

**GOLDEN HORSESHOE FOOD
AND FARMING ALLIANCE**

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Golden Horseshoe
Food and Farming
Alliance

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WHO WE ARE

The Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA) is a partnership between the regional municipalities and Federations of Agriculture in Niagara, Peel, Halton, York, and Durham, and the cities of Hamilton and Toronto, Conservation Authorities, the Greenbelt Foundation, Durham College, Niagara College, and the University of Guelph, the Holland Marsh Growers and members of the food industry.

In 2020, the GHFFA released their 5-year Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan, which identifies pathways for a more integrated and coordinated approach to food and farming viability in the area to ensure that the Golden Horseshoe retains, enhances and expands its role as a leading food and farming cluster in North America.

CHAIRS REPORT

As the fog of Covid lifts and we return to a new way of life, we can see that many of our lives have changed for the better, the way we live, work and farm has been refocused. The food value chain across the Golden Horseshoe has changed, in many ways it is stronger, and we can see that we as food growers, the resiliency we are known for has held true throughout the pandemic.

2020 was a year of working, gathering, and cultivating, the Action Plan is now ready, and the Action Items are ready to harvest. There is no greater satisfaction than being part of the Alliance as region by region we accomplish the goals set out through the Action Plan.

One of our first steps is opening our annual meeting to a broader audience and sharing sector knowledge and experiences from across the Golden Horseshoe.

'Use the Annual General Meeting as an opportunity to celebrate wins, report on outcomes and enhance relationship building with existing and new collaborators by expanding attendance to over 100 people representing a broad range of stakeholders across the Golden Horseshoe, from researchers, to innovators and investors, municipal partners, conservation authorities, other ministries and provincial leaders, farmers, and more.'

Our role as individuals around this table, this Golden Horseshoe, is to implement the HOW, I am continually impressed with the detail of action items with in the Action Plan and I am excited to be part of the Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Alliance as we work with all levels of government, stakeholders, producers, packagers, alike to ensure the food sector in Ontario has a productive and sustainable future.

We have worked together to build this plan and now we will work together to build and strengthen relationships across the Golden Horseshoe to put movement behind the Action Plan.



Johanna Downey

GHFFA Chair



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2020 was an extraordinary year. It is the year that we will always view with both sadness for those lost and wonder at the change that happened in our lives and work.

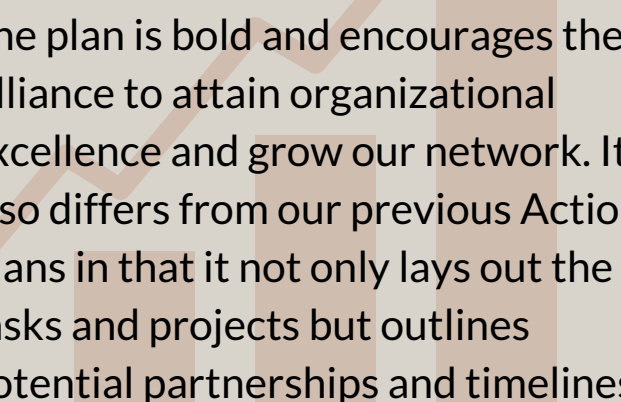
2020 in many ways allowed us to pause and reset. The Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance took full advantage of the reset as we spent much of the year developing our new Action Plan. With a new five-year plan endorsed, in my report, I wish to address the Alliance reset under four topic areas:

1. Strategic Planning
2. Succession Planning
3. Contingency Planning
4. Emergency Planning

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Our Action Plans are our Strategic Plans. They guide our projects and work as an Alliance and stretch us to new collaborations, partnerships and areas of concern. In our new Action Plan - A Vibrant Future 2021-26, we find themes of Climate Change, Food Security and Sustainability. These were themes that had not become critical 10 years ago when the previous Action Plan was written. As the years have progressed, we can no longer ignore the urgency of these 3 areas when it comes to growing food production, processing food and food distribution.

The plan is bold and encourages the Alliance to attain organizational excellence and grow our network. It also differs from our previous Action Plans in that it not only lays out the tasks and projects but outlines potential partnerships and timelines.



In this way, the Alliance will have a better opportunity to measure the effectiveness of our efforts.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

We have been fortunate to have strong committed Board members from the municipal level and the Federations of Agriculture. Four year terms have allowed Board stability and a partial turnover at every municipal election.

Staff wise, the ConnectON project headed by Marilyn Bidgood and joined by Nicole Winter, Kimmy Samra and Tayler Black have developed a strong Data Team. Under Marilyn's guidance, Nicole has flourished in her role and will be assuming Project Manager role for the Northern Ontario project in 2021.

