

Evaluation plan for CAUS online Phase I 2021: Evaluating the online farmer's market with home delivery

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Background About CAUS

This evaluation is for CAUS (Coopératif de solidarité d'abondance urbaine solidaire). CAUS is a solidarity coop in Verdun. Their mission is to create abundance for Verdun's citizens through eating and growing local, healthy and sustainable food, education and community cohesion.

Amongst the greatest activities CAUS has are:

1. Creating a community around abundance and local food and growing food with empowered members. CAUS has worker, producer (farmer or artisan) and consumer members.
2. Getting local and sustainable food to Verdun people through the physical farmer's markets and newly through their online farmer's market with home delivery.
3. Educating members about food that is available and that can be grown locally. This includes workshops on aquaponics with CAUS's aquaponics system, the distribution of seeds and seedlings for gardening but also indigenous plants, various other gardening workshops, a biodiversity Facebook Page run in partnership with La Maison de l'Environnement de Verdun, De-main Verdun and La Maison Nivard-de Saint-Dizier that encourages the photographing and cataloguing of different mammals, invertebrates, plants and fungi. MTL ON MANGE is an app in development to educate on the characteristics, growing information, history, nutritional information and culinary information or recipes about local and in-season ingredients.
4. Leveraging community well-being and dynamism through partnerships with other organizations in the community with convergent missions.

The Table below shows CAUS’ membership growth over the years

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Worker members				14	15
Producer Members (Farmers/Artisans)				32	32
Consumer Members				109	133
Total members	7	71	109	150	178

Some of CAUS’ Numbers

- 190 local organic produce baskets distributed weekly during the market season, more than 4000 during the summer of 2019
- Up to 36 farmer’s markets per summer since 2016
- 36 events a year in non-COVID times including workshops, parties and music shows at the markets
- New since May 2020, on online market with delivery once a week that offers even more products than the physical market because of COVID restrictions and continues beyond the regular market season, so prolonging the time that local sustainable food can be made easily accessible to citizens.
- CAUS sells various products online and through their kiosk at the market for different producers with a commission.
- 477 litres of compost were collected between five different community organizations and sold and distributed in 2019

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose is to evaluate the growth of CAUS' virtual market over the 2021 season. CAUS has been running the farmer's markets in Verdun for six years. Due to COVID the restrictions it brought on the physical market for the 2020 season in terms of numbers of people allowed in at one time, the products permitted to be sold at farmer's markets as well as the barriers it created for clients that are regulars to the market, pushed CAUS to pivot quickly and create an online farmer's market with home delivery so they could: keep all of their farmer/artisan/producer vendors, serve their clients and members and hopefully reach new people in Verdun with mobility issues/time constraints/auto-immune issues or other barriers to coming to the market. Having an online market was already on CAUS' docket, but the project was hurried along and created very quickly because of the pandemic. CAUS has never had sufficient revenue to pay its worker members regularly nor its board members for their implication. Lack of funds, the demands of grant writing, teamed with the pro-bono operations and management of the physical and virtual market means that the marketing, structuring of the market in an efficient way and a hard launch with the app MTL ON MANGE all fell by the wayside.

The money received from grants is destined for a market/strategy study resulting in a marketing and promotion plan, a rebranding and the redo of the website, including the online farmer's market and the implementation of an accounting system that simplifies the back-end accounting as well as the development of the MTL ON MANGE app mentioned earlier. Although, only the virtual market's growth in 2021 will be the focus, I believe it is important to include context and the elements connected to the virtual market like grants, MTL ON MANGE, the strategic market study, rebranding, the promotion plan and the redo of the website as these are all actions that are meant to support the virtual market's growth.

What is described above is the first phase of development of CAUS' online activities. There are two other phases of "CAUS Virtual" planned respectively in 2022 and 2023, but that is beyond the scope of this plan.

Program Description

This evaluation will monitor the growth of the virtual market specifically from February- Nov 2021, collecting the data during that period and then the data will be analyzed between December 2021 and January 2022. It will be used to answer a variety of questions by using indicators measured through quantitative and qualitative data. In this section we will look at the initial questions that arise, the uses, as well as a logic model or theory of change. In a later section, the focus will be explored and in the subsequent “Data and Sources” section I will look at how data will be collected and at the end I will explore a timeline of communications and the use of the data.

