



Grocery Delivery Program Project Documentation / Resource Guide

Prepared by Christina Lee, Project Manager
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We recognize that this program was developed on the traditional, ancestral, unceded and occupied Indigenous territories, including the three title-holding Nations: the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), sk̓wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətaʔ/səl̓ilwítulh (Tsleil-Waututh). This land was never relinquished by these Nations to Canada or British Columbia through a treaty or other means; it is sovereign and unsundered.

We acknowledge the ongoing and multi-layered histories of colonialism and dispossession, and the ways in which they directly impact issues of land and food sovereignty, as well as access to basic necessities. This is particularly pertinent to issues of food access, as histories of intentional displacement from traditional territories and heritage practices place Indigenous folks at a greater risk of food insecurity.

At hua foundation, we are committed to holding space for youth in the Asian diaspora to meaningfully engage with anti-racism and decolonization.

We are grateful for the support of many organizations and individuals within our community for their contributions to the development of this project:

- Yarrow Intergenerational Society for Justice
- Alain Chow & Tannis Ling, Bao Bei Brasserie
- Vancity Credit Union
- Chinatown Today
- Justin Fung
- Mike Tan
- Janice Leung
- Doug Chang

Many thanks to the 400+ community members who contributed to our GoFundMe campaign, and provided in-kind donations of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to our staff, volunteers, and seniors.

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SUMMARY

Program Development Flowchart



3. Project Delivery

Needs:

delivery coordination
/ liaison & staff

clearing house
space

order management
system

Recommended Actions:

generate standardized boxes
on a weekly rotation (at least 3),
and spreadsheets with formulas
for easy calculation

set a standard weekly schedule,
including pickup window (1.5
hours)

