



# Communities Feeding Communities Outcome Evaluation Report

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## Acronyms and Glossary

<b>CFC Beneficiaries</b>	CFC beneficiaries refer to the individuals who receive the benefits or assistance provided by the Communities Feeding Communities (e.g., free food distribution and participation in community events or activities).
<b>CLD</b>	Community-Led Development
<b>CFC</b>	Communities Feeding Communities
<b>CFC Visitors</b>	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.
<b>SET</b>	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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## Executive Summary

The Communities Feeding Communities (CFC) project is designed to help the Mt Roskill community achieve food security by having access to ongoing, adequate and nutritious food. The project aims to provide free food parcels, build community facilities and gardens, organise community activities and events, offer workshops and training for local residents, and build relationships with key stakeholders such as donors and local schools.

This report evaluates the effectiveness of the project in meeting its intended outcomes as well as identifying how the project can be improved in future. A mixed-method approach was utilised to capture the voices of CFC staff, a partner, volunteers and CFC visitors. It included a visitor survey, a focus group and a semi-structured interview.

The data shows that the project met four short-term and three medium-term outcomes. The short-term outcomes were the CFC beneficiaries have learned gardening, cooking, and other skills such as communication skills. The number of people receiving food parcels has grown, and by the same token, the number of food parcels distributed has increased. The number of facilities available to the community has also increased. The medium-term outcomes were the project improved the mental and physical health of CFC visitors, increased the social connection, and strengthened relationships.

The key factors that contributed to the project successfully achieving its intended outcomes were having friendly and helpful staff, providing sufficient nutritious and adequate food, organising a range of activities and workshops, establishing a strong relationship with stakeholders, and the involvement of volunteers.

The key areas of improvement identified by respondents, participants and the CFC partner include enhancing communication between staff and volunteers, organising more activities for CFC users, providing detailed volunteer guidance, recruiting more volunteers, creating a safe space for children, securing more donations, and placing emphasis on recycling initiatives.



## Section 1: Introduction

This section introduces the background of Communities Feeding Communities project, the project models, objectives and the intended outcomes.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Project overview

Presbyterian Support Northern (PSN) operated a traditional foodbank until December 2021, where registered agencies sent through referrals requesting emergency food parcels for their clients. The foodbank was located at St. David's Presbyterian Church in Grafton in Auckland city, however with this property being sold, PSN had to look for alternative locations for the foodbank. This venue change provided PSN with an opportunity to evaluate how it has been meeting the needs of the community and explore different possibilities for engaging the community around Kai. PSN undertook their own market research in early 2020 which showed that while the foodbank was providing support to people in the community, PSN was coming up against barriers when trying to build relationships or provide additional support to whānau to help them address their longer-term needs.

The traditional foodbank model offered a short-term solution that – while immediately beneficial to families – was unable to support ongoing food security<sup>1</sup> and promote food sovereignty<sup>2</sup> within local communities. PSN expanded the support offered to the community, and shifted its focus to a 'Communities Feeding Communities' (CFC) project with an emphasis on being community led.

The CFC project is a vital initiative aimed at fostering food security within the Mt Roskill community. By providing ongoing access to nutritious food, alongside a range of community events and activities such as cooking classes and gardening workshops, the project is dedicated to empowering local residents. With a core focus on five key commitments – spirituality, reciprocity, creativity, food security, and a sense of belonging – the CFC project strives to nurture not only the physical health but also the holistic well-being of community members. Through the promotion of reciprocal relationships, skill development opportunities, and the establishment of a supportive and inclusive environment, the project endeavours to ensure that every individual

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<sup>1</sup> Food security is defined when people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (the World Food Summit, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> There is agreed definition for the term "food sovereignty", however, one of the most used is the rights of peoples to define and control their own food systems (Siwior, 2021).

within the community can access healthy food with dignity, ultimately enabling them to live their best lives with dignity.

## **1.2. The Mt Roskill South community**

The project scoping research PSN undertook in 2020 showed that people in the Mt Roskill community faced financial and social challenges. More specifically, Mt Roskill South is one of Auckland's most ethnically diverse neighbourhoods with a higher number of people identifying as Pacific, Middle Eastern, Latin American and African than surrounding areas. The people who live in the area are also comparatively young and households have a higher number of children, according to the 2021 census data (Roskill Development, 2021). The Mt Roskill community also scores lower on a number of socio-economic factors when compared to the rest of Auckland. Those living in Mt Roskill are more likely to live in a home that is damp and has visible mould. They are less likely to have access to a mobile phone or the internet and are far less likely to own their own home. Members of the Mt Roskill community are more likely to be a regular smoker (36%) compared to others in Auckland (26.6%). The members of this community are far less likely than the rest of Auckland to be employed full-time and have higher unemployment rates (6.1%) than the rest of Auckland (4.1%). Individuals in Mt Roskill also have far lower incomes than the rest of Auckland. Only 10% of the population earn over 60,000 per year compared to 26% across Auckland. 50% of Mt Roskill individuals earn less than \$20,000 per year, compared to 35% across Auckland generally.

PSN was already aware that people in the Roskill South community face financial and social challenges. The PSN Emergency Foodbank in Grafton distributed food parcels to people in many different areas in Auckland. The Mt Roskill community has received about a fifth (almost 300 food parcels) of PSN emergency food parcels since July 2019; this was higher than any other suburb in Auckland. In addition, the Presbyterian Church had land available in Mt Roskill and was interested in a joint project. As a result, PSN moved the new initiative to the Mt Roskill community.

### 1.3. Community-Led Development model

A Community-Led Development (CLD) model guided the development of CFC to ensure that the project outputs are relevant to the needs and expectations of the community.

CLD 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. Locally-led initiatives also ensure that the project outputs are relevant to the communities that need them (Bijoux, 2015).

The following facets of CLD have been identified as key within the literature:

- Community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems.
- CLD builds on what people already have and leverages this with 'outside' resources to achieve collective outcomes.
- The approach emphasises a dual focus on:
  - achieving the outcomes the community has identified (e.g., improving access to local services, and improving educational and employment outcomes), and;
  - on community capacity-building, and enhancing social capital (i.e., outcomes that come about through the process of working together, such as strengthening relationships and networks, identifying community leaders, and gaining a sense of collective empowerment).
- With a CLD approach, primary organisations share power and work with community members, constituents or citizens who set the agenda, the way the work will be undertaken, and any other decision-making about issues that affect them and their communities (Lathouras, 2012). Members of communities should set priorities for action based on their perceived needs and hopes for their community (Lathouras, 2016).
- CLD projects focus on building and strengthening the relationships between members to provide peer support around their roles as board members and to develop a collective analysis of trends and issues for them and others in their network. Together, these groups can find commonalities and develop a vision to

sustain their ability to provide locally appropriate services with more robust governance functions (Lathouras, 2016).

Inspiring communities<sup>3</sup>, a NZ initiative that specialises in community development, has identified five key CLD principles that were also central to CFC project:

- Shared Visions: Vision and priorities are shaped by the people who live in the community
- Strengths and Assets: We respect and build on local knowledge, strengths and experience
- Sectors Working Together: We grow intentional collaboration across diverse sectors and people
- Collaborative Local Leadership: Communities own and drive their own solutions with local leadership at the centre
- Act, Learn, Adapt: We learn by doing to achieve long term systems change, not just short term projects.

The CFC aspects were considered and where applicable, adopted in the development phases, where appropriate.

