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**Item No. 21.6**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**March 18, 2025**

**TO:** Mayor Fillmore and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**FROM:** Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** February 9, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Mid-term Update on Implementation of the JustFOOD Action Plan

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### **INFORMATION REPORT**

#### **ORIGIN**

Since 2019, there have been several Regional Council motions and approvals associated with municipal support and co-leadership of the JustFOOD Action Plan for the Halifax Region. **Figure 1 in the body of this report contains a synopsis of Plan milestones and links to relevant documents.**

On February 6, 2024

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Kent

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

1. Accept and approve Part B of the JustFOOD: Action Plan for the Halifax Region, as contained in the staff report dated December 21, 2023;
2. Approve in principle the proposed annual budget request and resources for the implementation of the JustFOOD Action Plan for the Halifax Region, as contained in Table 2 of the staff report dated December 21, 2023; and
3. Direct funding in the amount of \$522,000 for the implementation of Part B of the JustFOOD Action Plan, as identified in the financial implications section of the staff report dated December 21, 2023, to be added as an option over budget on the budget adjustment list (BAL) for Budget Committee to consider in the 2024/25 Budget.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The JustFOOD Action Plan for the Halifax Region, as approved by Regional Council in March 2023, is a long-range strategy that has established 56 recommendations for action across the food system, towards a shared vision of increased food security and a more resilient local food system. Success depends on collaboration among governments, individuals, businesses, and agencies, each understanding their unique role and contribution to food systems change. Part B established implementation strategies, to commence in Year 1 (2024/25). HRM has been a funder and champion of the development and implementation of

JustFOOD, in recognition that food security and the resilience of our local food system is woven into and impacts the delivery of many municipal operations and strategic plans. While continuing to advocate for systems change to other levels of government and actors, JustFOOD is focusing regionally on increased collaborative governance, municipal capacity building, maximization of municipal resources, emergency food planning, and understanding of vulnerabilities, towards greater collective action and community resilience.

**Attachment 1** includes a summary table and **Attachment 2** contains the mid-term update on work to advance the Action Plan and deliver the Part B Implementation Strategies. Initial work to implement JustFOOD in 2024/25 has:

- **Strengthened Municipal capacity** to bring a food lens to decision-making, engage in food action, and provide emergency food planning, response, and recovery.
- **Supported community food action** through partnerships to deliver low-barrier grants, support for community gardens, development of community plots, community orchard training & outreach, vermicomposting workshops, and other priority food programming.
- **Increased community capacity for action** through sharing knowledge and connecting with 50 Community Groups, 25 Municipal Divisions & Advisories, and 19 Food Networks & Coalitions.
- **Progressed food system governance** and collective capacity for action through advancing the HFC and supporting ANSB, Mi'kmaw and other community food leaders in their communities.
- **Advanced innovative, community-driven** food solutions through pilot projects, partnerships research, and other initiatives, and
- **Leveraged municipal investment** to bring an additional \$508,000 in direct funding and \$150,000 in in-kind support for ongoing implementation and advancement of JustFOOD.

While the Update details significant progress to date, implementation has been challenged by Regional Council's decision to approve Part B but not fully fund it. The reduced funding has resulted in hiring and program delays, program changes/cancellations, and time/effort diverted to seeking new funding (details provided in Attachment 1 & 2). While an additional \$508,000 was secured, only a portion of this could fill in the funding gap as much of the funding is grants to support emergency food planning initiatives that were not originally planned for Year 1. Regional Council will be asked to consider supporting the full municipal funding ask for implementation as part of 2024/25 Budget and BAL deliberations.

Ongoing core/seed funding is required to support the people power (rarely funded by grants), key resources, and community-based programs that can be leveraged to bring additional partners, funders, and champions to the table to broaden impact and scale and continue to progress the implementation and realization of the Plan.

## **BACKGROUND**

Since [Council's direction in 2019](#), HRM has been co-leading the development of the Action Plan in partnership with the Halifax Food Policy Alliance (HFPA). This has included municipal funding for coordination, community engagement, plan development and creation of knowledge products like justfoodhalifax.ca. As the long-standing co-chairs and leaders in community food action, the Ecology Action Centre (EAC) and Nova Scotia Health Authority- Public Health (NSHA-PH) have been at the forefront of this collaboration. **Figure 1 outlines key milestones and direct links to founding documents in the evolution and growth of collaborative and collective action towards a more just and resilient food system.**



# JustFOOD

## Action Plan for the Halifax Region



### 2013

#### HALIFAX FOOD POLICY ALLIANCE (HFPA) TAKES ROOT

- Promotion of Food Security included in Regional Plan 2014 update
- HFPA comes to life (HRM, EAC, & Public Health+ many others) = collaboration towards a healthy, just, & resilient food system
- #1 priority was creation of regional food strategy to coordinate efforts

[History of HFPA](#)

### 2022

#### PROJECT UPDATE

Update to Regional Council including: background report detailing work to date, challenges/opportunities, and rationale for food strategy plus Plan Framework, Two Phase Engagement Plan, and COVID Food Action.

[Staff Report](#)

### 2024

#### PART B APPROVED BY REGIONAL COUNCIL

##### 15 implementation strategies

In principle, with annual funding of \$900,000, funding of \$500,000 for 2024/25, and declined additional funding of \$250,000 at BAL

[Staff Report](#)

[Executive Summary](#)

[Presentation](#)

[Full Part B](#)

### 2014

#### FOOD COUNTS: FOOD SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

[Learn more here.](#)

### 2019

#### FOOD STRATEGY INITIATED (JUSTFOOD)

##### Regional Council

Endorsed HFPA, signed on to Halifax Food Charter, approved co-development of Action Plan in partnership with HFPA and funded coordinator & community engagement.

[Staff Report](#)

### 2023

#### PART A APPROVED BY REGIONAL COUNCIL

##### 56 recommendations for action across the food system

JustFOOD Halifax Action Plan & the priority recommendations and workplan for Part B, made HRM a signatory to the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact.

[Staff Report](#)

[Executive Summary](#)

[Full Part A](#)

[Presentation](#)

[Engagement Summary](#)

### 2018

#### HALIFAX FOOD CHARTER

The [Halifax Food Charter](#) is a vision for food developed by the community.

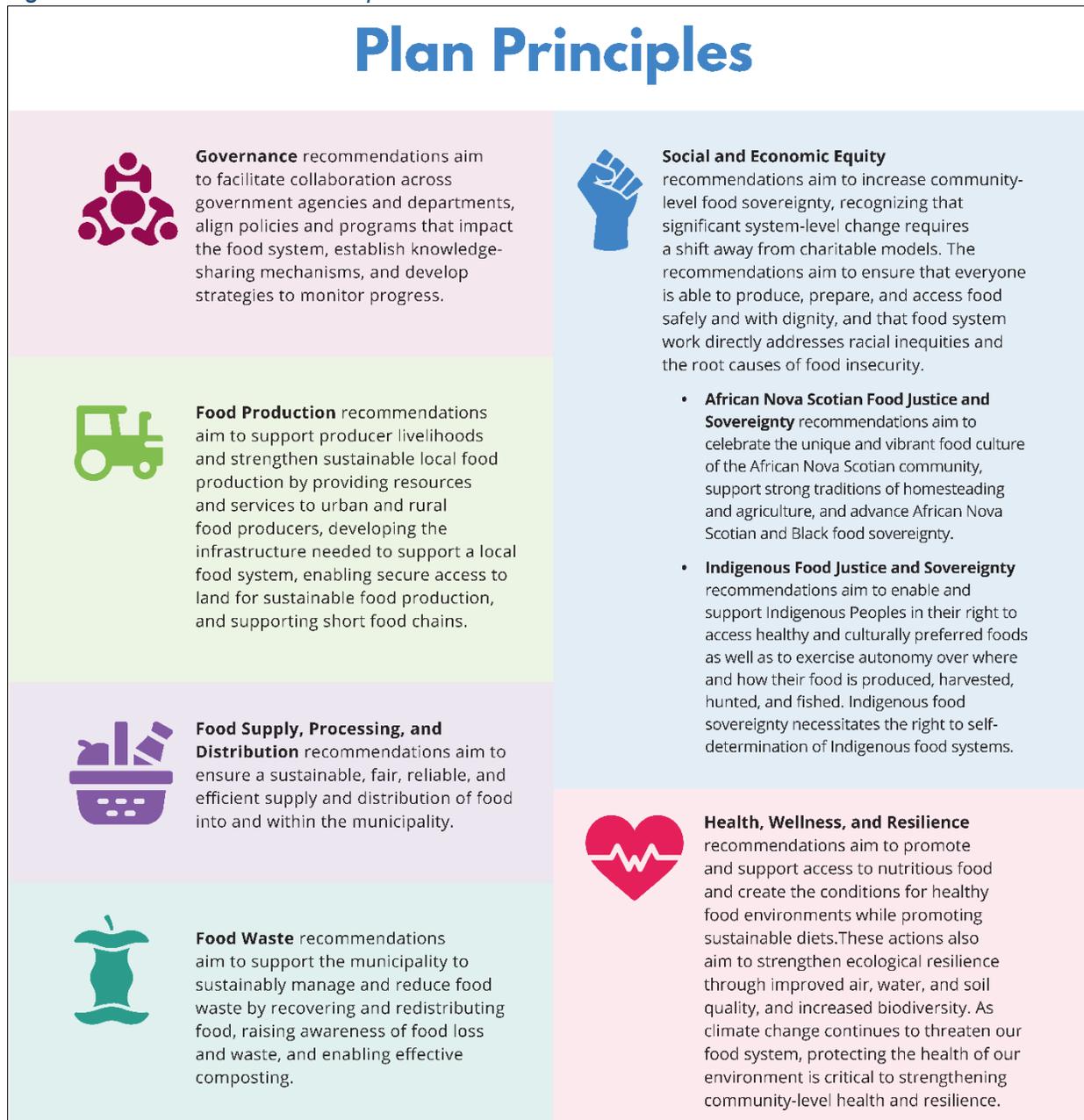


## Part A: Principles & Recommended Actions

Part A of the JustFOOD Action Plan, as approved unanimously by Regional Council in March of 2023, established the first food strategy for the Halifax Region. Part A set the stage and foundations for the ten-year Plan, establishing 56 core recommendations for action across the food system through extensive:

- [public engagement](#)
- municipal staff input
- research, and
- best practices from around the globe.

