



**FARMERS'  
MARKETS**  
*of Nova Scotia*



## Advancing Local Food Systems in a Pandemic

An Evaluative Summary of the Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program

Prepared by the Acadia Entrepreneurship Centre  
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## 1.0 Executive Summary

The 2020-2021 Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program was the second iteration of a program that originally launched as a pilot in May 2019. This iteration – like the pilot – had three key objectives:

1. To provide financial support to those in need to access healthy food, recognizing that Nova Scotia has the highest rate of food insecurity of any province in Canada.
2. To provide an experience that supported physical, mental, and community health.
3. To support local producers and farmers in developing a robust and resilient food system in Nova Scotia.

With continued funding support from the Nova Scotia government<sup>1</sup> – and in-kind/administrative support from many other partners – FMNS distributed \$78,235.00 worth of food coupons over an 8-month period to 261 households (an average of approximately \$300 per household) across 13 markets, including 6 markets that participated in the 2019 pilot program. These markets included:

| Original Markets (Continued from 2019)   | New Markets for 2020-2021         |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Avon Community Farmers' Market (Windsor) | Antigonish Farmers' Market        |
| Cape Breton Farmers' Market              | Bridgewater Farmers' Market       |
| Lunenburg Farmers Market                 | Chester Farmers' Market           |
| New Glasgow Farmers' Market              | Halifax Brewery Farmers' Market   |
| Truro Farmers' Market                    | Mabou Farmers' Market             |
| Wolfville Farmers' Market                | Novalea Farmers' Market (Halifax) |
|  | Spryfield Farmers' Market         |

By nearly any measure, the 2020-2021 Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program was a resounding success. Consider the following:

- **High redemption rates:** Coupon redemption rates were extremely high, with 86% of all food coupons being used. While this figure is down slightly from the pilot program (88.9% redemption), this was somewhat expected considering the logistical challenges associated with ongoing COVID restrictions. It should also be noted that several markets have granted permission for participants to redeem coupons after the program has officially ended, which is expected to increase the final redemption rate by a couple of percentage points.

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<sup>1</sup> Including an \$80,000 investment from Communities, Culture, and Heritage (CCH) Nova Scotia for the 2020 program, combined with a \$20,000 investment from Second Harvest (Food Rescue).

- **Healthy spending choices:** Despite having no restrictions on how their coupons could be redeemed, participants overwhelmingly made healthy spending decisions on locally-sourced food, demonstrating a clear need. More than 85% of all coupons redeemed were used directly towards the purchase of foods, which included produce, prepared foods, and other agri-food products (compared with 84% during the pilot program). 32% of all redemptions were for produce.
- **Engaged participants:** More than 83% of all program participants completed a survey at the beginning of the program to express their expectations. 42% of all program participants completed an exit survey at the conclusion of the program to evaluate their experience (results included within the report).
- **High impact:** On a scale of 1-10 (where 1 = not valuable and 10 = extremely valuable) participants across all markets gave the program an average score of 9.0/10 (compared with 9.4/10 during the pilot). 64% of respondents rated it a perfect 10 (compared with 72% in the pilot). These figures were expected to decrease somewhat, given that some of the most popular elements of the market experience (such as the social experience) were either limited or eliminated due to COVID.
- **Expanding social networks:** 43% of participants indicated they made at least one new friend or social contact. This is down somewhat from the pilot program (57%), but this figure is still notably high given the significant social distancing protocols participants were required to follow.
- **Diversifying dietary choices:** 82% of participants purchased foods that were not part of their diet previously.
- **Learning new things about food and nutrition:** 65% of participants learned something new about food and nutrition (down from 78% in the pilot program). Given limited opportunities for participants to interact with vendors and market personnel, this decrease is unsurprising.
- **Expected long-term dietary changes:** 50% of participants expect to make long-term changes to their diet because of their participation in this program (down from 62% during the pilot program).
- **Affording previously inaccessible foods:** 92% of participants – solely because of this program – purchased food(s) that were previously unaffordable to them (up from 90%

during the pilot program).

- **Increased sense of community belonging:** 92% of participants felt a greater sense of belonging to their community because of their participation in this program. This is up from 85% during the pilot and may speak to the impact market visits had on them during a period where many other usual forms of social interaction were discouraged.
- **Eating healthier:** 85% of participants reported eating healthier foods than usual during their participation in the program (down slightly from 87% during the pilot).
- **Freeing budgets to meet other needs:** 94% of participants – as a result of this program – felt they had more money to meet their other (non-food/grocery) needs. This is up from 85% during the pilot.
- **Good value for money:** 93% of participants believe they received good value for their food bucks overall (down slightly from 97% during the pilot).
- **Online shopping:** 30% of participants reported making either some or all of their market purchases online. 89% of those participants indicated it was either somewhat easy or extremely easy to make these orders digitally.
- **Injecting more money into the local economy:** 56% of participants reported spending money during their market visits *in addition to* their food bucks. 19% of participants reported spending at least \$10 of non-food bucks money per visit, on average.
- Economic impact – though not directly measured – is presumed to be significant. All coupons were redeemed for locally produced foods and goods, resulting in minimal economic leakage.

In addition to these measures, participants from all 13 markets offered up glowing endorsements of the program. Here are several examples:

*“Supporting farmers' markets is always a good idea and any way that makes it affordable should be encouraged. Fresh local food produced by local small-scale farmers should be a normal part of our lives and partaking in programs like this help make it more so.”*

*"This program helped me a lot since I am a single mother and an immigrant, and it has been difficult for me to work to take care of my daughter. So they gave me a lot of support, both financially, for my health and in a certain emotional way, because she gave community support and they always treated me very well."*

*"This program was an absolute blessing to my daughter and myself."*

*"Having no income while you're in school can be embarrassing (and not a lot of people talk about this?!!?) and this definitely allowed my partner and I to try things that we normally wouldn't have been able to afford. AND we were able to have more \$\$\$ at the end of the month from getting our essentials with the food bucks at the farmers market."*

*Last year I was able to take part in the farmers market food bucks programme, I absolutely loved it, I had an amazing time,*

*My sister was also enrolled with your programme so it became our family outing. honestly I can't really talk this programme up enough I sincerely hope the food bucks gets funding again, because I would love to be enrolled again this year.*

With Nova Scotia boasting the highest number of farmers' markets per capita in Canada, FMNS and its partners believe this program can be scaled up further and intend to continue this process in 2021. At the time of this writing (June 2021), FMNS has been successful in receiving further funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture, and Heritage, which will allow the program to expand to at least 25 markets and over 400 households for 2021-2022. FMNS intends to leverage this increased funding to seek additional sponsorships from individuals, non-profit organizations, and businesses. Ultimately, FMNS intends for the program to exist and expand as a hybrid model, where individuals, communities, governments, and organizations partner to provide necessary wrap-around support for individuals and families in need.

## 2.0 Acknowledgements

The Acadia Entrepreneurship Centre is pleased to have had the opportunity to prepare this evaluation summary. As a neutral third-party organization (unaffiliated with Farmers’ Markets of Nova Scotia or its participating member markets), we are well positioned to evaluate the program objectively and without bias. We would be remiss, however, if we did not acknowledge the organizations and people who were instrumental in helping us collect the qualitative and quantitative data you are about to read. Perhaps above all, we are grateful to the program’s participants for sharing their experiences, without which our ability to evaluate the program would be greatly diminished.

| Acknowledgements   |  |
|--|--|
| <i>Justin Cantafio</i> , Executive Director, Farmers’ Markets of Nova Scotia   | <i>Jenn MacKay Myra</i> , Treasurer, Spryfield Farmers’ Market   |
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| <i>Margaret Ells</i> , Market Manager, Truro Farmers’ Market   |  |
| <i>Karen Cooper</i> , Market Manager, Avon Community Farmers’ Market   |  |
| <i>Pauline Singer</i> , Market Manager, Cape Breton Farmers’ Market  |  |
| <i>Kristi Russell</i> , Market Manager, New Glasgow Farmers’ Market  |  |
| <i>Zoë Beale</i> , Market Manager, and <i>Cath Morley</i> , Market Manager, Halifax Brewery Market   |  |
| <i>Kerry Walkins</i> , Market Manager, Mabou Farmers’ Market   |  |

A special acknowledgement is in order from FMNS to the following:

- *Jessica Wall*, former Acadia University Community Development Student, who first brought the Food Bucks program to the Wolfville Farmers’ Market in 2016.
- *The British Columbia Association of Farmers’ Markets*, which generously enabled FMNS to follow their Nutrition Coupon Program. FMNS would especially like to thank BCAFM staff, who have graciously shared their time, knowledge, and experiences.



## 3.0 The 2020-2021 Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program: Background

*The 2020-2021 Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program* was an 8-month program instituted at 13 different farmers' markets across Nova Scotia. These markets included Antigonish, Avon Community (Windsor), Bridgewater, Cape Breton (Sydney), Chester, Halifax (Brewery), Lunenburg, Mabou, New Glasgow, Novalea (Halifax), Truro, Spryfield, and Wolfville. The program aimed to expand on the success of the pilot program (of the same name), which rolled out in 2019. Led and overseen by Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia (FMNS) Cooperative, the program had three main objectives.

1. To provide financial support to those in need to access healthy food;
2. To provide an experience that supported physical, mental, and community health;
3. To support local producers and farmers in developing a robust food system in Nova Scotia.

FMNS and its partners built the case for this evolving program around four realities:

- That Nova Scotia is the most food insecure province in Canada.<sup>23</sup>
- That Nova Scotia has the most farmers' markets per capita in Canada; therefore, these markets were assumed to be well positioned to support Nova Scotians in need.
- That farmers' markets are social and economic hubs and have been proven to play a key role in reducing both food insecurity and social isolation.
- That the first iteration of the program was by most accounts a major success.

