

**CALGARY
FOOD BANK**

Emergency Food Hamper Social Return on Investment (SROI) Analysis



By Dr Lucy Harry

With contributions from Robert Janikowski and Gorana Jeftic

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What is a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis?

A Social Return on Investment (SROI) Analysis is “a measure that captures the value of social benefits...SROI represents a development of traditional cost-benefit analysis as a way of translating some of the social objectives of organizations into financial measures” (New Economics Foundation, 2017, p. 2). It is a more comprehensive way of portraying the broader benefits of a social program, by identifying and measuring the secondary impacts of a particular social intervention. In the case of a food bank, while the primary output is the distribution of a food hamper, the impact of feeding a community will likely have a wider ripple effect on society and social services. This analysis seeks to capture and attribute a financial value to this wider societal impact. An analysis of this kind allows organizations such as the Calgary Food Bank to more accurately report the impact of an investment into their services to donors, funders and the wider public.

Stages of an SROI analysis

The different stages of an SROI analysis are outlined below:

1. Defining the scope and identifying the relevant stakeholders
2. Investigating the outcomes
3. Verifying the impact and attaching values
4. Calculating the impact
5. Reporting and responding to the findings

Establishing the scope

The Emergency Food Hamper (EFH) Program)

The first step is to establish the scope of the project. In this case, the analysis focuses on the Calgary Food Bank’s Emergency Food Hamper (EFH) Program, the organization’s longest-running and most resource-intensive program. In the 2023 fiscal year, the EFH program impacted 88,399 unique individuals. Approximately 150 volunteers build around 650 EFH hampers daily, which are collected by clients during their scheduled appointment times at both the Calgary Food Bank main warehouse site or at one of the 17 satellite locations. Hampers vary in size and sometimes content, depending on the number of people in the household, whether there are children or infants in the household, and whether there are any special dietary requirements specified during the hamper booking, such as celiac or

renal restrictions. Each hamper contains guaranteed core items, including protein, fresh fruits and vegetables, milk and eggs, as well as extra items, such as canned meat, canned fruits and vegetables, boxed meals, and cereal. The hampers are designed to last on average 10 days, and clients are allowed to book hampers every 10 days, with no annual restrictions on their service use.

The stakeholders

For the analysis, the researchers decided to prioritize the main stakeholders and beneficiaries of this program, the EFH clients. Other SROI analyses might include all stakeholders affected by a program – in the case of the EFH program, that would include the clients, the volunteers, the donors, the community partners and the food industry partners. But the researchers decided to prioritize the main beneficiaries of the program in order to provide the most conservative estimate of the Calgary Food Bank’s social value (as the analysis does not include the financial values associated with other stakeholder groups, for example, the financial benefit of volunteerism). It should be noted that EFH clients were not treated as one homogenous group; clients were segmented into three groups based on their levels of service utilization. The study included a large sample size of over 1,000 clients (see Appendix A for an overview of their demographic features). Future research may focus on other stakeholder groups.

Timeframe

This analysis examines the impact of the EFH program over one year. A literature review of other food bank SROI analyses found that a one-year study is the norm, as the positive impacts of food banks are usually experienced within that timeframe (Bradly, 2013; Clare et al., 2023; Grunhaus et al., 2019; Pham, 2018; Ravi et al., 2014). Given that the EFH program is an established program with plenty of historic data, the researchers conducted an evaluative (retrospective) SROI analysis, as opposed to a forecast (predictive) analysis. Therefore, data was reviewed from the past year and participants who had used the Calgary Food Bank’s services in that timeframe were recruited.

Methodology

Semi-structured interviews

Having established the parameters of the project, the next step was to conduct semi-structured qualitative interviews with the key stakeholders (the EFH clients) to determine the impact that the Calgary Food Bank's EFH program has had on their lives over the past year. Semi-structured interview questions were developed based on a literature review of other SROIs conducted by food banks, food rescue organizations and community meal programs, along with some questions developed by the research team (Bradly, 2013; Clare et al., 2023; Grünhaus et al., 2019; Pham, 2018; Ravi et al., 2014). A copy of the interview questions can be found at Appendix B.

Client segmentation

The sample of EFH clients who participated in the research was segmented. There is a diversity of EFH clients whose needs and patterns of usage differ, and thus the impacts of the program are likely to differ too. While some clients may book a hamper every 10 days throughout the year due to long-standing challenges, there will be other clients who only use the Calgary Food Bank once due to a sudden emergency. The researchers sought to reflect this diversity of usage in the analysis. This approach distinguishes the Calgary Food Bank's SROI analysis from other food bank SROI analyses, which do not adopt a segmented approach, and instead regard food recipients as a homogenous category, and indeed this is noted as a methodological limitation in other SROI reports (Ravi et al., 2014, p. 25). In segmenting the client population, the researchers drew upon a system of categorization used in research on homelessness, whereby service users are classified based on their levels of usage (Gaetz et al., 2014). Within the context of the Calgary Food Bank's EFH program, the researchers developed three categories of client which are defined as follows:

Frequent:

- This category represents clients who are long-term and frequent users. Over a year, they are likely to access the food bank multiple times, with minimal gaps between visits.

Occasional:

- This category represents "medium" usage clients. These clients may come to the Calgary Food Bank more than once per year but have wider time gaps and fewer visits

overall. Typically, they utilize the food bank intensively only for a short period of time instead of a sustained period throughout the year.

Situational:

- This category represents those who are considered “low” usage clients. These clients may only receive a hamper once or twice a year, and if they visit multiple times in a year, there will usually be long gaps between visits.

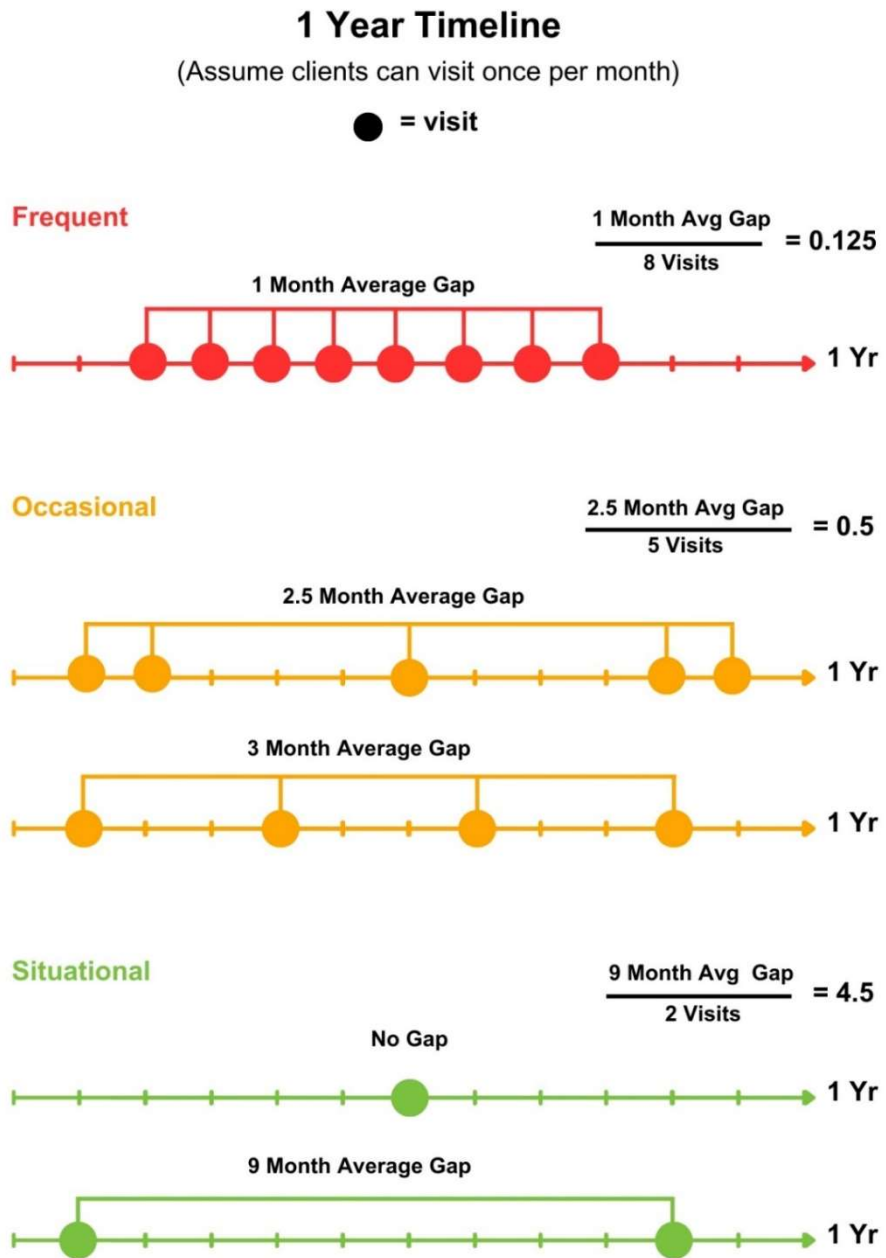
The researchers used two variables to divide clients into segmented groups over a one-year period: **average gap length** and **number of visits**.