Recent retirements of Kathy MacPherson of the Greenbelt Fund and Joanne-Hickey Evans, Senior Planner from the City of Hamilton have reminded me that I can't hold the Executive Directors' chair forever. Over the next 2-3 years, it will be our challenge to find the right candidate to fill this seat. That person may want a full-time position with benefits. As we do not offer that at this time, the challenge will be how to fund this.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

At the formation of the Alliance, 10 years ago, we proposed a unique funding model to the municipal partners. Instead of relying completely on grants, the Alliance would have core funding covered by the partner municipalities with additional money left to leverage other project funds. It takes ongoing effort to keep the municipalities informed and committed. Working Group staff come and go and commitment can sometimes diminish.

The Alliance must continue to show value to our partners for perpetuation of a strong funding base.

Thirty thousand dollars per year is a significant investment for each municipal partner. We all know that amount does not buy today what it did 10 years ago. While we have been able to generate some new dollars through our increased partnerships with ConnectON, we must always be looking for new sources of funds, projects and efficiencies.

EMERGENCY PLANNING

As a virtual office, staff at the Alliance had very little trouble moving to a "Work From Home" model. We were already there! Like everyone else, we soon learned to use Zoom, Teams, Webex, Slack and an assortment of other technologies.

And while we made it work, we have certainly missed the comradery and warmth of the in-person meetings. It also drove home the importance of continuing to advocate for strong rural internet. Modern agriculture and rural Ontario cannot be left behind in a Digital Divide.

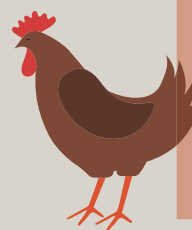
As Covid outbreaks hit Long Term Care homes, our research project on the Economic Impact of Local Food in LTC facilities came to a grinding halt. Understandably, LTC staff were not able to answer emails or calls from our team as they were focused on keeping residents safe. The team pivoted their project, adjusted their deliverables and have carried on. There will still be important information come from this project.

It has been my pleasure to serve since 2009 as your Executive Director – even in this extraordinary year.

We are blessed as an organization to have an extraordinary team who care about their work, a committed Board, supportive municipal staff, and awesome partners in our project work. Let's look with hope towards the next time we are able to be together to celebrate!

Janet Horner

GHFFA Executive Director





OUR STAFF AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OUR PEOPLE



JANET HORNER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



JULIE WILSON
ACCOUNTING



MARILYN BIDGOOD
PROJECT MANAGER
CONNECTON



STEPHANIE CROCKER
RESEARCH CONSULTANT
LONG TERM CARE



SONI CRAIK CHRISTIE
RESEARCH CONSULTANT
LONG TERM CARE



TAYLER BLACK
DATA MANAGEMENT



NICOLE WINTER
WESTERN ONTARIO
WARDEN PROJECT



JOSIE DIFELICE
COMMUNICATIONS



KIMMY SAMRA
DATA MANAGEMENT
SPECIALIST



BENJAMIN CRAIG
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
CO-OP STUDENT



DEEP PATEL
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
GIS AND DATA SPECIALIST
CO-OP STUDENT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DURHAM REGION

Councillor Gordon Highet
Regional Councillor

Ken Lamb

Durham Federation of Agriculture

Ryan Cullen

Durham College

YORK REGION

Councillor Avia Eek
Township of King

Kim Empringham

York Federation of
Agriculture

PEEL REGION

Councillor Johanna Downey
Regional Councillor (Chair)

Tom Dolson

Peel Federation of Agriculture

CITY OF TORONTO

Micheal Wolfson
Economic Development

HALTON REGION

Councillor Mike Cluett
Regional Councillor

Meaghan Richardson

Halton Federation of
Agriculture

NIAGARA REGION

Councillor Albert Whitteveen
Regional Councillor

Cathy Mous

Niagara Federation of Agriculture

Patrick Robson

Niagara College

CITY OF HAMILTON

Councillor Judy Partridge
City Councillor

No appointee

Hamilton Federation of Agriculture

Vacancy

Public Health

Greenbelt Foundation

Kathy MacPherson

Conservation Authority

No appointee

University of Guelph

Wayne Caldwell

Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Mark Reusser

Holland Marsh Growers

Jody Mott

Country Heritage Park

Jamie Reaume

Advisory Board Members

non voting

**Ontario Ministry of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Affairs**

Carolyn Puterbough

Working Group Members

Eric Acks

Linda Sicoli

Brian Morris

Joanne Hickey-Evans

Anna DeMarchi-Meyers

Don Cameron

Ben Roberts

Meena Hassalani

Stacey Jibb

Allison Brown

Danielle Collins

Kiersten Allore-Engel

Anna Shortly



ACTION PLAN 2021-2026

This new Action Plan provides an update to the previous Plan based on economic and societal changes that have arisen since 2012, in order to guide the Alliance over the next 5 years. These changes include advancements in technology (such as automation and artificial intelligence), the impacts of climate change, the changing policy context, as well as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the agri-food system.