Beginning in May 2020, each of the 13 participating farmers' markets worked with 1 to 3 community agencies to identify households (individuals, couples, and families) who could benefit from the program. Once participants were identified and agreed to participate in the program, they were given a pre-determined number of food coupons per week (sometimes referred to as 'food bucks' or 'market money'), redeemable at their respective farmers' markets. In early May 2020 (dates varied somewhat depending on the market), the program officially re-launched as markets began distributing the food coupons to participants.

To ensure that participants could best meet their needs, they were given no conditions or restrictions about how the food coupons could be redeemed. Rather, they were given the opportunity to spend the food coupons on any product or product category available at the

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<sup>2</sup> CBC News [October 9, 2015]. *Food insecurity rates for Nova Scotia and Halifax worst in Canada*. CBC News [Online]. Available: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/food-insecurity-unemployment-1.3262622>

<sup>3</sup> Vibert, Jim [February 20, 2020]. *Nova Scotia has highest rate of food insecurity*. Cape Breton Post [Online]. Available: <https://www.capebretonpost.com/opinion/regional-perspectives/jim-vibert-nova-scotia-has-highest-rate-of-food-insecurity-413280/>

market (ranging from fruits and vegetables to wine, spirits, and crafts). The redemption rate by product category is seen later in this report.

As noted, this innovative program was not the first of its kind. In fact, it was based partially on British Columbia's longstanding *Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program* (launched in 2007 and with a current annual budget of more than \$1 million), and also on similar projects undertaken by both the Wolfville and New Glasgow Farmers' Markets. The 2016 Wolfville Project – launched as a research project by Acadia University student Jessica Wall – supported 27 households and was widely considered a major success.

In addition to the program's three stated goals (seen above), *FMNS' 2020-2021 Nourishing Communities Food Coupon* program aimed to:

- Build on the positive outcomes of the previous project.
- Experiment with some new processes and methodologies (based on learnings from the pilot program).
- Determine how well the program would be received throughout other regions of Nova Scotia (including some with farmers' markets that are newer and less established).

The second iteration of the Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program was also aimed at moving the program closer to a sustainable and more self-sufficient future, which is discussed in Section 9

## 4.0 Expanding and Meeting Needs During a Pandemic

When FMNS and its partners set out to replicate (and expand) this program in 2020, a global pandemic was not on the horizon. It was not until midway through the planning process when the pandemic arrived in Canada, making it clear that the program would have to change considerably during its second iteration. In particular, as individual farmers' markets across the province implemented various COVID-19 protocols and responded to mandated operating restrictions, it became evident that the program's delivery would be different in 2020-2021.

Of particular concern was the program's goal of '*providing an experience that supported physical, mental, and community health*'. Even though the program's participating markets knew they would be able to distribute food and other market products to participants, they were forced to acknowledge that the social experience normally associated with farmers' markets would be at least somewhat (and in some cases greatly) diminished. Although this dealt a significant blow to the program's operating plan (past participants overwhelmingly indicated that the social and community-building experience was a key benefit for them),

participating markets unanimously agreed that the program should move forward with COVID-driven adjustments.

This proved to be absolutely the right decision. Even though most markets were not able to provide participants with the usual social experience, it quickly became apparent that most participants valued the program just as much as (if not more than) ever. The program gave



**“Thank you for this opportunity. My diet is not where I would like it to be due to funds. This allowed me to remedy this for a brief period. Good food really helps at all times on all levels of health, but especially during these difficult pandemic times.” ~ Participant, Bridgewater**

*Positive comments like this one came in from across the province, highlighting the profound impact the Food Bucks program is having on struggling individuals and families.*

them an opportunity to source locally produced food at a time when an increasing number of Nova Scotians were coming to recognize the value of local food and local farms (driven partly by occasional food product shortages in local grocery stores in the early days of the pandemic). Additionally, even though some markets instituted (temporarily) a curbside pick-up approach, this gave many participants a welcome social outing at a time when other opportunities for social interaction were diminished.

## 5.0 Evaluation Methodology

Ideally, a program of this nature would be evaluated twice: once – immediately following the program’s completion – to measure instant reaction, outputs, and reflections; and once again – much farther out from the program’s completion – to determine whether the program had a sustained impact. This two-pronged evaluative approach would help us to see the full picture, ensuring fully informed decisions about how best to carry forward. Given that the program has just concluded, however, we can only evaluate its short-term outcomes at this time. An evaluation of longer-term outcomes could be (and perhaps should be) considered at a later date.

Much like the pilot program before it, the 2020-2021 Nourishing Communities Food Coupon program evaluation consisted of three steps:

1. **A pre-program questionnaire:** in May 2020, all participants were provided with a short (10-15 minute) questionnaire either in digital format or hard copy. This confidential questionnaire contained a series of questions aimed at helping us understand (a) the demographic characteristics of the participants and (b) their expectations about the program. To ensure a high questionnaire completion rate, most questions were multiple-choice. A copy of the questionnaire can be seen in Appendix D.
2. **A post-program questionnaire:** when the program concluded in January 2021, all participants were provided with a second questionnaire. This second questionnaire closely resembled the pre-program questionnaire and was largely intended to determine whether the outcomes they experienced aligned with their expectations. This questionnaire also offered space for participants to share stories, testimonials, or anecdotes, some of which are seen later. A copy of the post-survey questionnaire can be seen in Appendix E.
3. **Coupon redemption data collection:** throughout the entire program, each farmers’ market diligently tracked the redemption of all coupons. Although doing so required considerable administration, it was vital to ensuring that important data could be captured. Of particular interest was tracking (a) what percentage of coupons were redeemed and (b) on which product categories were the coupons redeemed. This data is seen later in the report.

# 6.0 Key Outcomes and Participant Characteristics by the Numbers

## Investment, Participation, and Coupon Redemption

- Total value of food coupons distributed (all markets): \$78,235 (compared with \$42,000 in the 2019 pilot)
- Total value of food coupons redeemed (all markets, as of February 28, 2021): \$67,555 (compared with \$37,367 during the pilot)
- Overall food coupon redemption rate: 86% (compared with 88.9% during the pilot)
- Total number of food coupon recipients (all markets): 261 households, directly impacting over 500 people (compared with 105 households, directly impacting an estimated 150+ individuals during the 2019 pilot program)
- Number of food coupon recipient households by market:

| Market          | # of Participants | Market      | # of Households |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Antigonish      | 10                | Mabou       | 7               |
| Avon Community  | 40                | New Glasgow | 21              |
| Bridgewater     | 15                | Novalea     | 17              |
| Cape Breton     | 25                | Spryfield   | 7               |
| Chester         | 13                | Truro       | 31              |
| Halifax Brewery | 50                | Wolfville   | 18              |
| Lunenburg       | 7                 |             |                 |

## Demographic Characteristics of Participants

- **Gender:** 76% of food coupon recipients were female, while 22% were male. 2 respondents identified as non-binary, and 3 preferred not to answer (compared with 71% female and 25% male in the pilot).
- **Age:** Age distribution among food coupon recipients skewed somewhat younger during this iteration of the program, but people from all age categories were reasonably well represented. 43% were between the ages of 18-34, 32% were aged 35-54, and 24% were aged 55 or above.
- **Population characteristics:** 20% of program participants self-identified as living with a disability. 11% respondents were from the LGBTQ+ community, 3% were Acadian/Francophone, 8% were Indigenous, and 8% were African Nova Scotian. 12% indicated they had immigrated to Canada within the last 5 years.

- **Children or dependents:** 51% of all food coupon recipients reported having 1 or more dependent children under age 18 living with them (compared with 52% during the pilot). 22% of all participants reported having 3 or more dependent children (compared with 26% during the pilot).
- **Spousal status:** 54% of food coupon recipients did not have a spouse or partner living at the same residence (compared with 62% during the pilot). 42% reported living with a spouse or common-law partner (compared with 35% during the pilot), while 4% preferred not to answer.
- **Employment:** 9% of all food coupon recipients reported being retired (compared with 25% during the pilot). 24% were employed full time (>20 hours/week) (compared with 20% during the pilot), while 18% were employed part time (<20 hours) (compared with 9% during the pilot). 37% of recipients were not employed (compared with 33% during the pilot), although slightly more than half of those were currently seeking employment.

#### Food Coupon Redemption by Category

| Product category        | Total amount redeemed (\$) | % of total 2020 program food coupons | % during 2019 pilot program |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Produce                 | \$21,358                   | 31.6% (+)                            | 28.4%                       |
| Other agri. products    | \$20,290                   | 30.0% (+)                            | 27.7%                       |
| Prepared foods          | \$16,048                   | 23.8% (-)                            | 28.2%                       |
| Beer, wine, and spirits | \$1,026                    | 1.5% (-)                             | 2.6%                        |
| Artisans/crafts         | \$7,515                    | 11.1% (-)                            | 11.9%                       |
| Unclassified/other      | \$1,317                    | 1.9% (-)                             | 1.2%                        |

**Note:** it is important to recall that – in order to maximize personal choice and individual decision-making – pilot program participants were issued no restrictions on how their coupons could be redeemed. Overwhelmingly, however, participants opted to spend their coupons on locally grown or made food products. 85.4% of all coupons were redeemed for produce, prepared foods, and other agri-food products (compared with 84.3% during the pilot program)

#### Overall Evaluation

- 64% of participants scored the program 10/10 for overall benefit (compared with 72% during the pilot). A further 21% scored the program either an 8 or 9 out of 10. (compared with 17% during the pilot). The average benefit score was 9.0/10
- 93% of participants believe they received good value for their food coupons (compared with 97% during the pilot program).

## **Social, Family, Economic and Community Outcomes**

- 43% of participants indicated they made at least one new friend or social contact (compared with 57% during the pilot).
- 92% of participants feel a greater sense of belonging to their community because of their participation in this program (compared with 85% during the pilot)
- 56% of participants reported spending money during their market visits *in addition to* their food bucks. 19% of participants reported spending at least \$10 of non-food bucks money per visit, on average.