#### **1.4. CFC objectives**

CFC aims to help the Mt Roskill residents achieve food security by having access to ongoing, adequate and nutritious food, and nurture the strengths of the Mt Roskill community. There are four main objectives of the project, including:

- Using creativity to develop the project and engagement
- Providing a variety of community engagement opportunities
- Building inclusive and reciprocal community
- Improving mental and physical health.

#### **1.5. 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

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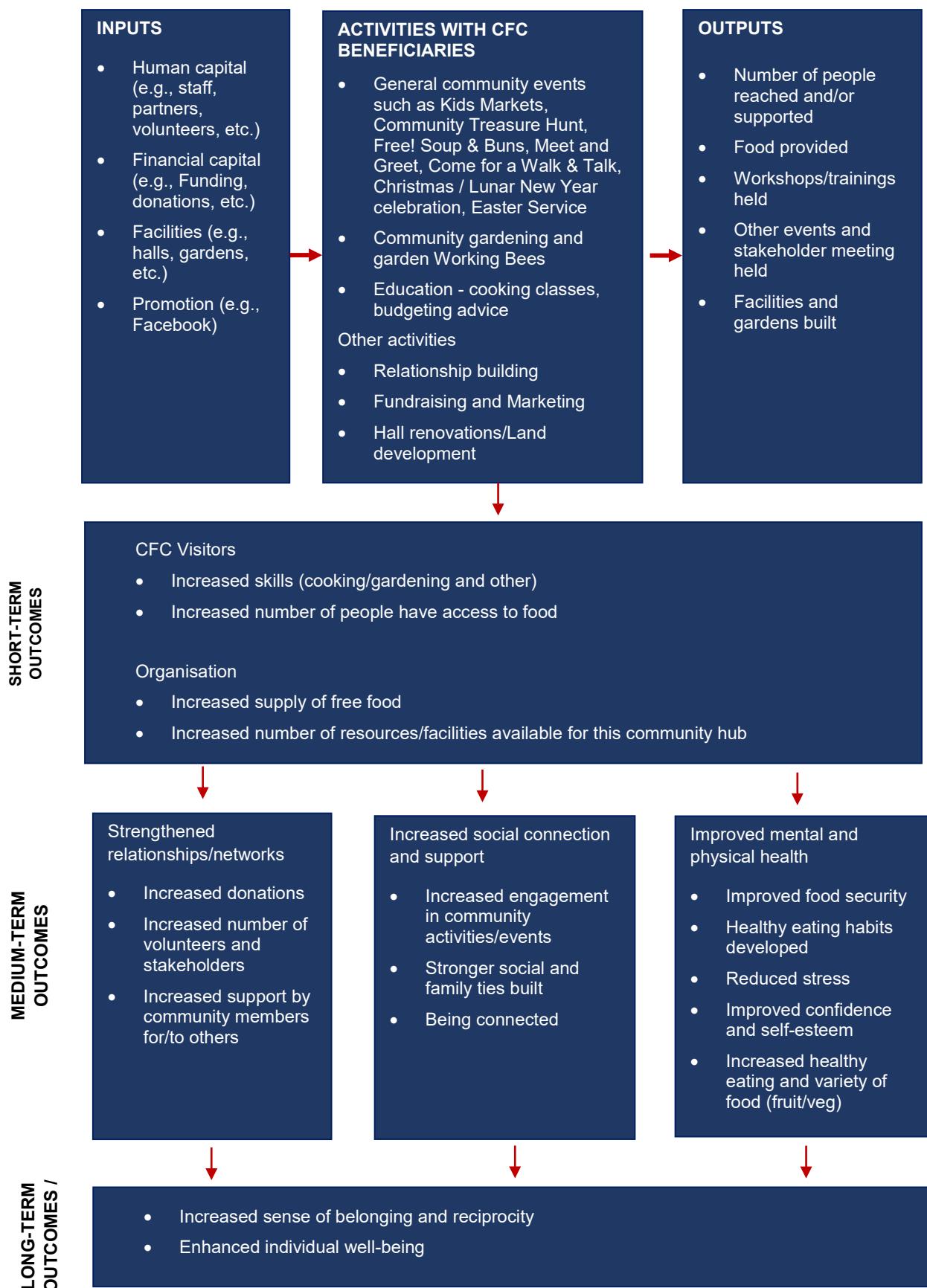
<sup>3</sup> The CLD principles and model are proposed by Inspiring Communities, here is a link: [https://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/ic\\_resource/what-is-community-led-development/](https://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/ic_resource/what-is-community-led-development/)

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.

## Intended Outcomes – A Logic Model





## Section 2

# Evaluation objectives & methods

This section lays out the evaluation objectives, methods, data collection and analysis.

## **2. Evaluation objectives and methods**

An initial review of the project documents and development of the Logical Model guided the evaluation objectives and questions. This evaluation focused on assessing the project outcomes.

### **2.1. Evaluation objectives**

The objectives of this evaluation were to

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

Evaluation questions:

1. Did the project meet its intended outcomes?
2. Are there patterns or factors contributing to the achieved and unintended outcomes?
3. What improvements could be made in the future?

### **2.2. Method**

The evaluation explored the short-term outcomes as well as the medium-term outcomes by using a mixed-method approach including document review, surveys, focus groups, semi-structured interviews and observations. The evaluation data collection period commenced in February 2022 and ended in August 2023.

The document review also included the kai parcel data<sup>4</sup> and other documents. Two focus groups were conducted to capture the participants' experiences, one group focussed on Kai space volunteers (n=8) and the other group was community garden volunteers (n=3). A number of semi-structured interviews were conducted with three CFC staff members<sup>5</sup> and a partner<sup>6</sup>. The evaluator gained permission to record all interview and focus groups audio; this was later transcribed using an AI transcription service (i.e., Otter.ai). In addition, CFC visitors were invited to complete a short feedback survey<sup>7</sup> between 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023 and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023. A total of 105 visitors (73

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 8 An example of food parcels dashboard

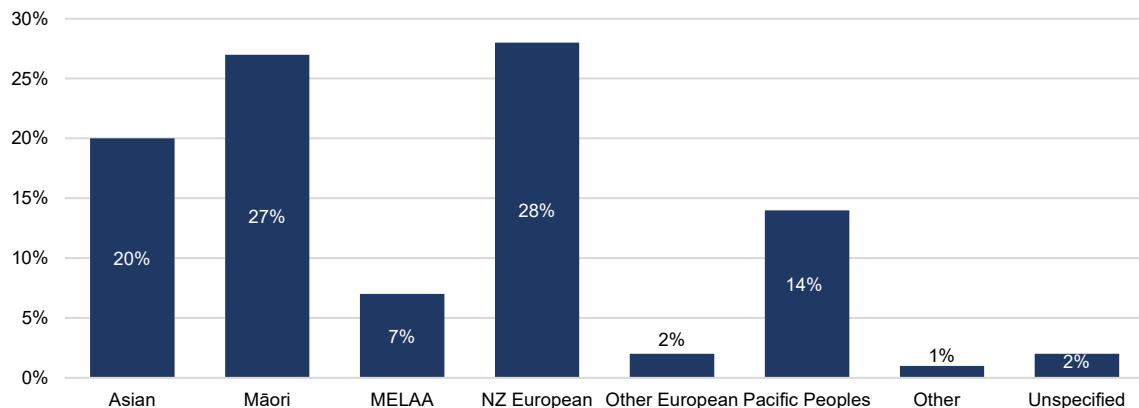
<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 3 Staff interview guide

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 4 Partner interview guide

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 5 Visitor survey

females, 31 males, and 1 other gender) provided their feedback. The respondents represent the diversity of the Mt Roskill community:

Figure 1. Respondent Ethnicity (n=105)<sup>8</sup>



The data analysis includes quantitative and qualitative methods. The Visitor Feedback Survey was analysed using Microsoft Excel. Qualitative data from transcribed interviews and focus groups was analysed using an inductive, thematic analysis in order to identify the common themes. The opinions and feedback expressed by interviewees and visitors were then triangulated with the viewpoints of CFC staff and their partner, to ensure the validity of the evaluation and provide a comprehensive understanding of this project.