The recommendations identify key partners, roles, and responsibilities for different actors across the food system, according to the Plan Principles as outlined in Figure 2. **See Fig. 1 for links to Part A & reports.**  
*Figure 2: Core JustFOOD Principles*



**Part B: Implementation Strategies for Year 1 (2024/25)**

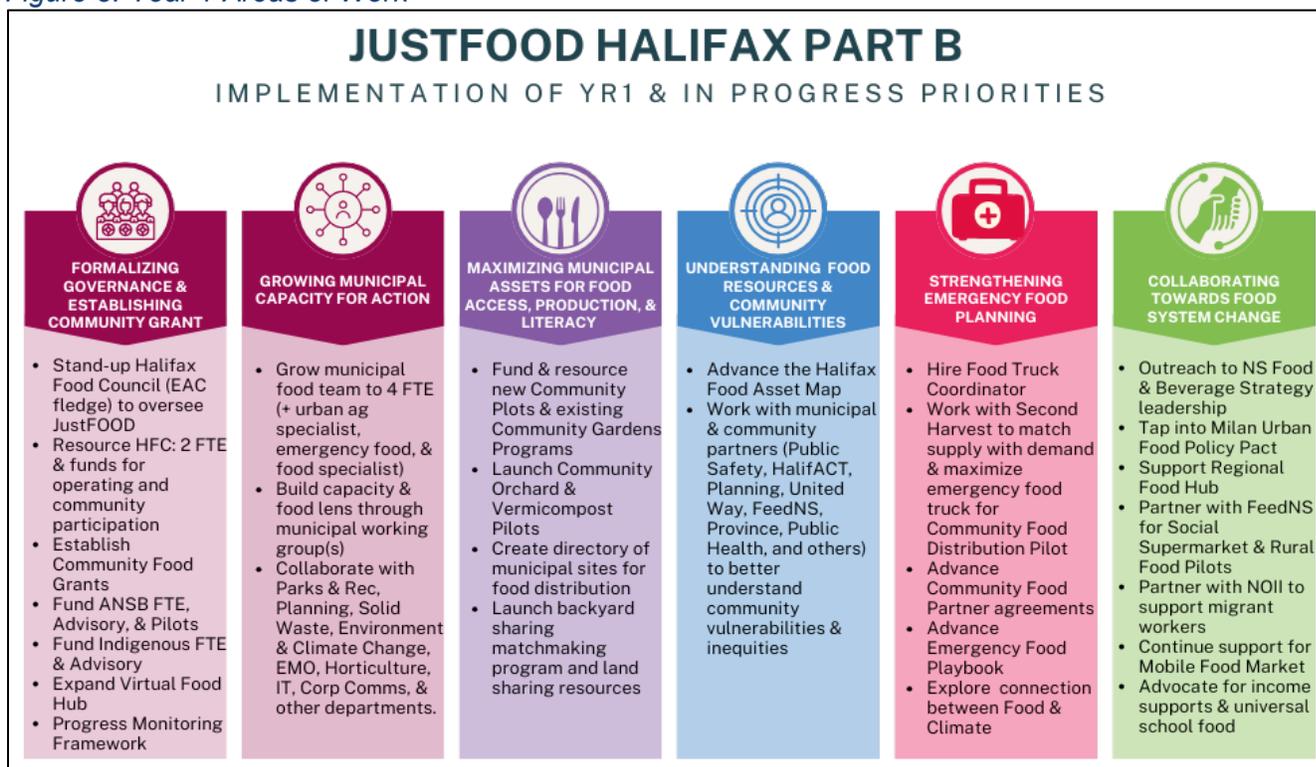
Part B, as approved by Regional Council in February 2024, is a practical document that:

- **contains Implementation Strategies**, developed in collaboration with key partners, to progress the priority Year One recommendations approved by Regional Council in Part A, chosen **to establish the foundations and increase capacity** to deliver the Action Plan as well as address crucial issues and opportunities,
- **establishes Fifteen Strategies** with clearly defined roles, budgets, outcomes and indicators to measure impact, **under six buckets of work, see Figure 3**,
- focuses on **building**
  - **regional capacity** for community-led governance, collaborative action, knowledge sharing, and impact measurement towards a more healthy, just, and resilient food system.
  - **Municipal capacity** for urban agriculture, emergency planning, collective action, and inclusion of food in decision-making through the creation of a Municipal Food Team.
- **delivers priority recommendations while increasing food literacy and community capacity** for action beyond the initiatives, leveraging social return on municipal investment.

**See Figure 1 for links to Part B and associated reports.**

Part B focuses on community and municipal capacity building, with the Municipality as a core funder and champion of food actions that fall under the Municipal mandate of building more complete, safe, affordable and resilient communities. The Municipality is critical to the ongoing success and implementation of the Action Plan through providing seed/core funding, to be leveraged for other funding and support to expand scope, impact, and capacity to progress the Plan recommendations for food system change.

Figure 3: Year 1 Areas of Work



### Partial Funding of Part B

The Municipality has provided seed funding to advance the development and implementation of JustFOOD since 2019, when Halifax Regional Council approved HRM to co-lead with the HFPA the development of a regional food strategy. In February 2024, Regional Council approved Part B and annual funding for the Action Plan (\$900,000 per year) but only partially funded Year 1 implementation (2024/25), allocating \$507,000 of the \$857,000 requested from the Municipality, towards the projected total budget of \$1,244,000 for delivery of Part B.

### DISCUSSION

The JustFOOD Action Plan focuses on actions within the Halifax Region and its associated food shed. While the Plan includes recommendations to advance the major changes required to improve food security, localize our food system, and de-commodify food, the primary responsibility may rest with other levels of government. Since the adoption of JustFOOD, there has been encouraging progress on some of these major issues, including:

#### FEDERAL

- Establishment of the [National School Food Policy and Program](#);
- Examination of [unfair competition and greedflation](#) practices of major grocers- [Competition Bureau Report](#) and [House Agriculture & Agri-Food Committee Report](#).
- Exploration of [Guaranteed Basic Incomes](#)
- Promotion of Sustainable Diets through new [Canada Food Guide](#)

#### PROVINCIAL

- One-time distribution of \$10+ million in “urgent” food funding distributed to Feed Nova Scotia, Parent Resource Centres, and other community food organizations.
- Launch of [School Lunch Program](#), with \$1.7 million investment towards \$100 million program
- Supporting [localizing the food system](#) such as [Nova Scotia Loyal](#) incentive program and \$800,000 investment in the Regional Food Hub

- Establishing two pilot **Collaborative Food Networks**, community led initiatives to increase dignified access to food, per year across Nova Scotia, including the Preston Township Collaborative Food Network and others planned for the Halifax Region,
- \$164,000 in **grants to JustFOOD** to support emergency food planning (Attachment 3)
- **NSHA-PH** (funded by the Province) **staff are core members of the JustFOOD team**, doubling the in-kind value of this contribution to \$124,435 in 2024/25.
- **Monthly meetings with JustFOOD team** to explore opportunities to collaborate, signalling interest in co-piloting dignified food access program.

JustFOOD and Part B initiatives are focused on increasing community-based action and resilience as well as municipal capacity to bring a food lens to decision-making. The Municipality has been a core funder and champion of this work as:

- food is a basic need and municipalities are the level of government most connected to residents and the daily impacts of food insecurity,
- most of HRM’s operations and strategic plans connect to food in some way, and
- JustFOOD is working across business units to reduce silos, inform the food deliverables in Municipal Priority Plans, and support the Municipality in responding to emerging food issues and opportunities towards increased community cohesion, capacity building, resilience, etc.

**Table 1 provides a high-level summary of how JustFOOD is connected to and advancing core Municipal mandates and operations:**

*Table 1: JustFOOD Advancement of Municipal Mandate*

Municipal Mandate & Operations	JustFOOD Connection & Advancement
<b>Emergency Management:</b> -Provide food as core emergency service during an event - Factor Food Outlets and other food assets as critical infrastructure in HRVAs & other risk assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building relationships with community organizations towards partnerships in emergency prep, response, recovery, through <b>JustFOOD outreach</b> &amp; programs like <b>Emergency Food Partners Bids &amp; Tenders</b></li> <li>• Mobilizing the <b>emergency food truck &amp; Coordinator</b> to increase knowledge/connection to community supply and partners</li> <li>• Increasing understanding of vulnerabilities &amp; resources through <b>Food Asset Mapping</b> and <b>Food System Monitoring Framework</b></li> <li>• Growing capacity for emergency food response through piloting <b>Storm Kits</b> and <b>Off-Grid Cold Storage Project</b></li> </ul>
<b>Regional Planning:</b> Design Complete Communities that promote food access & food security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building <b>Municipal Food Team</b> to increase capacity to inform planning and other strategic priorities</li> <li>• Creating tools like <b>Community Food Assessment Toolkit</b> and <b>Developer Checklist</b> to factor food access and production in community design.</li> </ul>
<b>Libraries, Recreation, &amp; Facilities:</b> -Deliver programming and infrastructure to promote food literacy and access -Make space available for community gatherings such as farmer’s markets, community meals, distribution, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing <b>Halifax Food Council</b> as central resource to learn about and connect to the local food system and network of food actors.</li> <li>• Expanding the <b>Virtual Food Hub</b> with learning tools, research, food events, volunteer opportunities, and other supports for involvement in community action.</li> <li>• Conducting <b>Food Asset Mapping</b> to determine suitability of municipal assets for markets, food distribution, production, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Solid Waste:</b> Divert food waste & prevent food loss/waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnering with Solid Waste to deliver <b>Vermicomposting Pilot</b></li> <li>• Partnering with SWR &amp; National Zero Waste Council to engage and research <b>Circular Food Hubs</b></li> <li>• Partnering with Second Harvest to deliver <b>Community Food Distribution Pilot</b></li> </ul>
<b>Parks and Other Municipal Land:</b> -Provide residents with access to land for food production -Naturalize & green spaces for heat mitigation, stormwater retention, food production, and natural services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing support and viability of community food production through in-house expertise to lead administration and expansion of <b>Community Gardens Program (Urban Ag Specialist)</b>, <b>Community Gardens Grants</b>, <b>Community Plots</b>, etc.</li> <li>• Increasing capacity for Parks staff to grow food on municipal lands through <b>Urban Orchard Pilot</b> and <b>Fruit/Nut Training Program</b>.</li> </ul>