## **Health, Wellness, Accessibility and Food Security Outcomes**

- 82% of participants purchased foods that were not part of their diet previously (pilot: 98%)
- 65% of participants reported learning something new about food and nutrition (pilot: 78%)
- 50% of participants expect to make long-term changes to their diet as a result of this program (pilot: 62%)
- 92% of participants reported that – as a result of this program – they purchased food(s) they could not previously afford. (pilot: 90%)
- 85% of participants ate healthier foods than usual during the program (pilot: 87%)
- 94% of participants – as a direct result of this program – felt they had more money to meet their other (non-food/grocery) needs (pilot: 85%)
- 54% of participants found farmers’ market prices to be higher than the grocery store (pilot: 63%)
- 23% of participants found it difficult to find transportation to and from their market (pilot: 17%)
- The top three farmers’ market characteristics that excited participants most were: ‘knowing the food I buy is grown or made locally’ (37%) ‘knowing I am supporting local businesses and vendors’ (36%) and ‘buying healthier foods’ (16%).
- 25% of participants – during the program – visited the market either ‘every week’ or ‘every week with 1-2 exceptions’ (pilot: 61%). A further 27% visited the market every second week (pilot: 22%)
- 30% of participants reported making either some or all of their market purchases online. 89% of those participants indicated it was either somewhat easy or extremely easy to make these orders digitally.

## 7.0 In Their Own Words: Participant Experiences

At the end of the Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Pilot Program, we asked each participant (through their exit survey):

**If you were approached by someone who was about to participate in the Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program, and they asked you for your opinion or advice, what would you tell them?**

*“Supporting farmers' markets is always a good idea and any way that makes it affordable should be encouraged. Fresh local food produced by local small-scale farmers should be a normal part of our lives and partaking in programs like this help make it more so.”*

*“This program helped me a lot since I am a single mother and an immigrant, and it has been difficult for me to work to take care of my daughter. So they gave me a lot of support, both financially, for my health and in a certain emotional way, because she gave community support and they always treated me very well.”*

*“This program was an absolute blessing to my daughter and myself.”*

*“Having no income while you're in school can be embarrassing (and not a lot of people talk about this?!?) and this definitely allowed my partner and I to try things that we normally wouldn't have been able to afford. AND we were able to have more \$\$\$ at the end of the month from getting our essentials with the food bucks at the farmers market.”*

*“That it's a wonderful program run by great people. I was able to buy products I normally wouldn't buy or couldn't afford to without this program.”*

*“It's a great experience to learn about food and the different food in the community.”*

*“I would tell them it was a very enlightening program where a person could explore and try out such a variety of local products with friendly and personable staff members through the process of being introduced to selecting food products.”*

*“The program is worthwhile because it allows you to support local and try new items that you may not normally incorporate into your diet (like specific seasonal vegetables, local pre-prepared foods and sauces, etc.). This sometimes encourages more cooking and searching for recipes to use the foods you're less familiar with, which is fun. And, since you're making the trip to the market already, you might spend more than the food bucks amount to get more*

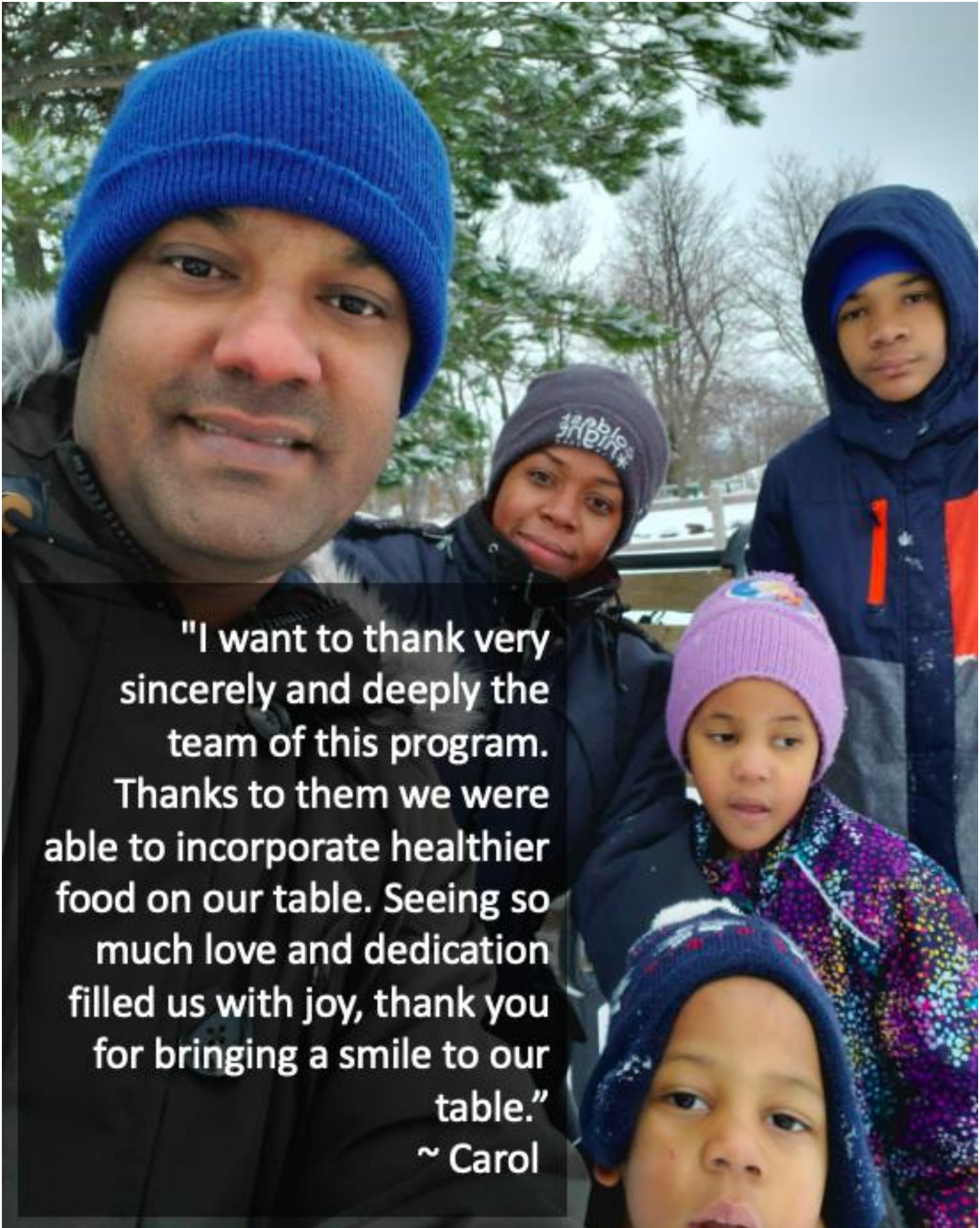


*product/products that aren't included in the food bucks allowance (like handmade masks, alcohol, etc.), and this allows you to support local with the things you're buying. You also might find something that you really like from a local vendor, which keeps you returning to the market once the food bucks program has concluded.”*

*“Thank you for this opportunity. My diet is not where I would like it to be due to funds. This allowed me to remedy this for a brief period. Good food really helps at all times on all levels of health, but especially during these difficult pandemic times.”*

*“We liked getting two weeks of food bucks at a time, made for less travelling and less gas to get there. Thanks for everything; we were so happy to take part it was the only outing we had all year. I grew up on a farm and helped with a lot of the work; I loved every minute. Farmers are the best.”*

*“As a disabled, immune compromised person, being able to order online (with no minimum spend) with an almost contactless pick up DURING A PANDEMIC has been a significant benefit. I'm genuinely afraid about how much more physical shopping I will have to do over the winter because I cannot afford to do all my shopping at the market. This is NOT because the farm market is overpriced it is because governments subsidize corporations more than local farmers.”*



"I want to thank very sincerely and deeply the team of this program. Thanks to them we were able to incorporate healthier food on our table. Seeing so much love and dedication filled us with joy, thank you for bringing a smile to our table."  
~ Carol

The Food Bucks program has helped countless families both economically and emotionally. With increased government support, it will reach farther in 2021.

## 8.0 Possible Opportunities for Program Enhancement

Even in the face of a pandemic, and despite doubling in scale (13 markets vs. 6), the 2020-2021 Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program was rolled out effectively. Nevertheless, there are always some lessons learned along the way, as well as opportunities for improvement. We asked participants of the program how they felt the program could be improved in the future, and here is a paraphrased snapshot of their responses (these are in addition to the key learnings from the pilot program, which can be seen in Appendix A):

1. **Better vendor education:** several respondents indicated that – at least on occasion – market vendors either didn't know about the food bucks program, or had a minimal understanding of how it worked. Although we cannot evaluate whether this was a wide-scale problem, it is not difficult to imagine that this could put food bucks recipients in an uncomfortable situation as they attempt to make their purchases.
2. **More visible price lists:** a few respondents indicated that they were either timid or embarrassed about asking vendors about the prices of their items (to determine whether or not they could afford to purchase those products). Although there may be cases where it is not logistically viable for this to occur, we believe visible price lists would enhance the participant experience considerably. It may be worth considering increased online shopping opportunities as well, as this would enable participants to study both the products and their prices privately and without social pressure.
3. **Greater product diversity and a more consistent experience across markets:** although this is likely obvious to most markets (and something many are probably working on), several respondents did express disappointment at the small range of items for sale. This is likely especially true at smaller, less-established markets. As each market continues to grow, this problem will likely subside. The interim solution to this may be to manage participant expectations more effectively, by telling them at the beginning of the program what products they are (and aren't) likely to find at each market.
4. **Specify market bucks allocation dates:** as one respondent insightfully pointed out, *“my only suggestion is to make participants aware of the exact date funds will be provided. For people living on 45% of the poverty limit, the date you are able to shop is a significant part of how to plan/attempt to stretch resources to try and have food for the whole month.”* There is little paraphrasing that could describe this insight better than this respondent.
5. **Making market bucks 'universal':** while it may be logistically complex (and potentially not especially necessary), one respondent indicated their desire for market bucks to be

usable *across* markets (i.e., the same bucks could be used at both the Brewery Market and the Spryfield Market). Another respondent indicated that her food bucks were usable, ‘only at the Saturday market, but not the Wednesday market’ and that she could not use them at the market store (presumably referencing the Wolfville Farmers’ Market). While the benefits of such changes must be weighed against the costs, it is reasonable to suggest that a more ‘universal’ system for food bucks redemption may enhance the participant experience.

