



HARVEST
HANDS

Harvest Hands: A Hopeful Future

Introduction

This evaluation report will detail a review and analysis of Harvest Hands, a charity organization founded by Jim Collins, conducted by Team 3 of ARBUS 300. Harvest Hands is in a compromising position. Rising demands of the charity due to more food bank visits year after year, alongside heightening maintenance costs and poor financial revenue pin the organization to a make-or-break decision. The contents of this report will assess the charity where it currently stands, where it is going, and how best to navigate the situation with a formal recommendation alongside alternatives discussed and evaluated by Team 3 for the future of the organization.

Problem & Opportunity Statement

The challenge that Harvest Hands is experiencing is critical because its rapid growth and "We never say no" policy have exceeded the organization's financial and operational capacity, stretching its warehouse space, cold storage, volunteer base, and leadership. This unsustainable growth will jeopardize its capacity to remain effective, serve communities, and maintain its mission-driven influence. The organization must find ways to sustain its expanding operations, secure steady funding, and satisfy increasing logistical demands without sacrificing its values or depleting its volunteers. How will Harvest Hands be in a position to grow food rescue activities to respond to increasing demand while remaining financially viable in the long term, operationally efficient, and aligned with its mission?

Data Analysis

The numbers and facts about Harvest Hands show how quickly the charity has grown and how much pressure that growth is creating. Since starting in 2020, the organization has given out over \$7.6 million in rescued food to more than 120 local agencies. They have about 120 regular volunteers, putting in around 900 hours each week, and they handle about \$97,500 worth of food every week. That means they move close to \$5 million worth of food each year, which is a big job for a small, volunteer-run group.

Below is a breakdown of key operational data:

Category	Data	What It Shows
Weekly Value of Food Rescued	\$97,500	Lots of supply and donor support
Yearly Value to Food Rescued	About \$5 million	Shows large growth for a small charity
Number of Partner Agencies	120+	Big network of groups relying on them
Number of Volunteers	120	Dependence on unpaid workers
Volunteer Hours Each Week	900	High effort but risk of burnout
Warehouse Size	1393 sq.m	Already near fill capacity
Growth Rate	35% per year	Expanding faster than they can handle
Food Wasted	Around 1%	Very efficient operations

Data Analysis Cont'd

The Proforma Income Statement shows that Harvest Hands is not financially sustainable right now. In 2021, they made \$70,056 in total revenue but spent over \$170,000, leaving a deficit of about \$100,000. Most of their money goes toward vehicle costs and facility costs, which shows that transportation and storage are their biggest challenges.

2021 Expense Type	Amount (CAD)	% of Total Revenue
Vehicle Rental	\$35,079	50%
Vehicle Fuel	\$20,854	30%
Facilities Rental	\$65,823	94%
Total Operating Expenses	\$170,175	243% (Deficit)

The data shows that the main problems for Harvest Hands are space, money, and structure. They do a great job at rescuing and distributing food, but their growth and lack of funding are serious limits.

Across Ontario, the need for food continues to rise. Food bank visits increased by more than 7% between 2019 – 2020, and one in six Canadian households face food insecurity. At the same time, 58% of food in Canada is wasted, showing that there is plenty of opportunity for Harvest Hands to continue making an impact.

In short, the data shows:

- There is high demand for food and plenty of available donations.
- The organization is running out of space and funding.
- Growth is fast, but structure and financial planning are weak

Key Decision Criteria

As a non-profit charity, Harvest Hands needs to really evaluate their problems and opportunities in order to strategically make the most beneficial next moves. Harvest Hands needs to create its own criteria to evaluate based off of. Without identifying key criteria, Harvest Hands will not know what to consider when identifying the next course of action. After understanding our major problems and opportunities, Harvest Hands should choose the next course or action based on the following criteria:

1. Opportunities to expand operations. Specifically increase:
 - a. Warehouse Space
 - b. Cold Storage
 - c. Volunteer Capacity
 - d. Leadership Operations
2. Seek additional funding/grow financial stability & resource
 - a. Acquisition of different sponsorships.
3. Additional food outlets/sourcing.
4. Maintain company mission/vision



Alternative Analysis

Harvest Hands have a few possible directions to take as they plan for the future. They need to decide how to grow while keeping their “never say no” belief realistic and sustainable. Here are three main options for the organization.

Alternative	Description	Pros	Cons
A. Expand Existing Facility	Rent a bigger warehouse (2322 sq. m) and buy a walk-in freezer and refrigerator. Cost: about \$12,000 per month plus \$95,000 in equipment	More space and better efficiency Keeps operations in St. Thomas Easy for current volunteers	Expensive each month Big upfront cost Still far from Toronto clients
B. Build a Commercial Kitchen	Spend about \$100,000 to make a kitchen that turns extra food into cooked meals. Also buy a dehydrator (\$10,000) and a vacuum sealer (\$7,500).	Less food waste More variety of food to give out Could build new partnerships	Needs trained people and health checks Hard to manage for volunteers Expensive to start
C. Open a Second Location Near Toronto	Open a smaller warehouse closer to donors and agencies in the GTA to save travel time and costs	Closer to large donor and client base Less driving and fuel Can serve more people	Needs more management High cost and setup time Hard to control two locations

Alternative Analysis Cont'd

To compare these options, we used a numeric comparability chart which scores them on four key factors: cost, scalability, community impact, and feasibility. Each is rated from 1 to 5 (5 is best).