Initial questions

The initial questions about the virtual market that arose are the following:

1. What are the desired outputs for the virtual market in 2021?
2. How can we measure those outputs or validate whether they were achieved?
3. What can the quantitative data tell us?
4. What can the qualitative data tell us?
5. How can the answers from the data inform an action plan?
6. How can the impact of the grant money be measured and what kind of results can be expected?

In the section about the focus, I will focus in on which questions can feasibly be answered as well as questions that were raised by stakeholders.

Uses

The evaluation would be used by CAUS internally for the **board members** and likely as part of the annual report, also to share with:

- **Employees**, for context

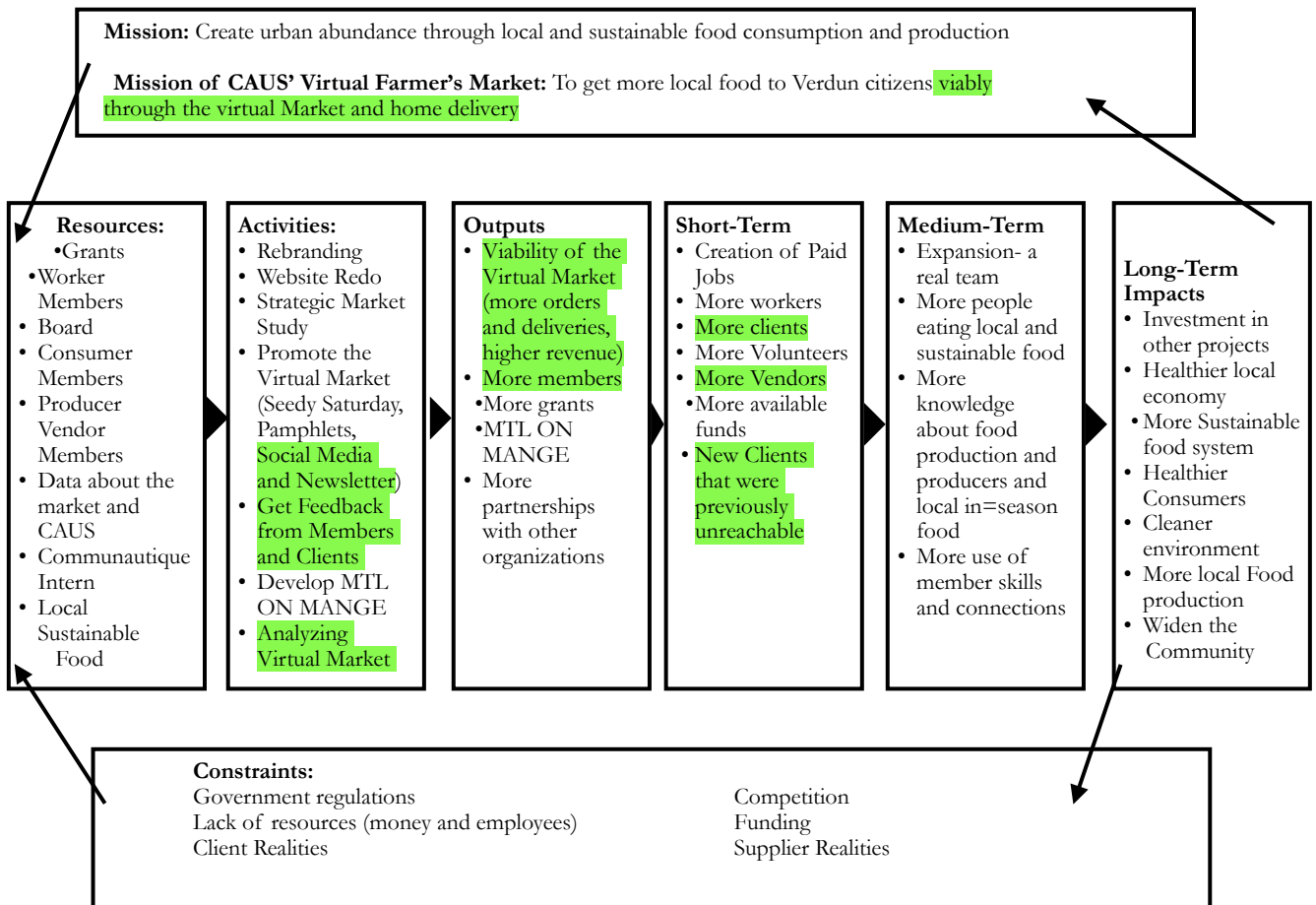
- **Funders** including the Verdun borough and other government bodies
- **Partner organizations**, in order to involve them in the project and give context
- **Vendor farmers and artisans**, to demonstrate growth and share client feedback
- **Members**, context for members