6. **Easily distinguishable market buck denominations:** another small but notable suggestion came from one respondent who indicated they found it difficult to quickly identify the value of their various food bucks. This participant suggested it may be helpful to fashion FMNS food bucks similarly to Canadian banknotes, which can be easily identified by their colour.
7. **Market bucks inflation:** it is no secret that Canada has recently experienced above average levels of inflation (and many expect this trend to continue). To that end, one participant wondered whether future market bucks allocations would reflect the shrinking purchasing power of a dollar. While this is almost certainly a long-term policy decision for FMNS and its partners, it is notable that at least one participant (and likely more) is noticing food price inflation.
8. **Online shopping opportunities:** although it was originally presumed that most program participants would be keen to do their purchasing in-person (at the market), there is evidence to suggest that at least some would prefer to shop online. About a quarter of program participants not only reported making their purchases online, but largely reported having an easy time doing so. Moreover, well over half of participants indicated that they *would* feel comfortable making their purchases online if necessary. While FMNS must weigh this against other program priorities (i.e., bringing people to the market for a prolonged social/community experience), it should also consider how to best meet the needs of all participants.

## 9.0 Next Steps: Program Sustainability and Future Funding Models

“Where do we go from here?”. This is the most common – and usually most important – question to surface at the conclusion of any successful program iteration, and the *Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Pilot Program* is no exception. Simply put, FMNS and its partners have spent the past two years rolling out an exemplary and impactful program, and there is

much enthusiasm within the community for sustaining the momentum and building on this program's clear success.

This enthusiasm is shared by Nova Scotia's provincial government which – through its department of Communities, Culture, and Heritage (NSCCH) – has recently mandated that it will provide at least \$350,000 per year to the Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program. This major investment has made it possible for FMNS to expand the program immediately, with the next iteration of the program scheduled to include at least 25 markets in 2021. This investment signals a major turning point and illustrates the government's recognition of the program's social and economic impact.

Thinking further into the future, FMNS' objective is to move towards complementing this generous annual funding from NSCCH with a long-term resilient and diverse funding strategy to ensure that this program remains in place permanently. To that end, FMNS proposes the following funding strategy for future years (2022 and beyond):

1. In the coming year, FMNS will work with its project partners to create and roll out a long-term fundraising strategy built on a resilient and diverse funding model.
2. FMNS will launch a donor program in 2021, allowing individuals, small businesses, and corporate sponsors to support FMNS and the *Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program*. The objective is to build and expand this strategy over time.
3. FMNS will take a lead role in training each of its participating markets on how to create their own fundraising models, with the objective of enabling FMNS member farmers' markets to fund at least 25% of their individual coupon program requirements on a year-to-year basis.

FMNS acknowledges that the Nourishing Communities Food Coupon program will always require some level of government investment, and it recognizes the need to find creative revenue models to minimize its reliance on government contributions while demonstrating continued community support. FMNS also believes this multi-pronged funding approach will allow the organization to continue to work effectively with government to ensure this program continues to grow and increase its impact.

## 10.0 Conclusion: A Fast-Growing Success Story

The 2020-2021 iteration of the Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program set out to do three things:

1. Provide financial support to those in need to access healthy food;
2. Provide an experience that supported physical, mental, and community health;
3. Support local producers and farmers in developing a robust food system in Nova Scotia.

Having reviewed the totality of data and feedback collected before, during, and after the program, our assessment is as follows:

### **Objective: Provide financial support to those in need to access healthy food**

#### **Outcome: Achieved**

FMNS and its 13 participating markets were very strategic in aligning with community agencies and social service groups. They did so very intentionally to ensure that those selected for the program (a) demonstrated a clear financial need and (b) were interested in and well positioned to benefit from the program. On both of these measures, the program was a success. In total, 261 households meeting these criteria were selected to participate in the program. Although not *all* coupons were redeemed for items that would normally be considered 'healthy food', the data clearly show that the majority of redemptions fell into this category.

### **Objective: Provide an experience that supported physical, mental, and community health:**

#### **Outcome: Likely Achieved**

Although this evaluation lacks sufficient depth to fully measure participants' physical, mental, and community health (resulting from the program), there is considerable evidence to suggest that success has been achieved in this area. For example, questions like *'I made at least one new friend or social contact through this program'*, *'During this program, I consumed foods that were not part of my regular diet before'* and *'I think my long-term eating habits have changed somewhat as a result of this program'* (all answered affirmatively) suggest that the program has made progress toward this objective. Although self-reporting is often considered somewhat anecdotal, FMNS has firm plans to institute more in-depth behavioural research during the third iteration of the program. This research will tell us even more about this outcome.

### **Objective: Support local producers and farmers in developing a robust food system in Nova Scotia:**

#### **Outcome: Likely Achieved**

Although our evaluation did not attempt to measure this outcome directly, it is generally accepted (as a result of numerous other studies) that investments in farmers' markets contribute to local food security and robust local food systems. In total, this pilot program directly injected \$67,555 into thirteen farmers' markets, and this figure does not account for

any secondary, tertiary, and spinoff economic impacts. And while we can't say with certainty how much extra money the program's participants spent (in addition to their food bucks), we *can* say that 56% of participating households reported spending some of their own money at the market during each visit. The evaluation also did not study the extent to which local vendors improved their chances for profitability and sustained business success through this program (although it is presumed to have done so to some degree). While a future evaluation process may include primary research with market vendors, we are comfortable suggesting this objective has been met, even in the absence of data specific to this program.

Overall, by nearly every measure, all parties associated with this pilot program – markets, participants, and community partners – believe that it was a major success both socially and economically. Although there was no reason to believe it *wasn't* going to be effective, it is worth acknowledging that many early-stage programs experience unexpected and unforeseeable snags along the way (resulting in less-than-expected results). Such was not the case with the Nourishing Communities Food Coupon program; it was overwhelmingly well supported, well subscribed, well-administered, and well received. Although there are always opportunities for future refinement and improvement, AEC is confident asserting that this program shows true promise in achieving its stated objectives not only on the current scale, but also on a larger one.

## Appendix A: Key Learnings and Opportunities for Enhancement from Pilot Program (2019)

1. **Transportation not a major issue:** it is well documented that transportation can be a major impediment for vulnerable populations, particularly in rural Nova Scotia. It is with some surprise, then, that we report very few participants of the program cited ‘transportation to and from the market’ as a major challenge. In fact, only 17% indicated this. It should be noted, of course, that many participants were selected for the program *because* of their proximity to the market; it remains quite likely that many otherwise suitable participants for the program would not be able to find reliable transportation on a regular basis.
2. **Limited hours a barrier:** by design (and for good reason), most farmers markets are open for only a short window of time during the week. For example, the Wolfville Farmers’ Market is open for 4.5 hours on Saturday and an additional 3 hours on Wednesday evening. This is not at all unusual for farmers’ markets, however a few participants did note that this presented a challenge for them due to a variety of foreseeable and unforeseeable obligations during those hours. Clearly, given the high redemption and participation rates, this barrier – though present – was not insurmountable.
3. **Personal relationships with the markets are key:** one participant summed this up succinctly when she said “*I appreciated when staff accompanied me to the market. The market is overwhelming at the beginning.*” It was reported by both participants and markets that a key ingredient in the program’s success was for each market to have an ambassador; that is, someone to befriend each participant, orient them to the program, show them around, and generally be a resource for them throughout the program.
4. **Product selection variance between markets a concern to some:** it will come as no surprise that each of the six participating markets varies in size, scope, and product availability. While some markets have dozens of vendors, others have fewer than ten. Naturally, this means that participants in this program likely had a different experience depending on which market they attended. Although all participants had access to healthy and local food choices, the *extent* of those choices was not equal. Although this is a larger, structural issue (not one that can be easily resolved), future iterations of the program may wish to look for creative ways to ensure the most consistent experience possible across markets.



5. **Acoustics present a barrier:** a few participants pointed out (as marketgoers occasionally do) that hearing was a challenge for them. According to one participant, *“eating inside was annoying as I was unable to chat with anyone due to the music volume.”* Although again this is a larger structural issue, it is one to take into consideration, as various hearing disabilities may prevent people from receiving the maximum benefit of the program. If they are to enjoy social interaction and learn about the products they are buying, they must be able to hear clearly.
6. **More coupon denominations = more purchasing flexibility:** a few participants noted that – ideally – they would have had access to a wider range of coupon denominations (in addition to the standard ones given out through the program). Although issuing more denominations would certainly increase the overall administrative requirement for the program, it may also encourage participants to spend their allotments more strategically, and to greater personal benefit.
7. **Vendor onboarding is key:** the Nourishing Communities Food Coupon program can only work if all market vendors (a) buy into the program and (b) understand exactly how to participate. Although feedback suggests that the vast majority of vendors were well acquainted with the program, there were a few noted instances where this was not the case. Ensuring that all vendors are well educated in the program’s procedures will eliminate potentially difficult or embarrassing conversations for the program’s participants.
8. **Consider connecting participants...to each other:** it was generally assumed at the outset that – for a variety of reasons – most participants of the program would prefer to remain relatively anonymous. And on the whole, this is probably correct. However, there were at least a few participants who suggested that they would have welcomed an opportunity to get to know some of the other participants, so that they could develop a friendship or share the market shopping experience together. This will be something to consider in future iterations.
9. **Consider carts for accessibility:** although this is certainly not a new concept for any farmers’ market, a couple of participants – due to mobility concerns – indicated they would have preferred to have a shopping cart. While introducing carts may present various logistical challenges within already-crowded markets, it is important to recognize the accessibility needs of program participants.
10. **Monthly coupon distribution effective:** although each market distributed its coupons in slightly different ways, at least one market was very pleased with its decision to disburse

food coupons on a monthly basis (in contrast to a weekly basis). This market felt there were three advantages to monthly lump-sum disbursements:

- a. It reduced the administrative requirements of the program (one disbursement per month instead of four).
- b. It gave program participants more flexibility in how and when they spent their coupons. For example, rather than spending the same amount each week, participants could purchase more one week and less the next (to better meet their needs).
- c. It provided the market with a better opportunity to collect and add supplemental information to the participants' coupon envelopes.