Alternative	Cost	Scalability	Community Impact	Feasibility	Total (out of 20)
A. Expand Facility	3	4	5	4	16
B. Commercial Kitchen	2	3	4	2	11
C. Second Location	2	4	5	2	14

Analysis of Alternatives:

- **Option A – Expand Facility** is the best short-term option. It will give Harvest Hands more space, allow them to work faster, and let them stay where their volunteers already are. The cost is high, but they could try to get grants or community donations to help.
- **Option B – Commercial Kitchen** is a creative idea that could reduce waste even more and help different community partners, but it's costly and difficult for a volunteer team to manage. It could work in the future once the organization is more stable.
- **Option C – Second Location** would help reach more people in the Greater Toronto Area and reduce long travel times, but it requires strong leadership, a full management team, and a lot of money. Harvest Hands is not ready for that yet.

Overall, expanding the facility is the most realistic and achievable. Expanding the current facility will help Harvest Hands grow safely, stay organized, and prepare for future projects like the commercial kitchen or a second site once they have more structure and funding.

Recommendation

Upon careful consideration of all alternatives with the future of Harvest Hands, Team 3 has come to the conclusion to recommend Harvest Hands invest in facility expansion. This is due to multiple reasons, being that Harvest Hands is facing problems with efficiency in terms of volunteering. Harvest Hands currently can have a maximum of 24 volunteers working at any given time. Increasing its facility size can in turn increase the number of volunteers able to work at the same time, thus being able to prepare more meals and food for the ever-increasing population of those in need of food. Furthermore, a bigger facility opens the opportunity for Harvest Hands to take in more food to store and allows for a future investment in a walk-in freezer to preserve food.



Action & Implementation Plan

The recommendation for Harvest Hands is to develop its current facility in St. Thomas to increase storage capacity, improve operational efficiency, and meet increased community demand. This is the most realistic and achievable short-term solution, in line with the organization's mission and volunteer-driven model and will lay the groundwork for long-term development.

1. To obtain funding via grants and sponsorships, Harvest Hands should look to apply for government grants, such as,
 - a. [Ontario Trillium Foundation](#)
 - b. [Food Waste Reduction Challenge](#)
 - c. [Social Finance Fund](#)
 - d. There are many other grants available
 - e. A small team of volunteers can be dedicated to grant applications, effectively writing about the Harvest Hands initiative and growth concerns.
2. Harvest Hands can look for local partnerships and donations by
 - a. Approaching grocery stores such as Loblaws, Metro, Sobeys, which can lead to refrigerator and walk-in freezer donations, as well as other equipment
 - b. Local car dealerships that may lead to truck donation
3. Start a donation campaign. All of the harvest hands donations come from cash donations. Creating a campaign can lead to larger, more frequent donations. This can also be volunteer led.
4. Now that the funding is in place, rent a larger warehouse (2322 sq. m) to hold more food. The space should be designed and organized for maximum efficiency.
5. If a walk-in freezer cannot be donated, use grants and donations to purchase.
6. Enhance volunteer efficiency by organizing shifts and tracking hours. Management software may be beneficial.

It is also essential to maintain strong relationships with grant employees and any sponsorships and partnerships. Sending them follow-up reports showing the impact of their grants. Also, monitoring and evaluating growth and success through changes from a smaller warehouse to a larger one, the amount of food incoming and outgoing, volunteer engagement, and cost savings.

Conclusion

Overall, Harvest Hands has a bright future ahead of them, however in order to maintain such a future, they really need to consider the opportunities and appropriate courses of action to take. Making the wrong choice or decision can lead them down the wrong path, which in turn, could lead to decreases in operations and even closure. However, through the detailed data analysis, evaluation of alternatives and recommendations we have provided, it is clear that expanding the current facilities of Harvest Hands is the most practical and sustainable path for growth and evolution. With our team's recommendation of expanding operations, we think that Harvest Hands will have the best opportunity to expand all sectors of their operations. This strategy directly tackles the issue of overcrowding, limited storage and volunteer shortages, while also maintaining the organizations mission. By pursuing the path for expansion, and centering our focus on targeting sponsorships, partnerships, donor engagement and grant applications, Harvest Hands will be positioning itself in such a place that allows stable and scalable growth. By strengthening Harvest Hand's funding, the company will have enough financial stability to to expand their operations and infrastructure. As an organization, it will be able to enhance operational efficiencies, meet more demand, goals and needs, and also build a sturdy foundation for future development and growth. Our approach for Harvest Hands will ensure the continuation of the charity's mission of feeding communities while also setting Harvest Hands up for long-term success.