Table 1: Logic Model/Theory of Change

The goal of funnelling and gathering resources is to achieve the impacts that are found at the end of the “Theory of Change”. On the way to get there are several outputs that can be measured on the short-term over the next season. They will be the focus. I will discuss in the next section: the focus on which questions and which phases as well as which outputs.

CAUS Virtual Market Theory of Change

That which is **highlighted** is the focus



Focusing the Evaluation of CAUS Online Phase I: Virtual Market in 2021

The evaluation will focus on process evaluation for the virtual market and validating that as the implementation of the development plan takes place in winter, spring and summer, that there are ways to verify that things are going as they should and the short-term outputs of growing sales through the virtual market, more deliveries, gaining new members and increasing products and vendors being achieved.

Although there are questions for every step of the logic model, the questions that came up in the most significant way are listed in the table below. The other columns speak to which aspects of answering each question works or does not. All rows where all conditions are satisfied are highlighted.

Table 2 The rows highlighted are deemed important questions.

Questions	Stakeholder Priority	Relevance	Feasibility	Combined with other questions does this contribute to a complete picture	Does this question provide utility to the stakeholders?
All Phases					
How can CAUS convert more clients into members from the virtual market?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
How can CAUS get all of its different types of empowered members more involved in the CAUS virtual market project?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Formative					
How is virtual market viability defined? What are the desired outputs for 2021?How can they be measured?	Yes	Yes	Contribution analysis?	Yes	Yes
How can the impact of a strategic market study’s recommendations, implementation and impact be measured?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
What are the barriers to the virtual market?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

What does the virtual market have going for it? How can CAUS capitalize on that?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
How can we ensure that the plans for this project are feasible?	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Contribution analysis: How can the logic model be validated and refuted? Where is there strong evidence of the results being connected to the program? What other external factors are at play?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Process Evaluation					
Who is the market's target clientele?	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
How can CAUS reach its target clientele?	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
How can we evaluate the program during implementation?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
How can the funding's impact be measured?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Summative					
How does this project propels CAUS to other projects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
What are the social impacts of the project?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
How can the utility of this evaluation be maximized for CAUS and translate into an action plan, increase outputs and resources?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

In order to focus the evaluation, it will focus on the growth of the virtual market over the 2021 season and attempt to answer the above questions through quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The goal is to suss out whether the virtual market's growth was sufficient or successful and which factors contributed to its growth and which impeded it. Hopefully the questions will be able to be answered by measuring indicators. This will mean a process evaluation with an eye on continued program improvement.

Data Sources and Methods

Ways of measuring its success and growth of the virtual market are: the number of new clients, the number of deliveries, revenue generated by the virtual market, customer feedback, increased membership through the virtual market, the addition of new products and vendors, the most lucrative products at each moment of the season, the revenue versus commissions and delivery costs. Some future questions about the impact may be to explore: funding of the project or subsidies received as well investment in and other projects and phases of the project that become possible through the success of the virtual market. The volume of local sustainable food and the number of farmers and people benefitting in Verdun could be another avenue to explore as well as the positive social impacts, outside of sales and viability in the Verdun community.

The collection of data and evaluation will be purposeful as well as based on convenience due to lack of time and money resources and because the small-scale of the project doesn't permit large-scale random sampling.

