

CALGARY FOOD BANK

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT REPORT

Every dollar donated to the Calgary Food Bank provides \$9.84 worth of social value

By Dr. Lucy Harry with contributions from Robert Janikowski and Gorana Jestic
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WHAT IS A SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT ANALYSIS?

A Social Return on Investment (SROI) Analysis is a way to show the wider benefits of a social program. In this case, it identifies, measures and assigns a dollar value to the secondary impacts of the Calgary Food Bank Emergency Food Hamper program.

31 clients were interviewed and asked, “what impact has the Calgary Food Bank had on your life?”

These findings were verified with a survey of 1,000 clients.



KEY FINDINGS

The Emergency Food Hamper program improves clients' lives in the following ways:



ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD

Clients talked about the importance of having access to nutritious food to improve their physical health. For some, the Calgary Food Bank is their only source of food and prevents them from suffering from malnutrition and even starvation:

"If the Calgary Food Bank is not feeding me, I am not being fed."



MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS

Clients reported that their mental health improved as a result of having access to food, as they no longer had to worry about how they would feed themselves and their families:

"Without the Calgary Food Bank I would have died. I probably would have killed myself. I couldn't handle it anymore. We had nothing to eat."



IMPROVED FINANCIAL SITUATION

Clients stated that they can redirect the money they save on groceries towards other bills like rent and utilities. This has been particularly helpful with the rising cost of living:

"You have to choose: do you buy food, or do you pay your power bill? That's the issue that I am dealing with."



SOCIAL BENEFITS

Clients appreciate the social interactions they have when coming to the Calgary Food Bank. This includes interactions with volunteers, staff, other clients, or simply riding to the Calgary Food Bank with a friend:

"We will have just a one or two line conversation with the people who check us in and it is really nice to talk to other people and know that they are there to help... Usually I'm a bit shy because of my speech impediment, but I am more confident because I am not judged at the food bank."



IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE

With the money they have saved on groceries, clients report that they are able to spend more on treats that improve their quality of life, such as outings with their children, swimming lessons or upkeep of their pets:

"Even though we are living way below the poverty line, I still want my kids to know how to swim!"



IMPROVED LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES

Clients said that the Calgary Food Bank helped them to improve their overall life circumstances. This included things like preventing them from becoming unhoused and providing support during periods of houselessness or while fleeing domestic violence. Others stated that without the Calgary Food Bank they would have resorted to dangerous and illegal means of accessing food, such as stealing or turning to survival sex work:

"[The Calgary Food Bank] gave me the strength to get out of sleeping in parks and into housing."

METHODOLOGY

A financial proxy was assigned to each outcome. This is how much money the Calgary Food Bank has potentially saved society and other social support systems as a result of clients experiencing those positive secondary impacts.



ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD:

High food insecurity costs AHS \$482.50/patient/year



MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS:

The average cost to the Alberta Health Services (AHS) of admissions for stress and anxiety is \$8554/patient/year



IMPROVED FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Emergency Needs Allowance costs Alberta government \$824/adult/year and \$135/child/year



SOCIAL BENEFITS:

TogetherAll, an initiative that is part of the City of Calgary's Social Isolation strategy, costs approximately \$25/person/year



IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE:

Fair Entry Recreation Fee Assistance costs \$50/adult/year and \$250/child/year



IMPROVED LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES:

It costs \$2550/person/year to house someone in the Calgary homeless shelter system

Every dollar donated to the Calgary Food Bank saves Alberta taxpayers \$9.84

$$\frac{[\sum (\text{Total Financial Proxy Cost} \cdot \text{Unique Clients Served Annually} \cdot \text{severity} \cdot (1 - \text{attribution}) \cdot (1 - \text{drop-off}) \cdot (1 - \text{deadweight}))] + (\text{value of donated food})}{\text{Emergency Food Hamper annual program cost}} = \mathbf{\$9.84}$$

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By Community For Community

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