Municipal Mandate & Operations	JustFOOD Connection & Advancement
<p><b>Diversity &amp; Inclusion</b> - Gauge vulnerabilities and address inequities - Provide programs &amp; services to residents through D&amp;I lens</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding <b>community experts</b> and hosting engagement at trusted locations to inform and <b>write JustFOOD recommendations</b> (Part A)</li> <li>• Hiring <b>community leaders</b> from respective communities and hosting at trusted organizations to <b>lead implementation</b> of JustFOOD (<b>ANSB Coordinator at ONE, Mi'kmaw Coordinator at MNFC, &amp; contractors through Centre for Migrant Workers</b>).</li> </ul>
<p><b>General Operations Mandate:</b> Provide informed &amp; responsive municipal services and promote safety &amp; well-being of residents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing the <b>Municipal Food Team</b> to better support need and demand for food lens on municipal operations, strategies, decision-making, and investments.</li> <li>• Connecting with <b>25+ Municipal business units and advisories over 8 months</b> who sought JustFOOD support to learn more about food work, research, best practices, and connect to networks to inform their work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resident Mandate</b> Increase action, infrastructure and support for food security and food system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1,000s of residents and community organizations who shaped JustFOOD</b> demonstrated strong support for the need for a food strategy and Food Council, funded and supported by the Municipality.</li> <li>• <b>2024 Resident Survey</b>- want HRM to increase efforts to support food security &amp; strengthen the food system (56%), invest in food infrastructure (35%)</li> </ul>
<p><b>HalifACT, Public Safety, Housing &amp; Homelessness, EMO, etc.</b> - Mobilize &amp; coordinate community action to increase community resilience (CMTs, GSRs, etc) - Mitigate risk factors (crime, climate, economics, isolation) and strengthen responses through increased awareness, dignified support services, and community mobilisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding low barrier <b>Community Food Grants</b>, community expertise (<b>ANSB &amp; Mi'kmaw Coordinators + Advisories housed at trusted organizations</b>), dignified food access programs (<b>Mobile Food Market, FeedNS Pilots, etc</b>),</li> <li>• Building relationships &amp; connecting actors; coordinating &amp; mobilizing action; centralizing resources, knowledge sharing, &amp; connections towards greater community cohesion and resilience to climate events, economic forces, and social isolation (<b>Halifax Food Council, JustFOOD Virtual Food Hub, Community Food Distribution Pilot, Emergency Food Partners Bids &amp; Tenders</b>).</li> </ul>

Figure 4: Community Coordination & Capacity Building



Strengthening relationships and building capacity for action has been a core focus since implementation began in April 2025. In this time, the JustFOOD team has **connected with more than 50 community organizations, 19 umbrella food networks and agencies, 4 Provincial departments, 25 municipal Divisions and Advisories** to provide training, knowledge, resources, and connections.

A primary and continual theme of the JustFOOD engagements was the need to evolve the HFPA to a stable, funded, and resourced Halifax Food Council ([community engagement report](#)). Organizations and individuals asked JustFOOD to create spaces and opportunities for connection, to better align work and learn from each other. They also expressed need for resources to inform their work to better address community need and respond to emerging issues. Rather than creating new programs, prioritization has been placed on supporting and partnering with community organizations who are doing the good work now, who are trusted, and in the best position to understand community need and connect with vulnerable residents. Organizations have indicated that funding is often not the barrier to the collaborations, exploration of new programs/ opportunities and responses to emerging issues that they would like to advance, that time and people power are major challenges. JustFOOD is not duplicating work but instead providing human and other resources to support this work, such as:

- low barrier **Community Food Grants**, with supports for application, program evaluation, and a cohort of similar projects to learn from each other and build relationships.
- mobilizing **HRM's Emergency Food Truck and Coordinator** to bring rescued food to community organizations to reduce time spent sourcing and transporting food for programs,
- creating a warehouse of resources, tools, and opportunities on the **Virtual Food Hub** (including research into emerging issues, promotion of volunteer opportunities, as well as tools to support knowledge sharing and scaling out for other initiatives.

This coordinating role not only benefits community organizations and residents, it also creates a feedback mechanism to build municipal knowledge while sharing back out to community partners to increase community capacity for action. As external forces like political unrest, rising costs, climate events are anticipated to increasingly create challenges for our food system, the role of HFC to coordinate and bring actors together will likely be more needed than ever. As JustFOOD is based in community and built on relationships, it is designed to be responsive and adaptable, increasing ability to identify emerging needs and foster resilience.

#### Implementation Status:

Since implementation began in April 2024, there has been significant progress towards advancing the priority Year 1 (2024/25) recommendations. **Attachment 1 provides a high-level summary of the successes as well as some of the challenges presented by partial funding and administrative hurdles. Attachment 2 contains the JustFOOD Status Update Report- February 2025, with details on the ed progress, impacts, and next steps for the 17 recommendation and implementation strategies.** A full report including final budget, outcomes, performance measures, and future progression will be presented to Regional Council as part of the JustFOOD Annual Report, to be published in July 2025.

Initial work to implement JustFOOD in 2024/25 has:

- **Strengthened Municipal capacity** to bring a food lens to decision-making, engage in food action, and provide emergency food planning, response, and recovery.
- **Supported community food action** through partnerships to deliver low-barrier grants, support for community gardens, development of community plots, community orchard training & outreach, vermicomposting workshops, and other priority food programming.
- **Increased community capacity for action** through sharing knowledge and connecting with 50 Community Groups, 25 Municipal Divisions & Advisories, and 19 Food Networks & Coalitions.
- **Progressed food system governance** and collective capacity for action through advancing the HFC and supporting ANSB, Mi'kmaw and other community food leaders in their communities.
- **Advanced innovative, community-driven** food solutions through pilot projects, partnerships research, and other initiatives, and
- **Leveraged municipal investment** to bring an additional \$508,000 in direct funding and \$150,000 in in-kind support for ongoing implementation and advancement of JustFOOD.

While progress has been substantial, funding shortages and administrative delays created notable challenges in project and pilot delivery. The reduced 2024/25 implementation budget required the

JustFOOD Team to revise plans, cut programs, delay hiring, and spend significant time seeking additional funding (specifics in Attachment 1, Page 4 & initiative updates of Attachment 2).

As promised, the Municipality's championing and investment in JustFOOD was leveraged to bring several new funders and partners to the table. In-kind support from Plan partners such as NSHA-Public Health has increased to \$150,000. An additional \$500,000 in direct funding was secured, however only a portion of this one-time funding could fill in the funding gap for implementation of Part B (**Attachment 3**). Much of the new funding is grants to advance emergency food planning and opportunities that were not planned for Year 1.

Regional Council will be asked to consider supporting the full municipal funding ask for implementation as part of 2024/25 Budget and BAL deliberations. Ongoing core/seed funding is required to support the people power (rarely funded by grants) and core programs that can be leveraged to bring additional partners, funders, and champions to the table to broaden impact and continue to progress the implementation and realization of the Plan. Should Regional Council not fully fund the program and approved Plan for 2025/26, the Municipal Food Team and Halifax Food Council will have to focus efforts on securing funds rather than on program delivery and fund generation to expand the implementation and impact of the Action Plan. This will further delay the advancement of the Action Plan and capacity to work together towards a more resilient food system, and greater food security.

Work for the balance of 2024/25 will continue to focus on advancing the Year 1 Implementation Priorities and catching up on the delays due to insufficient funding and other challenges. Work has begun to consider priorities for Year 2, which will be advanced once the people power and funding is available. Year 2 and future implementation priorities will be presented to Regional Council as part of the JustFOOD Annual Report, in July 2025.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Ongoing funding and budgets for implementation of the JustFOOD Action Plan is being decided by Council through Community Safety's 2025/26 Budget and Business Planning as well as Regional Council BAL deliberations of Budget 2025/26. There are no financial implications with this mid-term update and information report.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**Part A** of the JustFOOD Halifax Action Plan was built upon extensive community engagement and ownership, including engagement with 29 community-based organizations, 6 provincial partners, 9 HRM business units and thousands of HRM resident. A summary of engagement for Part A can be found [here](#).

**Part B** engagement and outreach focused on advancing the community priorities that framed the priority recommendations of Part A, including:

- Feed Nova Scotia Innovation and Learning Lab engaged with community-based organizations in the design and scoping of the Social Supermarket and Rural Food Access Pilots (Rec 11 & ES 11)
- No One is Illegal engaged with migrant workers and community advocacy agencies to advance the Migrant Worker Support Pilots (Rec 12 & IS 12e, 12e.i.)
- The community-based Indigenous Advisory Group (through MNFC) engaged with community members about JustFOOD at the Mawita'jik and are working to advance the Indigenous Food Justice & Sovereignty Recommendations (Rec 22-25 & IS 22) and
- The community-based African Nova Scotian and Black (ANSB) Advisory Group hosted community engagement to develop their Pilots and advance the ANSB recommendations (Rec 26-30 & IS 29).

