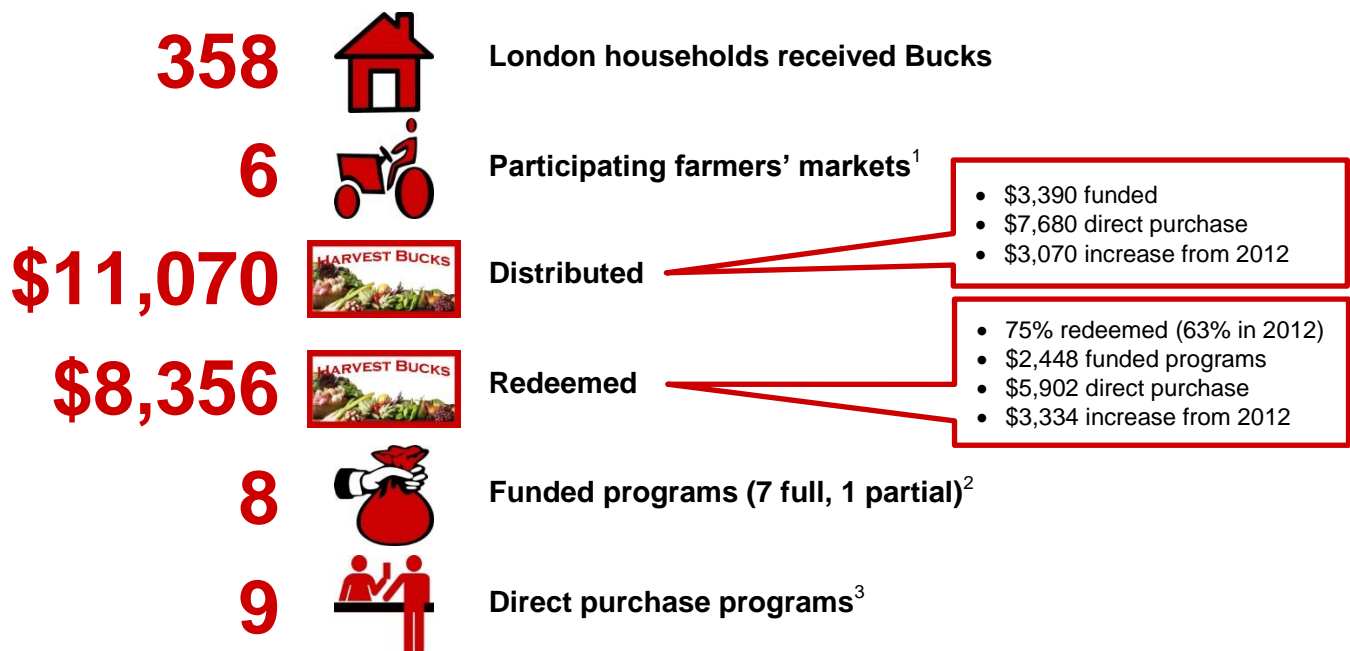
PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Harvest Bucks program is a vegetable and fruit voucher program started in 2012. Each voucher is redeemable for \$2 of fresh vegetables and fruit at participating London farmers' markets. Stakeholder feedback was collected from voucher recipients, distributing organizations and participating farmers' markets.

SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM CHANGES

- 5 additional farmers' market locations
- Steering Committee to provide program guidance
- Harvest Bucks available for direct purchase by individuals and organizations
- Open application for organizations to apply for funding (full funding and partial funding)
- Application Review Committee to review funding applications

HIGHLIGHTS



¹ Covent Garden Market (indoor and outdoor), Farmers' and Artisans' Market at the Western Fair, Masonville Farmers' and Artisans' Market, Southdale Farmers' Market, and University Heights Public School Market

² Crouch Neighbourhood Resource Centre, London InterCommunity Health Centre (4 programs), South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre, Thames Valley Children's Centre, and University Heights Public School

³ London InterCommunity Health Centre (2 programs), Middlesex-London Health Unit (5 programs), N'Amerind, and Private Purchase



PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: To increase access to and consumption of fresh vegetables and fruit for targeted Londoners.

Voucher Recipients Reported (Response Rate: Funded: 36%, n=55; Direct: 34%, n=69)

- 98% (funded) and 84% (direct) ate all or most of the vegetables and fruit they purchased
- 69% (funded) and 84% (direct) ate more vegetables and fruit
- 47% (funded) and 51% (direct) purchased produce they can't usually afford
- 29% (funded) and 34% (direct) tried new vegetables and fruit

Distributing Organizations Reported (Response Rate: Funded: 100%, n=8; Direct: 67%, n=6)

- 5 out of 8 (funded) and 4 out of 6 (direct) perception of increased access to and consumption of vegetables and fruit for voucher recipients

"Participants expressed what a help the Harvest Bucks were in their limited food budget. They expressed eating more fruits and vegetables due to having the bucks..."

~ Direct Purchaser

"... Participants were quite vocal about how amazing it felt to consume fresh produce, and how happy they were that they could provide fresh produce to their families. Some participants vocalized that they tried new produce that they had never tried before, like squash."

~ Funded Program Staff

Objective 2: To increase awareness, knowledge and comfort/familiarity with farmers' markets.

