

**MOW Provider Service Network**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**20 March 2025 at 1:30 pm**

**Attendees:** Kerri Daley, Co-Chair (Community Care City of Kawartha Lakes), Meredith Woods, Co-Chair (MOW Ottawa), Arvind Mohandoss (JW MacIntosh), Nathalie Bazinet (Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre), Kate Tysick & Amy (Community Home Support Lanark County), Maureen Glowaski (Haliburton Highlands Health Services), Gilda Cohen (Jewish Family Services, Ottawa), Sheri Birney (Community Care Northumberland), Janna Wood (Carefor, Pembroke), Laurie Hazen, (Eganville Seniors), Sylvie Lefebvre & Melissa Seguin (Services Communautaire Prescott-Russell), Brown Weeks (Southern Frontenac Community Services), Julie Cardle (Community Care Durham), Melissa Scott & Brenda Twaddle (Community Care Peterborough), Della Hart (Rural Ottawa Support Services South), Shell Lee Wert (Community Care South Hastings), Angela Robinson (VON), Chris Cobus (CSS Shared Resources, Ontario East).

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Chris Cobus extended welcoming remarks and then handed the meeting over to Kerri Daley, Co-Chair, to proceed with the agenda. Participants were invited to introduce themselves and their agency. There was a broad scope of MOW Providers represented from across the OHE geography.

**2. Acceptance of agenda and last meeting notes (16 Jan 2025)**

Both were accepted as circulated.

**3. Update on Taste Testing events with Sunita Goel owner of “Ageless Eats Kitchen” -**

Event being planned in Peterborough did not proceed. May be considered in future. Event being planned in Ottawa. Date to be determined (sometime in April). Contact: Meredith Woods for details [meredith@mealsonwheels-ottawa.org](mailto:meredith@mealsonwheels-ottawa.org).

Event in Napanee took place in early March, hosted by VON. Angela Robinson reported on Sunita's food and presentation noting she brought with her a good variety of both entrees and soups and all were very flavourful. Cost was less expensive than their current provider and turn around time on ordering 2-3 days (currently weekly). Capacity to address substantial volume of meals. Source of ingredients for homemade entrees and soups is Sysco (easily traceable if any questions re: a particular product). Desserts sometimes from Costco. Sunita still exploring the best means of delivery (whether to purchase a refrigerated truck for greater distances and use her drivers **or** hire a company to assist). Food purchased would arrive at MOW agency in bulk and then need to be organized per client orders re: entrees, sides, desserts, etc. (helps to keep price down). The online order form/platform is similar to what many providers currently use.

**Action:** Chris to send Sunita a “Thank you” on behalf of the group for her willingness to travel to various sub-regions of OHE to provide taste testing events.

#### **4. MOW Best Practice Standards & Guidelines Document**

Chris outlined the process involved in getting to this point with the updated document and checked in with the group on how they wanted to proceed. Participants have had the original and final document to review for some time now. The sub-Committee, made up of seven MOW Providers throughout OHE region, met to review the document and provide input. Very little changes were made to the original document, as the content seemed to still resonate with all involved. The group was asked if any additional time was required to review the document before it is moved forward to be translated and polished with formatting and illustrations for a professional touch. A couple of agencies expressed the need to have a little more time to review the document with their MOW staff involved.

**Actions:** Participants were asked to provide final feedback to Chris by email by Friday, April 11, 2025. If changes to the content are suggested, Chris will share these with the sub-Committee for a decision on incorporation of the suggestions, before moving forward with steps to finalize the document.

#### **5. Agency Highlights – e.g., March for Meals activities.**

MOW Providers throughout the region shared their various efforts to involve ‘community champions/local celebrities’ during March for Meals month (Mayors, First Responders, MP’s, Sports’ Icons, Municipal Counsellors) and their modes of promotion used (social media, newspapers, radio, etc.).

With current efforts across the province/country to “shop local” some also profiled local businesses that support their MOW efforts in some way. Some also used this month to recognize their volunteers with some TLC, e.g., homemade cookies and provide clients with useful “swag”, e.g., insulated bags/small coolers for their use, as well as having local counsellors serve food at their congregate dining events.

**Action:** Everyone was encouraged to share their media on various activities/events with OCSA.

#### **6. Future topics**

Presentation by Apetito anticipated to happen in May. The group discussed various questions/concerns they would hope to table with Apetito when they come:

- How might proposed tariffs impact on current purchasing arrangements/food costs?
- Will consideration be given to expanding the diversity of meals offered? (e.g., low Fodmap meals, ethnocultural foods, gluten free, and low sodium, vegetarian options).
- Is there opportunity to revamp the website with customer feedback, to ease navigation and ordering processes?
- Can the cost of freight be more clearly itemized on the invoice?
- Can we plan together re: how best to deal with recalls, i.e., clarify expectations re: notification, knowing we all have a role to play in responding to these situations to keep clients safe?
- Is there an easier way to identify meals that are ‘safe’ for people with various allergies e.g., allergic to garlic, mushrooms, or onions? Current reference to ‘Nutri-data’ means reviewing all ingredients one meal at a time, when these allergies arise.

- Can we plan together the time to consider changes to meal costs, so that they align with both Apetito and CSS fiscal planning schedules? E.g., CSS are usually budgeting for their next fiscal year in January.
- There appears to be variance in contracts across the sector. While some agencies may want to enter into a contract, and others may not, most would prefer not to be limited to purchasing meals exclusively from Apetito. As nonprofits, CSS have an obligation to do their best to keep meal costs for clients affordable and ensure client receive quality products in response to their changing needs. How might we work together to ensure affordability and client satisfaction?
- Is there opportunity to receive copy of Apetito's insurance coverage?
- Will Apetito's new menu come with additional costs?

**Action:** Chris to forward these questions to Apetito, so that they may respond to these topics and make the most of our time together next meeting.

**Other topics for next the next meeting's agenda?** - Chris to provide an update on the "Apples to Apples" project getting underway via collaboration between CSS Shared Resources, Ontario East and CSS Providers throughout the OHE region.

**7. Next meeting:** May 15 at 1:30 pm.

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