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

***Halifax Regional Municipality Charter***

The municipal purposes are set forth in section 7A of the HRM Charter:

- 7A The purposes of the Municipality are to
- (a) provide good government;
  - (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and
  - (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

**ATTACHMENTS**

ATTACHMENT 1:	SUMMARY TABLE OF PROGRESS TO DATE
ATTACHMENT 2:	JUSTFOOD 2023/24 PROGRESS REPORT
ATTACHMENT 3:	BUDGET CHANGES DUE TO PARTIAL FUNDING & ADDITIONAL FUNDING SECURED FOR 2024/25

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**ATTACHMENT 1: SUMMARY TABLE- JUSTFOOD PART B IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS (FEBRUARY 2025)**



JustFOOD Actions	Action Lead & JF Principle	2024/25 Successes	2024/25 Program Challenges & Impacts of Reduced Funding
<b>Rec 1. Halifax Food Council</b>	JustFOOD Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed foundational HFC documents, incl. governance frameworks, terms of reference, partnership agreements, &amp; job descriptions</li> <li>- Hired ANSB Food Coordinator at ONE</li> <li>- Hired Mi'kmaw Food Coordinator at MNFC</li> </ul>	<p><b>DELAYED &amp; Budget Trim</b></p> <p>Hiring for the new Municipal Food Team and HFC staff has been significantly delayed due to reduced budgets &amp; administrative challenges</p>
<b>Rec 1b.i. Community Food Grants</b>	JustFOOD Team, Feed Nova Scotia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partnered with FeedNS in established grant (with proven application, evaluation, &amp; cohort tools) to distribute \$131,500 to seven community projects</li> <li>- Designed JustFOOD funding stream, launched in January 2025, fund distribution in 2025/26</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROGRESSING, Modified &amp; Budget Trim</b></p> <p>Community Food Grants budget reduced from \$186,000 to \$93,000, supplemented with \$38,500 from HRM ECC</p>
<b>Rec 5a. Virtual Food Hub</b>	JustFOOD Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Revised &amp; updated Community Food Assessment Toolkit for publication in summer 2025</li> <li>- Developed Food Systems Volunteering Inventory &amp; Food Researchers Inventory</li> <li>- Developed Backyard Sharing Program</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROGRESSING as planned</b></p>
<b>Rec 6a. Food Asset Map</b>	HRM, JustFOOD Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assembled corporate, open dataset of food outlets</li> <li>- Developed data sharing agreements with partners</li> <li>- Refined data collection, storage, and maintenance methods</li> </ul>	<p><b>DELAYED &amp; Budget Cut</b></p> <p>Significantly delayed as program not funded &amp; mapping consultant/researcher not hired. Progressed through GIS staff, Food Team and volunteer efforts</p>

JustFOOD Actions	Action Lead & JF Principle	2024/25 Successes	2024/25 Program Challenges & Impacts of Reduced Funding
<b>Rec 9d. Monitoring Framework</b>	JustFOOD Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed template JustFOOD Project &amp; Progress Evaluation Framework</li> <li>- Created project reporting templates for partners</li> <li>- Advanced Food System Monitoring Framework</li> </ul>	<b>PROGRESSING as planned</b>
<b>Rec 11. Feed Nova Scotia Pilots</b>	Feed Nova Scotia, JustFOOD Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Launched Rural Food Access Pilot serving 51 households</li> <li>- Evaluated programs to inform future viability</li> <li>- Designed multi-vendor Social Supermarket model in partnership with Spencer House, focusing on service provision for seniors</li> </ul>	<b>DELAYED &amp; Modified</b>  Social Supermarket Pilot delayed due to severe lack of available community space suitable to host a market in identified priority communities
<b>Rec 12e.&amp; e.i English for Migrant Workers &amp; Welcome Bags</b>	Centre for Migrant Worker Rights Nova Scotia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Designed EMW program, with delivery slated for early 2025</li> <li>- Hired Welcome Bag Coordinator, with program delivery slated for early 2025 to March, 2025</li> </ul>	<b>DELAYED &amp; Modified</b>  Pilots paused until Spring/Summer 2025 to align with Temporary Foreign Worker visas, unable to proceed in Spring 2024 due to delays in receiving HRM funding
<b>Rec 22 &amp; 23e. Indigenous Food Justice &amp; Sovereignty</b>	Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hired Mi'kmaw Food Coordinator</li> <li>- Hosted 20 community kitchens</li> <li>- Distributed \$8,000 in emergency food access</li> <li>- Supported 75 clients</li> <li>- Designed &amp; delivered back-to-school lunch and snack program</li> </ul>	<b>DELAYED &amp; Modified</b>  Mi'kmaw Food Coordinator hiring slightly delayed due to partial funding
<b>Rec 29. African Nova Scotian &amp; Black Food Justice &amp; Sovereignty</b>	ANSB Food Coordinator, ANSB Food Justice Working Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hired ANSB Food Coordinator</li> <li>- Designed and delivered the "Blend it Forward" program, a five-week Africentric food literacy initiative to equip African Nova Scotians with skills to prepare nutritious, culturally relevant meals.</li> </ul>	<b>DELAYED, Modified, &amp; Budget Cut</b>  ANSB Food Coordinator hiring slightly delayed due to partial funding. Caja Planter budget cut & program not delivered.

JustFOOD Actions	Action Lead & JF Principle	2024/25 Successes	2024/25 Program Challenges & Impacts of Reduced Funding
<p><b>Rec 31b. Community Orchard Pilot</b></p>	<p>JustFOOD Team, HRM Horticulture, and Parks and Recreation</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hosted community engagement to inform orchard expansion at Leighton Dillman Park</li> <li>- Delivered “Certificate in Fruit Tree Care” training to Municipal staff and community members</li> <li>- Secured trees for planting</li> <li>- Partnered with HRM Horticulture, Naturalist &amp; Urban Forestry for ongoing orchard programs</li> </ul>	<p><b>DELAYED &amp; Modified</b></p> <p>Expansion of Urban Orchard delayed due to the need for additional community engagement and site assessment.</p>
<p><b>Rec 32. Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens</b></p>	<p>Municipal Food Team, JustFOOD Team</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Created and approved Urban Agriculture Specialist job description</li> <li>- Advanced five Community Plots Pilot sites</li> <li>- Developed the Community Garden Grant Program rubric &amp; staff report to Council in April 2025 to amend “Community Gardens” Administrative Order to enable grants</li> </ul>	<p><b>DELAYED, Modified, Budget Reduced/Cut</b></p> <p>Hiring for the new Municipal Food Team significantly delayed due to reduced budgets &amp; admin challenges. General food program budget cut. Community Plots scaled down and community gardens admin &amp; grants program delayed until Urban Ag Specialist hired.</p>
<p><b>Rec 33d. Backyard Sharing Program</b></p>	<p>JustFOOD Team, Municipal Food Team</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed the Backyard Sharing Program guide, including definitions of key roles, intake forms, site assessment form, and tools to assist partnership agreements</li> </ul>	<p><b>DELAYED &amp; Modified</b></p> <p>Program will launch later than planned and will be hosted on Virtual Food Hub due to hiring delays (MFT &amp; HFC) and privacy/administration concerns</p>
<p><b>Rec 39a. Halifax Regional Food Hub</b></p>	<p>Halifax Regional Food Hub Cooperative, JustFOOD Team</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established HRFH as a not-for-profit Co-op</li> <li>- Secured \$850,000 in funding via the Nova Scotia Community Economic Development Fund</li> <li>- Hired Managing Director</li> <li>- Created job description and advanced recruitment for the Executive Director role</li> <li>- Advanced Co-op member recruitment</li> </ul>	<p><b>DELAYED</b></p> <p>Launch of the Food Hub has been delayed due to challenges in hiring ED and Board capacity to move forward in their absence</p>

JustFOOD Actions	Action Lead & JF Principle	2024/25 Successes	2024/25 Program Challenges & Impacts of Reduced Funding
<b>Rec 45b. Emergency Food Plan</b>	Municipal Food Team, Emergency Management Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed Emergency Food Partners Bids and Tenders program</li> <li>- Hired Emergency Food Truck Coordinator</li> <li>- Created &amp; approved Community Food Specialist job description</li> <li>- Secured \$90,000 to develop Emergency Storm Kits and guidebook</li> <li>- Secured \$74,043 for Off-grid Cold Storage project</li> </ul>	<p><b>DELAYED &amp; Modified</b></p> <p>Launch of the Emergency Food Partners bids &amp; tenders program delayed by Community Food Specialist hiring delay. MFT and JustFOOD team advancing when time permits</p>
<b>Rec 45b.ii. Community Food Distribution Pilot</b>	Municipal Food Team, HRM EMO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed truck maintenance &amp; operating protocols, installed liftgate &amp; acquired distribution equipment, created truck calendar</li> <li>- Advanced partnership with Second Harvest to test Community Food Distribution Pilot</li> </ul>	<p><b>DELAYED &amp; Modified</b></p> <p>Hiring of the Emergency Food Truck Coordinator was delayed due to administrative challenges, resulting in delays in program launch.</p>
<b>Rec 47. School Food</b>	JustFOOD Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engaged with the Province &amp; partners to support the 2024/25 Provincial \$18.8M commitment universal ‘pay-what-you-can’ school lunch program</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROGRESSING as anticipated</b></p>
<b>Rec 56b. Vermicomposting Pilot</b>	HRM Solid Waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delivered 20 vermicomposting workshops to 20 unique groups, with 363 total participants</li> <li>- Gave away 62 vermicomposting bins</li> <li>- Created a project blueprint for community partners to deliver vermicomposting programming</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROGRESSING as planned</b></p>

HALIFAX



# JustFOOD

## Action Plan for the Halifax Region

STATUS UPDATE REPORT - FEBRUARY 2025



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# Executive Summary

The *JustFOOD Action Plan* is a long-range food strategy for the Halifax Region. [Part A of the Plan](#), endorsed by Halifax Regional Council in March of 2023, sets the stage for our regional food system, captures public engagement findings, and provides 56 recommendations for positive food system change. [Part B of the Plan](#), endorsed and funded in February 2024, is a practical document that includes Implementation Strategies to advance the priority recommendations identified in Part A.

This **Status Update Report** describes implementation progress between April 2024 and February 2025, including impacts, successes, challenges, and next steps to progressing priority recommendations. A comprehensive JustFOOD Annual Report will be published in the summer of 2025 and will include additional program evaluation metrics and outcomes.

## Beyond Food Security: Building a Resilient Food System in Partnership with Community

Unlike traditional food security models centered around food charity, JustFOOD drives long-term social, cultural, and economic change through a systems-based approach, where plan partners act collaboratively to push for systemic change rather than costly band-aid solutions. JustFOOD projects and pilots are designed to support community development, social cohesion, community wellbeing, community resilience, and community capacity to partner, share resources, and amplify one another's work.