This Action Plan aims to build on past successes while taking into consideration emerging trends and opportunities to plan for a prosperous future for the agri-food sector within the Golden Horseshoe region.

The Vision

The Golden Horseshoe is globally renowned as a vibrant and sustainable agri-food cluster, characterized by profitable farming operations of all sizes, a thriving hub of food processing and food retail, extensive research capacity, and innovative technology.

To read the full Action Plan click [Here](#)

The Goals

1
The GHFFA is recognized as the leading organization with expertise on food and farming issues and opportunities in the Golden Horseshoe Region of Ontario.

2
Establish the Golden Horseshoe as Canada's leading innovative agriculture and agri-food cluster.

3
Enable the agri-food cluster to support sustainability outcomes.

OUR PROJECTS

ConnectON is an asset mapping tool that supports economic development, planning, emergency preparedness/response and policy development. The ConnectON program continues to develop and expand as more partners and users “Know and Grow” the agri-food and manufacturing sectors.

Key accomplishments for 2020 include:

DATA, DATA, DATA

- Focus on data quality and refresh as a priority for GHFFA and ConnectON partners
- OMAFRA Farm Business Registration Data refreshed across the province (43,000+ records)
- Obtained Manufacturing data from open source data searches

Golden Horseshoe Partner Data Refresh Topline Summary

2020 Golden Horseshoe Partner Data Refresh	
City/Town	Total # of Assets Uploaded to ConnectON
City of Brampton	2,224
City of Mississauga	6,322
City of Toronto	8,334
Town of Caledon	660
Total	17,540

RESOURCES

All users benefit from the new resources that were developed.

These include:

- 4 video tutorials (Introduction to ConnectON, Tour of ConnectON, Navigating the Toolbar and Infrastructure Overlays and Base Maps)
- Extensive list of examples where ConnectON has been used to support provincial, regional and municipal project work
- Updates to Data Upload Templates
- Updates to the ConnectON User Guide
- ConnectON Website refresh
- www.connecton.ca



Watch the Introduction to ConnectON video [HERE](#)

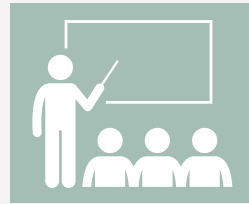


WOWC PROJECT

The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC), received project funding through OMAFRA's Rural Economic Development program for project completion on March 31, 2021. This is important work to "complete the picture" for Southwestern Ontario.



Develop resources



Provide access and training



Ongoing communication and support

Project Deliverables include:



Collect municipal business data and map 10 new municipal partners and refresh and add new data for 5 current partners