### 2.3. Ethics

This evaluation has been conducted in line with the Presbyterian Support Northern Research and Evaluation Ethics Policy.

Participation in the evaluation must be completely voluntary. It is important that participants are able to give informed consent before participating. Participants were informed of:

- How the evaluation was to be carried out
- The purpose of the evaluation
- How their information was going to be used

<sup>8</sup> MELAA refers to Middle Eastern, Latin American and African.

- How their privacy and confidentiality would be protected.

To ensure that these requirements were met, all participants were provided with a participant information sheet and consent form. These were signed and returned to the researcher prior to any interviews.

## **2.4. Limitations**

There are two main limitations of this evaluation.

The first limitation is the sample size of key stakeholders. The findings provided useful information to address the evaluation questions, but did not include an in-depth examination of different stakeholder groups and their perspectives. For example, this evaluation involved only a small number of project stakeholders (i.e., 11 interviewed volunteers may not be sufficient to represent the views of all volunteers), but did not reach out to other local residents or donors.

The second limitation is the documentation gaps. The lack of records such as volunteer data and donation data presented a hurdle to conclude if some intended outcomes had been achieved (e.g., increased donations, increased number of volunteers, increased engagement in the community activities/events, etc.). A Social Return on Investment analysis was therefore also not feasible due to the lack of available data.



## Section 3 Findings: Outcomes

The findings were presented based on evaluation questions instead of evaluation methods. This section outlines the achieved outcomes from the analysis of visitor surveys, staff interview data, partner interview data and focus group data.

### 3. Findings: Outcomes

The findings in this section describe the achieved outcomes from the analysis of Kai Parcels data, visitor surveys, staff interview data, partner interview data and focus group data.

This evaluation found the CFC project achieved most of the intended outcomes. In terms of the 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 also increased. The number of facilities made available to the community has also increased. With regards to the medium-term outcomes, the project improved mental and physical health of CFC visitors, increased the social connections, and strengthened the relationships.

Short-term outcomes	Achievement <sup>9</sup>	Description
<b>Learned skills</b>		
Gardening/Cooking skills		Three of 11 focus group participants and seven of 105 survey respondents indicated that they learned skills. All staff also expressed the same viewpoint.
Other skills		Two of 11 focus group participants and two of 105 survey respondents indicated they learned other skills such as communication skills.
<b>Increased number of people have access to food</b>		The Food Parcels Master Datasheet showed that the number of people receiving food parcels has increased from 68 to 724 (including individuals and families).
<b>Increased supply of free food</b>		The Food Parcels Master Datasheet showed the number of food parcels provided has increased from 21 to 299, including small and large parcels. Also, the Kai boxes and fresh produce packs increased from 632 to 2907.
<b>Increased number of facilities available for community hub</b>		Community garden, allotment gardens, micro food forest, nature play area, and the food parcel section within the community hub, Victoria and St Giles Halls etc.
<b>Medium-term outcomes</b>		
<b>Improved mental health and physical health</b>		
Improved mental health		Two of 11 focus group participants mentioned the mental health of CFC visitors has improved. All staff also highlighted this.
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.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

Improved confidence		Two out of 11 focus group participants and three of 105 survey respondents indicated that they felt valued and had more confidence.
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.
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.
Healthy eating habits developed		The current evaluation data does not contain any information about this indicator.
Increased healthy eating and variety of food (fruit/veg)		The current evaluation data does not contain any information about this indicator.
Improved food security		The second most important outcome 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.
<b>Improved social connection and support</b>		
Increased engagement in community activities/events		The current evaluation data does not contain any information about this indicator. SET requested figures on the number of people attending the CFC activities/events, but the data was not available.
Stronger social and family ties built		The current evaluation data does not contain any information about this indicator.
Being connected with other people		The third most important outcome for CFC visitors. 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.
Being supported		The most important outcome for CFC visitors. 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.
<b>Strengthened the relationships/networks</b>		
Increased donations		We requested figures on the number of donation items we received between February 2022 and July 2023, but the data was unavailable.
Increased number of volunteers and stakeholders		We requested figures on the number of volunteers and stakeholder engagements, but this data was unavailable. The Excel document contains the names and working hours of a very few volunteers.
Increased support by community members for/others		Four out of 11 focus group participants and eight survey respondents indicated that the CFC gave them an opportunity to give back to the community. Two staff members also expressed the same standpoint.

The findings for each short-term and medium-term outcome are described below.

### **3.1. Intended short-term outcomes achieved**

#### **3.1.1. Learned gardening and cooking skills**

To enable people to be more self-sufficient and have healthy food, CFC provided a range of activities and workshops such as Community Gardening, Garden Working Bee, and Cooking Classes to teach basic gardening skills and cooking skills. One of their most important short-term outcomes identified by all CFC staff members was that CFC beneficiaries gained skills.

This was also confirmed by some survey respondents (7%) who stated that they have learned gardening and cooking skills because of CFC activities (e.g., Community Cooking Class, Community Garden Working Bee, etc.).

Three focus group participants also expressed the same view. For example:

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

*“We had a session, they taught us how to make dumplings. That was an amazing time, as well as we had a good lunch here and I took back the skills, I can now make dumplings that’s also something we have learned, and it was a great time to be there.”*

*“I’ve picked up a few things. Planting, propagation, how to look after them, look after fruit trees, pruning. The whole works of what you might need to do to look after a garden. So this is a place where people could come and learn.”*

#### **3.1.2. Learned other skills**

In addition to gardening and cooking skills, two focus group participants indicated that they have learned diverse cultures and communication skills:

*“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.”*

Two focus group participants and survey respondents stated that they have learned patience:

*“I have learnt how others work, and how to be patient.”*

*“Learn how to be patient and caring and communicate.”*

### 3.1.3. Increased number of people have access to food

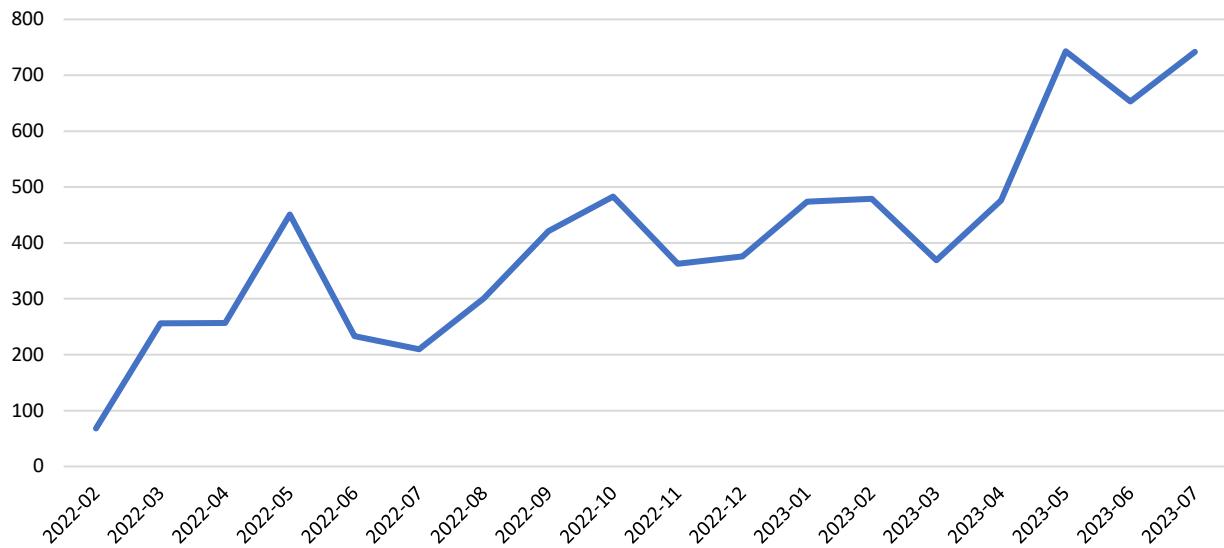
As stated in the introduction, PSN was aware that the people in the Roskill South community face financial and social challenges, data from PSN's emergency food bank in Grafton revealed that Mt Roskill community received a greater number of emergency food parcels than any other community in Auckland, therefore, PSN based the new initiative in the Mt Roskill community. At its core, the project is driven by the steadfast commitment to achieve food security within the Mt Roskill community. To ensure broader access to essential food, the project established the community gardens for vegetable cultivation, set up a Pātaka kai<sup>10</sup> for community access, and built relationships with key stakeholders to secure resources, etc. In addition, promotional efforts, such as Facebook, newsletters and visits to local organisations, have increased awareness of CFC among a growing number of people. As awareness spreads, people become more knowledgeable about where to seek support and access free food resources, connecting those in need with the necessary support and resources. This evaluation found the number of people with access to free and healthy food significantly increased during the reporting period. More specifically, the number of people receiving food parcels in a month grew from 68 in February 2022<sup>11</sup> to 742 per month in July 2023, a growth rate of 965%, as presented in Figure 2. During this period, a total of 7355 individuals were reached, comprising 3649 adults and 3706 children. While there was a slight drop in some months in numbers, there was overall growth.

Figure 2. Number of people reached in a month over time

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<sup>10</sup> Pātaka kai is for community access (no need for referral or entering CFC space).

<sup>11</sup> PSN previously operated a traditional food bank at St David's Presbyterian Church in Grafton in Auckland City and distributed food parcels to organisations and individuals. When CFC was established and moved to Mt Roskill in 2022, the focus shifted to local families. Initially, residents were not aware of the new initiative, which resulted in a very low number of people receiving food parcels in February 2022.

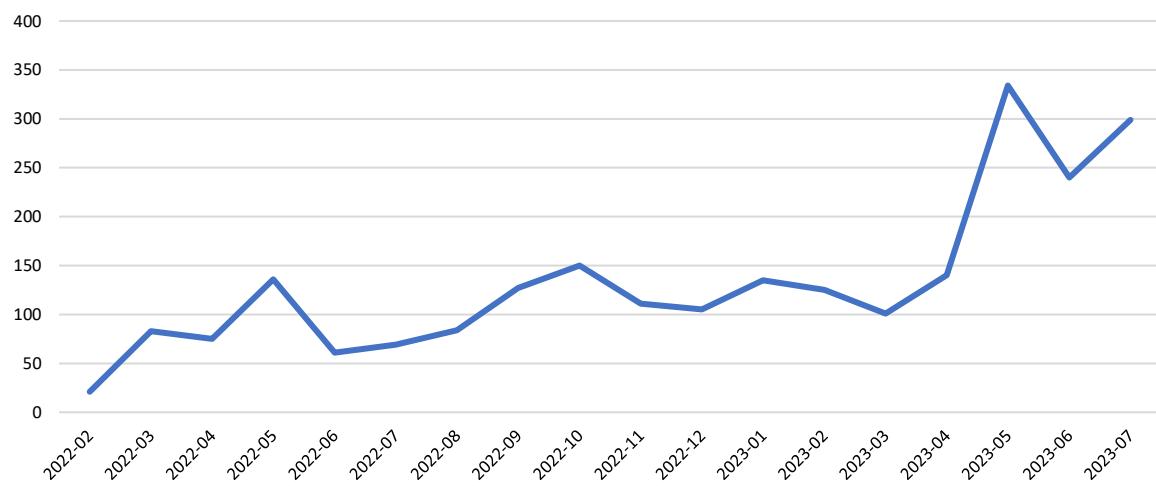


### 3.1.4. Increased supply of free food

In pursuit of fostering food security within the Mt Roskill community, the CFC project has diligently endeavoured to address nutritional needs through the provision of free food in their foodbank and Pātaka kai (e.g., free food parcels and fresh produce packs) and the cultivation of vegetables and fruits within the community garden. In addition, through well-crafted newsletters, engaging Facebook posts, and active outreach to local organisations, the project effectively communicated its mission and offerings. These promotional activities played a pivotal role in raising community awareness, ensuring that people were informed about the accessible essential support. As a result, the heightened visibility has empowered people with the awareness of where and how to access the crucial food assistance provided by the project, ultimately contributing to a significant increase in the provision of free food. This evaluation found that the project achieved the important short-term outcome of increasing the supply of free food. More specifically, Figure 3 illustrates this notable increase in the provision of free food parcels per month, rising from 21 in February 2022 to 299 in July 2023. During this reporting period, the project distributed a total of 3158 food parcels, which included 1010 large food parcels for 495 large families, 1966 small food parcels for 535 small families and 182 standard food boxes for 452 solo recipients, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing diverse community needs. In addition to the food parcels, from July 2022 onwards, CFC also regularly refilled their

street Pātaka kai with Kai food boxes and fresh produce packs<sup>12</sup>. In total, CFC provided 632 Kai boxes and 2907 fresh produce packs from July 2022 to July 2023, which is also an indicator of growth in free food availability.

Figure 3. Number of food parcels provided per month over time



### 3.1.5. Increased number of facilities available at CFC community hub

In order to achieve the CFC project objectives, particularly achieving food security and providing a variety of community engagement opportunities, increasing a number of facilities available for community hub was a key focus of the project.

Over the past year and a half, the number of facilities available to the community hub has increased<sup>13</sup>. For example, CFC began preparing the grounds for the community garden by mulching the garden with their first garden working bee in February 2022. From then onwards, they had help from the partner and volunteers to build and paint fences, lay concrete paths and build the first allotment gardens. Generous funding from a donor enabled CFC to do the hard landscaping of the Community Garden in September/October 2022. The Micro Food Forest was started in late September 2022, and the Nature Play area was built in March/April 2023. Therefore, increasing community hub facilities led to more people receiving support, such as access to

<sup>12</sup> Kai boxes and fresh produce packs relate to the food the CFC team put in the Pātaka kai each day for the public.

<sup>13</sup> PSN finances the CFC project, the staff and community activities. Northern Presbyterian provides the community hall and land.

community gardens, allotment gardens, and the Pātaka kai, as a result, enabling a greater number of people access to free and nutritious food.