By fostering long-term partnerships within community, the Plan builds collective impact and capacity for action while giving residents the power to shape their food system.

Since April 2024, the JustFOOD team has developed and deepened new and existing partnerships across the region, connecting with:

**49**  
community-based organizations

**4**  
4 Provincial Departments

**19**  
network and advocacy groups

**25**  
25 Halifax Regional Municipality Divisions and Advisories

Engagement and outreach efforts supported the JustFOOD Team and food system partners to build collaborative networks, share resources, exchange food system expertise and knowledge, identify emerging issues, and increase collective knowledge of local food systems.

## Municipal Impact and Alignment

Municipalities are key food system actors, given the many impacts of the food system on quality of life, the regional economy, community health, and community resilience.

JustFOOD is aligned with and continues to advance many overarching HRM Strategies, including Council's Strategic Priority Plan, HalifACT, Regional Plan, Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-2027, Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan, and Public Safety Strategy.

The Action Plan coordinates work across Municipal business units and departments such as Parks and Recreation, Community Safety, and Solid Waste Resources. Similarly, the Plan supports Municipal facilities such as libraries and community centres to create opportunities for residents to engage in food-related programming and provide residents with access to food.

### **The *JustFOOD Action Plan* positions the Halifax Regional Municipality to:**

- Increase impact by coordinating Municipal work, aligning action, reducing silos, and eliminating inefficiencies;
- Maximize Municipal assets through incorporation of food into strategic planning processes;
- Address food system challenges proactively and collaboratively — reducing reliance on costly, reactive solutions; and
- Work collaboratively with community and other levels of government, ensuring comprehensive and cross-jurisdictional approaches to food system change.

## Challenges to Implementation

The Municipality has provided seed funding to advance the development and implementation of JustFOOD since 2019, when Halifax Regional Council approved HRM to co-lead the development of a food strategy for the Region. In 2024/25, Council approved partial funding for the JustFOOD Action Plan, allocating \$507,000 of the \$857,000 requested from the Municipality, with a projected total budget of \$1,244,000 for delivery of Part B.

While progress has been substantial, funding shortages and delays created notable challenges in project and pilot delivery. The reduced 2024/25 implementation budget required the JustFOOD Team to revise plans, cut programs, delay hiring, and spend significant time seeking additional funding.

**Budgets for the following programs were reduced:**

**Halifax Food Council**

- Reduced by 15%
- Supplemented with funding from the Nova Scotia Health Authority

**HRM General Food Program Funds**

- Budget eliminated

**Community Food Grants Program**

- Reduced by 50%
- Transitioned from independent delivery to partnership-based delivery with Feed Nova Scotia
- Supplemented with funding from HRM's Environment and Climate Change

**HRM Food Asset Map**

- Budget eliminated

**African Nova Scotian and Black Caja Planter Program**

- Budget eliminated

**Hiring for the following positions was delayed due to budget reductions and/or due to administrative challenges:**

**Mi'kmaw Food Coordinator, hosted by Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre**

- Hired in July, 2024

**African Nova Scotian and Black Food Coordinator, hosted by One North End Community Economic Development Society**

- Hired in July, 2024

**Food Policy Strategist, hosted by HRM**

- Position created in October, 2024

**Emergency Food Truck Coordinator, hosted by HRM**

- Hired in December, 2024

**Urban Agriculture Specialist, hosted by HRM**

- Role approved; hiring will take place before April, 2025

**Community Food Specialist, hosted by HRM**

- Role approved; hiring will take place before April, 2025
- 2024/25 funding support provided by Environment and Climate Change to supplement budget gaps

**Engagement Coordinator, hosted by Ecology Action Centre**

- Role ready for posting; hiring will take place before April, 2025

**Research Coordinator, hosted by Ecology Action Centre**

- Role ready for posting; hiring will take place before April, 2025

**Due to partial Municipal funding, administrative delays, and further action required from partners, implementation timelines for the following programs have been delayed:**

- Halifax Food Council
- Food Asset Map
- Social Supermarket Pilot
- English for Migrant Workers Pilot and Welcome Bags for Migrant Workers Pilot
- Community Orchard Pilot
- Backyard Sharing Program
- HRM Community Food Distribution Pilot

**Additional details regarding program modifications and challenges can be found in respective Status Updates.**

## Year One Successes

In 2024, the JustFOOD Team made significant progress toward advancing priority recommendations.

**Program outcome highlights include:**

- Creation of **four new municipal food roles** and associated job descriptions;
- Development of terms of reference, governance framework, and staff job descriptions for the **Halifax Food Council**;
- Launch of the **Community Grants Program** and distribution of \$131,500 in funding to seven community-based projects, in partnership with the Feed Nova Scotia Innovation and Learning Lab;
- Creation of a corporate, **shareable database of food outlets** to inform community research and Municipal programs such as hazard, risk, and vulnerability assessments;
- Community engagement to inform expansion of the the Leighton Dillman **Community Orchard and Urban Orchard Pilot**;
- Delivery of **“Certificate in Fruit Tree Care” training** to Municipal staff and relevant community members;
- Advancement of **five Community Plots Pilot sites**, activating public spaces and increasing community growing capacity;
- Provision of **water infrastructure** (including rain barrels, water tanks, water pumps, and gutters) to 10 HRM community gardens;



Photo credit: Terrel Daniel Photography

- Launch and completion of the **Rural Food Access Pilot**, serving 51 households in the Musquodoboit Valley area with wholesale, shelf-stable food;
- Design and delivery of the **“Blend it Forward” Program**, a five week **Africentric food literacy initiative** designed to equip African Nova Scotians with skills to prepare nutritious, culturally relevant meals;
- Delivery of **20 community kitchen sessions**, distribution of **\$8,000 in emergency food access funding**, and **support for 75 clients** through the Mi’kmaw Native Friendship Centre;
- Support for the **establishment of the Halifax Regional Food Hub** as a not for profit cooperative, securing \$850,000 in funding from the Nova Scotia Community Economic Development Fund;
- Development of **Emergency Stormkit templates** for future distribution of kits to a sample of 1,500 HRM residents;
- Development of **Emergency Food Partners Bids and Tenders program**, strengthening HRM’s relationship with community partners and understanding of partners’ capacity to provide community-based emergency food responses;
- Engagement with the Province to support the 2024-2025 provincial budget commitment to \$18.8M in funding for the **universal ‘pay-what-you-can’ school lunch program**; and
- Delivery of **20 vermicomposting workshops** by Solid Waste Resources, serving 20 unique groups with 363 total participants.



Photo credit: Terrel Daniel Photography

**Additional details regarding specific program successes and outcomes can be found in respective Status Updates.**

A comprehensive plan with detailed implementation strategies, strong relationships, community trust and participation, and seed funding to support people power has enabled the JustFOOD team to explore partnership opportunities and secure additional resources and funding to support implementation of the Action Plan. To date, the Team has secured \$476,000 in additional direct funding towards Plan objectives, with many other opportunities under exploration.

**A full funding breakdown can be found in the respective HRM staff report.**

## Continued Investment

Year One outcomes underscore the transformative potential of proactive food systems work. Investment in JustFOOD project work not only aligns with Municipal priorities but also delivers measurable benefits to community.

With sustained community leadership and Municipal involvement as a Plan co-lead and [Milan Pact](#) signatory city, the Halifax Region can position itself as a leader in innovative, community-driven food systems, creating long-term economic, social, and environmental benefits for all residents.



# Halifax Food Council

**Recommendation 1: Establish and fund a Food Council (HFC)** to coordinate collective action for positive change; support regional food initiatives; advise governments, institutions, and others; and guide and evaluate the implementation of the JustFOOD Action Plan.

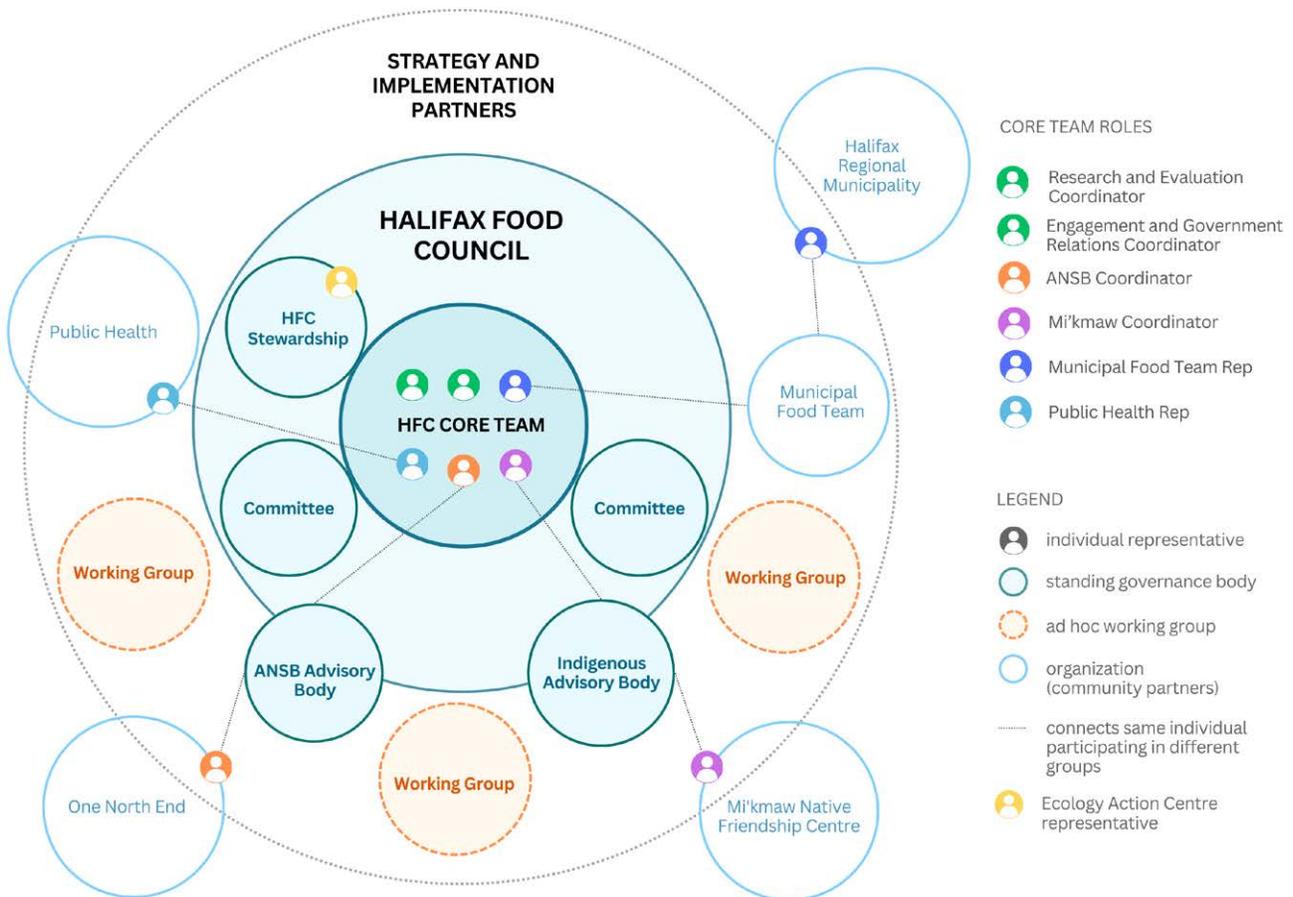
See **Part B Implementation Strategy 1 (page 38)**.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Effective food systems governance requires focused effort, community trust and engagement, and dedicated people to coordinate response and decision-making across levels of governments, institutions, organizations, and community groups, as well as the active engagement of individuals. The **Halifax Food Council (HFC)** is a formalized, collaborative governance model that will be founded and resourced to replace the more informal Halifax Food Policy Alliance.