Obtain, upload and refresh FBR data, Manufacturing data, and third party data



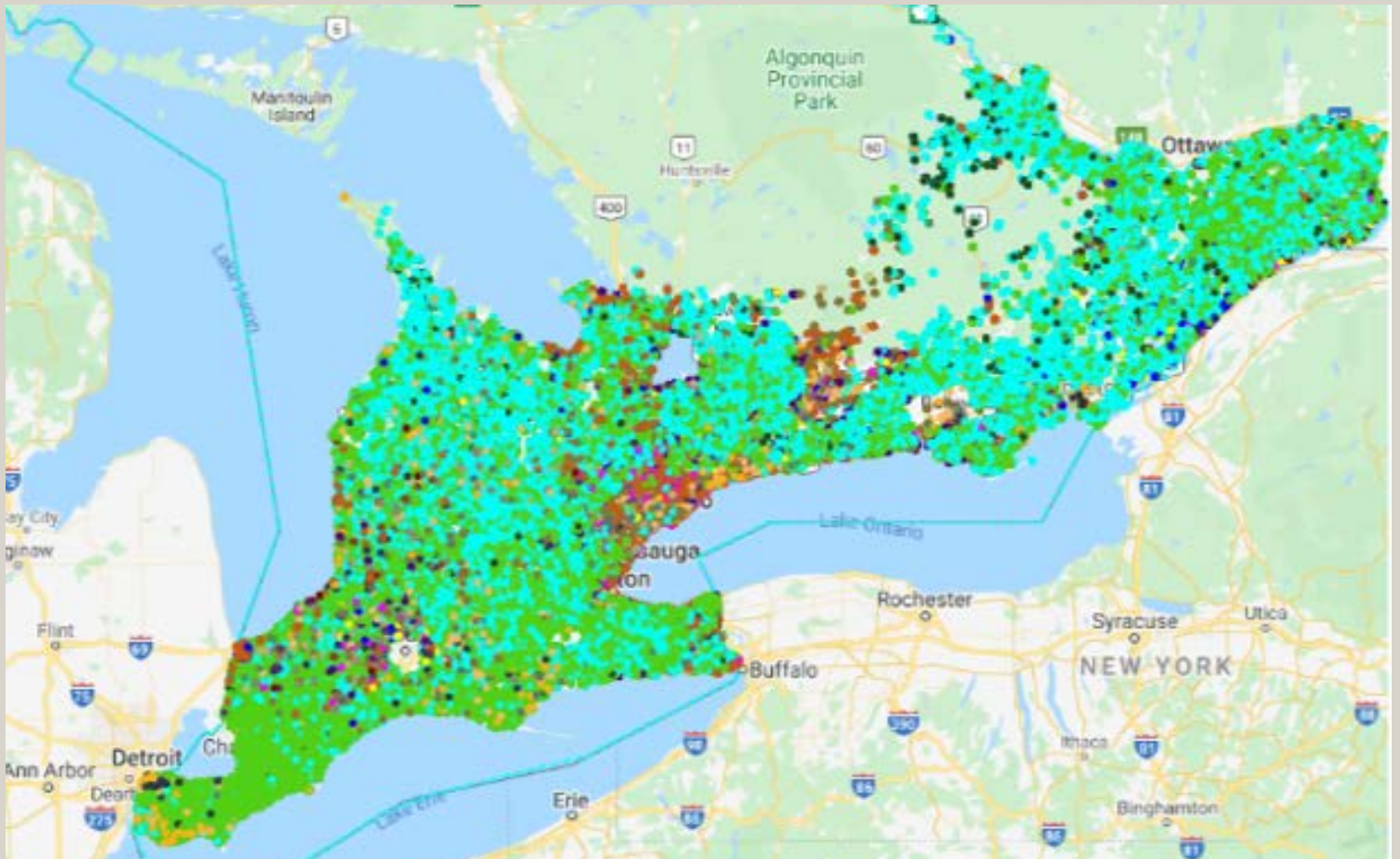
Establish data sharing agreements with municipal partners and organizations



Establish regional viewing

BENEFITS TO ALL USERS

- Updated data and new data sources
- Over 100,000 businesses in ConnectON, 50 municipal partners and 200+ users
- Regional viewing for Southwestern Ontario and Southern Ontario
- Support Agricultural Systems approach to planning and the OMAFRA Agricultural Systems Portal
- System Enhancements and new features: improved site security, new functionality



HEADING NORTH

This would complete the provincial picture and there is significant interest and support for a project.

- Partnership with Northern Policy Institute (NPI)
- NPI will lead and source funding for mapping 11 Districts
- Pilot a new sector which will benefit all partners

Thanks to a Talented Team

Nicole Winter

Project Manager, WOWC

Kinmy Saura

Data Management Specialist

Taylor Black

Data Manager

Marilyn Bidgood

Project Manager, ConnectON

SERVING UP LOCAL II: ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

2020 marks the second of three years of the Serving Up Local II: Economic Assessment (SULEA) project. This research project between the GHFFA and the University of Guelph saw a major shift during the pandemic in order to stay relevant and successful in the changed landscape of long-term care.

The original SULEA project proposal was focused around understanding the economic impacts to LTC homes of a local food purchasing goal in order to support OMAFRA in creating aspirational goals and targets for local food purchasing in the BPS under Pillar 3 of the Local Food Act. The concept was to use data and work GHFFA had previously done as part of Serving Up Local I with a second cohort of homes from the Regions of Peel and Niagara to compare data points and create an online economic assessment tool for all homes in Ontario. This tool would assist homes in better understanding the economic impacts to their homes of increasing local food and help them to plan their local food goals.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic gravely impacted LTC homes and their ability to focus on any projects outside of virus response. In order to create the economic assessment tool, we needed standard purchasing data from Cohort 2 before and after a local purchasing priority, and 2020 was anything but standard purchasing practices in healthcare. We also lost access to our LTC teams as their focus shifted internally to the crisis happening in their homes and in their sector, so implementing a new food purchasing priority for Cohort 2 was not an attainable action.