Segmentation formula

A k-means clustering was used to develop the segmentation formula, which is a machine learning method that groups similar items together into different clusters. It does this by repeatedly adjusting the groups until the items in each group are as similar as possible to each other. “Average gap length per visit” was used as the parameter for the k-means clustering. Displaying a high numerator (gap length) implies that a client may be more situational as opposed to frequent, while a high denominator (visit count) implies a client is more likely to be frequent. Using a k-means clustering enabled the grouping of clients who fall somewhere between the two extremes. Figure 1 uses hypothetical data (not real client data) to show how clients were categorized into the three segments, using average gap length and total number of visits within a year.

Figure 1

Model of Client Segmentation by Visits to Average Gap Length

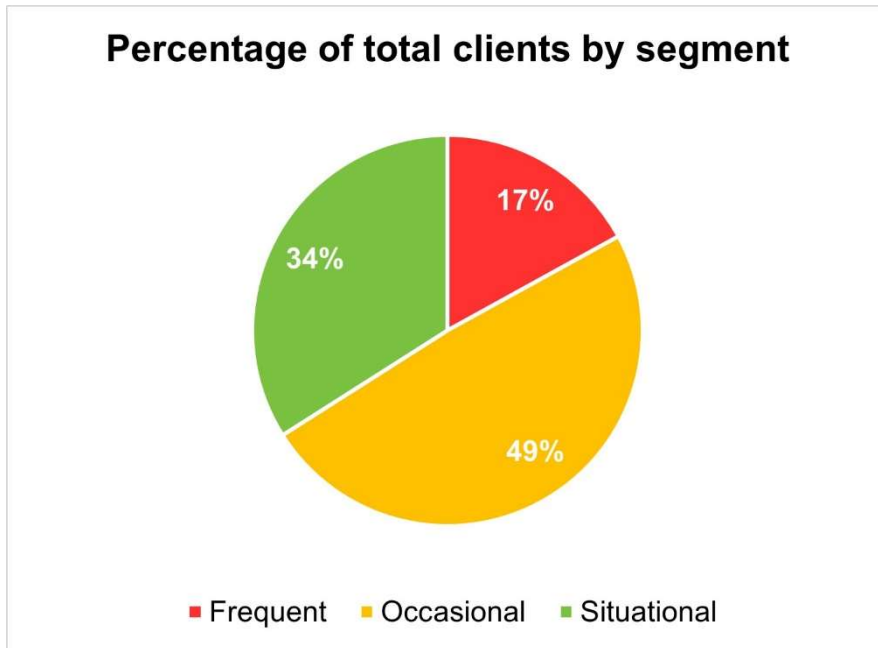


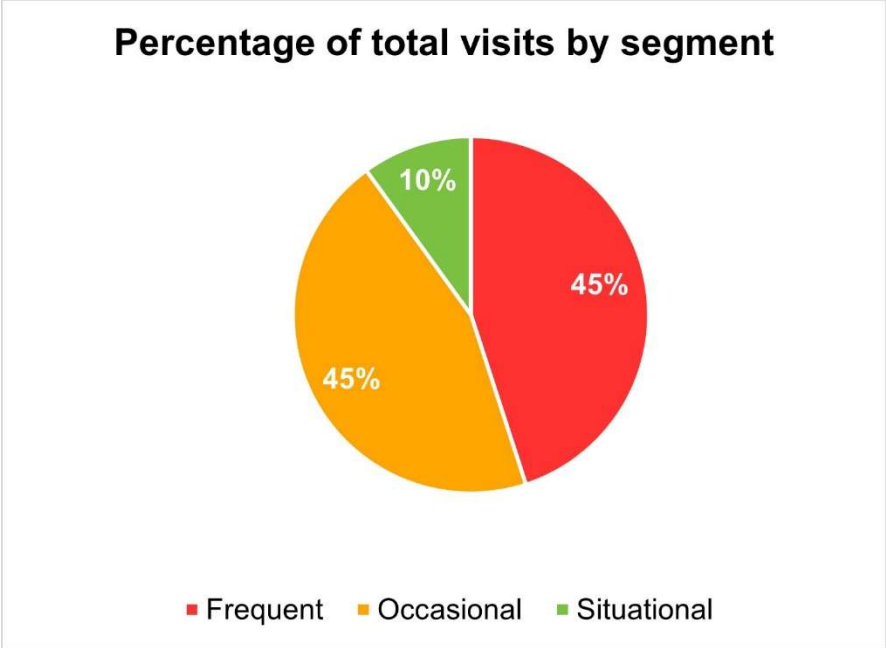
A short-term segmentation was conducted using client data from 2023, the results of which are shown in Table 1 and Figure 2 below. Table 1 depicts the conditions used to determine client usage-type (i.e., frequent, occasional, situational). Occasional clients are the largest proportion of users, constituting 49%, followed by situational (34%) and frequent (17%) (Figure 2). While frequent clients make up 17% of the overall food bank population, they account for around 45% of the total hampers distributed (Figure 2).

Table 1.
Outcome Summary of Short-Term Segmentations (2023)

Cluster	Average Gap (days)	Average Visit Total
Frequent	25.8	12.6
Occasional	47.1	4.4
Situational	160.3	1.3

Figure 2.
Breakdown of Client Segmentation (2023)





Interview participant recruitment

Once the segmentation of the client population was completed, a sample of interview participants divided across the three categories was decided upon. The goal was 10 participants from each category – 30 interviews in total – or until saturation was reached. To do this, potential participants were identified from the Calgary Food Bank’s client database of individuals who have previously consented to be contacted for research purposes. Clients were matched to their usage-type (i.e., frequent, occasional, situational) to ensure members from each category were correctly identified and represented in the SROI analysis. A research invitation email was sent to 230 EFH clients across three rounds of recruitment, resulting in 40 responses (a response rate of 17%). 31 interviews were conducted in total, with the breakdown of participants by client usage-type shown in Table 2.