Voucher Recipients Reported (Response Rate: Funded: 36%, n=55; Direct: 34%, n=69)

- 94% (funded) and 95% (direct) intend to buy vegetables and fruit at a farmers' market in the future
- 25% (funded) and 56% (direct) bought vegetables and/or fruit for the first time at a farmers' market
- 37% (funded) and 39% (direct) became more comfortable going to a farmers' market
- 33% (funded) and 28% (direct) learned that fresh vegetables and fruit were less expensive at a farmers' market than they thought
- 31% (funded) and 26% (direct) felt more connected to their community

Distributing Organizations Reported (Response Rate: Funded: 100%, n = 8; Direct: 67%, n = 6)

- 4 out of 8 (funded) and 4 out of 6 (direct) perception of increased market awareness and knowledge
- 5 out of 8 (funded) and 3 out of 6 (direct) perception of increased market comfort level and familiarity

"There was a higher level of comfort and familiarity with the farmer's markets. Friendly relationships were established between the farmers and the participants."

~ Funded Program Staff

"There was a noticeable increase in awareness and knowledge of farmer's markets. Most of them had never been into a farmer's market before."

~ Funded Program Staff

Objective 3: To increase the comprehensiveness of local community programming through a reduction in barriers to participants' access to vegetables and fruit.

Funded and direct programs reported several additional benefits that the Harvest Bucks added to their existing programming, including:

- Provided incentive for clients to participate in the program
- Supported nutrition recommendations promoted in the program by reducing the financial barriers to purchase produce
- Increased program emphasis on seasonal local foods

“One of the greatest benefits was the increase of males that we saw register for our collective kitchen program ... The [Area] is known to have the largest single male population living in poverty. With the lack of male specific services in London, and the issues surrounding men accessing services, the Harvest Bucks program created an incentive for men to begin attending a program. Even after the Harvest Bucks were distributed, the men returned for the sessions afterwards ...”

~ Funded Program Staff

“The distribution of Harvest Bucks allowed us to focus on seasonal local foods even more prominently than we normally would. We prepared foods with fresh local produce at every session we provided.”

~ Direct Purchaser

“It was nice to be able to say this produce is in season, it is available at the market, and here is inspiration to purchase it. Everybody was thrilled to receive the bucks regardless of their economic situation.”

~ Funded Program Staff

FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS TO HARVEST BUCKS REDEMPTION

Facilitators

(Reported by distributing organizations)

- Program content related to healthy eating including trying new food and food preparation
- Ongoing relationships with voucher recipients and ability to provide reminders to use Bucks
- Voucher recipient and/or organization in close proximity to farmers' markets
- Reduce transportation barriers by offering bus tickets
- Farmers' market orientation (e.g., market tour)
- Voucher recipients' enjoyment and comfort with the farmers' market experience
- Voucher recipients' familiarity in using Bucks previously
- Voucher recipients' food insecurity providing motivation to use Bucks

Barriers

(Reported by voucher recipients and/or distributing organizations)

- Distribution of Harvest Bucks to voucher recipients later in the program or year
- Limited farmers' market hours
- Signage at farmers' market not visible to some participants
- Lack of transportation to farmers' market
- Voucher recipients' difficulty carrying large quantity of produce after purchasing
- Voucher recipients' daily challenges and stress
- Voucher recipients' limited food skills for produce preparation
- Voucher recipients' taste preferences for sugar/fat/salt and limited exposure to produce

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Key recommendations for change are listed below. Recommendations are based on the evaluation, lead evaluators' consultation and operational program knowledge, and giving consideration to the overall program goals and intended outcomes.

- Have funded Harvest Bucks available earlier in the growing season
- Enhance selection criteria for funded programs including factors such as comprehensive food literacy programming, farmers' market orientation and addressing transportation barriers
- Distribute Harvest Bucks to voucher recipients multiple times to increase impact
- Develop a tracking system to help ensure participants receiving additional Harvest Bucks have used previously distributed Harvest Bucks
- Review the system for identifying participating vendors to minimize voucher recipient confusion
- Develop strategies to enhance the administration of the evaluation to increase response rates
- Explore the inclusion of additional farmers' markets

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Steering Committee

Brianna Colenutt, Registered Dietitian, London InterCommunity Health Centre
Cheryl McKeever, Executive Director, Glen Cairn Community Centre
Christine Scheer, Farmers' Market Manager, Covent Garden Market
Joshua Archer, HEHPA Project Manager, Child and Youth Network
Kate Ledgley, Ending Poverty Project Manager, Child and Youth Network
Kim Leacy, Registered Dietitian, Middlesex-London Health Unit
Michelle Navackas, Market Manager, Farmers' and Artisans' Market at the Western Fair
Shelly Happy, Community Development Worker, London InterCommunity Health Centre

Application Review Committee

Deborah Peckham, Steering Committee Member, London Homeless Coalition
Josh Chadwick, Community Harvest Coordinator, London Food Bank
Kim Leacy, Registered Dietitian, Middlesex-London Health Unit
Sheila Foster, Manager, Ontario Works London

Program Donors

Thank you to the following donors for their contribution to the Harvest Bucks Program:

- Arthur Ford Public School
- Child and Youth Network
- Kim Leacy
- Paul Swan
- Anita Quenneville
- Covent Garden Market
- Middlesex-London Health Unit
- The Church of St. Jude

100% of funds received are used to purchase Harvest Bucks for funded programs. Tax receipts are provided for donations of \$100 or more.

To learn more about Harvest Bucks, email kim.leacy@mlhu.on.ca.