### **3.2. Intended medium-term outcomes achieved**

#### **3.2.1. Improved mental health**

Receiving free food, engaging in community activities/workshops, and connecting with others are integral components that synergistically contribute to the improvement of people's mental health. The provision of free food addresses a basic human need, promoting physical well-being and alleviating the stress related to food insecurity. Participating in community activities fosters a sense of belonging, and joy, offering a positive outlet for self-expression. Additionally, connecting with others cultivates a supportive social environment, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness. This outcome was highlighted by focus group participants who shared their experiences with CFC and how this had a knock-on effect on their mental health.

Two focus group participants pointed out that their mental health has improved because CFC is a great place to meet people, share and volunteer. For example:

*“I wasn’t feeling so good with my mental health after having the baby, just to come and listen to people. Just saying hello to a new person, for me this was a great place to start with, and just getting my hands dirty in the garden, definitely helped me and the kids as well.”*

CFC staff also highlighted the importance of providing a place of love and support where people are able to be themselves, express themselves, share their stories, and feel better about themselves, which is a good way to improve wellbeing:

*“I think providing a place of love and support, that they’re able to be themselves. A lady has only been in New Zealand for four to five months, and she wants to be a strong mom, and she wants to provide a better life for her kids. She always telling me like if I wasn’t coming here, I’d just be at home.”*

#### ***Reduced stress and worry***

The ongoing cost of living crisis significantly impacts millions of families. Factors such as inflation and the enduring repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic have

contributed to a disturbing rise in poverty and food insecurity, amplifying the risk of adverse effects on mental health, including heightened stress levels. Notably, the stress associated with food insecurity may precipitate conditions such as depression and anxiety.

This evaluation found that CFC beneficiaries experience reduced levels of stress and worry, largely attributed to the provision of food assistance such as free food parcels and Kai boxes. Approximately half of the survey respondents (51 of 105) identified the reduction of stress and worry as one of the most important outcomes for them and their families. Additionally, a quarter of respondents (n= 26) provided qualitative feedback reaffirming this standpoint. They expressed that the support provided by CFC was instrumental during periods of financial hardship and stress. Here are some typical quotations:

*“It has helped me and my family as we are on a very tight budget and need this help.”*

*“[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.”*

*“Being able to provide food to families in the community facing financial hardship or challenges.”*

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

### ***Improved confidence***

Financial hardship is closely associated with feelings of shame and uncertainty, which can exacerbate poor mental health and foster a negative self-perception. People experiencing poverty often suffer from stress and anxiety, and fear judgement from others. These experiences may result in social isolation, as people become cut off from their community due to the fear of judgement and inability to afford participation in social activities. Consequently, social isolation can exacerbate mental health issues. This evaluation found that some CFC visitors experienced feeling great, valued and more confident. For example, the two focus group participants and survey respondents indicated that they felt valued and more confident:

*“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.” [Focus group participant]*

*“[CFC staff members] are treating people [the] same, that’s the main point here, and [being] respected [by] all. They [CFC staff members] love my kids, I share even my family matters, because they gave me confidence.” [Survey respondent]*

### ***Feeling happy***

If people have good mental health, they might feel happy, confident, hopeful, and generally satisfied with life (Solan, 2021). The focus group participants were asked about the most important benefit for them, three participants expressed that every time they come to volunteer the CFC they feel happy, for example:

*“I come here to volunteer when I’m upset or stressed, and I feel great and happy after completing all the volunteer tasks.”*

One survey respondent provided qualitative feedback that was consistent with the view of the focus group participants:

*“Happy to come here. [I] always feel welcomed and happy [to] have a community like this, special thanks to [the CFC staff member].”*

We can also see happiness in a story shared by a CFC staff member:

*“One of our volunteers loves to dance. She uses our dance sessions to express herself and move freely. She says it makes her happy because she doesn’t have the opportunity to do this [otherwise].”*

### ***Being supported***

Almost a quarter of survey respondents (n=27, 23%) indicated that one of the most important outcomes for them and/or their families was to be supported. Similarly, a fifth of survey qualitative responses(n=20) expressed the same sentiment. Here are some typical quotations:

*“Families are supported during times of hardship, especially when a member is sick in the hospital.”*

*“My experience has been great. Whānau is able to receive support from the community service.”*

A CFC staff member shared two stories to demonstrate how they supported people:

*“A local reached out to us to complete his community service hours while he was going through a difficult court case. He was honest about his conviction, and we trusted his story. He stayed with us for 4 months and became a big part of our family at CFC. Throughout his ups and downs, we were able to support him and assist him in his journey to find a job. After the 4 months, he was let off without conviction. He really wanted a job and we updated his CV and provided him with a glowing reference.”*

*“We have a budgeting advisor who provides support to people with their finances. Several locals have been using these services. It is created to facilitate relaxed and conversational interactions.”*

Providing support for CFC beneficiaries was also mentioned by the partner as a key outcome:

*“I think what’s also started is helping with budgeting and other things.”*

### **3.2.2. Improved physical health**

A quarter of the focus group participants (n=4) discussed how volunteering has benefited their physical health in several ways, including keeping them active and eating a wider selection of healthy food. Here is a sample of their quotations:

*“Keeping me active. That’s good to get out in the sunshine, or even when it’s not sunny, even if it’s wet, to do something in the garden.”*

*“I think I would say I’m pretty good, I’ve got muscles.”*

*“Eating more veggies, some spinach, some beans. That’s good.”*

*“It’s great for my kids to see how they [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.”*

Conversations with the CFC staff members further corroborated this standpoint. They explained that some people who rarely eat vegetables or only eat one type of vegetable have been able to eat more healthy food since joining CFC. For example:

*“One volunteer approached me in the kitchen and said, ‘whenever I come here, the only thing I ate is vegetables. I thought the only vegetable I liked was cucumber, but everything I’ve been eating here is delicious. Actually, my doctor told me I have diabetes and need to cut down on meat. So, I’m happy that I can eat a lot of vegetables, and it’s so tasty.’ That’s a massive benefit for her health.”*

### **3.2.3. Improved food security**

One of the primary CFC objectives is to help the Mt Roskill community achieve food security by having access to ongoing, adequate and nutritious food. All CFC staff members indicated that enabling food security is a key driver for their work.

*“One of our core missions is to create food security in the area, that’s why we have allotment gardens, community gardens, our Kai space, and our Pataka Kai. We came in with this idea on how to create food security, and it’s been working really well, because we’ve been able to support people in different ways.” [A CFC staff member]*

Over half of the survey respondents (n=61, 58%) selected receiving food parcels as one of the most important outcomes for them and their families. Additionally, many survey respondents (n=35, 17%) provided narratives stating they have benefited from CFC by accessing ongoing and nutritious food.

*“My family doesn’t go hungry. Sending my 6-year-old to school every day is a bit hard because I don’t always have school lunch for him.”*

*“Every week, I visit the Community Pantries in the area, there are essential supplements for me and my children. This ensures that I have enough for my kids’ lunches every weekday when they are at school, and there is always something for between meals.”*

*“We don’t come here every day, but when we’re short on budget, we always have hope because I know for sure our community place will be able to help us. So, we don’t go hungry. Really appreciate it.”*

### **3.2.4. Improved social connection and support**

Another key intended outcome, as described in the logical model, was to improve the sense of belonging and wellbeing of CFC visitors. Therefore, CFC staff organise community activities and workshops to improve social connection and foster a feeling of belonging. In addition, by welcoming everyone, showing respect, actively listening, and providing support, CFC staff not only create a safe space, but also establish a foundation for trust and understanding. This inclusive attitude fosters a sense of value and dignity among CFC visitors, promoting open communication and a willingness to seek assistance when needed. As a result, CFC serves as a place where visitors can find camaraderie, empathy, and encouragement, creating a supportive environment that significantly enhances their wellbeing.