11. **Partners willing, able to participate in coupon distribution:** some participating markets did not distribute their food coupons directly at all, opting instead to pass them along to social service agencies to do so. This decision worked well because (a) it ensured an added layer of confidentiality or privacy to the participants (b) it encouraged the social service agencies to buy-in and assume a more active role in the program and (c) it lessened the administrative requirement for the farmers' markets (whose staff and volunteers are often at or near capacity)

12. **Food Coupon Pilot Program reduces food insecurity stigma:** although many food banks have made great efforts to reduce stigma and shame for their users, several people associated with this program remarked that the Nourishing Community Food Coupon program took stigma reduction to a new level. Simply put, there is no way for other farmers' market patrons – or vendors – to know who is using coupons associated with the pilot program. The unique coding process applied to the food coupons ensured that only the program administrators could track which coupons were part of the pilot program (and which were non-program coupons, which are also sold by various markets).

13. **More transparency helpful in selection process:** naturally – and especially as the program expands – there will be people who wonder how its participants are selected. Although the six markets worked very closely with their community partners to identify people who were well-positioned to benefit from the program, the lack of publicity around eligibility criteria has the potential to create challenges in the future. Although no major questions were raised during the pilot program, FMNS and its markets must continue to work together to strike an appropriate balance between participant confidentiality and program transparency.

## Appendix B: All Participant Quotes and Statements

**If you were approached by someone who was about to participate in the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program, and they asked you for your opinion or advice, what would you tell them?**

|  |
|--|
| Great program to receive healthy foods.  |
| Supporting farmers' markets is always a good idea and any way that makes such affordable should be encouraged. Fresh local food produced by local small-scale farmers and crafts people should be a normal part of our lives and partaking in programs like this help make it more so.   |
| It's a great program :)  |
| It's a great program and you should sign up.   |
| It is a good thing.  |
| I would encourage them to do so.   |
| This program helped me a lot since I am a single mother and an immigrant, and it has been difficult for me to work to take care of my daughter. So they gave me a lot of support, both financially, for my health and in a certain emotional way, because she gave community support and they always treated me very well.   |
| I really want to be invited to this program again so bad   |
| It was amazing experience  |
| It's a very good program. It helped us out a lot.  |
| Definitely accept it. Farm fresh food is 10x better than what you buy at the grocery store.  |
| It's easy to do and to be fortunate to be part of this program is an absolute blessing to my daughter and myself. My advice is take your time and browse your options from each stand. Some duplicate products and the way they are packaged or quantity for the price can be very different   |
| That I found it very helpful, as without it I wouldn't been able to afford it. I would recommend it.   |
| Good program.  |
| I would advise anyone that participates in this program; they would really appreciate the quality and quantity of vegetables and food stuffs. Great social and learning curve of the wonderful vendors.  |
| I would tell them it's wonderful and such a big help. I can eat much healthier.  |
| It was a great blessing to us. We loved going and enjoyed the music and people.  |
| I think it is a very good program that enables many people to participate in it that would otherwise not be able to go to the market.  |
| Very good program.   |
| It is super great. I wouldn't have the extra food that I got if it wasn't for this program, and I hope they do this every year. It's a great program.  |
| This is a wasted question. Only people in desperate poverty were given the opportunity to participate in the Food Bucks program. Desperate people don't need convincing to access free healthy food. Politicians need convincing to address the systemic causes of poverty in Nova Scotia, and the barriers people face in accessing healthy food (money). The levels of child poverty and food insecurity in NS are deplorable. The supports given to people with disabilities is deplorable. If someone was offered this program and |

were anxious or unsure how it worked, I would happily encourage them to take the opportunity, explain how it worked, and different ways to access market goods.

Fantastic opportunity to stretch your budget, learn about foods that you might not otherwise try, shop and support local, learn about what your local market has to offer!!!!

Definitely to participate in the program

It is a wonderful help that is provided, and it can save you money and the quality of food is really good and healthy. Nothing too industrial or too processed. It also helps local producers and contribute to the local economy which is even better for everyone. You should really apply for it.

It is great program; you will learn and grow a lot going to farmers' market. Food Buck is great support, and you will learn what local community bring to the plate.

GO FOR IT!!!!.

It was a fantastic program that we would like to see continued!

I would definitely recommend them to participate.

The food there is costly. And there is not much variety. There are only few items to choose from. At the same time you might buy products which you would have never bought if you didn't had that gift card.

It's a great idea clean food and decent prices and supports local sellers

Participate, you get access to fresh local products

I'd tell them to go to the farmers market because they helped my family they'd be glad to help someone else family it's a friendly environment I recommend other people to go to the farmers' market.

It is a great way to support local people and their businesses

It was a great program, it really helped out my family. The only problem was with covid, I had to purchase everything online and would have liked to shop around more in person. I definitely will now in the future though. Thank you.

Try new things. Use it as a way to get your kids to try new things, let them help pick out new things.

It's really a great program. Specially the vegetables and fruits are so fresh that you will never find anywhere. Such a fantastic program.

Great program. It helped put food in the freezer and helped me financially.

This is a wonderful program.

I would say to 100% take part in it. It was a great experience to really see how inexpensive buying local and buying sustainably can be. I loved seeing the other vendors that were at the brewery market and getting exposed to that kind of local crafting.

I would encourage them as I know this does help families out there.

That I loved it and it helped a lot with getting my kids school snacks and eggs for breakfast!

Fantastic

Definitely take advantage of this program!!!! I really hope that it exists next year. It really truly made a difference for us. Having no income while you're in school can be embarrassing (and not a lot of people talk about this?!?) and this definitely allowed my partner and I to try things that we normally wouldn't have been able to afford. AND we were able to have more \$\$\$ at the end of the month from getting our essentials with the food bucks at the farmers' market.

The program is worthwhile because it allows you to support local and try new items that you may not normally incorporate into your diet (like specific seasonal vegetables, local pre-prepared foods and sauces, etc.). This sometimes encourages more cooking and searching for recipes to use the foods you're less familiar with, which is fun. And, since you're making the trip to the market already, you

might spend more than the food bucks amount to get more product/products that aren't included in the food bucks allowance (like handmade masks, alcohol, etc.), and this allows you to support local with the things you're buying. You also might find something that you really like from a local vendor, which keeps you returning to the market once the food bucks program has concluded.

I would tell them it's a great way to try foods you either would not have been able to pay for yourself, or even known it exists. I am extremely grateful for it, thank you so much.

It is excellent way to help the people and food quality also excellent.

It's an awesome program. Use it to try new things and eat healthier

Definitely try it out. Great chance to try out some things you might not have otherwise

Order food boxes early because sometimes they sell out!

To go ahead its easy

I would tell them that it is a great program and to take full advantage of this and enjoy it and to definitely try new things that you wouldn't have bought with your own money or not able to afford.

try it!

No

Try different products and appreciate the opportunity to participate. Go outside your good comfort zone

great program

It was a good place to go and get fresh produce.

I would highly recommend participating in this program as they will get to try out new food!

Try new food items.

This is a great program. I got to try fresh vegetables that I don't usually buy, vegetables are fresher than what you buy in a grocery store. I really enjoyed pre-made dishes.

It was an informative and worthwhile program.

It's a great programme but can only use the food bucks on Saturday.

It's worth it.

I would tell them it was a very enlightening program where a person could explore and try out such a variety of local products with friendly and personable staff members through the process of being introduced to selecting food products.

To go, because there's great stuff there like meats and baked goods and fresh veggies and fruits.

It is an awesome program.

To try it for sure.

It's great that they are here for us.

I think it is great. I would encourage them to do so. I have learned so many new things about food items I didn't know. The products are fresh and delicious.

Great program; highly recommended

Great program.

This program is very useful.

Good program. Try it.

Good program.