Operational Process Workflow

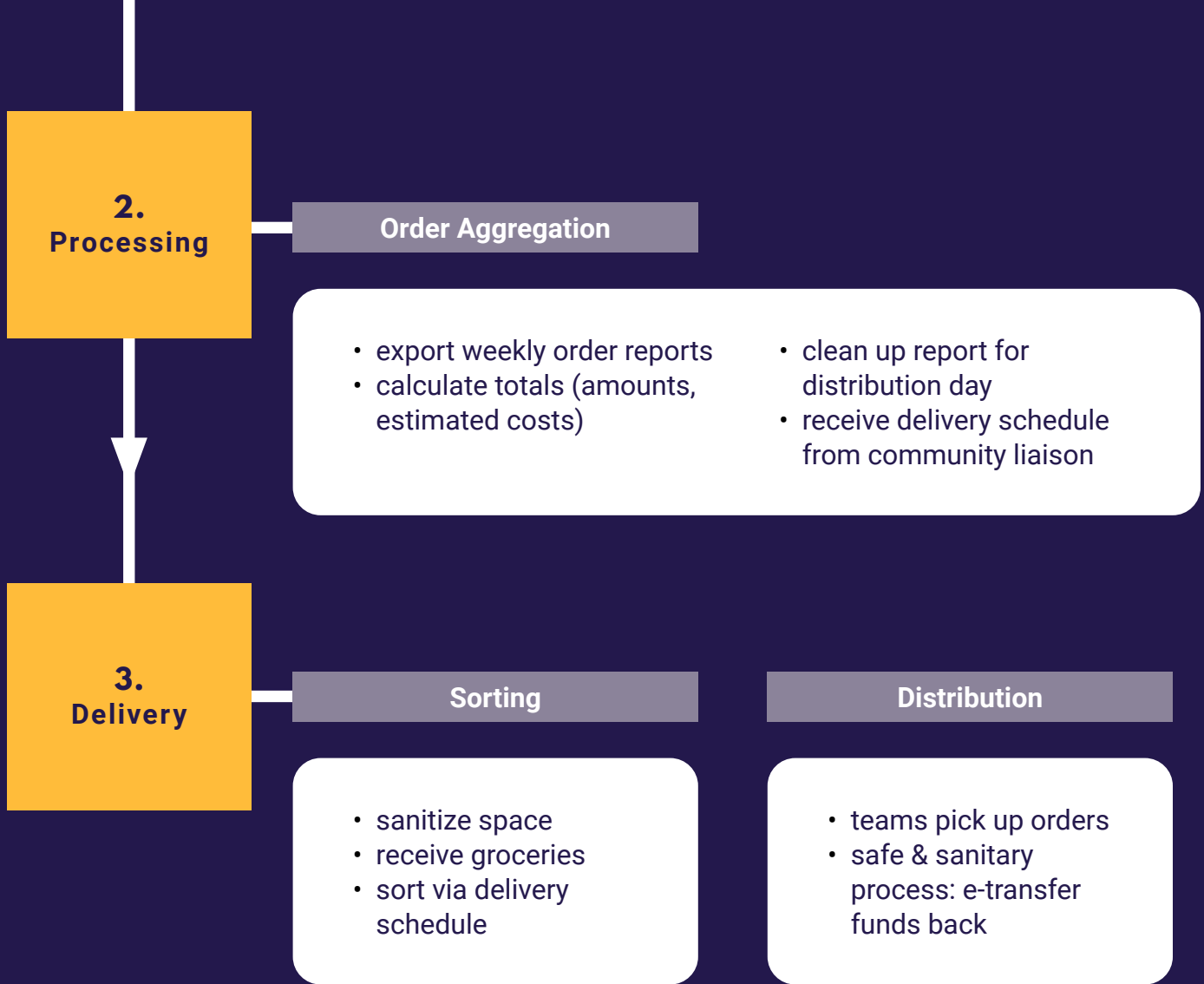
1. Collection

Database Assembly

create a database
system to manage
contacts, track orders

Order Collection

a community liaison
receives orders in
database / collection
system



Sample Weekly Schedule

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Distribution Day: - groceries received, sorted, distributed - set pick-up window for delivery teams			Submission Deadline: - all orders for the following Monday in by EOD	Order Processing: - collect and aggregate orders through database - calculate totals & cost; submit to supplier	

The sample above provides an example of a weekly schedule with adequate timelines for submission, ordering, and distribution.



INTRODUCTION

Project Context

In March 2020, due to increasing concerns around the potential for community transmission of COVID-19 and rapidly changing food access in the neighbourhood (grocery stores and restaurants closing or limited hours), the Chinatown Cares project was developed as an emergency response program to ensure access to affordable, fresh, culturally appropriate groceries for isolated Chinese-speaking seniors, focusing primarily on the geographical region known as Vancouver's Chinatown. The project brings together diverse organizations and individuals with shared concerns: namely, ensuring access to culturally appropriate food for Chinatown seniors. Coming together in this nature creates a confluence of organizational capacity, financial resources, expertise, and value chains. This generates opportunities to practice reciprocity, and build trust and social capital to address additional challenges that may arise, whether related to the COVID-19 pandemic or not, and to support the long-term sustainability of Chinatown's food systems for the future.

The need for such a program was assessed at a community level, and builds on food justice, racial equity, and mutual aid frameworks, among many others. While this program was originally developed to serve isolated Chinese-speaking seniors, it can be adapted to support any community that is facing issues of food insecurity, and can be scaled and adjusted depending on assessed need.

This program operates in three parts:



**(1) order
collection**



**(2) order
processing**



**(3) order
distribution**

(1) Order collection and (3) distribution are facilitated by community partners as 'nodes,' as this format provides better opportunities for relationship-building within their networks. For efficiency purposes, the program centralizes the (2) processing portion of the program, and operates in a modular format, allowing easy plug-in for organizations that serve communities with similar needs. This document summarizes the actions taken for developing the order processing portion of the program.

Objectives

The objectives of this document are:

1. To identify key roles, relationships, and responsibilities necessary to building a robust, scalable distribution program;
2. To share reflections and learnings from the process of systems development; and
3. To advocate for greater localization and community-building.

This resource guide is intended for communities or organizations who are interested in increasing the reach and accessibility of existing mutual aid networks, through scalable, centralized operational processes.

Guiding Frameworks

While many food access programs already exist, and other mutual aid programs have come out of adjacent emergency response initiatives, this program aims to provide long-term sustainable operations that are scalable and adaptive to community needs, foregrounding dignified access and community appropriateness.

There has long been recognition that the charity model is unsustainable, and comes from a top-down position, however well-intentioned: a high-level body assessing the needs of a community, determining the best solution for the situation, and taking action. These programs tend to have long application processes and/or require proof of need, which are often arbitrary and/or discriminatory, and reproduce structural systemic inequalities and stigma around receiving aid.

This program operates upon principles of justice-based grassroots community response and mutual aid. This begins by working directly with community members to address their needs in ways that maintain their agency. By extension, this also means building and customizing each program to the specific needs of each community, and providing employment (with fair compensation), prioritizing community members, particularly those with lived experience where possible. Therefore, there are operating costs associated with the program, but depending on the local context, these can be covered in a variety of ways. The Chinatown Cares project operating costs were covered by a crowdfunding campaign,

as this method ensured a fairly quick turnaround, without reliance on granting cycles from regular funding bodies or other long application processes.