We wanted the major output of the project pivot to be something useful, and meaningful that could contribute to the calls for LTC reform. Our extended literature review shifted to study food reporting in other institutions and provinces. Unlike other public healthcare institutions in Ontario, LTC homes are not required to report on food purchases. That makes the Serving Up Local II data collected from 22 LTC homes the only food purchasing statistics collected from LTC homes in Ontario. And we have data for two different scenarios - one before a local food and food purchase tracking priority, and one after, making this data valuable and unique. The pivot shifted the data analysis to reveal some unintended positive food quality outcomes for increasing local food and food purchase tracking practices in LTC.



GENERAL FINDINGS

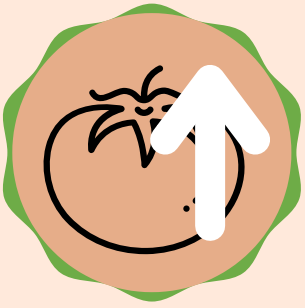
The data also revealed that major food classes, like fresh produce, ranged dramatically as a percentage of total food budget spend from home to home. This inequity between homes' offerings to their residents has led the project to recommend policy on food category reporting for LTC homes, and food quality indicators related to food purchase spend by food category. Based on project research, a government mandate to track food category purchases could also be a tool for upholding local food purchasing in the BPS. Thus, the project focus now includes greater government relations to collaborate with the Ontario Auditor General's office, and to ultimately bring together OMAFRA and the Ministry of Long-Term Care for the first time to consider the emerging SULEA project recommendations on food category tracking and creating food quality indicators. The final project year is lined up to be an exciting one!

Stephanie Crocker

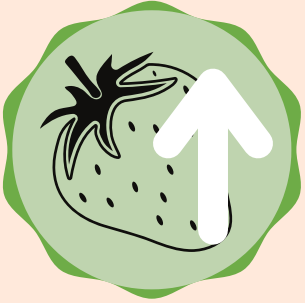
Research Consultant Long Term Care

Soni Craik Christie

Research Consultant Long Term Care



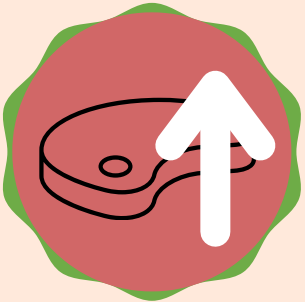
Increased fresh produce spend by **19%** collectively



Increased local seasonal produce by **31%**



Processed fruit and vegetable spend **increased**



Local high-quality proteins **increased**



Processed food spend **decreased**

ONTARIO CARROT VALUE CHAIN

Following the Alliance release of the Ontario Carrot Value Chain Study in 2019, an infographic to illustrate the value chain was produced. The infographic tells succinctly the story of the journey of the carrot from field to table. Every Canadian consumes 9.9 kg of carrots per year. As a significant part of our diet, it is important that we understand the origin and journey of the humble carrot. Most of the carrots produced in Ontario are grown in the Bradford area, part of the food cluster of the Golden Horseshoe. Please check for the Foodland Ontario label!



The full report on the Ontario Carrot Value Chain Project can be found [Here](#)

A PRACTITIONERS GUIDE TO LOCAL FOOD

Sometimes the best way to get things done, is to collaborate with others than to go it alone. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture successfully applied for Canadian Agricultural Partnership funding and gathered several partners to produce a toolkit for communities to guide them through potential activities, key performance metrics, funding opportunities, and ways to collaborate to support Ontario's agri-food sector.

The project aims to increase local food sales, provide new opportunities for local producers for value-added agriculture, enhance agri-tourism and culinary tourism opportunities, and elevate the brand of local agricultural products.

The **Always in Season Toolkit** can be used nationwide. It includes many tips, templates, and innovative ideas for communities to initiate, particularly during events such as Local Food Week, Ontario Agriculture Week, Canadian Agricultural Literacy Month, Canada's Ag Day, and Food Day Canada. Through interviews with stakeholders across the province, many innovative approaches were highlighted to support the agri-food sector, and help producers sell more local products and encourage agri-tourism.



Supporting agriculture, local food and local beverage processors has never been more important. Community organizations and municipalities have a vital role to play in fostering an environment where agricultural producers and processors can thrive.

OFA partnered on this project with the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance, Greenbelt Foundation, South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation, Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance, Greenbelt Fund, Meat and Poultry Ontario, Rural Ontario Institute, Food and Beverage Ontario, Rural Agri-Innovation Network, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, Ontario East Economic Development Commission and Farm and Food Care Ontario.

To learn more and access the toolkit, visit www.foodandfarming.ca

This project was funded in part by the Canadian Agriculture Partnership, a five-year federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The Alliance contributed \$10,000 to the project.