I would tell them it was very beneficial.

|   |
|---|
| This program feeds families, which is great.  |
| Great opportunity to meet people and get involved in the community.   |
| This program was very helpful to me and my family.  |
| It's a great program and they should get involved as much as possible.  |
| Food bucks is a great program. I would recommend it to more people.   |
| It's a great program, easy to access and a great social experience especially through COVID.  |
| This is a very good program; this helps through the week.   |
| Food is very fresh, and staff are approachable and easy to talk to.   |
| It's a great experience to learn about food and the different food in the community.  |
| It is a good program. It is worth using.  |
| Go early and go often: there's always great things to get.  |
| That it's a wonderful program run by great people. I was able to buy products I normally wouldn't buy or couldn't afford to without this program. |

**In your opinion, what would make the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program better for future participants?**

|   |
|---|
| NA  |
| Regular connection to charitable food organizations, such as the food bank, would make it better and ideally having it part of a government funded universal income program. The food bank does its best to provide some fresh produce as it is available, but it is never as fresh, varied, or abundant as buying it straight from the vendors at a farmers' market. |
| To have all vendors know about it and how it works; and to have a pricing list outside each vendor so people don't have to ask about each item.   |
| Continue doing so.  |
| I cannot think of anything more, but it is very beneficial for seniors.   |
| They do everything right  |
| No idea I'm cute not smart  |
| Nothing to improve on   |
| It's a very good program; I don't know how you could improve it.  |
| Perhaps offering more food bucks per week.  |
| I have to explain to some vendors what the bucks are and how they work. I think if you have a meeting with the vendors to inform them what they are about, it would make it easier for the customer   |
| If it ran longer. It really helped. Thank you   |
| No need of any changes; everything works perfectly well for me.   |
| Run longer than 10 weeks.   |
| It was great. I have nothing to add.  |

|  |
|--|
| To go every week if you could get there. The only thing I would like to see is they have more vendors with different things. And next year I hope they have the bands and the music they used to have because that's one thing that I missed every week, and so did my grandkids.  |
| My only suggestion is to make participants aware of the exact date funds will be provided. For people living on 45% of the poverty limit, the date you are able to shop is a significant part of how to plan/attempt to stretch resources to try and have food for the whole month.  |
| I think that it is a good enough!  |
| It could go for longer period and be brought back again.   |
| Nothing. Most of the things are sorted.  |
| No advice, maybe a larger amount of \$ as prices are higher than a grocery store.  |
| It would be great - if the unused credits of one month are automatically added to next month's gift credit.  |
| Products should be less costly. There should be variety of items to choose from.   |
| With prices rising I would want to see more bucks per month  |
| I dunno  |
| I love the farmers market I wouldn't have it any other way because. Farmers Market is filled with kind and friendly people?  |
| I think it's a good program already  |
| The option to shop online and in the store.  |
| Maybe over 4 months at \$125   |
| It's perfect. I don't think it needs anything to improve. Great program.   |
| At my market, I could only use my Food Bucks online. There are many vendors that are not online. It would have been nice to have the option to support table vendors as well. I felt limited to my choices and sometimes online vendors were sold out.   |
| Not sure it was so easy to do.   |
| I think it is really well organized! It was a little bit tough due to COVID to use my December Food Bucks because I left early December and just finished my two-week quarantine at the end of January, but that has nothing to do with you guys it's just the way the cards fell this year! Everything went super smoothly.   |
| I think it's perfect   |
| Nothing really. Your program was perfect. The only thing I would say would be maybe extending the monthly food bucks allowance, so it expires at the end of the program instead of each month. Definitely have an expiry date though for procrastinators like me haha.   |
| I think that being able to use the food bucks allowance in different transactions (rather than having to use the whole balance at once) would be useful, in addition to being valid at more locations, like the Halifax Seaport Farmer's market. These spaces are larger and often less difficult to access, especially in COVID circumstances where the number of people inside a space are usually limited. Making the food bucks usable at several "stores" may also allow you to find products that one vendor may be sold out of (ex: apples) at another vendor nearby, while still supporting local, instead of the alternative of buying them at the grocery store. |
| I think it's a great system. If there was a way to tell online how much credit you have left that would be nice too.   |
| yes  |

|   |
|---|
| It was great  |
| Nothing I can think of. It was an overall delightful program and I'm thankful I got to try it out   |
| A little more choice in the food boxes for delivery would be good. I really liked that they came with recipes so more of that!  |
| Yes   |
| Honestly I cannot think of anything right off hand. The online ordering is easy to understand and easy to track what you are ordering, the emails are very helpful and great for the remainders, I am grateful for this opportunity thank you!                          |
| Nothing   |
| I think it was great.   |
| Continue to allow people the choice of the products they purchase   |
| no  |
| Maybe increasing the value of the food bucks a bit more?!   |
| I wouldn't change a thing.  |
| I found it was perfect.   |
| I don't know. I felt it was good the way it is. I enjoy going to it. It was my first time and I liked it. If you do this next year, please consider me next year please.  |
| Allow t heir use in the farmers' market store at the farmers' market (since it is open at other times, or so I am told).  |
| Not sure - guess maybe just some fine-tuning so the odd item won't be missed when delivered (just growing pains). Also, have heard that sometimes orders put in close to the usual deadline sometimes resulted in product size and/or availability being short changed. |
| A bit better price for meats, etc. It took like 2-3 coupons to get a pack of 2 steak/porkchops and did not leave much room to get very much meat. And the fresh produce was even more expensive for a coupon.   |
| Just by being there is a great help.  |
| If they had carts to put stuff in to help people with disabilities.   |
| Can't think of any reason it should change.   |
| Not at this time. Great program and service.  |
| If the program was more widely known.   |
| Nothing.  |
| Have longer hours, more food.   |
| Offering food bucks early September or October so more fresh produce is available.  |
| Having longer hours.  |
| Make bucks available at the farmers' market.  |
| Have more guests to help out.   |
| Different coloured bills for different amounts instead of them being the same colour.   |



**Is there anything at all you would like to tell us about your experience with the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program? If so, please tell us here.**

Thank you for this opportunity. My diet is not where I would like it to be due to funds. This allowed me to remedy this for a brief period. Good food really helps at all times on all levels of health, but especially during these difficult pandemic times.

Everyone was very pleasant.

I found it very good.

Only that it is a very good program. Also, prices may be a little bit higher, but I realize that between travel and all the work involved, and in setting up, it is well deserved.

Thank you very much for your support, I hope I can count on this support next year, since my family ate healthier.

It was great and I loved it

Thank you for the help and experience

People were very kind and nice to me.

Thank you so much for offering me the program, so I could feed my family healthier food.

Please continue the program and allow me to be part of it. It's such a benefit to me and my family

Just thankful for it. Without it I couldn't afford the food.

I enjoyed the program.

Appreciated the chance to be given this chance to participate.

It was great for us, and we enjoyed going very much, the foods were all great, the prices were better than last year I thought. We liked getting two weeks of food bucks at a time, made for less travelling and less gas to get there. Thanks for everything; we were so happy to take part it was the only outing we had all year. I grew up on a farm and helped with a lot of the work; I loved every minute. Farmers are the best.

I felt very lucky to be able to participate in this program.

It is a very good program.

It's a great program. If I didn't get the bucks I likely wouldn't have went, because I wouldn't have the extra money to go. And my granddaughter loved going down every week but missed the music. I would love to learn about any other programs that you have going that I don't know about, please and thank you. I'm very interested and hope this keeps going next year as well. I saved my bucks up because there was a winter sweater that I really wanted because with my disease I mind the cold so bad and I wanted that sweater so bad and could not pay what they wanted for it, so I hope that was okay that I got myself my sweater it was something I needed and wanted to stay warm going to school. I hope it was okay that I did that.

I only wish I knew this was an ongoing program I had access to. Being able to put local food (any food) on my table AND know its supporting my community and my local farmers...that is invaluable. I enjoyed seeing friendly faces at my market pick up. As a disabled, immune compromised person, being able to order online (with no minimum spend) with an almost contactless pick up DURING A PANDEMIC has been a significant benefit. I'm genuinely afraid about how much more physical shopping I will have to do over the winter because I cannot afford to do all my shopping at the market. This is NOT because the farm market is overpriced it is because governments subsidize corporations more than local farmers.

Please accept my sincere gratitude for being chosen to participate in this program! I feel very very fortunate to have been given this fabulous opportunity for myself and my family

It helped me financially to buy things sometimes I wouldn't afford to buy because of the prices. The quality of the food and fresh produce makes a big difference, and you can eat healthy. It is a very nice program that helps people in the need and people who struggle financially.

I loved it a lot, I enjoyed everything I got out of it. There are several things I got which is not available at grocery stores. I really thankful to accept me into the program. I would love to join again in future.

Thank you for this wonderful program. It was helpful for me. I tried foods out of my regular diet. I also got to know more about the local Farmers' market.

Nothing as such.

No

It helped me and my daughter make nutritionists meals and learn new things from the farmers market I'd like to a client for this year too

It was a great experience, thank you.

It's a really fantastic program. This is very perfect program for immigrant. This way we can support our local farmers. I am lucky to be a part of program. Thanks to kids first.

It was a great experience. I would not have traded the experience for anything.

I would like to thank you. I do love being a part of this program and it does help my family.

Just thank you so much to everyone who makes this happen!!

Just thank you so much!!!! This program was really beneficial for us. We hope its back again this year!!!!

I enjoyed the experience a lot and will definitely be returning to the market as often as I can for the local goods I'm now hooked on!

I was able to go to a new market and discover new foods. This was extremely helpful financially, thank you so much.

By this program people receive good food that is best part of this program.

I truly enjoyed the program. We created wonder meals together every pick-up day

I loved it

The people I interacted with were very nice and would talk to me each week for a couple minutes

I loved shopping at the brewery market! I fell in love with the herbal hot chocolate mix and the maple syrup.

Keeping track of the coupon code was the only complaint I have. But that was my own responsibility. I would just like to say thank you.

The staff was wonderful, and I am grateful to have been offered the program.

I found it very good and enriching socially to re-connect again in a limited way with market staff during this pandemic (as a volunteer myself with the market). This sustained personal contact was invaluable and encouraging. Thanks.

It was great to be able to get extra food that was delicious and fresh that couldn't (get) any other way normally afford to get or get to benefit from.

It was very helpful.

I received a pack of coupons of 10 and wasn't able to get much of anything, and if I wanted any meat then I could not get any fresh produce because it was even more expensive than meat was.