This program also does not rely on food donations, recognizing that within the current capitalist-industrial system, members of adjacent industries (e.g. food production) have operating costs that must be covered. Rather, this program encourages the development of more direct connections between food producers and consumers, and decreased reliance on global supply chains. This is an opportunity to reshape the ways in which we interact with food systems, and reimagine our relationships to food.

Discussions around food security should also emphasize the importance of access to food assets that are appropriate to the needs of the community, where possible. This is of particular importance during long-term emergency situations, as familiar foods can provide a sense of control when the contemporary context feels outside of our hands. In the example of the Chinatown Cares project, our goal was to provide fresh produce that would be familiar to Chinese seniors (e.g. choi sum, daikon radish, ginger), whereas many food hampers provided in the neighbourhood supply items such as dry spaghetti and pasta sauce, and other items that are not culturally appropriate. This centres the community members as experts and agents in their own lives.

KEY RELATIONSHIPS

The success and rapid startup of this program can be attributed largely to pre-existing relationships within the community. In the case of the Chinatown Cares project, we were able to connect directly with seniors early on through Yarrow Intergenerational Society for Justice's senior network. This provided with us an immediate assessment of the needs of the community and a direct avenue to solicit feedback.



It is of note that two thirds of community-sourced contacts were existing members of Yarrow's network. Only one third were new applicants, most of whom came to the program through word of mouth from other members, rather than advertising referrals.

Based on our experiences, we found that community members were more likely to request assistance and respond to offers of aid/support if they were well-connected, and had built up relationships and networks of trust with service providers and community liaisons. The reality is that, even for those who fit the criteria of support/aid programs, many will not seek out help unless they already are familiar with the service provider. This supports wider calls for better relationship-building within our communities, as a method for building resilience to shocks and stresses, and the argument that one should not be meeting their neighbour for the first time during a crisis situation.

We also drew on relationships with restaurants and local produce suppliers, who were eager to participate in the program because they have equally strong connections to the neighbourhood. Well-connected communities create a feeling of responsibility to care for their members, despite simultaneously facing their own emergency-related stresses.

Regular partnership check-ins and constant communication across all relationships (community to liaison, liaison to operational staff, operational staff to suppliers) ensure that each group’s needs are met. These systems of reciprocity are key foundations of mutual aid praxis, and contribute to a sense of co-creation and equal partnership in the process and decision-making. Mutual aid is, by definition, not transactional; rather, it builds foundations for stronger communities and reciprocal relationships of care.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The program requires three major role areas, which may be divided further, depending on the capacity of the individuals involved. These roles each manage a relationship, and contribute key functions to the program. These roles are:



(A) Community Liaison



**(B) Clearing House/
Operational
(External) Support**



**(C) Project Manager/
Back-end (Internal)
Support**

For reference, the hourly estimates provided below reflect a program that services an average of 50-60 recipients.



Community Liaison(s)

(15-20 hours/week, across several staff)

The community liaison acts as the direct contact for community members who wish to participate in the program. The community liaison is crucial for building and maintaining relationships and trust within the community, and is counted on for their knowledge about and familiarity with the dynamics of the groups that they serve. They support the build-out of the program by providing information on the needs of the community, and are a direct link to solicit feedback to ensure that the program is addressing the correct issues, and in the appropriate manner. Note that hourly estimates for our community partners are approximate as they each serve other functions and provide additional services to their networks.

Each week, they are responsible for:

- collecting orders from recipients
- maintaining contact databases
- coordinating order distribution, routing and setting delivery schedule

They also manage program marketing and advertising (either targeted or broad), based on their knowledge of the needs of the community. They are the first point of contact for community members, and communicate needs to the centralized processing teams.

The community liaison is also responsible for developing an appropriate delivery system with the support of the project manager where necessary. Based on our experience and the guiding frameworks of this project, we recommend sourcing members of the delivery team from within the community, as this provides more opportunities for connection and relationship building. We recommend budgeting up to six hours per week for delivery; however, due to the intentional localization of the program, delivery costs are not particularly high. Depending on the capacity and size of the team and the project budget, there are many options for compensation, including: stipend, hourly, or per-delivery.



Clearing House / Operational (External) Support (8-12 hours/week, across 2-3 staff)

The operational support team is responsible for the physical processing of orders. At the scale of our program, three staff each work on-site one day per week, for 4 hours.