Table 2.
Number of Interview Participants by Segment

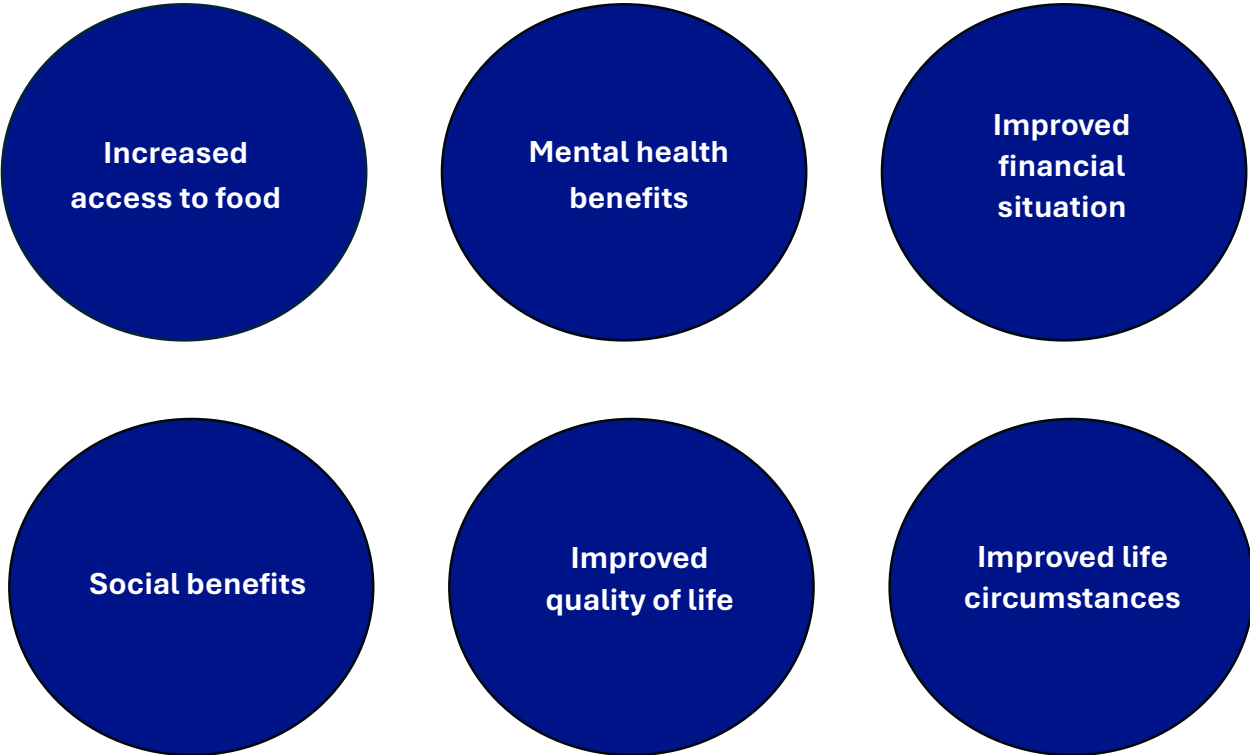
Frequent	Occasional	Situational
10	11	10

Client interviews were conducted at either the Calgary Food Bank or, if the client wished, at a public place that was more convenient for them, typically a public library or coffee shop.

Clients were compensated for their time and travel with a \$30 gift card. Usually, one or two Calgary Food Bank researchers conducted the interviews. Prior to commencing the interview, the participants were provided with information about the purpose of the study, the use of their data, and their participation rights, including guaranteed anonymity and the right to skip a question or end the interview at any time. After obtaining written consent, interviews were audio recorded for ease of transcription, coding and analysis.

Identifying the outcomes

Following completion of the semi-structured interviews, those qualitative data were transcribed and coded using MAXQDA software. From the analysis the researchers identified six key secondary impacts – hereafter referred to as “outcomes” – which Calgary Food Bank clients reported they had experienced as a result of the EFH program. Some of the outcomes intersect with one another, as food insecurity is a complex and multifaceted issue. Nevertheless, the six identified outcomes are distinct enough to warrant separate categorizations. These six outcomes are depicted below, and each outcome will be explored in greater detail in the next section of the report.



1. Increased access to food

When participants were asked, “can you tell us about the positive impacts that the Calgary Food Bank’s Emergency Food Hamper program has had on your life?” they unanimously responded with the obvious answer, which is access to food. Clients stated that this was their only source of *nutritious* food and highlighted the improvements to their physical health. This was commented on by Katy¹, a single mother of two small children: “with the fruit and vegetables and good meals we are not tired, exhausted, depleted of our vitamins and everything. As long as we are eating, our moods are good”. In the past, she had kept her children home from school on days that she could not provide them with a lunch, due to shame. Another participant, Josie, talked about how the EFH hamper had encouraged her and her wife to cook. She explained that they used to eat fast food, but since receiving EFH hampers, they have been able to lose weight and eat a more balanced diet. Much research has shown that food insecurity leads to negative health outcomes, including an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases, asthma, anaemia, and poorer general health in children (Eicher-Miller et al., 2009; Gundersen & Ziliak, 2015; Skalicky et al., 2006; Seligman et al., 2010; Vozoris & Tarasuk, 2003).

For other clients, particularly the “frequent” clients, EFH hampers were their only source of food and without those nutrients, they may face malnutrition or even starvation. This fact is illustrated by the following quote: “if the food bank is not feeding me, I am not being fed”. Many stated that they cannot afford to purchase any additional food. One such example comes from Dave, an older man who had previously owned a business but following a car accident he has had to depend on Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), a benefit provided by the Alberta government to individuals who are unable to work due to disability. Since his accident, Dave has been experiencing food insecurity, lamenting that: “I can’t remember what it is like to stroll through the grocery store and pick things off the shelf that I want”. Participants talked about how, without the Calgary Food Bank, they would have to resort to skipping meals.

2. Mental health benefits

Across all three categories of clients, participants reported that the Calgary Food Bank had provided mental health benefits, whether it be reducing stress levels, anxiety, depression or improving moods. Clients talked about their previous experiences of lying awake at night and worrying about how they were going to feed themselves or their families the next day. Several participants used the exact same phrase: “it takes a mental load off”. Clients discussed how

¹ All names and identifying features have been changed for this report.

worrying about a lack of food was the primary factor contributing to their stress. One participant named Ruby, an older woman on AISH stated: “[having the Calgary Food Bank] has made me feel less stressed... the stress of not being able to feed yourself is very hard on a person”. And indeed, for some, the stress relief was instant upon receiving their hamper: “I got my hamper and ever since then it was immediate, because I don’t have to worry. The biggest stress, and the thing that would keep me up at night was hunger pains”. This was also articulated by single mother, Katy:

“It is hard to move forward when you are just trying to survive... you can’t find stability and don’t feel stability in your life... So having a stress removed – which is insecurity with food – helps me move forward instead of moving me back, everyday stuck in survival mode.”

Often food insecurity was linked to participants’ depression. For example, one participant, Alan, stated that: “not being able to eat is just one thing that really sucks the life out of you. So, it has helped with that area of depression at least.” Others talked about how the EFH program has helped to improve their anxiety too, with Michael explaining that, “it takes away the anxiety because you know you are going to have the food. But it also takes away the bad behaviour that I would demonstrate from anxiety. If I am stressed out the chances of me being disrespectful or uncivilized are going to elevate.”

Tragically, when asked, “what would your life be like without access to the Calgary Food Bank’s Emergency Food Hamper program?” a few participants responded that they think they would have died by suicide. This point is highlighted in the following quote from a frequent-use client:

“I have been coming here for quite a long time and I have no problem saying that [without it] I would have died. I probably would have killed myself. I couldn’t handle it anymore. We had nothing to eat.”

But receiving an EFH food hamper elevates clients’ moods. Participants talked about the excitement of unpacking their hamper:

“When you get your hamper home and you start going through it and you see something like sugar! And these are things that the average person doesn’t think about, you go to the grocery store and you pick up a bag of sugar. But when you don’t have it, and you don’t have the ability to get it, it becomes enormous.”

The Canadian Community Health Survey consistently shows that the risk of adverse mental health outcomes increases as household food insecurity rises (Jessiman-Perreault & McIntyre, 2017). This is the case in other high-income countries, with an analysis of a

national survey in New Zealand showing that psychological distress is linked to food insecurity, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, and education-level (Carter et al., 2011).

3. Improved financial situation

“There’s not enough money left over after bills and rent to purchase groceries” – this client’s sentiments were shared by many participants who talked about how the Calgary Food Bank’s EFH program enabled them to stay financially afloat during the rising cost of living. Clients talked about the rising cost of rent, gas, utilities and groceries. Participants recounted being able to afford groceries in the past, but were finding the current inflation untenable, and so were being forced to cut down on more expensive and nutritious food items, such as meat. Rent was a particular concern for participants, with many stating that without the ability to save money on groceries, they would have not been able to afford their increased rental payments, reiterating that the Calgary Food Bank “had stopped them from becoming homeless”. The following quotes from participants further illustrate this point:

“[It has helped me] be able to save more money for rent.”

“I have no money left: more money comes out in bills than comes in and that does not include food or gas.”

“You have to choose: do you buy food or do you pay your power bill? That’s the issue that I’m dealing with.”

Mothers in particular talked about how the money saved on groceries could be diverted towards other essentials for their children, as articulated by single-mother, Katy:

“There are extra items that I can get for [my children] that I would normally spend on food... it helps me in the long run to provide for their other needs... it helps me to plan a little bit ahead with some extra money available... My other necessities are like clothes for the kids, runners, school supplies this year, gas to get them from school and back, toiletries – so it helps with that.”