#### ***CFC visitors connecting with other people***

People living in poverty are more likely to experience poor mental and physical health (Murali & Oyebode, 2018). Individuals experiencing food poverty may often feel stigmatised by others, for the situation they are in, which can have a negative impact on mental health and lead to social isolation.

Rooted in the community, CFC plays an important role in connecting people. A number of survey respondents (14%, n=44) pointed out that one of the most important outcomes for them and/or their families is to be connected with other people. Their comments showed that the CFC helps visitors to connect with other people and make new friends:

*“I moved to South Roskill 2 years ago, and since then, through meeting [the CFC staff member] and other locals, I have become part of a functional and vibrant community, as my kids have school but I felt unconnected, but now, being part of this community, along with receiving essential food supplements, has enriched my life. I am deeply grateful to the kind people associated with here.”*

*“Connecting with the church and communicating with others. [CFC] can help somebody in need.”*

*“The CFC has been so helpful in many ways, have met a lot of friends.”*

This was also expressed by half (n=4) of the focus group participants;

*“For me, since the onset of COVID-19, we’ve been working from home, and as a result, the connection with offices has diminished. So, this is a good opportunity because I live around corner, so I can come in my own time and connect with people, re-establishing connections after two years.”*

*“Makes me happy and connected to people, meeting others in a friendly space. That’s the most beneficial aspect for me.”*

*“As you get older, you need something in your life, it’s good to come out and meet people. And what I love is that you get to meet people from around the world, which is wonderful.”*

CFC staff descriptions of their daily work also attest to the project improving social connection:

*“We have a strong social connection because we all sit down and we share food together. We gather [for] morning tea regularly, and through our conversations, we share different cultures and upbringings. That’s amazing social connection, because it shows different diversity, embraces differences as well as creates that social connection.”*

### **3.2.5. Strengthened relationships/networks**

CFC serves as a catalyst for strengthening the relationships between the project and stakeholders such as CFC beneficiaries and volunteers. By engaging in the project together, stakeholders develop a sense of interconnectedness and shared responsibility. Volunteering and participating in community activities fosters a sense of reciprocity and shared responsibility. CFC beneficiaries find a renewed sense of belonging and connection, as they actively play a role in supporting the project that has embraced and support them. Therefore, CFC plays an important role in strengthening relationships.

#### ***Increased support by community members***

Being able to give something back to the community is an important aspect of this outcome. Four focus group participants indicated that CFC has provided them with an opportunity to give back to the community. For example:

*“It’s an opportunity for me to give back to the community, and I also feel useful.”*

*“We are volunteers, and we’re willing to give back to the community.”*

*“I love giving back to the community. It’s very rewarding. It’s absolutely rewarding because I’m helping families.”*

Eight survey respondents expressed the same view:

*“I’m thankful for the opportunity to give my time and energy to this worthwhile cause.”*

*“As a retiree, I have found it very rewarding to dedicate my energy and time to this worthwhile cause of feeding the needy. It provides a sense of purpose and re-enforces my overall sense of wellbeing when I give and help others. As St Francis of Assisi says - “it is in giving, that we receive”, so I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to help.”*

Two CFC staff members shared two stories to demonstrate that the project has strengthened the relationships and networks:

*“One of our community members is passionate about getting elderly Chinese out so they aren’t socially isolated at home and plays an active role supporting the Roskill Chinese Group. This member brought in two elderly women who love to cook and offered to make dumplings for us. Impressed by the idea, we invited them to join our Welcome Wednesdays, where we host a free lunch for the*

*community. We set up the tables for dumpling-making, welcoming everyone to participate.”*

*“Last year, a mother with six children came in for a food parcel, and she wants to give back because of her difficult history. She loves baking and she comes in every few weeks to make her community famous biscuits and cakes.”*

In summary, the medium-term outcome of improved well-being and increased sense of belonging has been met by CFC as it has increased the connections within the community and improved food security:

*“I assume this includes increased wellbeing because people are less lonely, and there is a relatively large number of people accessing assistance with food.”*  
*[Partner]*

*“People feel lonely, so it’s giving people opportunity to live, a sense of belonging is really important. They feel welcomed when they come in. It’s trying to say to them: ‘is there something you would like to talk to someone? How else can we support you? What do you want? How could we help you to do that?’”* [CFC staff member]

*“I think having that sense of belonging and more dignity, and keeping their dignity while they’re in a vulnerable place.”* [CFC staff member]

One focus group participant indicated she had a sense of belonging when she came to the community hub:

*“I do feel a sense of belonging all the time. I get on well with everybody.”*

Two survey respondents also felt a sense of community belonging:

*“CFC was a space where I felt welcome and supported. It was great to meet new people and chat over a cuppa. We felt involved in the planning and execution of the garden and play area. The kids and I feel that we belong to the community. Fresh veggies are a bonus!”*

*“For some reasons, I don’t know why it feels like home every time I come here. Thank you all.”*



## Section 4

# Findings: Success Factors

This section analyses the core elements of the CFC project which led to the achieved outcomes.

## 4. Findings: Success Factors

The factors that contributed to CFC successfully achieving its intended outcomes have been explored in this report. This evaluation identified five core elements of the project that were integral to its success: having friendly and helpful staff, organising a range of CFC activities and workshops, providing adequate healthy food, building a strong relationship with stakeholders, and the involvement of volunteers.

### 4.1. Having friendly and helpful staff

The material lack of food leads to more than physical pains of hunger: it can contribute to emotional anxiety. While food pantries, food banks and other emergency food distribution agencies offer free food, for many, it is associated with feelings of guilt and shame. Therefore, having an open-door policy, respecting everyone who comes to the community hub and CFC staff doing their best to help them and take care of them is crucial for the service. Staff indicated this is what they have done:

*“People come to the community hub because they found this is a friendly environment where they are looked after without judgment, and their needs are met. They enjoy coming here, because they like talking with us, and I treat them as my family.”*

*“Dignity is important as we welcome people. Sometimes we may not be open on Monday, if someone comes in and says they need food or something else, we’ll do our best to help them out.”*

This evaluation found that CFC visitors experience a welcoming, non-judgemental environment which helps to improve their mental health and restore the visitors' dignity and confidence. The smiles and enthusiasm of the CFC staff made them feel welcome, respected and happy. As seven focus group participants expressed:

*“I’m happy with it, and I’m happy to be a volunteer here, as the staff respect me, and they are nice and friendly, I feel welcomed. I like all CFC staff.”*

*“I wanted to get out for my mental health, the people here were very welcome, they’ve always got a smile. So it’s been a good community space for us.”*

A number of survey qualitative responses (n=34) also showed that friendly and helpful staff made them feel welcome and happy. Here are some typical quotations:

*“When I come to community hub, I feel good because [CFC staff member] helps me and talks with me. Thanks.”*

*"It has been both heart-warming and gratifying to deal with CFC, and specially [CFC staff member], who always responds with caring, kindness and alacrity. She turns what could be a demeaning or embarrassing experience into a pleasant and relaxing one, for which I am extremely grateful."*

*"I am not well at the moment, and I've had to deal with expenses like parking and doctor visits. But when I come here, I feel very supported and non-judged, [CFC staff member] is very kind, positive and helpful."*

#### **4.2. Providing free and healthy food**

Food insecurity fundamentally undermines wellbeing. The provision of free and sufficient food plays a pivotal role in improving the well-being of people facing economic challenges. Beyond addressing the immediate concern of hunger, it directly impacts various facets of their overall health and quality of life. Access to nutritious food contributes to physical well-being, promoting better health outcomes and reducing the risk of nutritional deficiencies. Moreover, a consistent and reliable food source alleviates the stress and anxiety associated with food insecurity, allowing individuals to focus on other aspects of their lives such as education and employment. This fundamental support not only enhances the immediate health of recipients but also serves as a crucial step towards breaking the cycle of poverty, fostering a foundation for improved wellbeing.