The HFC will advance the implementation of the JustFOOD Action Plan for the Halifax Region. It will operate as an autonomous body within a host organization (the Ecology Action Centre) to reduce administrative burdens, where legal incorporation may be explored over time.

## Organizational structure of the Halifax Food Council





## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Lead:** Municipal Food Team, Ecology Action Centre (EAC), Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre (MNFC), One North End (ONE), and Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA-Central) are collaboratively standing up the HFC. Additional partners will be recruited as foundations are established.

**Partners:** Misewa Collaborators and Baxter Research Lab at the Dalhousie Schulich School of Law supported the development of foundational research and governance documents.

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

Significant progress has been made toward standing up the HFC. Governance consultants, Misewa Collaborators, were contracted to support the development of foundational documents, including governance frameworks, terms of reference, and partnership agreements that outline the relationships, mutual responsibilities, and legal agreements between HRM, EAC (the host organization), and other foundational partners such as ONE and MNFC.

An African Nova Scotian and Black Community Food Coordinator (hosted at ONE) and a Mi'kmaw Food Coordinator (hosted at MNFC) were hired in July 2024 to support the HFC and lead their respective Advisory Bodies. The two core HFC staff – the Engagement and Government Relations Coordinator and the Research and Evaluation Coordinator – will be hired in early 2025. This hiring has been delayed to ensure that implementation of the Action Plan continues until HRM Municipal Food Team positions are filled, ensuring a coordinated transfer of work. The Municipal Food Team positions are currently with HRM Human Resources, anticipated for posting early in 2025.

Recruitment of additional HFC members will be completed when all HFC staff have been hired. Recruitment processes have been established in the governance frameworks.

## PROJECT IMPACT

The primary functions of the HFC are to:

- 1 Establish a collaborative governance space for food system actors to identify and pursue shared goals for the regional food system.
- 2 Oversee the implementation of the JustFOOD Action Plan.
- 3 Establish a monitoring framework to guide and evaluate the impacts of implementing the JustFOOD Action Plan as well as the state of the food system
- 4 Develop strategies, tools, and resources to enhance the efforts of community partners and food system sectors.
- 5 Provide advice to governments, institutions, communities, and others.
- 6 Center equity and increase community power in food governance.



Photo credit: Misewa Collaborators



# Community Food Grants Program

**Recommendation 1b.i: Develop a sustainable funding stream** operated by the Council to provide financial support for community-based initiatives that address community food access and the health of the local food system.

See **Part B Implementation Strategy 1b.i (page 48)**.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

An annual, accessible, and sustainably-funded **JustFOOD Community Food Grants Program** will support community-based groups to advance projects that reflect community needs and progress systems-level change. The Grants Program will focus on grassroots efforts and equity-deserving communities, recognizing community groups as agents of positive change. It will reduce application barriers, support program evaluation, and prioritize underserved communities.

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Lead:** The JustFOOD Team and Municipal Food Team will continue to collaborate to deliver and expand the JustFOOD Community Food Grants Program, in collaboration with Feed Nova Scotia's (Feed NS) Innovation and Learning Lab.

**Partners:** Municipal business units (including Grants, Environment and Climate Change) and community-based organizations will work with the JustFOOD Team and Municipal Food Team to align and evaluate potential funding opportunities and seek diversified funding sources to grow the value and impact of the grant program.

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

To maximize impact and efficiency after receiving partial funding, JustFOOD partnered with Feed NS in May 2024 to distribute grant funding through Feed NS' [Innovation & Learning Grants](#) program. JustFOOD and Feed NS jointly evaluated applications and distributed funds to community organizations. Throughout the grant cycle, members of JustFOOD engaged with funded organizations through monthly learning circles that aimed to facilitate knowledge sharing and strengthen connections between organizations.

Organizations funded in 2024/25 will be required to submit a final JustFOOD report in June 2025. In 2025/26, Feed NS' Innovation & Learning Grants and JustFOOD's Community Food Grants will continue to co-deliver this program. The 2025/26 program will include a **dedicated JustFOOD stream** available for HRM-based organizations to apply for projects that:

- Align with principles and recommendations outlined in the *JustFOOD Action Plan*;
- Increase access, availability, and/or choice of food, centered around dignity and agency;
- Increase community-led food production; and
- Promote food justice and sovereignty for equity-deserving communities.





## PROJECT IMPACT

HRM-BASED PROJECTS FUNDED BY JUSTFOOD		
ORGANIZATION	PROJECT	SUMMARY
Halifax Developmental Centre for Early Education	Growing Green	Vegetable garden for children to grow, learn and share with families, with surplus donated to a local food pantry.
Regional Independent Students Association (RISA)	Nourishing Young Minds	Cooking and food literacy program for at-risk youth.
Prescott Group	Gluten-Free Food Access	Gluten free pantry for low-income households and food-insecure individuals with dietary restrictions.
Veith House	Urban Hen Keepers	Hen hub for local keepers to share knowledge, develop resources and support for each other.  All resources and materials provided, including portable coop and veterinary care.
North End Community Health Centre	North End Food Network	Food sovereignty conference and monthly network meetings for residents and organizations in North End Halifax.
Akoma	Let's Grow Together	Youth-focused skills development in hydroponic gardening promoting the growing, connection and distribution of food to the Prestons.
Common Roots Urban Farm Bi-Hi Park (in collaboration with OSO Planning + Design)	Off-Grid Cold Storage Prototyping (funded by Environment and Climate Change)	Renewable energy cold storage unit to support urban farm participation, reduce food waste, and testing of sustainable cold storage alternatives.

Jointly, the grant partnership with FeedNS resulted in the distribution of **\$131,500** to seven applications across HRM that advance JustFOOD objectives and community capacity for action, comprising \$93,000 from Community Safety (CS) and \$38,500 from Environment and Climate Change (ECC). A total of \$630,000 was distributed to community-based initiatives across Nova Scotia.

Program evaluation, including qualitative and quantitative data collected by recipients, will deepen our understanding of the local food system and the unique, community-level needs and barriers to food access, justice, and sovereignty. The JustFOOD Annual Report will include evaluation of how the objectives of the Grants Program were advanced, including the following:

- Increased food security, justice, and sovereignty through community-rooted responses informed by lived experience and direct connection to community members;
- Reduced barriers to application and reporting, and prioritization of typically underserved communities;
- Increased access to funding for food programming and (re)distribution of power to community-level actors;
- Demonstrated impact and value of low barrier, flexible, and community-based funding that can be shared with other funders;
- Increased capacity and resilience at the community level to address other food and social issues;



- Shared learnings through working directly with community-based initiatives to deepen collective understanding of the food system and the unique, community-level needs and barriers to food access, justice, and sovereignty.

## FEEDBACK FROM FUNDED ORGANIZATIONS

*"The focus of the grant and simplicity of the structure and processes so far have been great. [...] Grants like this that can support infrastructure investments alongside programming (and with realistic reporting requirements) seem to be rare and absolutely fill a critical gap in the community food funding landscape."*

*"In our organization, there is never money to do the food-related things we want to do with the children as all funds go to support staff and bills. Many of our children have issues with food, or experience food insecurities, and having chances to apply for money so we can do more in-depth projects to help the children learn and explore adds a huge value to what we can provide."*

*"The JustFOOD Community Food Grant Pilot fills a gap in the funding landscape by targeting organizations and community groups that may not have the resources to navigate more complex funding processes. By focusing on community-led initiatives, the grant supports innovative and locally relevant solutions to food insecurity, which might otherwise struggle to secure funding."*



Common Roots Volunteers and Staff working together on the Off-Grid Cold Storage Prototyping project.

Photo credit: Nicola Nemy, CRUF





# Virtual Community Food Hub

**Recommendation 5.** Create a virtual community food hub through the JustFOOD website.

**Recommendation 5a.** Establish a central repository of resources that supports community food planning, provides local context on community food security, and promotes dignified food access.

**See Part B Implementation Strategy 5 (page 55).**

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The JustFOOD project website ([justfoodhalifax.ca](http://justfoodhalifax.ca)) is expanding to become the **JustFOOD Virtual Community Food Hub**. The Hub will be a central, digital platform that provides easy access to a wide range of food-related information, materials, tools, and resources to support community food action. The Hub will continue to share *JustFOOD Action Plan* progress reports and related updates or announcements.