Another mother, Anne, who is over 75 years old, utilizes the EFH program while still working part-time to support her adult son who is living with schizophrenia. She and her husband pay for his rent and bills and provide him with food, which she collects from the Calgary Food Bank. This has been particularly useful in recent years as her hours were reduced at work, and the cost of bills has been increasing with inflation. Like other clients, the EFH program helps her and her husband’s financial situation because it allows them to save some money on groceries for their son.

These findings accord with existing studies. Not surprisingly, research shows that the key reason why people turn to food banks is because they have insufficient income to purchase

groceries (Kneebone & Wilkins, 2022). According to Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto, the median amount left after paying for rent and utilities was \$6.67 per day, per person (Daily Bread, 2023). In the UK, nine out of ten referrals to the Trussell Trust food bank network were due to late essential bill payments including electricity, water and mortgage or rent (Trussell Trust UK, 2024). Kneebone and Wilkins (2022) show that food banks receive 22 more visits per 10,000 people with every \$30 increase in rent. This suggests that the money saved on groceries by using a food bank is used to pay other essential bills, including rent and utilities.

4. Social benefits

Interview participants discussed how the Calgary Food Bank's EFH program provided social benefits, through positive social interactions with volunteers, staff and other clients, getting a ride to the food bank with a friend, or being able to share the food they cooked from their hampers with family, friends and neighbors. Indeed, several studies have found that food insecurity and the inability to eat regular meals with others are predictors of loneliness and low social support (Burries et al., 2021; Rotenberg et al., 2021; Woolley et al., 2020). Conversely, the opportunity to have a sit-down meal at a charity food service is found to reduce loneliness and social isolation (Rotenberg et al., 2021).

The research participants talked about the kindness of the Calgary Food Bank volunteers and the comfort they derive from interactions with them, whether over the phone or when collecting their hampers. The following quote from Heather, a single mother who fled a situation of domestic abuse, is particularly illustrative of the impact of positive interactions with volunteers:

"I remember there was one fellow, and he sounded like an older fellow, and he was amazing. He was a volunteer and I remember this phone call with him to the food bank, and I think he was genuinely curious: 'why are you in this situation where you are coming to the food bank?' He was genuinely curious about why I was in that situation, so he was asking me questions in a very open, loving way, honestly. And that is when he was like 'let me set you up with this thing to get you other resources.' I think that was right around the time when my separation was happening, and it was extra hard at that point... I talked to this fellow, and he just really, really cared, and also part of it was he made it feel like the only thing he had to do in his whole entire day was talk to me. And it wasn't like, 'okay next, I have other calls, there are people waiting...' It just made it feel like he cared, which made me feel like I could open up."

Patricia, a woman with complex mental health issues, stated, "I would like to say that all the volunteers I have met and the phoneline people are *kind*. That is really nice because they

don't make you feel stupid for accessing the Food Bank.” This sentiment was shared by other clients, who said that their feelings of shame, stigma, and embarrassment were alleviated somewhat by the treatment they receive from the Calgary Food Bank volunteers and staff. Indeed, Niamh talked about how the interactions with volunteers have been a good source of sociability for her, and have improved her confidence:

“The people who come and check us in or the people who tell us where to park, — we will have just a one or two line conversation and it is really nice to talk to other people and know that they are there to help and they are just like us... Usually I'm a bit shy because of my speech impediment and because I wear braces [due to her physical disability] and people stare at me and stuff like that. But I am more confident because I am not judged at the food bank.”

Aside from interactions with volunteers and staff, some participants stated that interactions with other clients are important to them: “I have got to know other people who come to get hampers, you talk, ‘how are you?’, ‘what’s happening in your life?’”

5. Improved quality of life

Interview participants stated that the Calgary Food Bank's EFH program has enabled them to save money which could be put towards things that improve their quality of life. Other research has shown that food insecurity negatively affects quality of life, and that these effects are stronger in countries that are more economically and socially “developed,” such as Canada (Frongillo et al., 2017; Frongillo et al., 2019).

In terms of the ways in which clients' quality of life improved because of the EFH program: a female client, Heather, who is a single mother and survivor of domestic abuse, said that the Calgary Food Bank has been helpful in providing her with some disposable income that she can spend on “treats” for her children. For example, “trips to Heritage Park on my Fair Entry pass” and swimming and art classes to ensure they have the best possible start in life. The following quotes from participants are illustrative of the positive impacts that the Calgary Food Bank's EFH program has had on clients' quality of life:

‘It gives me the money, like if I want to come to McDonalds and have a bite to eat for a treat, to do something that I want, or go to the Dollarama and get stuff. So, it opens up that money to something else.’

‘When I think of the food bank, other than the obvious it has helped provided food and it has helped my budget because if my entire budget doesn't have to go towards the

basic necessities of life, it frees up that budget to be able to do a fun activity with the kids’.

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

Interestingly, many of the participants reported that the EFH program helps them to maintain their pets – whether it be through the occasional provision of pet food or kitty litter or through the ability to divert funds towards their pets – and that this was hugely beneficial to their mental health and wellbeing. One situational client, Patricia, who is supported by AISH due to complex mental health issues, talked about how the money saved from using the food bank has helped her to purchase specialty cat food and this has had an effect on her mental health: “my cat is very, very important to me. I have a history of mental illness and I haven’t been sick for almost five years, and I got him over four and a half years ago, and he has just changed my life!”

6. Improved life circumstances

Clients reported that the Calgary Food Bank’s EFH program has helped them to improve their life circumstances, whether it be preventing them from losing their housing, assistance during periods of being unhoused or providing the energy and mental clarity to upskill and improve their life circumstances. Several participants reported that they would not have survived without the Calgary Food Bank’s assistance; when asked, “can you tell us about the positive impacts that the Calgary Food Bank’s EFH program has had on your life?” several participants responded to the effect of, “well I’m still here, aren’t I?”. This was especially the case for clients who were either currently unhoused or who had previously experienced periods of homelessness. For instance, Jonah, an occasional user of the Calgary Food Bank, had utilized the EFH program during periods of homelessness; he is now housed and employed and credits his survival to the Calgary Food Bank:

“The only words I can come up with is ‘keeping going’, to basically keep one foot going in front of the other, marching forward. And giving me the energy to do so, because without [the Calgary Food Bank] I would just be laying in a ditch somewhere, as morbid and macabre as that sounds. Food is fundamental to life and without that, what can you do?”

This was also the case for a situational client, Eleanor, who used the EFH program during periods of homelessness when she was sleeping in parks, albeit she is now in a stable housing situation and only uses the Calgary Food Bank occasionally. She said that the Calgary Food Bank helped her by providing her with the sustenance that was required to

improve her life circumstances: “it provided me with the mental clarity needed to fill out forms”, such as forms related to housing, applying for work and other social supports. She said it would have been harder to get back on her feet without a healthy diet: “[The Calgary Food Bank] gave me the strength to get out of sleeping in parks and into housing”. Another participant, Luke, who turned to the Calgary Food Bank after periods in a psychiatric hospital, talked about how fundamental the Calgary Food Bank has been to his survival:

“I will always look at this period and the one saving grace or sunlight is the food bank. I know income support has been there for sure, but I can have the roof over my head and no food and what is the point in that? You can die in your house! Yay I have a roof over my head so I have a casket! But if you have food you don’t have to think about whether you are going to wake up tomorrow morning. Food pains are not just little cramps, it is mental and it makes you feel less_ than, and makes you hide and the depression flows right in. What food does is keep us all alive.”

Others talked about how the food provided by the EFH program stopped them from resorting to stealing food:

"I was so stressed, so embarrassed, I couldn't go into a store because I wanted to eat and I didn't want to steal anything, but you get these urges and you see muffins and you see loaves of bread... Hunger is one of the worst things, it makes you do things you would not even imagine..."

Frankie, a single mother who has lost custody of her three children due to past struggles with addiction, discussed how the Calgary Food Bank enabled her to have food in her cupboards for when the social workers assess whether she can have visits with her children. She is currently working and upskilling by taking a diploma so that she can be in a more financially secure situation. Frankie disclosed that the Calgary Food Bank stops her from turning to “dangerous work”:

“I know I can say for sure that it helped intervene with dangerous work – a single mum has a crying baby and she cannot afford milk or formula and she isn’t able to get to the food bank then she might be doing dangerous work such as sex work. So, the food bank saved me and intervened instead of me having to do work which is demeaning.”