The next section will explore the two strategies for data collection, both quantitative and qualitative meant to complete each other and give a fuller picture. :

1. Quantitative Evaluation: Logs throughout the 2020 and 2021 season

CAUS will keep a log each week to track the results from the virtual market so that the available quantitative data is properly documented and trends can be observed over time. This data will be collected from February to November 2021. In fact, the logs for 2020 will have to be completed retroactively, so that there is something to compare to and more of a progression over time and it is easier to situate what kind of growth is reasonable to expect. CAUS, with the help of their digital marketing and web specialist intern will attempt to automatise as much as they can for the logs through their online merchants so that completing them is less labour intensive and, as a result, more likely to be completed. A member of the board will be delegated each

week to fill-in the log. Graphs that track the results of the information of the logs will be compiled during December 2021 and January 2022. Below is the template of the log that will be filled-in weekly. The results can then be mapped to find the overarching patterns, evaluate whether deliverables are being obtained and where there may be barriers. Combined with the qualitative results of interviews the more measurable data will be completed with the reasons behind the quantitate results.

CAUS Virtual Market Logs

Week #	
Wednesday Delivery Date	
Sales for the week on the virtual market	
Approximate commissions	
Delivery Costs	
Number of deliveries	
Number of Pick-ups	
Number of Virtual Market Clients	
Top 3 most popular items	
Number of clients through website	
Number of clients through Slashlocal	
Number of Clients through MTL ON MANGE	
Was the market promoted in the newsletter?	
Was the market mentioned on social media?	
How many clients were members?	
Did any virtual market clients become members?	
Ratio or pourcentage of repeat clients	
Ratio or percentage of first time clients	
Positive Comments	
Negative feedback	

2. Qualitative Evaluation: One on One interviews

The interviews conducted will be mainly with clients of the virtual market, former clients of the virtual market, members that do not use the virtual market, visitors to the farmer's markets, members of partner organizations and random Verdun citizens on the street. The aim is to interview about 50 people since one on one interviews are so labour intensive. Because of the relational nature that CAUS has with its clients and the community, it is believed that we can obtain more complete information from people through one on one interviews. On the flip side, because CAUS know the clients, members, and community so well, there is a fear that they may be reluctant to give negative feedback. Lack of funds, also means that compensation for a focus group is out of the question.

The interviews will be conducted by worker members (volunteers) and board members. The interviews at the market can only begin in June and can be done by the volunteers at the entrance while people wait to come into the market. The interviews with random Verdun people can be done on Wellington street. The problem is that people with reduced mobility who are a target are not necessarily accessible on the street and obtaining their contact info is unlikely through different organizations for reasons of privacy and ethics. This means that they will be underrepresented. The virtual market clients and former clients' names and contact information can be found in the sales records. Members of our partner organizations can also be found through the board. Member contact information is also possible through the board. Interviews will be done over the phone for clients, members and those of partner organizations.

Further on in the last section, "Use, Interpretation, Dissemination, and Sharing Plan", you will find a proposed schedule for the interviews along with the other aspects of the program.

Protocol for the Individual Interviews

Although, interviewers can use their judgement, these are the guiding questions and introduction. These questions will be put in a survey software or a spreadsheet at the least. They will also need to be verified with the board.

Introduction:

Hello,

My name is (NAME). I am conducting interviews on behalf of CAUS, Le coopératif de solidarité d'abondance urbaine solidaire. CAUS is responsible for running Verdun's Farmer's Markets for the last six years plus other urban agriculture projects and educational campaigns around urban agriculture and biodiversity. We are collecting feedback about our virtual farmer's market with home delivery in order to better orient it and promote it. Can we ask you some questions? This should take 5-15 minutes.

Starter Questions:

Are you familiar with CAUS?

Yes/No

Are you familiar with CAUS's online or virtual market with home delivery?

Yes/No

More Specific Questions to the Virtual Market for those who are familiar:

Have you ordered from the online virtual market?

If yes, how many times?

Do you or will you continue to order from the virtual market?

Yes/No

Why or Why not?

Which aspects or products of the virtual market are the most attractive to you?

What could be better about the virtual market?

Are there barriers or inconveniences with using the virtual market?

Are you a CAUS member?

Why or why not?

For those who are not familiar with the market:

Knowing that there is a local farmer's market with locally produced food, artisanal and gardening products with home delivery for those in Verdun, would you be interested in using such a service?

Yes/No

Why or Why not?

Values and consumer choice questions:

Who would you recommend the virtual market to?

Why?

Considering the context of COVID, how useful/valuable is ordering online with delivery on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is very useful?

Have you visited CAUS' regular physical markets?

