



## What is a Community Food Centre?

Source: Community Food Centres Canada

*The Community Food Centre model, based on work started at The Stop Community Food Centre, is a mix of programming, organizational culture, principles and values, and infrastructure. Each CFC that we have helped developed is locally-tailored, and thus looks a bit different, but the themes below bind all together behind a single purpose.*

A **Community Food Centre** is a thriving, welcoming space where food builds health, skills and community. It provides emergency food access in a dignified setting that allows people to regain their self-worth. People learn cooking and gardening skills there, and kids develop positive attitudes towards healthy foods. Community members find their voices on the issues that matter most to them, and people find friends and support.

While each new community food centre will be tailored to meet local needs, the following criteria will be common across all centres:

### Program areas

All CFCs offer responsive programming in three core areas:

- **Food Access programs** provide emergency access to healthy food to those in need in a respectful and dignified manner
- **Food Skills programs** develop healthy food behaviours and skills, primarily in the areas of gardening and cooking
- **Education and Engagement programs** work to give individuals and communities voice and agency on food and hunger issues

### Infrastructure & staffing

- Programs are offered in an integrated space, allowing for synergies and cross-pollination between program areas
- Each space includes gardens, a Public Health–approved kitchen, offices for a minimum of five staff, and multi-purpose program and dining space to seat 80-100



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- All centres are to be financially stable, with a minimum staff team of five (one director and four coordinators) and a minimum operating budget of \$350,000/year

### **Program quality assurance & impact**

- CFCC staff visit each CFC on an annual basis to perform a program audit to ensure the highest-quality program delivery
- Each CFC provides data for centralized evaluation efforts, which are aggregated in CFCC's Annual Impact Reports
- CFCs share knowledge, lessons, innovations and best practices with one another through annual conferences and the online Learning Network

### **Principles and Values**

- **The Power of Food:** When it comes to food, we believe the medium is the message. Good food has the power to build health and community, and inspire people to become engaged in issues that matter to them. Offering food that is delicious, healthy and pleasurable is a priority, not an incidental.
- **Multidimensional Approach:** We believe that taking a multidimensional approach to programs can create individual and community change. By locating a critical mass of diverse programs under one roof, we create multiple points of entry and encourage synergy, collaboration and cross-pollination.
- **Integrated Thinking:** We believe we must address the big picture while also taking action at the grassroots. By combining a united national voice with grassroots action, we aim to influence the policies that create the issues facing our communities. We focus on income security, health issues, and sustainable agriculture.
- **Organizational Capacity:** We believe that financially stable community organizations are vital. We strive to support organizations to have sufficient staffing and resources to do justice to our valuable work. This involves diverse and innovative fundraising approaches at both the local and national levels as well as fostering an organizational culture that supports staff to get satisfaction from their work and live a balanced life.
- **Relevance:** We believe in meeting people where they are at. Community food Centres meet immediate needs first as a precondition for being able to address more complex food-related needs. Though Community Food Centres aim to help people make change in their lives, we recognize that people's skills and goals are diverse, and that they do not want to be preached at or pushed. We understand that people require practical supports to be active in their communities, and that there must be pleasure in the process as well as the outcome.



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- **Respect:** Respect underpins all of our work. We believe in creating a welcoming and respectful environment in all the Community Food Centres we support. From the way people are greeted to the aesthetics of the physical surroundings, our activities and policies reflect respect for diversity and a recognition of the inherent value, assets and potential to contribute of all people.
- **Empowerment:** We look for ways to foreground community leaders in everything we do.  
\_\_\_\_\_We believe in people's abilities to take care of their own needs. When people can support themselves and their peers by acquiring skills that enable them to choose, grow, prepare and advocate for good food and a more equitable society, the result is higher self-esteem, better social and physical health and stronger communities. Similarly, we empower our centres with the supports they need to be locally relevant and to have a voice in the larger movement.
- **Impact:** We believe in creating efficient and high-impact programs. We employ a cost-benefit analysis when developing our programs, and we endeavour to regularly measure their impacts on the community.

### Each Community Food Centre

- Increases access to healthy food among low-income community members
- Increases skills and knowledge and encourages behaviour change around healthy food
- Reduces social isolation and increases connections to a variety of supports
- Increases knowledge of poverty and food systems issues and create new opportunities for effective action on systemic issues