Numerous news articles have also reported on the desperate measures that food bank clients take to “stay afloat”, including foregoing on heating, taking out dangerous loans, shoplifting, and resorting to sex work (Bernard, 2023; McRae, 2023a, 2023b; Murray, 2023).

The Calgary Food Bank’s EFH program has helped female clients to flee situations of domestic violence. For example, Jane, a situational client who received an EFH food hamper

while she was getting back on her feet after leaving her physically and financially abusive husband reported:

"[Without the Calgary Food Bank] I might have been like a lot of women out there and gone back to the abuser because there would have been no choice. Because if there is no help and no food, what do you do? You go back to the abusive situation, right? It was close, it was close."

Research has shown the link between food insecurity and intimate partner violence (IPV), and how it predominantly impacts women (Ricks et al., 2016). The research literature suggests that food insecurity may be related to IPV through financial abuse suffered by victims in controlling relationships; the propensity for IPV and food insecurity to arise from the same living conditions; and the tendency for survivors who leave abusive relationships to work low-wage jobs and receive government assistance (Power, 2006).

The Calgary Food Bank has also assisted clients with their resettlement following displacement. This is illustrated by the following quote from Oleksiy, a frequent-use client who moved to Calgary following the outbreak of war in Ukraine:

"There is no possibility of returning to Ukraine because our house has been destroyed and our city almost does not exist anymore as was completely destroyed by missiles and bombs. So the only opportunity to live is to start a new life here, and that is what we are doing right now with the help of organizations like the Calgary Food Bank."

The Ukrainian clients interviewed noted that it is comforting to encounter so many Ukrainians at the Calgary Food Bank (both clients and volunteers). Indeed, one participant informed us that another Ukrainian woman she met at the food bank had assisted her in finding a job and a place to live in Calgary.

Others talked about how the EFH program supported them while they were upskilling: "I don't know if I would have been able to graduate from school on an empty tummy."

Verifying the outcomes

Survey design

Having established the outcomes, the next step was to verify their validity with a larger sample of clients. For this, the researchers designed a survey instrument, utilizing studies from Social Value UK's repository of previous SROI studies (Curtin et al., 2022; Chuan Ko, 2019; CTBC Bank & Green Mountain, 2022; KPMG Sustainability Consulting Co., Ltd, 2023;

O-Bank Co., Ltd, 2022; Özgün, 2021; Özgün, 2023; PwC, 2021; Tzu Chi Foundation, 2023). The survey questions were designed to ascertain whether or not other clients had experienced the secondary outcomes discussed in the previous section, and if so, to what extent they experienced the outcomes, and also to measure the three key factors associated with an SROI analysis:

Deadweight – whether the outcome would have happened anyway.

Attribution – whether any other individuals/services contributed to this change.

Drop-off – the rate at which the impact decreases after the service has ended².

In the interviews, clients reported some “negative impacts” of using the Calgary Food Bank. These were coded and centered around the following two themes:

- Mental health: shame and stigma experienced from using the Calgary Food Bank.
- Access to food: spoiled food; culturally inappropriate food; dietary preferences not considered.

Given that the reported negative impacts corresponded with categories for positive impacts – mental health and access to food – they were already part of the survey. Specifically, participants were asked, “did [the outcome] improve as a result of the Calgary Food Bank?” and any negative responses were subtracted from the final calculation. Figure 3 below illustrates how the survey questions were framed.

² The analysis does not include ‘displacement’ (whether the impact displaced other activities or outcomes) as this factor is not commonly measured in other food bank SROIs.

Figure 3.

SROI Survey Question Format

Outcome #1

1. Has your [outcome] improved because of the Calgary Food Bank?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Prefer not to answer

[If answered 'yes', continue to question 2, if answered 'no' or 'prefer not to say', skip to next outcome section]

2. To what extent has the Calgary Food Bank improved your [outcome]?
 - a. A little
 - b. Somewhat
 - c. A lot
 - d. A significant amount
3. As a result of [outcome], have you experienced any of the following secondary impacts? Please select all that apply.
 - a. [Example secondary impact]
 - b. [Example secondary impact]
 - c. [Example secondary impact]
 - d. [Example secondary impact]
 - e. Other, please specify _____
4. What would your [outcome] be like if you had NOT accessed the Calgary Food Bank?
 - a. Worse
 - b. Somewhat worse
 - c. Stayed the same
 - d. Somewhat better
 - e. Much better
5. Who or what else has contributed to your [outcome]? Please select all options that apply.
 - a. [Example of other individuals, organizations and agencies]
 - b. [Example of other individuals, organizations and agencies]
 - c. [Example of other individuals, organizations and agencies]
 - d. [Example of other individuals, organizations and agencies]
 - e. [Example of other individuals, organizations and agencies]
 - f. Other, please specify _____
 - g. Not applicable
6. How important has the Calgary Food Bank been in improving your [outcome] as compared to other services or individuals?
 - a. Not at all
 - b. Slightly more
 - c. Much more
 - d. Significantly more
 - e. A great deal more
7. If you were to stop accessing the Calgary Food Bank today, how long do you anticipate that the [outcome] would last?
 - a. Less than 1 month
 - b. 6 months
 - c. 1 year
 - d. More than 1 year
 - e. A lifetime

The list of questions were then repeated for each outcome. Question 1 was used to ascertain whether clients did in fact experience the positive outcome(s) derived from the interviews. In other words, it was used to establish the “materiality” of the outcome. Question 2 was used to ascertain the severity of that impact. The purpose of Question 3 is to find out the specific ways in which the Calgary Food Bank’s EFH program had assisted clients in achieving this outcome; this question was used to select the most appropriate financial proxy. Question 4 was framed in order to ascertain the “deadweight” – would this outcome have happened anyway without the Calgary Food Bank? Question 5 and 6 were used to understand “attribution” – how much of this change could be attributed to the Calgary Food Bank versus other individuals and services? Finally, Question 7 was designed to measure how long the positive impact lasts for, and thus the drop-off rate.

Survey administration

The survey was hosted online using the platform Qualtrics. To direct EFH clients to the online survey, flyers were created with a QR code and inserted into food hampers or given to clients while they were checked in for their hamper appointments. The survey landing page contained information, including the study’s purpose, and the option to exit the survey at any time to prevent responses from being recorded. Before the questions were displayed, participants were asked to consent to the terms of the survey. To incentivize participation, clients were entered into a monthly \$50 Walmart gift card draw. The total number of responses was 1626, which was reduced to exactly 1000, once duplicates and incomplete responses were removed from the pool. This is a statistically significant sample of the clients who utilize the Calgary Food Bank, as based on the number of unique clients the EFH program serves per year and with a confidence level of 95% and 5% margin of error, at least 383 respondents would be necessary for a statistically significant sample size. Table 3 shows the breakdown of responses from the three client segments.

Table 3.
Survey Responses by Client Segment

Segment	Percentage of responses
Frequent	36%
Occasional	54%
Situational	10%

Survey results

Figure 4 provides a summary of the key results from the survey for each outcome.

Figure 4.

Overview of Survey Responses by Outcome

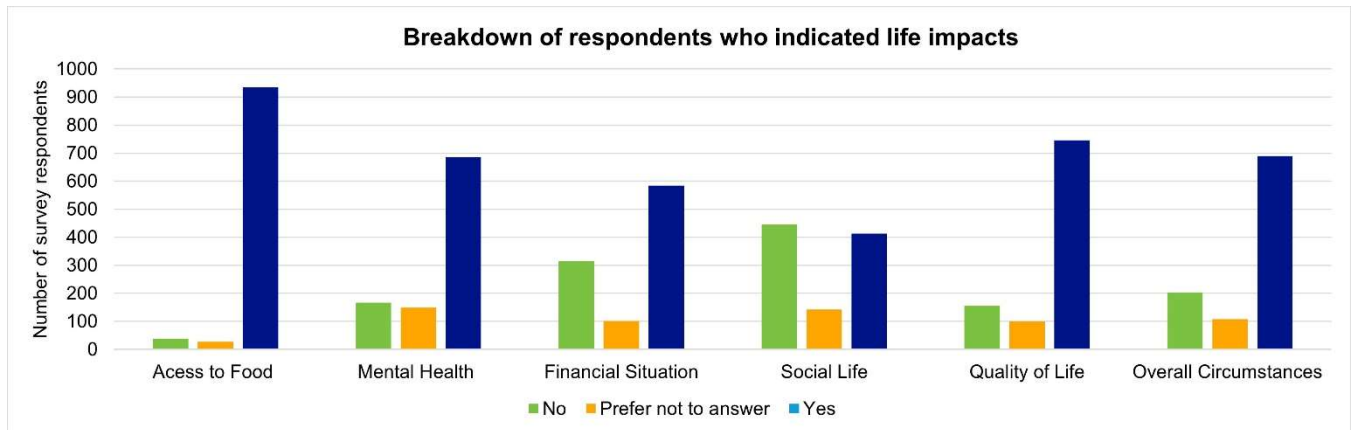


Table 4.