In 2021, the Alliance will initiate a project in York Region using the **Always in Season Toolkit**





OUR STORIES

CLEAN WORKS APPROVED BY HEALTH CANADA TO SANITIZE N95 MASKS

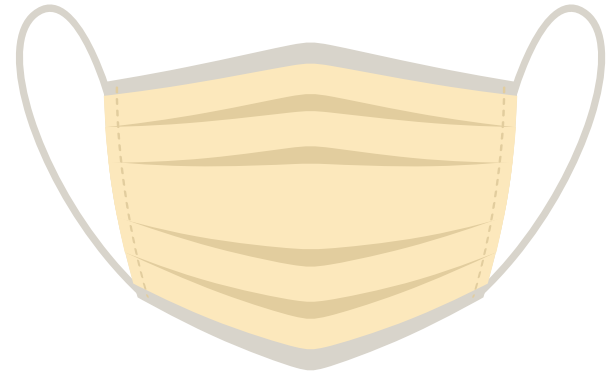
May 2020

Clean Works, last year's winner of the the Food Safety Innovation Award, has been approved by Health Canada to sanitize N95 masks for healthcare workers.

The company has invented a novel system to rid produce of pathogens, moulds and viruses without using water, and has recently adapted its production facility in Niagara to build equipment specifically for the masks.

“We have been using the technology for the past four years in the agri-food industry and are the only company with this level of experience,” says Mark VanderVeen, president of Clean Works. “These units are efficient and cost-effective and mobile for use in-house and on-site.”

To read more click [HERE](#)



100KM FOODS LAUNCHES VIRTUAL MARKET WITH HOME DELIVERY

August 20th 2020

Among the many shocks caused by the pandemic, the overnight closure of restaurants in mid-March had essentially everyone in the food sector scrambling to adapt and pivot gears, including Paul and his team. But a swift and savvy pivot has resulted in 100km Foods launching a virtual farm market that gives customers the opportunity to shop from over 100 local farms, with home delivery offered throughout the GTA and contactless pick-up markets across Toronto.

To read more click [HERE](#)



MOBILE GREENHOUSE CLASSROOM TO DELIVER FOOD EDUCATION TO DURHAM REGION SCHOOLS

March 9th 2020

We Grow Food (WGF) is a grassroots non-profit organization that was established in 2013 by Carol VanderSanden and Michelle Perry in Oshawa, with the aim to inspire community members to learn where their food comes from and how they can grow their own in an environmental and sustainable way.

Now going into their seventh season, WGF is expanding with a 31-foot mobile greenhouse classroom that will bring food education and gardens directly to schools and communities throughout Durham Region, supported by a recent partnership with the Durham District School Board.

To read more click [HERE](#)



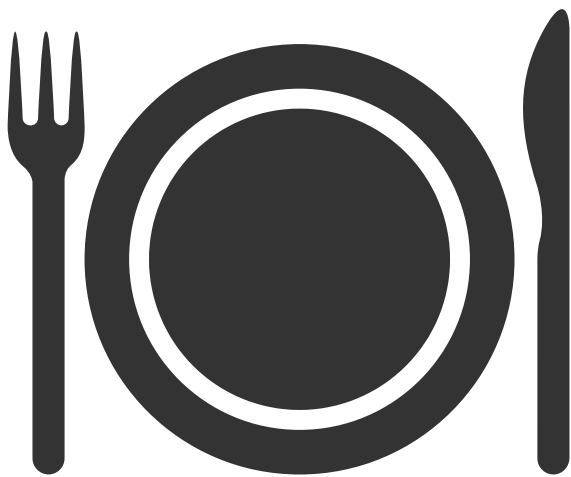
A Q&A WITH EQUAL PARTS HOSPITALITY DURING COVID-19

November 24th 2020

Equal Parts Hospitality is a driving force in the hospitality industry in Hamilton, Ontario, managing some of the city's most popular event spaces and restaurants (like The French and Aberdeen Tavern), in addition to a catering arm of the business.

