

Communities Feeding Communities

Outcome Evaluation Summary Report

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Acronyms and Glossary

CFC Beneficiaries - This refers to the individuals who receive the benefits or assistance provided by Communities Feeding Communities

CLD - Community-Led Development

CFC - Communities Feeding Communities

CFC Visitors - Visitors are individuals who pop into the CFC, seeking conversation, saying hello, inquiring about the project, participating in the CFC events or activities, requiring food parcels, volunteering the CFC, regardless of whether they are direct recipients of the free food distribution

SET - Service Evaluation Team

Conflict of Interest Declaration

The Communities Feeding Communities is a Presbyterian Support Northern project and this evaluation has been conducted by the Presbyterian Support Northern Service Evaluation Team

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SUMMARY

Communities Feeding Communities (CFC) has successfully achieved most short-term and medium-term outcomes by focusing on providing free food parcels, developing community facilities and gardens, hosting diverse activities and workshops, and fostering partnerships with stakeholders. The project's success can be attributed to the dedication of its staff, the support of volunteers, and effective engagement with stakeholders such as local partners and donors.

BACKGROUND

Presbyterian Support Northern (PSN) operated a traditional foodbank at St. David's Presbyterian Church in Grafton in Auckland until December 2021, where registered agencies sent through referrals requesting emergency food parcels for their clients. PSN reassessed its approach to meeting community needs and conducted the research in early 2020. The findings revealed that while the foodbank provided immediate support, it faced challenges in fostering long-term relationships and addressing the broader needs of families for sustained food security and sovereignty. Recognising these limitations, PSN sought a more effective method to better support the community.

PSN worked in partnership with Northern Presbyterian to develop the CFC project in Mt Roskill, as this community scores lower on a number of socio-economic factors when compared to the rest of Auckland. The community members are far less likely to be gainfully employed full-time and have higher unemployment rates than the rest of Auckland. They also have far lower incomes.

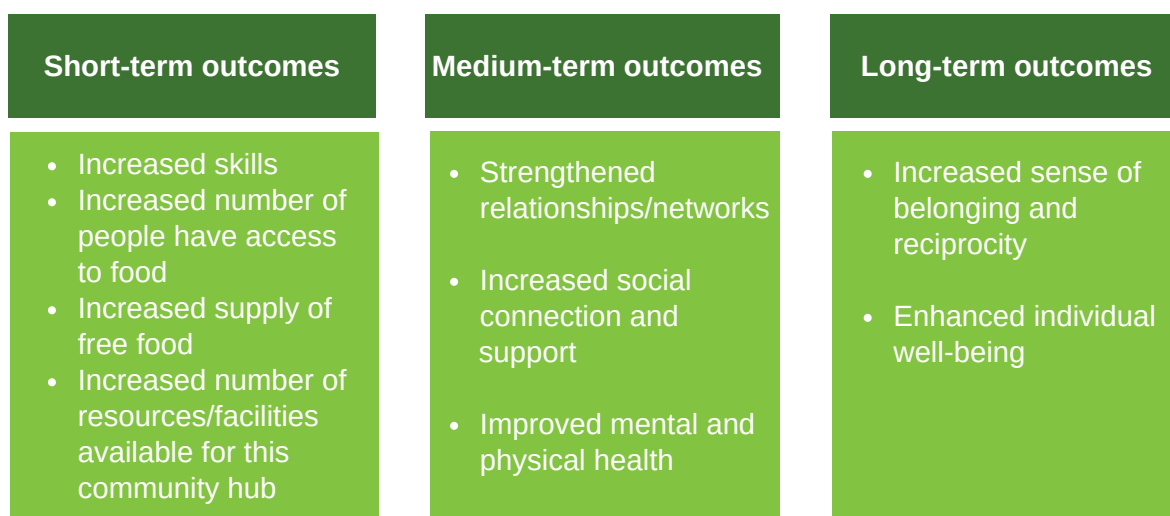
A Community-Led Development (CLD) approach was applied to achieve food security. It prioritises the inclusion of communities and groups who may otherwise have had a limited involvement or been excluded altogether and leverages community resources in ways that grow resilience while promoting positive social and economic development. The CFC project has two phases: Phase 1, launched in January 2022, aims to enable community access to a food pantry, emergency food parcels, a community garden, pātaka kai, and basic family supplies; Phase 2 aims to ensure that a person who presents to PSN asking support is given wrap-around assistance that addresses their physical, mental, social and spiritual needs.

THEORY OF CHANGE

The CFC project was designed to support the Mt Roskill community. With a core focus on five key commitments - spiritual, reciprocity, creativity, food security, and a sense of belonging - the project strives to nurture not only the physical health but also the holistic well-being of community members.

The project aims to provide free ongoing access to nutritious food such as food parcels, build and provide community facilities and gardens, offer various community activities and events such as cooking classes and garden workshops, and to build relationships with key stakeholders such as local schools and donors.

By doing so, more individuals will have access to free healthy food and garden space. They will also learn skills such as gardening and cooking while building social connections. As a consequence, their mental and physical health are likely to improve, their social connections can be widened, and their relationships and networks are strengthened. Ultimately, these contribute to the long-term outcomes, such as an increased sense of belonging and reciprocity, and enhanced individual well-being.



An initial review of project documents and the development of the logical model guided the evaluation objectives and questions. This evaluation focused on assessing the Phase 1 of the project outcomes.

EVALUATION

The main objectives of this evaluation were to:

1. Determine if the project meets its intended outcomes
2. Capture key success factors and identify ways how to improve the project

While the Communities Feeding Communities initiative is designed to achieve long-term outcomes, this evaluation focused solely on measuring its short- and medium-term outcomes.