Segmentation Results for “Access to Food”

	Number of responses	Severity	Deadweight	Attribution	Drop-Off
Overall	1000	66%	17%	46%	36%
Overall Segmented	527	69%	35%	48%	28%
Frequent	190	68%	35%	50%	23%
Occasional	289	70%	36%	50%	30%
Situational	48	66%	30%	32%	38%

Table 5.*Segmentation Results for “Improved Mental Health”*

	Number of responses	Severity	Deadweight	Attribution	Drop-Off
Overall	1000	50%	36%	40%	62%
Overall Segmented	353	50%	45%	40%	60%
Frequent	117	45%	53%	41%	58%
Occasional	206	52%	41%	41%	62%
Situational	30	54%	45%	34%	58%

Table 6.*Segmentation Results for “Improved Financial Situation”*

	Number of responses	Severity	Deadweight	Attribution	Drop-Off
Overall	1000	37%	64%	43%	64%
Overall Segmented	497	38%	45%	44%	43%
Frequent	178	39%	43%	45%	44%
Occasional	273	39%	43%	46%	44%
Situational	46	28%	62%	33%	28%

Table 7.*Segmentation Results for “Social Benefits”*

	Number of responses	Severity	Deadweight	Attribution	Drop-Off
Overall	1000	28%	65%	30%	88%
Overall Segmented	458	28%	64%	30%	36%
Frequent	167	31%	59%	34%	41%
Occasional	250	28%	65%	30%	36%
Situational	41	15%	82%	15%	18%

Table 8.*Segmentation Results for “Improved Quality of Life”*

	Number of responses	Severity	Deadweight	Attribution	Drop-Off
Overall	1000	50%	33%	64%	81%
Overall Segmented	492	51%	32%	55%	65%
Frequent	181	51%	29%	55%	68%
Occasional	268	52%	33%	56%	64%
Situational	43	46%	34%	50%	60%

Table 9.*Segmentation Results for “Improved Life Circumstances”*

	Number of responses	Severity	Deadweight	Attribution	Drop-Off
Overall	1000	47%	36%	51%	82%
Overall Segmented	482	48%	35%	53%	60%
Frequent	171	49%	35%	54%	63%
Occasional	268	49%	35%	53%	60%
Situational	43	42%	38%	44%	51%

Analysis

As illustrated in Tables 4-9 above, not all of the responses could be segmented. This is because some of the respondents’ use of the Calgary Food Bank was too close to the start or finish of the year that they were excluded from segmentation as a pattern could not be established within the selected timeframe. In terms of some notable findings: access to food has the highest severity rate of all of the outcomes (66%) which is to be expected given this is the primary outcome of the EFH program. “Improved mental health” has the second highest level of severity (50%, along with “improved quality of life”), but improved mental health is lowest for frequent clients (45%) which may be indicative of the long-standing challenges faced by this group. For “improved financial situation”, the level of severity is relatively low (37%), but frequent and occasional clients experience this outcome over 10% more than situational clients, which is likely explained by frequent and occasional clients’ more sustained usage of the service. “Social benefits” has the lowest level of severity of outcome (28%), but it is highest amongst the frequent clients which reflects findings from the interviews, that those who use the service regularly and may be utilizing government benefits such as AISH and/or are unemployed, are most likely to enjoy the social interactions they experience at the Calgary Food Bank, as they may experience higher base levels of social isolation. This outcome has the highest drop-off rate (88%) which might suggest that the main social benefit derived from clients from the EFH program is the interactions they have with volunteers, staff and other clients when collecting their hampers, and so if they were to stop using this service, that benefit would cease almost entirely. For “improved quality of life” this outcome has the highest attribution rate (64%) which would indicate that this is a unique benefit of the EFH program which is not offered by other programs and services in the city. For “improved life circumstances”, there was a high drop-off rate (82%)

which is reflective of the EFH program helping clients in emergency situations rather than being a long-term solution.

Identifying the financial proxies

In order to calculate a program's social return on investment, it is necessary to attribute a financial proxy to each of the outcomes. This next section describes the selections of financial proxies and the justifications for each.

1. Access to food

Research shows that food insecurity has adverse impacts on a person's physical health (Nagata et al., 2019; Seligman et al., 2010; Vozoris & Tarasuk, 2003). The Alberta Health Services (AHS) has conducted research on the financial impact of high household food insecurity (HFI) and found that a patient with HFI stays in hospital between 1.48 to 2.08 days longer per year than individuals living in food secure households, and this costs the healthcare system between \$400-565 per person (Alberta Health Services, 2023, p.10). This heightened expense constitutes around 4.4% of acute care costs (Alberta Health Services, 2023, p.10). Participants reported that the Calgary Food Bank has improved their access to food, and as a result they experienced the following secondary impacts:

- Access to healthy food (56%)
- Hunger alleviation (49%)
- Prevention of malnutrition (36%)
- Improved physical health (29%)

Based on this, the researchers took the average cost provided by the AHS, **\$482.50** per person, and multiplied this by the number of unique clients the EFH program serves each year, to arrive at the financial proxy for this outcome.

2. Mental health benefits

When clients were asked in what ways their mental health had improved as a result of the Calgary Food Bank's EFH program, they reported reduced stress (64%) and reduced anxiety (49%). The Canadian Institute of Health Information (CIHI) provides an annual breakdown of the costs per admission per condition in each province (the latest data are from 2021-2022). In Alberta, the average cost of an admission for stress/adjustment disorder is \$6,478 and for

anxiety is \$10,629 (CIHI, 2024). The average of cost of those two admissions is **\$8,554**. So this figure was multiplied by the number of clients the EFH program serves per year to attain the financial proxy for this outcome.

3. Improved financial situation

When clients were asked in what ways their financial situation had improved as a result of the EFH program, they stated it enabled them to “save money on food” (53%), gave them the “ability to pay other bills e.g. utilities, transportation, internet” (41%) and to divert money to housing costs (34%). From this it can be surmised that clients are using the money they save on groceries to pay for other basic necessities and avoid emergency situations where they are unable to pay their bills. The Government of Alberta offers emergency financial assistance in the form of an Emergency Needs Allowance which can be used to cover unexpected emergency costs such as food, clothing, childcare, transportation, damage deposit, temporary shelter, utility arrears and eviction payments. The Emergency Allowance rates differ based on several factors. For adults, the entitlement for a single adult living in private housing was used (based on the survey responses, most of the respondents live in private rental accommodation) which is **\$824**. For a child, while the absolute cost of a child is unclear, the cost of “an additional child” is listed as **\$135**, so this figure was used as it is the most conservative. Therefore, the cost of a single adult was multiplied by the number of adults the EFH program serves per year and the cost of an additional child was multiplied by the number of children the EFH program serves per year, to calculate the financial proxy.

4. Social benefits

There is much international research on the societal cost of loneliness, most notably the US Surgeon General, Dr Vivek Murty, reported that loneliness causes premature death and is equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes per day, and results in \$6.7 billion excess cost of Medicare, and \$154 billion to employers as a result of loneliness-related absenteeism in the US (Murty, 2023). This research is yet to be replicated in Canada, which prompted the use of financial proxies related to social isolation prevention initiatives at the provincial and city-level. As part of the City of Calgary’s strategy to address social isolation, the Alberta government invested \$53 million into mental health resources, including ‘Togetherall’, an online platform with a virtual community and resources to combat loneliness (Togetherall, 2020). While the individual cost of a user is not advertised on their website, other research estimates that the cost of an individual user’s subscription is the equivalent of **\$25** (SHTG,

2022, p.26). Therefore, this figure (multiplied by the annual number of unique clients) was utilized as the financial proxy for this outcome.