Many respondents highlighted that the most important benefit for them and their families was to have access to free and healthy food. Therefore, providing sufficient nutritionally adequate food was a key factor that contributed to people's wellbeing.

#### **4.3. Offering community activities, workshops and trainings**

Another factor that contributed to the success of the project was the range of activities and workshops offered such as Community Gardening, Garden Working Bees, Cooking Classes, etc. For example, CFC runs regular garden learning sessions every Tuesday where anyone from the community can come and work in the garden and ask questions.

Staff worked closely with the CFC beneficiaries since hands-on gardening is the most effective way to learn. They also educated them about soil health, the significance of companion planting, seed propagation, composting benefits, plant diversity, and how to harvest produce.

Another example is the Cooking Classes on a Thursday morning. The classes include demonstrations and practical hands-on activities where staff and participants cook simple basic recipes. Then they all sit down to eat the food at the end of the session. Participants increased their knowledge and could take home ingredients that enabled them to replicate the meal at home for their families.

CFC beneficiaries gained gardening and cooking skills because of these activities and workshops. In addition to the skills learnt, these activities and workshops have improved their social connections. For example, the survey respondents indicated that they felt connected and made new friends because of these activities and workshops:

*“I enjoy that [the Community Gardens]. As you get older, it’s good to come out and meet people. Plus, I love the diversity here – you get to meet people from all around the world, which is wonderful.”*

CFC staff also mentioned that these activities and workshops contributed to achieving food security. For example:

*“One of our core missions is to create food security in the area, so that’s why we have the Allotment Gardens and the Community Gardens.”*

#### **4.4. A strong relationship with stakeholders**

Establishing strong relationships with stakeholders was key to the success of the project, particularly with partners, volunteers and local community agencies and groups.

Key stakeholders such as donors and partners ensure ongoing support and funding, which is essential for the project’s sustainability and its ability to carry out its mission. A positive relationship with volunteers encourages their continued involvement, helping the project tap into a diverse pool of resources without the burden of significant operational costs. Engaging with local organisations such as schools and kindergartens fosters a sense of community around the project’s cause, this engagement can lead to increased awareness, support, and a broader network of local residents who are willing to contribute to the project.

For example, CFC staff reached out to the local kindergarten to see how they could support them. CFC staff then supported the kindergarten’s families by dropping off potatoes and onions every week.

One CFC staff member said:

*"We have a wide range of stakeholders and have established a lot of relationships around Mt Roskill, like listening to stories, having conversations, going to schools and kindergartens, working with local organisations, introducing ourselves, having conversations with children and parents and families in the area as well, talking about the gardening, the volunteer days and opportunities that we have in this space. The way that we do that is just from conversations, relationships building."*

The partner also noted the importance of collaborative relationships to the development and success of the project:

*"I had a long-term relationship with the CFC manager and PSN. And I think that helped to address some of the big bumps. If we didn't have that [relationship], I'm not sure if we would have been able to predict the issues we faced and resolve them as successfully as we could be. And also, for PSN and for us, we were both willing to spend more money than we initially planned, because both of us are contributing more than we would have thought we would have had to. And I think that comes down to the trust between the two parties, and the relationship and the willingness to take some risks to assist working together."*

#### **4.5. Volunteerism**

Volunteers are integral to the success of CFC project. More specifically, by leveraging volunteer support, the project can expand the capacity to deliver services, conduct community activities and workshops, and respond to community needs in order to make a meaningful and widespread impact.

Volunteers provide additional people power and skills without adding to the project's payroll. Keeping operational costs low enables the project to direct a larger portion of resources toward supporting local residents and fulfilling its mission rather than paying more for administrative expenses.

From volunteers' perspectives, CFC provides opportunities for them to acquire new skills, gain work experience, develop a deeper understanding of social issues, gain an increased sense of belonging and serve the community.

CFC staff highlighted that volunteers offered essential help in the Kai space, gardens, and workshops. For example, a volunteer helped the CFC to build the Pātaka Kai - an important way for community members to access food with dignity; some volunteers built fences, painted them and put in the small front gardens; some people volunteered

in the community gardens; some volunteers come in every Wednesday to volunteer in the Kai space, etc.

This project would not have been a success without these volunteers. As the staff members highlighted:

*"We do receive a lot of donations, some volunteers help in Kai space, some volunteers help me packing tea bags. Without the volunteers, it's going to be hard."*

*"We have fantastic volunteers, and the team has grown over time, largely through word of mouth from people connected to the church or those needing to do community service. Some volunteers have been with us for around three or four months."*



## Section 5

# Findings: Areas of Improvement

This section presents the focus group participants' feedback and partner's comments on potential future improvements.

## 5. Findings: Areas of improvement

This section presents the focus group participants' feedback and partner's comments on potential future improvements. The recommendations encompass enhancing communication, organising additional activities, improving volunteer engagement, securing more donated items, creating a safe space for children, and placing emphasis on recycling initiatives.

### 5.1. Enhancing communication

The most common feedback for improvement related to communication. Seven focus group participants indicated that the communication between CFC staff and volunteers should be improved. Here are some typical quotations:

*“Tell me in advance about the volunteer tasks and workload.”*

*“Sometimes we need to wait a long time. Sometimes we’re swamped with tasks, but short on volunteers. Then there are days when we’ve got plenty of volunteers, but not much to do. For example, we had three truckloads of deliveries, but only three volunteers showed up, the workload was massive, and by the end of it, they were tired. Another day, we’ve got ten volunteers, but there’s nothing for them to do. It would be great if they [CFC staff] could improve the communication and coordination.”*

*“My challenge is finding volunteers for this project because the staff doesn’t communicate how many volunteers they need. I have to reach out to them to inquire about workload and volunteer requirements. It seems there is a communication issue, as I have to contact them every time to get details about volunteer tasks and workload.”*

Two focus group participants suggested that the communication with external delivery personnel should be improved:

*“I believe there should be better communication with delivery personnel. One day, a delivery person said he would be at CFC at 6am, but our regular volunteers only work from 9am to 12pm on Wednesday mornings. It’s unclear who is responsible for communicating with these delivery people. Sometimes there were errors in the amount and type of food delivered. Volunteers have had to spend extra time recounting all the food quantities, and informed the delivery person about the amount of missing food items. It feels like a waste of time.”*

### 5.2. Organising additional activities

Two focus group participants suggested getting 'Having Meals on Wednesday' back:

*“They used to have meals on Wednesday, one day a week, they had meals available for anyone to come in. And I think they phased that out, which was a pity, because there were some elderly people who came only for that.”*

The partner talked about his vision about the next stage of the project, he'd like to see more joint activities in the future:

*“I think, in 2024, when we move into the Victoria Hall, I'd like to see a few more joint ventures activities, both in terms of one or two that are regularly occurring, and a few more that are one off. And we need to see some momentum in developing the worshiping community.”*

### **5.3. Improving volunteer engagement**

In order to have more effective volunteer engagement, it is proposed to have a clear Volunteer Engagement Strategy and to develop a Volunteer Guide.