**Development and/or revision of the following Hub resources are underway:**

**Community Food Assessment Toolkit:** The toolkit is a resource for community members, organizations, and land-use planners to engage communities in understanding and gathering information about their local food environments and food systems. The toolkit provides an easy to use process for performing community food assessments, with relevant tools and activities. Additional tools are provided to support community members to respond to assessment outcomes, including tools that support action plan creation.

**Food System Volunteering Inventory:** The Inventory will act as a directory for community members who are interested in volunteering in the local food system. The inventory will catalogue food actors and groups that host volunteers, connecting people with organizations, projects, or initiatives that align with their interests and skills.

**Food System Researchers Inventory:** The Inventory will include profiles of food system researchers to increase understanding of food research in our region, provide opportunities for researchers to connect and amplify each other's work, and share findings.

**Backyard Sharing:** See aligned Update 33d Backyard Sharing Program. Conversations are underway to explore options for hosting this resource on the Hub.

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Lead:** The JustFOOD Team is leading the development of the JustFOOD Virtual Community Food Hub.

**Partners:** HRM, Nova Scotia Health - Public Health, community food actors, food researchers, and community members are supporting the JustFOOD Team to identify, create, and share relevant information, materials, tools, and resources for the Hub.



## PROJECT IMPACT

The JustFOOD Virtual Community Food Hub will facilitate collaboration, coordination, and communication among food system actors, supporting effective and inclusive food system action. The Hub will build capacity through the provision of training, resources, and education materials that equip food system actors with the skills and knowledge needed for effective action.

The **Community Food Assessment Toolkit** will provide an opportunity to explore and map community assets and challenges, informing and inspiring collective action towards a more resilient and equitable food system.

The **Food System Volunteering Inventory** will increase organizational capacity of local food system actors by streamlining volunteer recruitment processes and amplifying needs and opportunities.

The **Food System Researchers Inventory** will build a stronger network of food system researchers and actors, facilitating research alignment, collaboration, and knowledge transfer.

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

The JustFOOD team is working with a website technician and graphic designer to reconfigure the justfoodhalifax.ca website to increase site accessibility and allow for more extensive and complex resource hosting capabilities.

Nova Scotia Health - Public Health are leading the work to revise the existing [Community Food Assessment Toolkit](#) to include:

- Principles of asset-based community development and health equity;
- Concepts of food justice and food sovereignty; and
- User-friendly tools and formatting.

The revised Toolkit is expected to launch in the summer of 2025, as are the Volunteering Inventory and Researchers Inventory. Additional community outreach and profiling are being carried out with community partner support to ensure the Toolkit and Inventories are responsive to community needs, accurate, comprehensive, and useful.

**JustFOOD**  
ACTION PLAN FOR THE HALIFAX REGION

THE ACTION PLAN DIGGING IN ▾ HALIFAX FOOD POLICY ALLIANCE





# HRM Food Asset Map

**Recommendation 6.** Develop the HRM Food Asset Map, an interactive mapping resource to enable the identification, refinement, and sharing of information about regional food resources, including agricultural land, food outlets, licensed community kitchens, food services, and food advocates.

**Recommendation 6a.** Build on existing data to create a comprehensive, current database of regional food resources.

**See Part B Implementation Strategy 6a (page 60).**

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A food asset map is a visual, geo-coded representation of the food resources in a particular area or region. The HRM Food Asset Map is currently a beta-stage mapping application intended to enable the identification, refinement, and sharing of information about food resources in the Halifax Region. The Asset Map will include open-source food resource data that will support researchers, policymakers, service providers, planners, advocates, and community members.

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Lead:** HRM and the JustFOOD team are leading the development of the HRM Food Asset Map.

**Partners:** An array of community partners are committing to regular data sharing to support and further enable map functionality and maintenance. Partners include Community Health Teams, the Halifax Public Libraries, 211, Farmers Markets Nova Scotia, and the Province of Nova Scotia, among others.

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

Development of the HRM Food Asset Map is underway and is expected to continue into 2025/26. *Progress has been delayed as, due to budget shortfalls, there was insufficient funding to procure a food asset mapping consultant as recommended in the Implementation Strategy.*

To date, a detailed data schema has been developed to establish data collection categories and types. The data schema builds on data gaps and opportunities identified through engagement efforts, literature review and background research, and best practices collected through outreach to municipalities and groups that host or have developed food asset maps. HRM GIS and data specialists are determining data storage methods that will enable desired map functionalities.

Data collection efforts continue, and outreach to partner groups is ongoing. Several partial and whole datasets have been obtained and are being validated and manipulated by HRM GIS staff. Data licensing agreements have been explored in collaboration with HRM Legal. A robust data set of licensed food outlets has been created and incorporated into the Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerabilities Assessment and is being developed into a corporate dataset.

Next steps include additional data set collection, validation, and manipulation, alongside the creation and refinement of a public facing, user interface design.



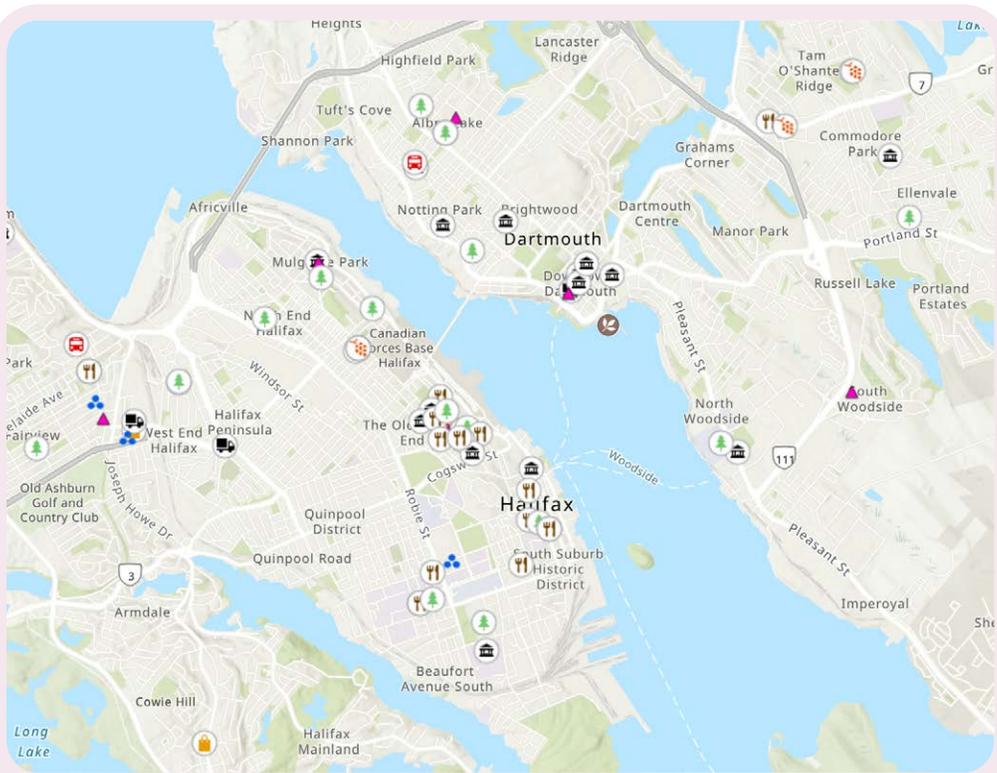
## PROJECT IMPACT

The HRM Food Asset Map will:

- Increase wider understanding of our food system;
- Support the identification of gaps or vulnerabilities;
- Serve as a resource to researchers and policy makers;
- Inform development and monitoring of JustFOOD Action Plan and Municipal KPIs; and
- Inform projects like the Equity Index, Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Analysis, Regional Planning, Community Profiles and other broader programs gauging community assets, inequities, and vulnerabilities.

*"In my role as a settlement services provider, I look forward to a holistic food systems map that will help me, my colleagues, and the people we serve to more easily navigate and locate food related resources in the community."*

-Gillian Smith, Settlement Coordinator, Halifax Refugee Clinic



Beta version of the Halifax Food Asset Map.



# JustFOOD Monitoring Framework and Food Systems Report

**Recommendation 9d.** Use key performance indicators to monitor and evaluate Plan progress.

See **Part B Implementation Strategy 9d (page 65)**.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The *JustFOOD Action Plan* requires robust monitoring to evaluate progress and impact over time, inform revisions, and guide strategic adjustments. Two distinct reporting frameworks have been developed and advanced to support this:

- 1** JustFOOD Project & Progress Evaluation Framework: JustFOOD Action Plan project impact and outcome metrics are being evaluated on an ongoing basis, for regular analysis and reporting. Impact and outcome metrics will inform how current projects are scaled and/or modified and how new projects are selected, designed, and implemented.
- 2** Food System Monitoring Framework: The Food System Monitoring Framework includes a set of indicators adapted from the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact and other sources, to be reported on through the Halifax Food Council's JustFOOD Annual Report. This monitoring framework will gauge the state of the regional food system and track food system action or changes. This framework will inform priorities and future actions for JustFOOD, as well provide valuable knowledge to inform actions of other food system players.

Both the Project Evaluation and Food System Monitoring Reports will be shared publicly through the JustFOOD Virtual Hub.

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Lead:** The JustFOOD Team is leading the development of the Monitoring Frameworks.

**Partners:** The Municipal Food Team, HRM IT GIS staff, Nova Scotia Health - Public Health, and other Plan partners are supporting the JustFOOD Team to select indicators, measure *JustFOOD Action Plan* progress, and track food system action or changes.

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

**JustFOOD Project & Progress Evaluation Framework:** The JustFOOD Team has developed a template that will be used to report on the interim status and outcomes of Part B projects, including a summary of progress, next steps, impact, and associated partners. The team has also developed annual project reporting templates for partners, to inform the evaluation of *JustFOOD Action Plan* implementation, progress, and impact.

**Food System Monitoring Framework:** The JustFOOD Team has begun to develop the food system monitoring framework that will guide regular reporting on the regional food system. The JustFOOD Team will finalize the

food system monitoring framework in early 2025, which will be followed by the completion of data collection and development of reporting plans to communicate key findings and changes over time. A selection of holistic food system indicators taken from this framework will be reported on in the **JustFOOD Annual Report**, with first publication in the summer of 2025.