5. Improved quality of life

With regards to the ways in which clients' quality of life had improved as a result of the Calgary Food Bank, the most frequently selected response was "ability to provide treats for yourself and your children e.g. day trips" (48%). The City of Calgary has the Fair Entry Recreation Fee Assistance Program, where an adult is entitled to a subsidy of up to **\$50** per year to take part in a recreation program, while children are entitled to a subsidy of up to **\$250** per year. This Fair Entry pass also enables reduced admission rates for sites around the city including the Calgary Zoo, Heritage Park and TELUS Spark science centre. The adult and child annual subsidy was multiplied by the number of adults and children the EFH program serves per year respectively, to arrive at the financial proxy for this outcome.

6. Improved life circumstances

When asked in what ways clients' life circumstances had improved as a result of the Calgary Food Bank, the most selected options were related to housing (43%), specifically, the ability to retain housing and assistance during periods of being unhoused. Research from the University of Calgary has suggested that when individuals are coming close to losing their housing, they will utilize a number of strategies to remain housed, including relying on charities such as food banks (Kneebone & Wilkins, 2023). It was assumed, based on the data, that the EFH program is used by clients as part of their strategy to retain their housing and prevent homelessness, and so the cost of housing someone in the homeless shelter system was used as the financial proxy. Research shows that it costs approximately \$100 per night to house someone in a homeless shelter in Calgary, and most people in the Calgary shelter system are "transient" and stay an average of 1.5 times per year, with each stay lasting around 17 days (Kneebone & Wilkins, 2023). This means that it costs the system approximately **\$2550** per person, per year, which, multiplied by the unique clients served per year, is the financial proxy for this outcome.

Calculation

Having established the financial proxies, the next step was to calculate the social return on investment using the survey responses. Each financial proxy value was multiplied that by the unique client count for the past year to yield the maximum possible social benefit assumed

to be applicable to every client who had visited the Calgary Food Bank. Using the responses from the survey, the researchers excluded (and subtracted from the total financial value) those who answered “no” when asked if they had experienced each outcome. Then, for each outcome, the researchers determined the level of severity, deadweight, attribution and drop-off that would need to be subtracted from the total financial value. In other words, the “adjustments”. As detailed above, each outcome had a set of questions associated with it which was linked to the adjustments. Using a Likert scale approach, the researchers assigned a certain percentage to each response (Social Venture Australia, 2014). Once the percentage for each adjustment was calculated, the adjustments were multiplied together with the total financial proxy amount to determine the remaining financial proxy dollar amount for the final calculation.

The value of donated food was added to the top of the equation to account for the fact that the Calgary Food Bank can receive, solicit and glean food that would otherwise have gone to waste, and provide it to clients (and the costs associated with the processing of donated food are included in the program cost). The dollar amount of purchased food is not reduced by the adjustments mentioned above, as the assumption is that 100% of the value of donated food will be of benefit and would otherwise have been wasted.

The final step in the SROI calculation is dividing everything by the annual EFH program cost. The annual cost is the total investment and input required to yield these social returns. The program cost does not include the value of donated food but does include the associated administrative costs and the value of any purchased food.

Adjustments are applied to each financial proxy. The following formula was used to calculate the adjustment factor for each financial proxy:

$$\text{Adjustments} = \text{Severity} \cdot (1 - \text{Attribution}) \cdot (1 - \text{Drop off}) \cdot (1 - \text{Deadweight})$$

The generalized formula for calculating the Calgary Food Bank SROI is as follows:

$$\text{SROI Ratio} = \frac{([\sum (\text{Financial proxy Cost} \cdot \text{Unique Annual Clients} \cdot \text{Adjustments})] + (\text{value of donated food}))}{\text{Emergency Food Hamper Annual program Cost}}$$

Assumptions

Some SROI calculations from other studies include a Net Present Value (NPV) to work out how effective an investment made today will be in the future. Here, it was decided that the

NPV would not be included due to the fact that the Calgary Food Bank provides an emergency service and thus the benefits are more immediate and are unlikely to exceed a year.

The segmentation analysis relied on linking client responses to data from the Calgary Food Bank's database and only clients who were successfully matched were analyzed. In order for a client to be successfully segmented, they had to have been a Calgary Food Bank client for at least 3 months before taking the SROI survey. This is based on the assumption that 3 months is enough time to successfully differentiate a client's usage pattern into a discernable segment over a single year. It should be noted that clients' responses were still included in the aggregate totals, even if they were not able to be segmented.

To optimize the amount of time it takes to complete the survey, a conditional question was presented for each financial proxy. If a participant selected "yes", it would present questions related to each outcome's adjustments. But if the participant selected "no", the survey would skip to the next outcome section. All of the "no" responses for each question were allocated into the count for the lowest weighted answer to accurately capture the client's negative sentiment for the specific outcome and its financial proxy. When "no" was selected, an assumption was made that the client is saying "no" to every adjustment question related to that outcome and its financial proxy. "Prefer not to answer" responses were excluded from the calculations.

Social Return on Investment Ratio

Having completed all these steps, and based on the calculations, **the Calgary Food Bank's Emergency Food Hamper program's social return on investment is \$9.84:\$1.**

For every dollar donated, the Calgary Food Bank provides **\$9.84** of social value

Therefore, for every dollar donated to the Calgary Food Bank, it is able to provide \$9.84 of social value and potential societal savings. Put another way: last fiscal year the Calgary Food Bank received \$20,600,189 in donations (the majority of which was put towards the EFH program costs), which potentially provided \$202,705,860 worth of social benefit to the wider community.

Comparison to other Social Return on Investment analyses

Table 10 and 11 provide a comparison of the Calgary Food Bank’s SROI to other SROIs by non-profits in the city and to other food bank SROIs.

Table 10.

SROI Ratios from Non-Profit Organizations in Calgary

Name of organization	Summary of service	SROI ratio
Inn from the Cold	Helping families overcome homelessness	6.79:1
Alpha House, DOAP program	Mobile diversion response to street level addiction and public intoxication	9.43:1
Reset Society, EXIT program	Support for women and girls fleeing sexual exploitation and sex trafficking	11:1

Note: Sourced from Alpha House Society (2014), Constellation Consulting Group (2019), Constellation Consulting Group (2023).

Table 11.

SROI Ratios from Food Banks or Food Rescue Organizations

Name of organization	Summary of service	SROI ratio
Food Rescue in Aotearoa New Zealand	Food rescue and distribution network	4.5:1
Australia Foodbank	Network of food banks	23:1
SOMA Österreich and Partner, Austria	Social food markets	8.47:1
Garden Patch, Saskatoon	Community garden	1.61:1
Our Food Project, Cape Breton	Project aimed at creating a more sustainable community food system	2:1

Note: Sourced from MacLeod (2016), Martin et al. (2022), Grünhaus et al. (2019), Ravi et al. (2014), Clare et al. (2023).

But it is important to note that comparing different organizations’ SROI ratios can be challenging as “organizations work with different stakeholders and will have made different judgements when analysing their social return. Consequently it is not appropriate to compare the social return ratios alone... organizations should endeavor to educate funders and investors on the importance of putting the ratio in the context of the overall analysis”

(Nicholls et al., 2012, p.11). Therefore, as well as the overall ratio, the significance of the SROI analysis can be derived from the identification of the different outcomes and ways in which the EFH program has a social benefit in the community, with increased access to food, improved mental health, improved financial situation, social benefits, improved quality of life and improved life circumstances for clients.

Limitations and risk factors

An SROI analysis is based on assumptions, that could be construed as a limitation affecting its accuracy. Specifically, the selection of financial proxies is based on the researchers' assumptions of what other services Calgary Food Bank clients might utilize if they did not have access to the food bank. To minimize subjectivity and inaccuracy as much as possible, a survey question was included asking clients about the specific ways in which they experienced an outcome so that the most appropriate financial proxy could be identified. The inclusion of this question also helped to minimize the risk of "double counting" as although there may appear to be some overlap between the different categories, when it came to identification of the secondary outcomes there were clear distinctions.