Again, so helpful and grateful that they are here to help us out.

|   |
|---|
| I can never tell you enough how much I appreciate being part of this program. Thank you so much.  |
| Very kind vendors made shopping easier; Thank you for accepting me in your program. I truly enjoyed going and saving money is a big deal to me. Thanks again. |
| Great program and service to the community. Really helped several of the families that attend our club.   |
| Great experience. Thank you.  |
| Love the market. Thanks!  |
| It was great.   |
| Great program.  |
| This was very helpful; they were very nice.   |
| It was a great, great program.  |
| It was great.   |
| They are very nice and helpful.   |
| Food was delicious and plentiful. There was a wide range of products to pick from.  |
| Good fresh food.  |

## Appendix C: Coupon Redemption by Market

Expressed in Dollars

| Market          | Product Category |               |                |                     |                  |              |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------|
|                 | Produce          | Other Agri    | Prepared foods | Beer, wine, spirits | Artisans/ crafts | Other        |
| Antigonish      | 1,270            | 850           | 70             | 25                  | 445              | 255          |
| Avon Community  | 570              | 275           | 375            | 25                  | 1,035            | 0            |
| Bridgewater     | 1,109            | 837           | 558            | 0                   | 97               | 60           |
| Cape Breton     | 955              | 810           | 2,380          | 45                  | 810              | 0            |
| Chester         | 945              | 1,180         | 480            | 210                 | 25               | 0            |
| Halifax Brewery | 709              | 735           | 1,832          | 10                  | 0                | 639          |
| Lunenburg       | 1,285            | 2,450         | 800            | 115                 | 170              | 0            |
| Mabou           | 480              | 285           | 215            | 40                  | 270              | 0            |
| New Glasgow     | 2,854            | 2,922         | 3,216          | 193                 | 2,820            | 0            |
| Novalea         | 2,223            | 1,197         | 0              | 0                   | 0                | 0            |
| Spryfield       | 817              | 1,004         | 562            | 71                  | 327              | 16           |
| Truro           | 5,023            | 2,147         | 3,566          | 235                 | 566              | 232          |
| Wolfville       | 3,119            | 5,599         | 1,994          | 58                  | 951              | 115          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>    | <b>21,358</b>    | <b>20,290</b> | <b>16,048</b>  | <b>1,026</b>        | <b>7,515</b>     | <b>1,317</b> |

Expressed as a Percentage of Total Expenditures by Market

| Market          | Product Category |              |                |                     |                  |             |
|-----------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|
|                 | Produce          | Other Agri   | Prepared foods | Beer, wine, spirits | Artisans/ crafts | Other       |
| Antigonish      | 44%              | 29%          | 2%             | 1%                  | 15%              | 9%          |
| Avon Community  | 25%              | 12%          | 16%            | 1%                  | 45%              | 1%          |
| Bridgewater     | 42%              | 31%          | 21%            | 0%                  | 4%               | 2%          |
| Cape Breton     | 19%              | 16%          | 48%            | 1%                  | 16%              | 0%          |
| Chester         | 33%              | 42%          | 17%            | 7%                  | 1%               | 0%          |
| Halifax Brewery | 18%              | 19%          | 47%            | 0%                  | 0%               | 16%         |
| Lunenburg       | 27%              | 51%          | 17%            | 2%                  | 4%               | 0%          |
| Mabou           | 37%              | 22%          | 17%            | 3%                  | 21%              | 0%          |
| New Glasgow     | 24%              | 24%          | 27%            | 2%                  | 23%              | 0%          |
| Novalea         | 65%              | 35%          | 0%             | 0%                  | 0%               | 0%          |
| Spryfield       | 29%              | 36%          | 20%            | 3%                  | 12%              | 1%          |
| Truro           | 43%              | 18%          | 30%            | 2%                  | 5%               | 2%          |
| Wolfville       | 26%              | 47%          | 17%            | 0%                  | 8%               | 1%          |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>   | <b>31.6%</b>     | <b>30.0%</b> | <b>23.8%</b>   | <b>1.5%</b>         | <b>11.1%</b>     | <b>1.9%</b> |

## Appendix D: Pre-Program Participant Questionnaire

Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia

### 2020 Food Bucks Program

Participant In-take Survey

***Hello,***

Welcome to the 2020 Nourishing Communities Food Bucks Program!

We've created a short survey to help us evaluate the success of this program. The survey will ask you a range of questions about you and your expectations, and your answers will help us create the best possible experience for other participants in the future. We'll ask you to complete another short survey once the program is finished.

**We expect this survey will take you about 15-20 minutes to complete.** It's anonymous and confidential unless you choose to leave your name. Your responses will only be shared with the project evaluation team. Please make your best effort to answer all questions and feel free to skip any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

**Please complete this survey *before* you receive your first round of Food Bucks.**

Thanks for your cooperation! If you have any questions about the survey, please let your host organization know and we'll answer them.

#### **Question 1: What is your age?**

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to answer

#### **Question 2: Which of the following Farmers' Markets will you be shopping at as part of this program?**

- Avon Community Farmers' Market
- Cape Breton Farmers' Market

- Lunenburg Farmers' Market
- New Glasgow Farmers' Market
- Truro Farmers' Market
- Wolfville Farmers' Market

**Question 3: Do you consider yourself to be a member of any of the following populations (choose all that apply)**

- Indigenous/Aboriginal
- African Nova Scotian
- Person with a Disability
- LGBTQ+
- Acadian/Francophone
- Immigrant (within the last 5 years)
- Caucasian
- Other

**Question 4: How many children (under age 18) are currently living with you (either part time or full time)?**

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4+
- Prefer not to answer

**Question 5: Do you have a spouse or partner that currently lives in the same dwelling as you?**

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

**Question 6: Which of the following best describes your current employment status?**

- Not employed, but seeking employment
- Not employed, and not seeking employment
- Employed part time (less than 20 hours weekly)
- Employed full time (20 or more hours weekly)
- Self employed
- Retired
- Prefer not to answer

**Question 7: With which gender do you identify?**

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary/third gender
- Prefer to self-describe (please do so below)
- Prefer not to answer

**Question 8: *Not counting yourself*, how many people do you estimate will regularly consume the food products you purchase at your farmers' market through this program?**

- Nobody else; it will just be me
- 1 other person
- 2 other people
- 3 other people
- 4 other people
- More than 4 other people

**Question 9: In the last twelve months, how many times would you estimate you have visited your local farmers' market (the market you will be spending your food bucks at or receiving your food box from)?**

- I have not visited the farmers' market in the last 12 months
- Once or twice
- 3-10 times
- More than 10 times

## COVID-19 STATEMENT

As you likely know, COVID-19 has significantly changed the way farmers' markets across Nova Scotia are currently operating and serving customers. It is unclear when or if markets will return to their pre-COVID-19 operating procedures, and this will affect your experience with the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program. We would like to ask you some questions about this.

**Question 10: At your residence, do you currently have BOTH a high-speed Internet connection and a computer suitable for placing an order online?**

- Yes, I have both
- No, I don't have either of these
- No, I don't have high speed Internet
- No, I don't have a computer suitable for online shopping
- Prefer not to answer

**Question 11: *Please answer this question only if you answered 'Yes' to Question 10 above (if not, please skip this question)*: on a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being 'not at all comfortable' and 10**

**being 'completely comfortable'), how comfortable would you be placing an order online with your local farmers' market (recognizing that you would NOT have to use any online payment method such as credit card, PayPal, etc.)**

- 1 (not at all comfortable)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 (completely comfortable)

**Question 12: How comfortable would you be visiting your farmers' market each week to pick up your food bucks order or food box?**

- Completely uncomfortable
- Somewhat uncomfortable
- Mostly comfortable
- Completely comfortable

**Question 13: If your farmers' market could arrange to have someone deliver your Food Bucks/food box order to your residence each week, is this something you would want? (note: this may not be possible at all markets)**

- No, definitely not
- No, probably not
- Yes, probably
- Yes, definitely

**Question 14: If (either on occasion or for an extended period of time) you were not able to select the specific food items you wanted, but were instead provided with an assorted food box, how would you feel about this?**

- I would be very disappointed
- I would be a little bit disappointed
- It may not be ideal, but I'd still be reasonably happy with it
- I'd be perfectly content with whatever food products I'm given

**Question 15: One of the things many people love about farmers' markets is the social experience (seeing friends and neighbours, talking to farmers, hearing live music, etc.). In many instances, this social experience is not possible right now (and may not be possible**



throughout the duration of the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program). How do you feel about this?

- Very disappointed; the social aspect of the farmers’ market is very important to me
- Somewhat disappointed; my overall enjoyment may decrease a little bit, but not much
- Not at all disappointed; the social aspect of the farmers’ market is not important to me

**Question 16: Do you have any other comments or questions about the way COVID-19 (and current farmers' market operating restrictions) will affect your experience with the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program? If so, please tell us here.**

**Question 17: Here are some questions about your expectations for this program.**

|   | No, definitely not | No, probably not | Yes, probably | Yes, definitely |
|---|--------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| I expect to feel a greater sense of belonging to my community as a result of participating in this program. |                    |                  |               |                 |
| I expect to purchase foods that are not currently a part of my regular diet.                                |                    |                  |               |                 |
| I expect to learn something new about food and nutrition.   |                    |                  |               |                 |
| I expect to eat healthier during the time I am participating in this program.                               |                    |                  |               |                 |
| Because of the Food Bucks program, I expect to have more money to meet my other (non-food/grocery) needs.   |                    |                  |               |                 |
| I expect to use all of the food bucks offered to me through this program.                                   |                    |                  |               |                 |

**Question 18: Here are some additional questions about your expectations for this program.**

|   | No, definitely not | No, probably not | Yes, probably | Yes, definitely |
|---|--------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| I expect that I will form some new long-term eating habits as a result of this program.                     |                    |                  |               |                 |
| I expect that it will be challenging for me to find transportation to and from the farmers' market.         |                    |                  |               |                 |
| I expect to purchase at least one new food item that - without Food Bucks - I could not afford to purchase. |                    |                  |               |                 |
| I expect that farmers' market prices will be higher than the grocery store.                                 |                    |                  |               |                 |

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| I expect that I'll get good value for my money when I spend my Market Bucks. |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|

**Question 19: Here is a list of things that people sometimes say they like about farmers' markets. Which ONE (1) is most important to you?**

- Knowing the food I buy is grown or made locally
- Knowing I am supporting local businesses and vendors
- Feeling a greater sense of belonging to my community
- Being able to buy food or products I can't buy anywhere else
- Buying healthier food
- Buying tastier food

**Question 20: Here are five categories of products you'll often find available at farmers' markets. Which TWO (2) are you most looking forward to purchasing with your food bucks? You can choose up to 2 answers.**

- Produce (fruits and vegetables)
- Other farm products (meat, eggs, cheese, maple syrup, honey, etc.)
- Prepared foods (prepared meals, take home cooking, baked goods, coffee, tea, spices, etc.)
- Beverages
- Artisans, crafts, and non-edible products (soaps, art, jewelry, etc.)

