**Lockers of Love**

**Winter 2021 Proposal**

The MSU Food Collective Centre executive staff propose that the Lockers of Love program move from an anonymous food drop-off service to an anonymous virtual grocery gift card distribution process for the duration of the Ontario COVID-19 lockdown regulations. We believe that a virtual gift card system will increase both the accessibility and safety of FCC partners amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The following sections outline the shortcomings of our current Lockers of Love system, specifics of the proposed gift card system protocol, the benefits of this system, as well as finances and other considerations that we have taken into account.

**Lockers of Love – Fall 2020**

While the Lockers of Love program was successfully open for an approximately 2-month duration in the fall semester, the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in decreased efficiency of the program for both FCC staff and partners. Primarily, given the nature of online classes, most FCC partners are no longer on campus on a day-to-day basis to retrieve their Lockers of Love order. In the case of many partners, travelling to and from campus not only is an increased burden amidst stressful conditions, but it also increases the risk of exposure to COVID-19 by unnecessary travel to campus. Furthermore, the majority of buildings on campus are closed to the public or follow limited operating hours under COVID-19 regulations. As a result, over half of the Lockers of Love designated lockers are inaccessible to the program, limiting our order capacity and making it more difficult for partners to access their orders. For example, we have had one partner arrive to campus on two separate occasions to find the buildings closed while trying to retrieve their order. Moreover, we have noticed extended delays in the retrieval of Lockers of Love orders. We postulate this is a result of the added burden of travelling to campus.

It is evident to the FCC staff that the Lockers of Love program is an incredibly important service in the midst of a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the first 24 hours of re-opening our program in November, the FCC received multiple Lockers of Love orders to be filled for community partners. We believe it is of the utmost importance for Lockers of Love to re-open as soon as possible and in the safest way possible for both the FCC partners and staff.

**Proposed Lockers of Love Gift Card System**

As a solution to some of the issues raised above, the FCC is suggesting moving to a completely virtual anonymous relief service through online gift cards. The goal of the system is to maintain the anonymity of the Lockers of Love program while supplying a contact free alternative to travelling back and forth from campus.

Similar to the current format, partners will access a Lockers of Love order form on the FCC website to indicate their need of the service. In their personal questionnaire, FCC partners outline the extent of their needs which may influence the nature of the gift card. If it appears that extensive health products are required, the FCC can collaborate with SHEC to provide health-specific gift card support. As opposed to completing a survey of their desired items, the partner will instead complete their profile questionnaire but simply check that they are requesting a virtual gift card. Below this request the FCC will indicate the reasoning to this switch and provide contact information if there are any concerns or questions.

Once the survey is completed, the Assistant Director will receive an email indicating a request has been placed and fill a purchase order for an online grocery gift card, valued at $25 in the email of the partner. In our current review of available electronic gift cards, we will most likely be dispensing through Wal-Mart or President’s Choice (PC) The Gift of Choice cards which can be applied to multiple companies (Loblaws, Loblaw Great Food, Dominion, No Frills, Real Canadian Superstore, Maxi, Pharmaprix, Provigo, Extra Foods, Your Independent Grocer, Atlantic Superstore, Zehrs Markets, Valu-mart, Fortinos, Shoppers Drug Mart, and more).

Following this purchase, the FCC partner will instantaneously receive a virtual gift card to their email. This process eliminates the need for travel and allows the FCC partner further independence over their grocery needs, rather than being limited by the stock of the FCC space.

**Finances**

With regard to finances, the FCC Director and Assistant Director believe the budget is available to service the necessary partners with grocery store gift cards, while maintaining the funding to re-stock the FCC space if and when restrictions change. The Director and Assistant Director postulate the average FCC order values at approximately $25, depending on the resources requested. Currently, the FCC space continues to have $900 for stocking supplies. Given less than $100 were spent to service 2 months of Lockers of Love last semester, we believe that funding this system will not be an issue. In partnership with SHEC, the FCC also has an additional $300+ to fund health and wellness-related requests.

**Proposed Benefits**

As abovementioned, the current Lockers of Love system presents myriad concerns with regard to COVID-19 exposure and travel. We believe that switching to a virtual gift card system will limit the health risks to FCC partners and staff by limiting their interactions on campus and travel throughout the city of Hamilton; increase the accessibility of the program to FCC partners by eliminating travel times and navigating building hours; and allow for greater freedom and independence over grocery choices for FCC partners. Ultimately, the proposed virtual system will allow for FCC partners to gain greater support in a safer manner.

Moreover, a virtual gift card system would allow the FCC to support students struggling financially who may not be currently located in the Hamilton region. By utilizing gift cards to grocery chains found across Canada, the FCC can ensure that those students requiring support and able to find it with Lockers of Love. Furthermore, the FCC staff believe this is a great opportunity to implement a new inventory system. Through the switch to virtual gift cards, the FCC staff will have the opportunity to take extensive inventory of supplies without the flow of goods occurring. Ideally this will allow for enough time to implement the new inventory tracking system for when restrictions are lifted.

We hope that the EB is convinced of the crucial nature of this virtual Lockers of Love system and the strategies we have proposed to mitigate any safety or other concerns. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the nature of this request, please do not hesitate to contact the Director, Hannan Minhas, or Assistant Director, Elise Durie.

Thank you for your consideration,

The FCC Executive