Each week, they are responsible for:

- receiving bulk orders
- sorting into packages
- dividing based on delivery schedules
- facilitating delivery pickups
- clearing house maintenance
- tracking leftover stock and reporting back for future weeks' ordering

They ensure the safe and sanitary transfer of goods, track PPE inventory (whether for internal use or distribution), and manage the centralized packing space. The operational support team liaises with/addresses any concerns regarding space use.

Project Manager / Back-end (Internal) Support (4-6 hours/week)

The project manager and/or back-end support are responsible for managing administrative and internal processes.

At the outset of the program, the project manager builds the order management system, sets the weekly schedules, and creates the order rotation (approx. 30 hours).

Each week they are responsible for:

- managing the ordering process:
 - receiving individual orders
 - aggregating, calculating, and submitting the bulk order
 - preparing lists for distribution day
- processing administrative tasks:
 - tracking expenses (for bulk grocery orders, PPE acquisition, supplies)
 - receiving payments
 - payroll processing

The project manager is also the first point of contact for potential partner organizations (new distribution nodes, suppliers, etc.), or other general inquiries about the program.



SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

While there are many different ways to build the back-end order tracking system, we recommend the use of a Customer Relationships Management (CRM) system. Whereas a simpler lower-barrier system can be built via Google Forms (or similar web-based form-to-spreadsheet), a CRM is beneficial in the long run because orders can be traced back to individual contacts or buildings, and most contain basic filter/search, custom categorization, spreadsheet import, and reporting systems. Spreadsheet-based systems can be used by Community Liaisons to receive orders in a given week, but organizing week-over-week with the same sheet will likely become unmanageable.

Many CRM systems exist for a wide spectrum of budgets, but for the Chinatown Cares project, we utilized Hubspot CRM, as its base-level program is free to use and covers the needs of this specific program.

Key contact fields:

- Customer first/last name; alternate names (ie Chinese name)
- Language preference
- Phone number
- Address for delivery + buzzer number + options to aggregate by building
- Dietary / other restrictions

Key order fields:

- Description: building + name + customizations
- Order type - list out all options if possible
- Amount due
- Close date
- Stage tracking

It is also recommended to use a cash flow management system, particularly when managing a large volume of orders each week. This makes it easy to track payments owing and received, as well as manage outgoing expenses.

For the purposes of this program, we utilized Wave, though there are many similar systems that will cover the basic needs of this type of program.

Key tracking items:

- Income, expense
- Categorizations - separating grocery orders from other expenses etc.
- Reporting systems



REFLECTIONS

At the time of publication, the Chinatown Cares project continues to operate at full capacity, alongside the official Provincial Government reopening of non-essential businesses. This speaks to a need to recognize that prioritizing economic recovery does not necessarily align with the pace of community recovery and human life, particularly for those communities who face additional challenges and barriers around mobility and access, as well as increased risk factors during a global pandemic.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and associated responses have highlighted that local governmental bodies are not adequately prepared for shocks and stresses. This is particularly true in addressing the needs of those communities who are at greatest risk, do not traditionally have access to as many resources, and often have needs that vary from those assessed and addressed by mainstream support structures, noting that these conceptions of “mainstream” are often based off of a centrally assumed white, able-bodied norm.

While there remains a need for these issues of equity to be addressed at a systemic level, the success of this program speaks to the power of community and mutual aid, and the very real possibility of building contextually appropriate structures and supports whether inside or outside of official avenues.

Further, an especially powerful aspect of the Chinatown Cares project lies in its relationships and collaborations across sectors and industries: two non-profit organizations, a restaurant, a credit union, and a network of community members with backgrounds in a diverse range of industries. While many individual sectors have stepped up to provide mutual aid and support, we remain curious about how to continue enacting what we’ve learned from our time developing the Chinatown Cares project. How can we encourage more coordinated efforts and collaborations that break down the silos that limit our collective potential? How can we take this opportunity to imagine justice-oriented futures, with the recognition that we all have valuable resources and skills to bring to the table? Perhaps this work begins by rethinking and de-patterning how many of us have been taught to operate. Rather than reaching for a seat at a table that was not built with our communities in mind, we can bring communities together to embark on the nourishing journey of building a table that fits our own communities’ needs.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Budget/Cost Template

The following template is provided to guide budgeting for the project. This is a rough guideline from which program developers can input context- and local-specific wages and costs, as well as any donations (monetary or in-kind).