A mixed-method approach was employed to capture the voices of CFC staff, a partner, volunteers and CFC visitors. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through anonymous surveys, and access to interview transcripts and raw data was restricted to the Service Evaluation team until aggregation for reporting purposes.

The evaluation spanned the service delivery period from February 2022 to August 2023. Data analysis encompassed Kai Parcels distribution records, 105 paper-based survey responses, and records from focus groups involving eleven volunteers, and semi-structured interviews conducted with three CFC staff members and one partner.

The main limitation of the findings relates to limited in-depth examination of different community stakeholder groups and their perspectives. Also, the lack of records such as volunteer data and donation data presented a hurdle to evaluate if some intended outcomes have been achieved.

FINDINGS

This evaluation found that the CFC project achieved most of the intended outcomes, and CFC visitors and stakeholders expressed their satisfaction of having this initiative in Mt Roskill.

“[CFC staff member] has supported my family during our most difficult times when we had nothing. I always appreciate the kindness, humility, and care everyone gives.”

“Thanks for the food parcels, it really helps and takes away some of the stress load.”

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

CFC visitors have gained skills such as gardening and cooking skills. The number of people receiving food parcels has increased, and by the same token, the number of food parcels distributed has increased. The number of facilities made available to the community has also increased.

Short-term outcomes	Description
Learned skills	Many CFC visitors participated in activities and demonstrated their gained skills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gardening/Cooking skills 	Three of 11 focus group participants and seven of 105 survey respondents indicated that they learned skills. Additionally, all staff expressed the same viewpoint.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other skills 	Some CFC visitors talked about other skills they learned. Two of 11 focus group participants and two of 105 survey respondents indicated that they learned other skills such as communication skills.

The light green colour signifies achieved outcomes or indicators, demonstrated by available data. Light gold indicates partial achievement of an outcome. Light orange indicates documentation gaps, including cases where evaluation data is absent.

Short-term outcomes (<i>continue</i>)		Description
Increased number of people have access to food		The Food Parcels Master Datasheet showed that the number of people receiving food parcels has increased from 68 to 724 (including individuals and families).
Increased supply of free food		The Food Parcels Master Datasheet showed that the number of food parcels provided has increased from 21 to 299 over the evaluation period, including small and large parcels. Additionally, the Kai boxes and fresh produce packs increased from 632 to 2907.
Increased number of facilities available for community hub		CFC built a community garden, allotment gardens, micro food forest, nature play area. They also developed a food parcel section within the community hub, to name a few.

“It’s been great to get gardening tips and growing my own veggies in the allotment.”

“Mt Roskill is very diversity, before I came here to volunteer, I rarely communicated with people from different countries, now I can communicate with those people with different cultures, and I’ve learned these different cultures.”

MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES

The project also contributed to mental and physical health of CFC visitors, increased their social connections, and strengthened the relationships. The most crucial outcomes identified by CFC visitors are being supported as the primary outcome, receiving free food parcels as the second most important, and being connected with other people as the third most significant outcome.

Medium-term outcomes		Description
Improved social connections and support		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement in community activities/events 		The current evaluation data does not contain any information about this indicator.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger social and family ties built 		The current evaluation data does not contain any information about this indicator.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being connected with other people 		Forty-four out of 105 survey respondents pointed out that one of the most important outcomes for them is being connected with other people. Four focus group participants and one staff member also expressed the same view.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being supported 		Seventy-two of 105 survey respondents indicated that one of the most important outcomes for them is being supported. One staff member and one partner also expressed the same viewpoint.

“Every time I visit the community hub, the staff are so nice and welcoming, I feel really good, and I feel more confident, and I’m valued.”

Medium-term outcomes <i>continue</i>		Description
Improved mental and physical health		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved mental health 		Two of 11 focus group participants mentioned that the mental health of CFC visitors has improved. All staff also highlighted this.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced stress and worry 		Half of the survey respondents pointed out that one of the most important outcomes for them and their families is reducing stress and worry.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved confidence 		Two out of 11 focus group participants and three of 105 survey respondents indicated that they felt valued and had more confidence.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling happy 		Three out of 11 focus group participants and one survey respondent indicated that they felt happy. One staff member also shared a story about CFC beneficiaries feeling happy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved physical health 		Four out of 11 focus group participants talked about how being a volunteer has benefited their physical health. One staff member also corroborated this viewpoint.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy eating habits developed 		The current evaluation data does not contain any information about this indicator.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased healthy eating and variety of food (fruit/veg) 		The current evaluation data does not contain any information about the indicator.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved food security 		The second most important outcomes identified by 61 of 105 survey respondents (and their families) relates to receiving food parcels. All staff also stated that food security is achieved through food parcels and the community garden.
Strengthened the relationships/networks		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased donations 		The data was unavailable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of volunteers and stakeholders 		The data was unavailable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased support by community members for/to others 		Four out of 11 focus group participants and 8 survey respondents indicated that CFC gave them an opportunity to give back to the community. Two staff members also expressed the same viewpoint.

“It’s great for my kids to see how the veggies grow, and it’s great that we harvest our own veggies. The little ones want to eat them because they were involved in the process of growing and harvesting. Now that they know where it’s coming from, my dad is having better success in feeding them vegetables.”

SUCCESS FACTORS

This evaluation identified five core elements of the project that were integral to its success and successfully achieving its intended outcomes.



AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

The key areas of improvement identified by survey respondents and interviewees (CFC visitors and partner) include

- enhancing communication between staff and volunteers,
- organising more activities for CFC users,
- providing detailed volunteer guidance and recruiting more volunteers,
- creating a safe space for children,
- securing more donations, and
- placing emphasis on recycling initiatives.

An evaluation is planned for the next phase of the project.