Two focus group participants indicated that CFC should provide detailed guidance for volunteers. For example:

*“I think it would be great if they could offer volunteer guidance, especially for new volunteers, it can be confusing for new volunteers who may not know what to do. Clearer and more detailed assignment of volunteer tasks should be considered for the future.”*

Two focus group participants suggested recruiting more volunteers in the future:

*“They should focus on the marketing in the future to recruit more volunteers.”*

### **5.4. Securing more donated items**

Two focus group participants indicated that it would be great if CFC could get more donations, particularly a variety of donated food:

*“I think if we had a lot more like donation patterns, that would be great as well.”*

*“We get vegetables to give to people, it'd be nice if we could have dry foods available.”*

### **5.5. Creating a safe space for children**

A focus group participant noted that CFC has no gates, and there's a lot of cars on the road. When she's helping out in the backyard or in the community rooms, her kids wander off, which is dangerous:

*“A safe space for children because I cannot leave him for a second, he’ll get in the way or he’ll end up tumbling something on himself.”*

### **5.6. Placing more emphasis on recycling initiatives**

A focus group participant suggested that the staff should focus on recycling, as CFC has a lot of packaging materials:

*“Just be aware that there’s a lot of packaging, so there’s a lot of plastics and soft plastics, there’s a lot of cardboard. Both cardboard and soft plastics can be recycled, so considering recycling would be a good [idea].”*



## Section 6

# Findings: CFC Model

This section presents the findings about changes to the CFC development model.

## 6. Findings: CFC Model

Community development integrates a holistic approach and an organised effort to assist a group of people in a community to enhance people's lives. The success of a developing project hinges on its ability to flexibly adapt its model, ensuring that it remains responsive to local residents' needs and expectations.

This evaluation found that only two of the five main facets of the CLD model were implemented by the CFC in the initial stage of the project:

- CFC staff listened to the community members' needs and expectations
- Community members came together to take collective action and generated solutions to common issues.

Based on data analysis, the CFC project moved towards a Network Weaving<sup>14</sup> model. This model is a powerful tool for those looking to create sustainable change within communities by fostering interconnectedness and shared responsibility. Krebs and Holly (2006) indicated that the model focuses on sets of relationships among people and communities that have the ability to create a better and collaborative community by 1) encouraging intentional peer relationships which recognise the value and contribution that individuals can make; 2) considering every individual to be a leader, who has the ability to connect and initiate collaborations; 3) including all stakeholders' voices in the process of generating change.

Networks include four imperative elements, and they are interlocking and complementing so that a network can function. First, people in the network have to be intentional. Second, they have to establish relationships. Third, they have to be action-oriented. Fourth, they need to have systems in place to provide support and foster accountability for their work. In each of these categories, trust relationships are the foundation of community development and social change.

The three reasons for this observed model change are:

First, the Network Weaving Model emphasises relationship-building and collaborations, which can significantly enhance the effectiveness of community

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<sup>14</sup> The concept and practice of "network weaving" was proposed by June Holley. According to Krebs and Holley (2006), communities are built on connections, and better connections usually provide better opportunities.

initiatives. As one CFC staff member indicated, building and strengthening connections within the Mt Roskill community is an important part of the project, as relationship-building helps build trust and mutual support, creating a resilient foundation that can lead to better coordination and increased overall project impact. Leveraging connections also helps CFC to mobilise resources more effectively. These include financial support, volunteers and other components that contribute to CFC's success.

Second, the CFC encourages inclusivity by involving diverse voices and perspectives within the community. CFC staff welcome all people and focus on a shared and collective idea. This reflects the second element of Network Weaving Model, which focuses on co-creation processes and all stakeholders' participation.

Third, network weaving is empowering for communities. This is not only because communities have better access to decision-making and to leading the change they want to see, but also because network-weaving enables them to be aware of the networks they are embedded in and of the power they have to shape decisions. This awareness also brings with it more exposure to a plurality of ideas, and more peer learning. The evaluator observed community members actively engaging in communal activities or workshops, offering mutual support, exchanging gardening or cooking skills, sharing food, and volunteering their time, even during holidays, to contribute to the maintenance of the community gardens.

Therefore, this evaluation found that the Network Weaving Model is adopted by the CFC to cultivate relationships and trust, amplify collaboration, and maximise the impact of collective efforts. CFC staff play these four different roles to get local voices, organise community activities and workshops, provide support and training for local residents, and thereby promote positive community development. For example, one CFC staff member plays a role as a "Guardian" or "Facilitator". In his regular garden learning session every Tuesday, he teaches participants about soil health, the importance of companion planting, health and safety in the garden, and how to harvest produce, etc. He also connects with retired gardeners seeking social connections, then they collaborate to make some very valuable suggestions to the development of the gardens. Some CFC staff play a role as "Connector Catalyst" or "Self-organised Project Coordinator", they connect individuals and listen to their needs and ideas, and

assist in coordinating community activities such as the Kids Market and the Christmas Celebration.



## Section 7: Conclusion

This section outlines a summary of this evaluation.

## 7. Conclusion

The CFC project was designed to help and support the Mt Roskill community. It aims to provide free food parcels, build community facilities and gardens, organise community activities and events, offer workshops and trainings for local residents, and build relationships with key stakeholders such as donors and local schools.

The evaluation findings demonstrated that the CFC project has succeeded in meeting its intended short-term outcomes and medium-term outcomes. More specifically, the project met the four short-term outcomes fully. The data demonstrated that the CFC beneficiaries 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 also grown. There was also an increase of the number of facilities made available to the community.

In terms of the medium-term outcomes, the project partially achieved the three intended outcomes. More specifically, the project enhanced the mental and physical health of CFC visitors by addressing some factors such as improved food security, reduced stress, increased confidence, and enhanced physical health. Yet, there was a lack of evidence or data to substantiate the development of healthy eating habits and an increase in the variety of food consumed. In addition, this evaluation found that the project increased social connections, as CFC visitors indicated that the most important thing for them is being supported and being connected with other people. However, there was a lack of evidence or data to substantiate two outcome indicators related to this medium-term outcome: increased engagement in community activities or events, and stronger social and family ties built. Furthermore, the project strengthened the relationships, with CFC visitors noting that it provided them an opportunity to contribute to the community. Unfortunately, there was no available data to illustrate whether the donations increased or if there was a rise in the number of volunteers and stakeholders.

CFC's success relied on a number of factors. First, CFC has an open-door policy and staff are friendly and helpful. They respect everyone who comes to the community hub and are doing their best to help and take care of them. The kindness of CFC staff makes those seeking help feel welcome, supported and happy. Second, providing

sufficient nutritionally food was a key factor that contributed to people's wellbeing. Third, CFC staff organised a range of activities and workshops, that contributed to the intended short-term outcomes such as learned gardening skills and medium-term outcomes such as being supported and connected. Fourth, establishing a strong relationship with stakeholders was key to the success of the project. Finally, volunteers play an important role in the project, as many activities or workshops would not be possible without volunteers.

This evaluation identified some key areas of potential improvements, including:

- Improving communication between CFC staff and volunteers
- Enhancing volunteer management and engagement through recruitment and guidance
- Organising additional activities
- Securing more donated items
- Creating a safe space for children
- Placing an emphasis on recycling initiatives.



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