**Question 21: On a scale of 0-10 (where 0 = no benefit at all and 10 = a tremendous amount of benefit), how much benefit do you expect to receive from your participation in this program?**

- 0 (no benefit at all)
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 (a tremendous amount of benefit)

**Question 22: Is there anything at all you would like to tell us about your expectations for the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program? If so, please tell us here.**

**Question 23: If you would like to leave your name, please do so here. Otherwise, you are free to skip this question and remain anonymous.**

**Question 24: If you would like someone from the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks Program to follow-up with you about your responses to this survey, please leave an email address or phone number where you can be reached.**

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your input is extremely helpful for this program and for future participants. Please click 'SUBMIT' to submit your responses.**

## Appendix E: Post-Program Participant Questionnaire

Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia

### 2020 Food Bucks Program

Participant Exit Survey

#### *Greetings,*

On behalf of Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia, we would like to thank you for your participation in the 2020 Nourishing Communities: Food Bucks program. We hope that your experience with this program was positive and rewarding.

Just like at the beginning of the program, we would like to ask you some questions about your experience. This will help us evaluate whether the program was successful, and will help us make improvements to it in the future.

**This survey will take you about 16-20 minutes to complete.** You can complete the survey all at one time, or you can save it and return to it later. This is an anonymous and confidential survey, unless you choose to leave your name. Your responses will not be shared with anyone except the FMNS project evaluation team. Please try to answer all questions and skip any questions you don't feel comfortable answering.

Thanks for your cooperation! If you have any questions about the survey, please let your host organization know and we'll answer them.

#### **Question 1: What is your age?**

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to answer

#### **Question 2: Which of the following Farmers' Markets did you shop at (or receive products from) as part of this program?**

- Antigonish Farmers' Market
- Avon Community Farmers' Market
- Bridgewater Farmers' Market

- Cape Breton Farmers' Market
- Chester Farmers' and Artisans' Market
- Halifax Brewery Farmers' Market
- Lunenburg Farmers' Market
- Mabou Farmers' Market
- New Glasgow Farmers' Market
- Novalea Farmers' Market
- Spryfield Farmers' Market
- Truro Farmers' Market
- Wolfville Farmers' Market

**Question 3: Do you consider yourself to be a member of any of the following populations (choose all that apply)**

- Indigenous/Aboriginal
- African Nova Scotian
- Person with a Disability
- LGBTQ+
- Acadian/Francophone
- Immigrant (within the last 5 years)
- Caucasian
- Other

**Question 4: How many children (under age 18) are currently living with you (either part time or full time)?**

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4+
- Prefer not to answer

**Question 5: Do you have a spouse or partner that currently lives in the same dwelling as you?**

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

**Question 6: Which of the following best describes your current employment status?**

- Not employed, but seeking employment
- Not employed, and not seeking employment
- Employed part time (less than 20 hours weekly)
- Employed full time (20 or more hours weekly)

- Self employed
- Retired
- Prefer not to answer

**Question 7: With which gender do you identify?**

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary/third gender
- Prefer to self-describe (please do so below)
- Prefer not to answer

**Question 8: During your participation in the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program, about how often did you make a purchase/receive items from your farmers' market?**

- Every week
- Every week, with 1-2 exceptions
- Every second week
- About once a month or so

**Question 9: Here are some statements relating to your experience during the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program. Please respond with 'yes', 'no', 'not sure', or 'prefer not to say'.**

|   | Yes | No | Not sure | Prefer not to answer |
|---|-----|----|----------|----------------------|
| I made at least one new friend or social contact through this program   |     |    |          |                      |
| During this program, I consumed foods that were not part of my regular diet before  |     |    |          |                      |
| By participating in this program, I learned something interesting about food and nutrition  |     |    |          |                      |
| I used all or most (more than 90%) of the Food Bucks offered to me through this program   |     |    |          |                      |
| I think my long-term eating habits have changed somewhat as a result of this program  |     |    |          |                      |
| During this program, I purchased or received at least one new food item that - without Food Bucks - I could not have afforded to purchase |     |    |          |                      |

**Question 10: Here are a number of statements relating to your experience with the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program. Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.**

|  | Strongly Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| I now feel a greater sense of belonging to my community because of this program              |                   |                   |                |                |
| I ate healthier food(s) than usual while I was participating in this program                 |                   |                   |                |                |
| During this program, I found that I had more money to meet my other (non-food/grocery) needs |                   |                   |                |                |
| I found that prices at the farmers' market were higher than they are at the grocery store    |                   |                   |                |                |
| I found it difficult to find transportation to and from the farmers' market                  |                   |                   |                |                |
| I believe I received good value for my Food Bucks, overall.                                  |                   |                   |                |                |

**Question 11: On average, about how much money did you spend each week at your farmers' market in ADDITION to your Food Bucks?**

- I didn't spend any additional money (I only used my Food Bucks)
- \$1-2 per week
- \$3-5 per week
- \$6-10 per week
- \$11-20 per week
- More than \$20 per week

**Question 12: Here are five categories of products you'll often find available at farmers' markets. Which ONE (1) did you spend more of your Food Bucks on? If you are uncertain, please make your best guess based on your memory.**

- Produce (fruits and vegetables)
- Other farm products (meat, eggs, cheese, maple syrup, honey, etc.)
- Prepared foods (prepared meals, take home cooking, baked goods, coffee, tea, spices, etc.)
- Beverages
- Artisans, crafts, and non-edible products (soaps, art, jewelry, etc.)

**Question 13: Not counting yourself, how many people regularly consumed the food products you purchased or received from your farmers' market through this program?**

- Nobody else; it was just me

- 1 other person
- 2 other people
- 3 other people
- 4 other people
- More than 4 other people

**Question 14: On a scale of 0-10 (where 0 = *no benefit at all* and 10 = *a tremendous amount of benefit*), how much benefit did you receive from your participation in this program?**

- 0 (no benefit at all)
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 (a tremendous amount of benefit)

## **COVID-19 STATEMENT**

As you know, COVID-19 has significantly changed the way farmers' markets across Nova Scotia operate and serve customers. As a result, your experience with the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program was likely different than it otherwise would have been. We would like to ask you some questions about this.

**Question 15: During your participation in this program, how often did you place your Food Bucks market orders online?**

- Every time (I placed all of my orders online)
- Most times
- A few times
- Never (I did not place any orders online)

**Question 16: If you placed any orders online, please tell us how easy or difficult it was for you to do this. *If you did not place any orders online, please skip this question.***

- Extremely easy
- Somewhat easy
- Somewhat difficult
- Extremely difficult



- Unsure/prefer not to answer

**Question 17: During this program, how often did you personally go to pick up your products directly from your farmers' market?**

- Every time
- Most times
- A few times
- Never

**Question 18: If you personally picked up your order (even once) from your farmers' market, can you tell us how easy or difficult that was for you? *If you did not personally pick up any orders from your market, please skip this question.***

- Extremely easy
- Somewhat easy
- Somewhat difficult
- Extremely difficult
- Unsure/prefer not to answer

**Question 19: During this program, how often did your farmers' market deliver your products to you at your place of residence?**

- Every time
- Most times
- A few times
- Never

**Question 20: If your products were delivered to you (even once), can you tell us how effective the delivery service was? *If no products were delivered to you at any time, please skip this question.***

- Very effective
- Mostly effective
- Not very effective
- Not at all effective
- Unsure/prefer not to answer

**Question 21: Some participants of the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program received food boxes from their farmers' market (instead of selecting each item themselves). How often did you receive food boxes?**

- Every time (I only received food boxes during this program)
- Most times
- A few times

- Never (I did not receive any food boxes during this program)
- Unsure

**Question 22: If you received a food box (even once) during this program, can you tell us how satisfied you were with the food box(es) you received? *If you did not receive any food boxes, please skip this question.***

- Completely satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Completely dissatisfied
- Unsure

**Question 23: If you were approached by someone who was about to participate in the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program, and they asked you for your opinion or advice, what would you tell them?**

**Question 24: In your opinion, what would make the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program better for future participants?**

**Question 25: Is there anything at all you would like to tell us about your experience with the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program? If so, please tell us here.**

**Question 26: Can you help us?**

**We'd love to learn more about your experience with the Nourishing Communities Food Bucks program. We're looking for a few folks to have a follow-up chat with to get more information about your experience. Your feedback will help make the program better for all future participants.**

**If you are interested, please leave your name and an email address (or phone number) where you can be reached.**

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your input is extremely helpful for this program and for future participants.**

## Appendix F: Overall Program Evaluation by Market

| Market          | Average Benefit Rating (/10) | # of Respondents |
|-----------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| Lunenburg       | 10.0                         | 5                |
| Spryfield       | 10.0                         | 2                |
| NovaLea         | 10.0                         | 1                |
| Avon Community  | 9.8                          | 8                |
| New Glasgow     | 9.6                          | 21               |
| Wolfville       | 9.1                          | 10               |
| Mabou           | 9.0                          | 4                |
| Antigonish      | 9.0                          | 3                |
| Halifax Brewery | 8.8                          | 13               |
| Chester         | 8.7                          | 6                |
| Cape Breton     | 8.4                          | 15               |
| Bridgewater     | 7.9                          | 7                |
| Truro           | n/a                          | n/a              |