To avoid overestimating the Calgary Food Bank's impact, the most conservative financial proxies were selected. A Sensitivity Analysis is included at Appendix C, which provides examples of alternative financial proxies and assumptions that could have been made, to highlight that the researchers selected the most conservative options. For instance, when it comes to the cost of homelessness, the Calgary Homeless Foundation has estimated that it costs on average \$94,202 per person, per year, in the homeless shelter system in the city (RSM Richter & Associates Inc., 2008, p.2). Instead of that figure, the researchers selected a smaller (and more recent) estimate from the work of Ron Kneebone, which suggests that it costs on average \$2550 per person per year to house someone in the Calgary homeless shelter system (Kneebone & Wilkins, 2023). The researchers were also conservative in their assumptions, so, for example, when it came to the mental health outcome, it was assumed that clients with mental health conditions might experience one admission per year for this condition, when in fact, the number of annual admissions may be far higher amongst vulnerable populations who utilize food banks. Moreover, by only including the main stakeholder group – EFH clients – the estimation of the financial impact of the Calgary Food Bank is kept as conservative as possible, without considering how other stakeholders such as volunteers, donors, community partners and supermarkets might financially benefit from the Calgary Food Bank's services.

Conclusion and recommendations

Research has shown that “the role of the food bank has increased where the welfare state has reduced,” leading to the “embeddedness” of food banks as “the answer to the problem of rising food poverty as the state retreats in times of austerity” (Beck & Gwilym, 2023, p.556-558). This project clarifies the outsized role that food banks are playing in our society, and the different ways in which they are offering social support to clients beyond just the simple provision of a food hamper. Not only do they provide clients with access to nutritious food to prevent hunger and malnutrition, but they most frequently also improve clients’ quality of life, mental health and life circumstances, as well as having an impact on their financial situation and some positive social benefits. This is in large part because the money saved on groceries can be reallocated elsewhere, most notably, towards rent; food bank usage serves as a way of retaining housing and preventing homelessness (Kneebone & Wilkins, 2023). While the Social Return on Investment Analysis method is not without its limitations – namely it is based on assumptions and financial approximations – this is a useful way of portraying and estimating the wider social impact and financial benefit of the Calgary Food Bank, beyond just thinking about the cost of an individual hamper. As a result of this work, the researchers provide the following recommendations:

- Given the high rate of social return, the Calgary Food Bank should explore avenues for increasing its capacity and accessibility throughout the community.
- Use the Social Return on Investment Analysis results to inform an Organizational Theory of Change.
- In the coming years, follow up with in-depth studies on each of the outcomes.
- Consult community partners on the findings of this research.
- Based on the calculations, the highest societal savings are in the areas of mental health and prevention of homelessness (“improved life circumstances”), which should inform the Calgary Food Bank’s work priorities and collaborations.
- As well as positive impacts, the research revealed some negative feedback which should be addressed operationally. .
- These findings should inform the Calgary Food Bank’s programming, for example, clients highlighted the importance of nutritious foods, which should be reflected in the hamper contents. Clients also discussed the enjoyment they derive from the social interactions at the Calgary Food Bank, facilitating further consideration of a shopping cart model.
- Continue to monitor the Calgary Food Bank’s social impact via the regular Emergency Food Hamper Feedback Survey, with questions informed by the findings from the SROI project.

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Appendix A: Overview of survey respondent demographics

Gender Distribution

Female	Male	Non-binary	Other	Transgender	Two-Spirit
627	352	8	3	6	2

Age Distribution

Age Category	Total by Age Category
15-24 years	84
25-34 years	271
35-44 years	311
45-54 years	169
55-64 years	104
65-74 years	49
75 years and over	10

Visible Minority

Visible minority	Percentage of participants
Yes	19%
No	81%

Identify as First Nation, Metis or Inuit

Identify as First Nations, Metis or Inuit	Percentage of participants
Yes	7%
No	93%

Identify as 2SLGBTQI+

Identify as 2SLGBTQI+	Percentage of participants
Yes	7%
No	93%

Identify as disabled

Identify as disabled	Percentage of Participants
Yes	27%
No	73%

Born in Canada

Born in Canada	Percentage of Participants
Yes	65%
No	35%

Newcomers' Years in Canada

Newcomers' Years in Canada	Percentage of Participants
Less than 1 year	54%
1-5 years	26%
5+ years	20%

Citizenship Status

Citizenship Status	Percentage of Participants
Canadian citizen/First Nations/Métis/Inuk (Inuit)	39%
Temporary Status (student/visitor/worker)	35%
Permanent Resident	18%
Refugee Claimant	8%

Housing Situation

Housing Situation	Number of Respondents
Band owned housing	2
Emergency shelter	5
Group home/youth shelter	4
Home that you own	86
Other, please specify	45
Private rental housing	605
Rooming house	63
Social rental housing (public)	78
Unhoused	7
With friends or family	104

Appendix B: Interview questions

1. Can you tell us a little bit about what led you to use the Calgary Food Bank for the first time?
 - a. Has that reason changed over time?
2. Can you tell us all the ways that the Calgary Food Bank's Emergency Food Hamper Program has positively impacted your life?
 - a. Have these changes impacted anyone else around you?
3. Over what time-period have these changes occurred? So, for example:
 - a. What immediate impact has the EFH program had on your life? (In weeks/month after receiving EFH hamper)
 - b. What medium-term impact has the EFH program had on your life? (Over a few months after receiving the EFH hamper)
 - c. What long-term impact has the EFH program had on your life? (6 months+)
4. Do you think any of the changes you experienced would have happened anyway without the Food Bank?
5. Has the EFH program had any negative impact on your life?
6. Has anyone else helped you make those changes in your life, e.g. other support services or individuals?
7. How important have these changes to your life been?
 - a. Which change has been most important to you, and why?
8. What do you think your life would be like if you did not have access to the EFH program at Calgary Food Bank?
9. How long do you think the positive impacts of EFH on your life will last?
 - a. With continued use?
 - b. Without continued use of the service?
 - c. How long do you think you will continue to use this service?
10. Do you have any other comments about the EFH program that you would like to share?

Appendix C: Sensitivity analysis

Outcome	Alternative financial proxy description
Increased access to food	The retail value of the EFH hamper (\$368); multiplied by the average number of household visits per year.
Mental health benefits	The average costs of hospital admissions for stress, anxiety, and depression (\$9654) multiplied by the number of individuals served last year.
Improved financial situation	The annual cost of the Government of Alberta's Rent Assistance Benefit: eligible low-income families are entitled to up to \$700-900 per month in rent assistance. Taking the lower end of the scale (\$700) multiplied by 12 months, multiplied by the number of households the EFH program served last year.
Social benefits	Based on the assumption that seniors and those living with disabilities are most likely to be affected by social isolation, the average cost of an Adult Day Program (\$10) which is partially funded by the Alberta Health Services can be used. An assumption is made that an individual may attend once per month, so multiply \$10 by 12 for the annual cost, and multiply it by the number of seniors and those living with disabilities (using those who state AISH as their income source as a proxy) the Calgary Food Bank served last year.
Improved quality of life	The Alberta Government provides a subsidy for children's sports recreation programs of up to \$350 per child. So multiplying that total by the number of children the Calgary Food Bank served last year, plus the \$50 Fair Entry subsidy for adults multiplied by the number of adults the Calgary Food Bank served last year.
Improved life circumstances	The Calgary Homeless Foundation estimated in previous research that it costs on average \$94,202 to house an individual in the homeless shelter system in the city per year. So this total multiplied by the number of individuals the Calgary Food Bank served last year.

Outcome	Alternative SROI Ratio	Actual SROI Ratio
Increased access to food	10.08:1	9.84:1
Mental health benefits	10.52:1	
Improved financial situation	10.82:1	
Social benefits	9.84:1	
Improved quality of life	9.85:1	
Improved life circumstances	28.9:1	
TOTAL	30.81:1	

Note: Sourced from Calgary Food Bank (2024), CIHI (2024), Civida (2023), Age Care (2024), Alberta Sport (2024), City of Calgary (2024), Calgary Homeless Foundation (2007).