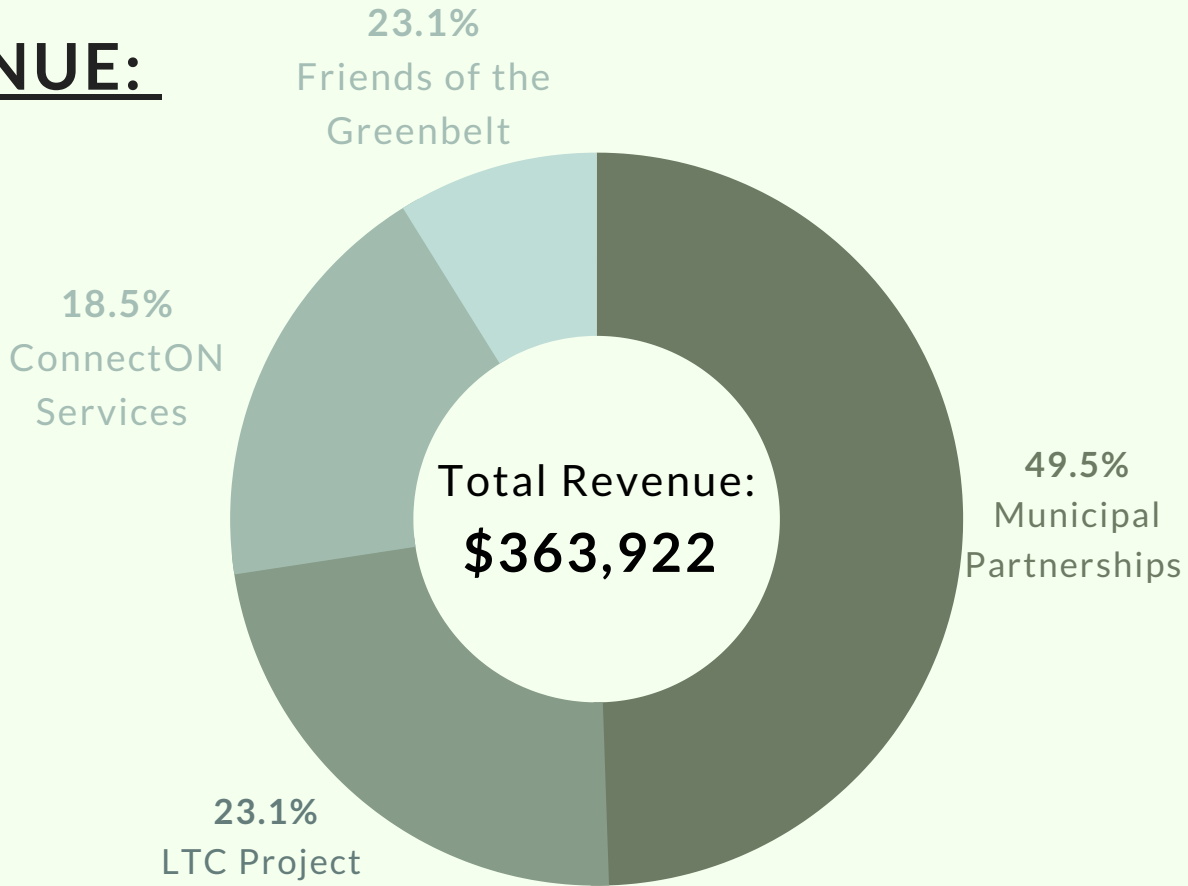
To get a glimpse of what COVID has meant for the foodservice industry, we recently connected with Equal Parts.

To read the Q&A click [HERE](#)