Yes/No

Considering both convenience and preference, would you prioritize ordering online with home delivery or coming to the market?

How important is it to you to be able to order local in-season products with home delivery most of the year on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is extremely important?

How important is it to you to support local farmers on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is extremely important?

How important is it to you to support a local food initiative?

Whom do you order food from?

Demographics

What is your gender?

Male/Female/Non-binary/Would rather not answer

Which age category are you in?

19-35/36-45/46-60/61+

Which category does your household income into?

Less than \$20,000/\$21-49,000/\$50-69,000/ \$70-99,000/ \$100,000+

Which is the highest level of schooling you have obtained?

High School/College or Cégep/Technical or professional diploma or certificate/Undergraduate/Graduate

Call to Action and general feedback

Are there any other comments you'd like to make to CAUS about anything?

Would you like to become a member?

Would you like to be on our mailing list?

The results of the interviews will be coded looking for themes that surface about the benefits (to capitalize on and validate), barriers (problems to fix) and who would benefit from the virtual market with home delivery (target clientele). The quantitative data from the interviews will also be compiled and mapped visually through tables or graphs.

Use, Interpretation, Dissemination, and Sharing Plan

As aforementioned, the evaluation would be used by CAUS internally for the **board members** and likely as part of the annual report, also to share with:

- **Employees**, for context
- **Funders** including the Verdun borough and other government bodies
- **Partner organizations**, in order to involve them in the project and give context
- **Vendor farmers and artisans**, to demonstrate growth and share client feedback
- **Members**, context for members

In order to interpret the results, reports and visuals will need to be created to map results and make them more easily comprehensible. On top of it, CAUS will need to establish markers in terms of what are considered acceptable, poor or beyond their expectation results in terms of virtual market sales, new clients, new vendors and new members. This will have to be identified before the evaluation begins in February by taking into consideration their financial forecasts as well as the subsidies being used to come and support the growth of the market and what the rebranding, website and online boutique redesign, MTL ON MANGE, strategic studies and coaching from Récolte and 6 months of a full time intern prior to the program can bring to the outputs of the virtual market as well as use of their social media and the mobilization of members. By defining what is optimal, insufficient, and acceptable in terms of results, the evaluation results will be able to be better interpreted. By combining both the quantitative “what” results with the qualitative “why” results, a report of recommendations for an action plan and an assessment of whether the theory of change is on track will be provided.

There will be moments to reevaluate the evaluation program and check-in with stakeholders to verify reliability, feasibility and utility of the evaluation. There will be a dialogue throughout the program so that things stay on track as perspective, information and factors change.

Table 3 below is a timeline for the evaluation, including sharing of the results halfway through and at the end as well as checking-in. To be noted, the team that will work on the evaluation are all within the organization. This means that a teamwork matrix will be done for the CAUS board and workers involved and not for an external commissioned team. This also means that there isn't a particular external person in charge of communication or a spokesperson on behalf of my team. I will be responsible for communicating to the board with other internal evaluators.

Table 3: 2021 Timeline for the Evaluation and Communications

Task	Ja 21	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Ja 22	F 22
Define CAUS's Output Goals: Optimal, Acceptable, Unacceptable	X													
Complete the 2020 Logs	X													
Collect 2021 Logs		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Conduct interviews with virtual market clients and former clients			X	X	X	X				X	X			
Create a team matrix for CAUS board members and workers for collecting data	X													
Conduct interviews with people in Verdun				X	X	X								
Conduct interviews with Members		X	X	X	X	X								
Conduct interviews with market clients						X	X		X	X				
Analyze and report the log results												X		
Analyze and report the interview results												X		
Do a mid-way evaluation of the program to be given to CAUS						X								
See how the program is fairing compared to markers and reevaluate markers(acceptable, unacceptable or optimal)							X							
Integrate any necessary changes to the evaluations							X							
Check-in with stakeholders individually plus a meeting (utility, methods and feasibility)				X				X			X			

Task	Ja 21	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Ja 22	F 22
Check that data is being collected properly		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Give a final report to CAUS with results and recommendations													X	
Make any necessary changes to the report based on tracked feedback from stakeholders														X
Calendar of the most successful products and when they are sold													X	
Look at the possibility of future evaluation													X	X

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