Labour	
Project Manager	4 hours/week, 1 staff
Back-end (Internal)	2-4 hours/week, 1 staff
Clearing House / Operational (External)	8-12 hours/week, total across 2-3 staff
Deliveries	3-6 hours/week, flexible staffing
Administrative	1 hour/week, 1 staff
Structural	
Clearing House Space	
Supplies	
PPE (masks, gloves)	
Sanitizing supplies (spray/wipes, etc.)	
Paper bags, produce bags	
Large plastic tote boxes	
Other (pens, markers, elastic bands, box cutters)	
Other Costs	
Gas/parking/transportation	
Contingency	

Appendix B: Overview of Operational Needs

Clearing House Space Considerations:

- Adequate sorting space (including tabletops, non-porous surfaces, easy to clean)
- Storage/refrigeration
- Accessibility (ground-floor entrance ideal)

Week-to-week Supplies:

- Paper bags, produce bags, plastic wrap for sorting/packing
- Box cutters, scissors
- Pens, markers, elastic bands, masking tape
- PPE (disposable masks, non-latex gloves)
- Sanitizing spray/wipes

Appendix C: Putting it All Together

On an average week for the Chinatown Cares project, most seniors are contacted through community liaisons to place orders. Some seniors commit to several weeks in advance, after having assessed for themselves that the amount of food is appropriate for the time period. They are informed ahead of time that there would be three set boxes on rotation, with a mix of Asian leafy greens along with other vegetables, garlic, ginger, and 7 pieces of fruit. There is also a choice of add-ons: milk, tofu, and a half dozen eggs. Seniors are able to make note of dietary restrictions and general substitutions (e.g. extra leafy greens instead of root vegetables), but individual requests cannot be accommodated due to the centralized nature of the program.

On a set cutoff date per week, orders are aggregated to calculate the amount of produce that would need to be procured for the upcoming week. These are plugged into formulas for the set sample boxes, and resulting totals submitted to our produce supplier, a local grocer.

On the distribution day, the produce arrives in cases at the clearing house: a local restaurant during non-operating hours. Produce is separated into vegetables and fruit, each with its own bagging station. Each station has a dedicated staff member bagging produce into set portions, with a runner filling the paper bags standing open along tables. It is helpful to write the names of each recipient and their order on each bag, in the case that there are customizations. This also makes sorting easier as well.

When all of the bags are filled, they are grouped based on delivery schedules provided by community liaisons. These groups are loaded into tote boxes for easy loading. During a set pickup window, delivery team members arrive at the clearing house and load orders into their vehicles. As they leave the clearing house, and each subsequent drop off location, they call the next recipient on their list to prepare for their arrival. The delivery teams are made up of community members to encourage community relationship building, and tend to deliver to the same seniors each week to develop a sense of familiarity.

Delivery teams receive payments for the groceries by envelope, which they take home and remit the amounts via Interac e-transfer back to the program. This procedure was developed to adhere to physical distancing protocols, with the understanding that none of the seniors in the program have online banking access themselves. These payments are reconciled in the cash flow management system as well as in the CRM database.



代購蔬果

請致電訂購：

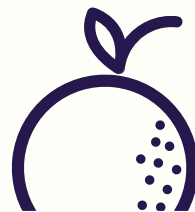
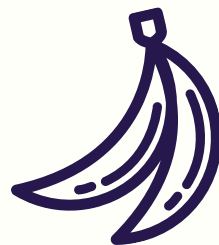
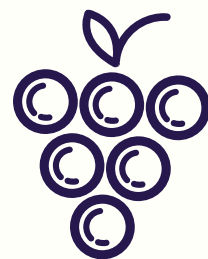
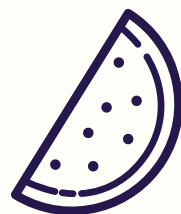
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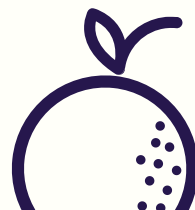
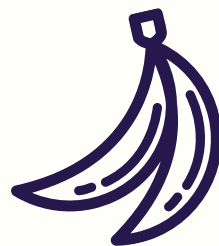
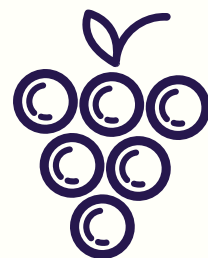
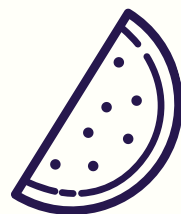
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