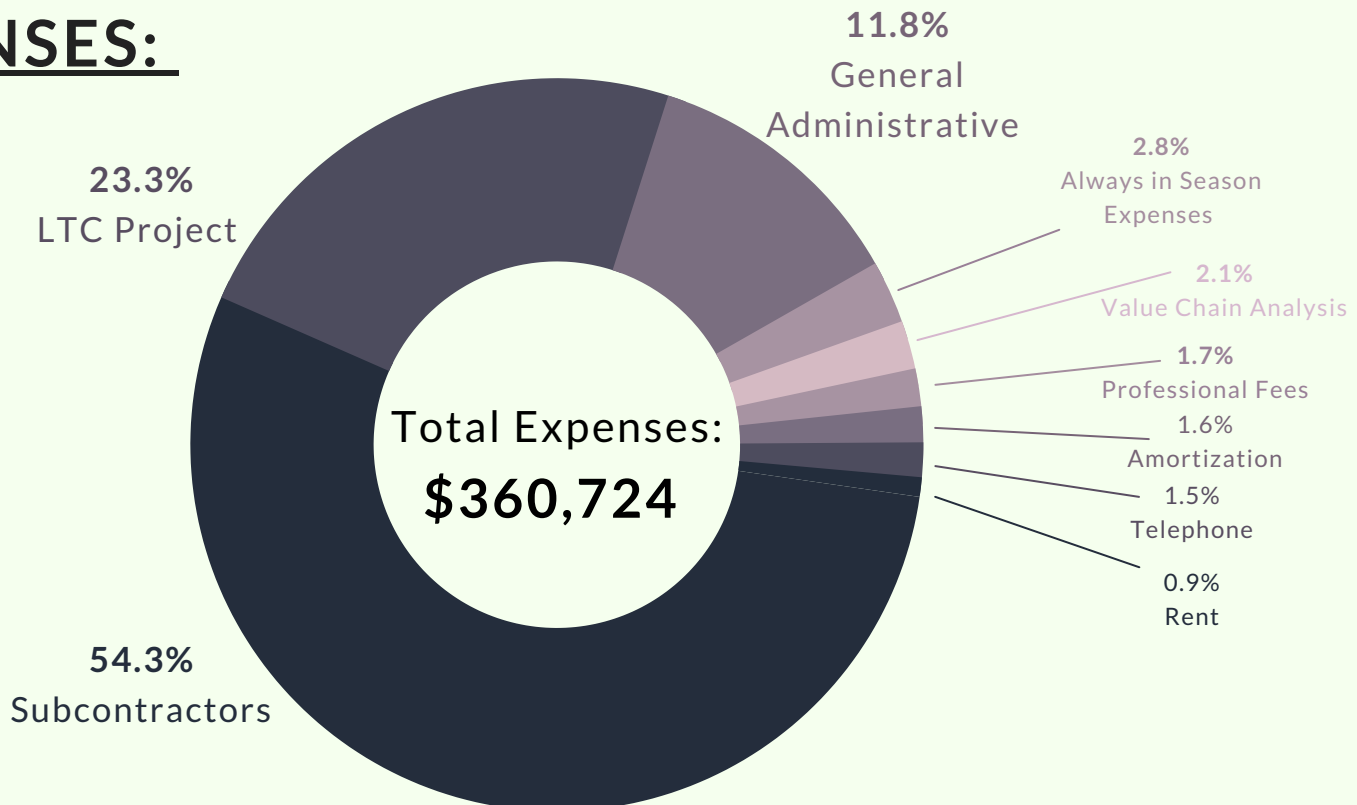


2020 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

REVENUE:



EXPENSES:



To access the full auditors report click [HERE](#)

MANAGEMENT LETTER



May 25, 2021
Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance
8560 Tremaine Road
Box 55
Milton, Ontario
L9T 2Y3

Dear Board of Directors of Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance

We have completed our audit of the financial statements of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance for the year ended December 31, 2020. As part of our work, we reviewed the accounting procedures and systems of internal control in the principal areas of financial activity within the organization. We report to you that, within the scope of our examinations, the systems of internal control are adequate to support the fairness of presentation and that we did not come across any material weaknesses.

However, we do stress that this observation is not the result of a specific examination of the organization's system of internal control and, therefore, must be taken in the context that it is meant, namely review of internal control systems to allow us to voice our opinion on the financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not for profit organizations.

During the course of our audit of the organization for the year ended December 31, 2020, we may have identified matters which might have been of interest to management but tended to be minor or more of a housekeeping nature. During the audit, we would have met with Janet Horner (Executive Director) and communicated these minor items, if applicable. The comments that follow are those that we believe should be addressed formally and brought to the attention of the board of directors.

This communication is prepared solely for the information of management and is not intended for any other party and, as such, we accept no responsibility to a third party who uses this communication.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for the excellent cooperation and assistance we received throughout the course of our work and, in particular, the assistance and co-operation received from Julie Wilson.

We will certainly be pleased to discuss the matters set out in the accompanying memo with you further, at your convenience.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "RLB LLP". The signature is written in a cursive, stylized font. The letters "R", "L", and "B" are connected, and "LLP" follows. The signature is set against a light beige rectangular background.

M. D. P. Short, MBA, CPA, CA, C. Dir, is responsible for the engagement and its performance, and for the report that is issued on behalf of RLB LLP, and who, where required, has the appropriate authority, from a professional, legal or regulatory body.

HST rebates

Observation:

RLB noted an issue with the HST during the audit engagement. The non-refundable portion of HST was being recorded to a single expense account instead of the appropriate expense on a per transaction basis.

Implication:

This causes inaccurate expense balances, which limit the organization's ability to use reporting throughout the year to make decisions.

Recommendation:

RLB recommends that the organization should be grossing up the non-refundable portion of HST to the corresponding expense account instead of allocating all HST to one account.

OUR PARTNERS



Possibility grows here.





CONTACT

Janet Horner

Executive Director

Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance

519-925-5975

janet@whitfieldfarms.com



foodandfarming.ca



[@GHFoodFarming](https://twitter.com/GHFoodFarming)

Designed by Minerva Cancilla-Styles