## PROJECT IMPACT

Monitoring and reporting on both the regional food system and also JustFOOD Action Plan implementation and outcomes will support evidence-based decision making and strategic, systems-level action.

Indicators will be used to:

- Assess and report on food system change;
- Evaluate progress and impact of the JustFOOD Action Plan over time;
- Build capacity for food systems planning at the municipal level and inform HRM KPIs; and
- Strengthen partnerships and knowledge transfer through data collection, analysis, and sharing.



# Social Supermarket and Rural Food Access Pilots

**Recommendation 11.** Develop programs and resources that address the rising cost of food in collaboration with the Province, academic institutions, and other partners.

See aligned Recommendations:

**Recommendation 11b.** Develop programs and resources (e.g., bulk delivery services) to assist community members in coping with the rising cost of food.

**Recommendation 14.** Support community-based programs and grassroots initiatives that provide dignified access to good food, create social inclusion, and offer choices that respect the culture and traditions of diverse communities.

**See Part B Executive Summary 11 (page 25).**

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In April 2023, the Feed Nova Scotia Innovation and Learning Lab engaged and consulted with the JustFOOD Team to identify recommendations from the JustFOOD Action Plan that could be prototyped through the Lab, in partnership with community. Based on community engagement feedback identified in the Plan, the Innovation and Learning Lab chose to progress a Rural Food Access Pilot and a Social Supermarket Pilot, both of which will promote affordable and dignified access to food.

The **Rural Food Access Pilot** re-imagines what food access can look like in communities that are underserved by traditional food outlets through a food delivery system.

A **Social Supermarket** is a community centered approach to selling food in a way that is affordable, offers choice, and maintains dignity. The Pilot is designed with the primary intention to increase food access (rather than generate profits).

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Lead:** Feed Nova Scotia Innovation & Learning Lab.

**Partners:** The **Rural Food Access** Design Team (comprising members of the JustFOOD Team, Musquobodoit Valley Family Resource Centre (MVFRC), Nova Scotia Health - Public Health, MusGo Rider, The Deanery Project, and community). The Mobile Food Market is acting as an advisor.

The **Social Supermarket** Design Team comprises members of the JustFOOD Team, Halifax Public Libraries, Square Roots, and community partners, and community.



## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

Following 11 months of planning, the **Rural Food Access Pilot** launched in June 2024 with the hiring of a Shelf Stable Food Program Coordinator, hosted at the MVFRC. Through community consultation to identify opportunities and barriers to food access in the Musquodoboit Valley, the Rural Food Access design team identified a six-month affordable pre-order **shelf-stable food initiative**, which is an expansion of the MVFRCs existing affordable produce pack program (the “Good Food Bag Program”). Monitoring and evaluation of the pilot is tracked at monthly Steering Committee meetings. The Design Team conducted an outcome evaluation in December 2024 to assess the viability of continuing the pilot for another year as an independent program coordinated by the MVFRC.

A number of communities were explored to assess available space and capacity to site the Social **Supermarket Pilot**, including Fairview, Spryfield, Sackville, North End Halifax, and South End Halifax. The Design Team encountered various challenges in proceeding with these communities due to a severe lack of available community space and differing priorities and capacities of potential hosts. In Fall 2024, the design team engaged Spencer House Seniors Centre to run a community consultation to gauge interest in testing the social supermarket model, which garnered positive feedback. The Design Team is planning to **launch and test a multi-vendor market** based on the social supermarket model, with a focus on serving seniors, in early 2025 and will assess the viability of expanding the model to additional locations throughout HRM.

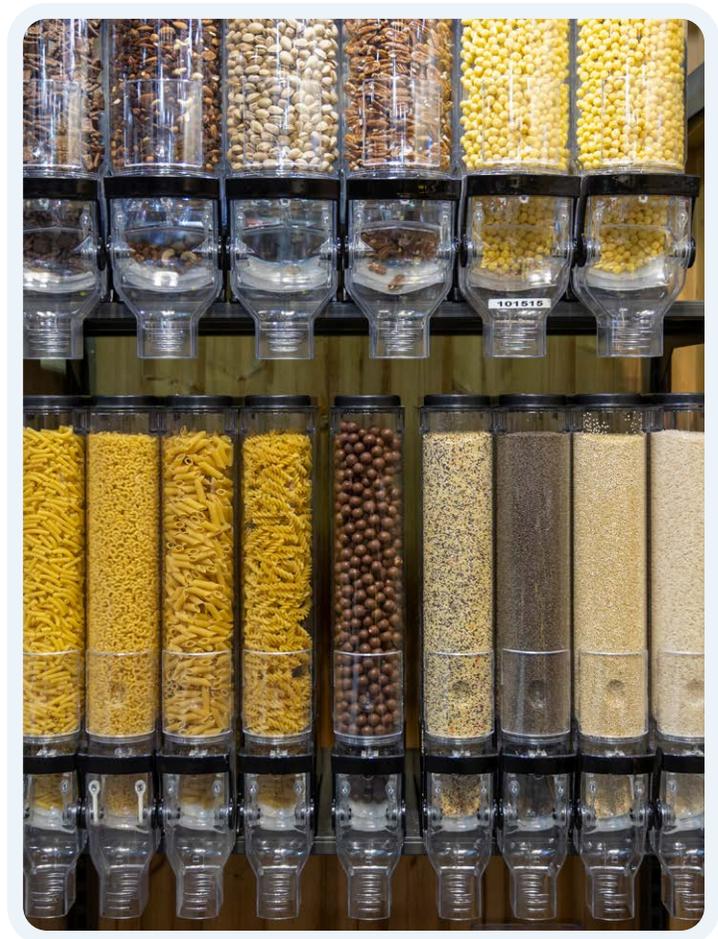
## PROJECT IMPACT

### Rural Food Access Pilot:

Fifty-one households registered to participate in the Rural Food Access Pilot, with three distinct groups of participants emerging:

- 19 households already registered with the Good Food Bag Program, receiving monthly home delivery of fresh produce at wholesale cost. This group has their shelf-stable orders added to regular monthly home deliveries.
- 17 new households that live in the Middle Musquodoboit community and pick up their orders every month.
- 15 new households that live further afield in Upper Musquodoboit or Elmsvale. These households pick up their orders from satellite locations every month.

A total of 147 orders were received between June-November. Over this 6-month period, program staff experimented with different approaches to selling shelf-stable products at wholesale prices, including running





a home delivery service, building and selling a series of food kits, hosting a pop-up market in senior housing, and launching a buy-one-get-one-free sale.

While the number of participants and orders may seem relatively low, this is typical of food programs delivered in rural settings, where greater effort is required to reach a more dispersed, smaller population. Higher value should be placed on program impact on participants, rather than volume and numbers served. Given the geographical context, the initial interest and uptake of the Rural Food Access Pilot was successful and reinforces the need for greater investment in rural food programs. Program participants reported their valuing of a community-led initiative and the affordability of items.

### **Social Supermarket Pilot:**

Valuable learnings for barriers to food programming have emerged from the challenges that the Design Team experienced in launching the Social Supermarket Pilot, including increased awareness of the lack of community spaces available in HRM to host markets and the difficulties with relying on established service providers to take on additional programs.

Once launched, the Spencer House Pilot will be evaluated according to the core objectives of the Social Supermarket Pilot, including:

- Increased dignified and affordable food access;
- Increased first voice, community-level participation in food systems work;
- Leveraging existing resources and assets; and
- Developing an understanding of project feasibility, such as how it can be sustained, expanded, or replicated in the long term.



# English for Migrant Workers (EMW) Pilot & Migrant Worker Welcome Bags Pilot

**Recommendation 12.** Promote fair and decent employment for all, including fair economic relations, fair wages, and improved labour conditions within the food and agriculture sector.

**Recommendation 12e.** Collaborate with libraries, schools, community centres, and faith-based organizations to provide easily accessible social services (e.g., literacy services, legal services, resource fairs) to migrant workers in agriculture.

**See Part B Implementation Strategy 12e (page 71).**

**Recommendation 12e.i.** Develop multiple-language information packages to share with workers upon their arrival in Nova Scotia that detail existing public services and how to access them.

**See Part B Implementation Strategy 12e.i (page 76).**

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**EMW Pilot:** The Centre for Migrant Worker Rights Nova Scotia (CMWR NS, previously No one is illegal-Nova Scotia, NOII-NS) will create and deliver an English language course for migrant workers (also known as Temporary Foreign Workers, TFWs), with lessons that focus on workplace skills and knowledge, workers' rights, and local culture.

**Welcome Bags Pilot:** CMWR NS will create and distribute packages (welcome bags) to migrant workers upon arrival in HRM. Bags will be designed to increase workers' awareness of rights and responsibilities in Nova Scotia, connect workers to support services, and provide workers with practical items for emergencies and personal hygiene. Information packages for migrant workers will provide useful information on:

- How to file complaints about worker rights violations;
- How to apply for the Open Work Permit for Vulnerable Workers (OWPVW); and
- How to connect with support organizations.

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

CMWR NS has identified and approached the following prospective project partners:

- **EMW Pilot:**
  - **Halifax Workers' Action Centre:** Providing feedback on materials and/or the curriculum, particularly on the topic of labour standards.
  - **Office of the Worker Counsellor:** Providing feedback on materials and/or the curriculum, particularly on topics such as Workers Compensation or occupational health and safety systems in Nova Scotia.
  - **Donna Pearce,** Program Development and QA Coordinator for ESL Services at Brock University: Supporting with EAL curriculum development.
- **Welcome Bags Pilot**
  - **Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group (NSPIRG):** Supporting venue access for packaging of welcome bags and space for storage. NSPIRG may also support the recruitment of volunteers to assemble welcome bags.



- **Department of Social Justice & Community Studies at Saint Mary's University:** Supporting experiential learning placement for students in the program to support the project, including help with research for the information packages and educational resources for migrant workers, as well as for assembling the welcome bags.

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

*Due to HRM resourcing delays, CMWR NS has shifted the original timelines for both Pilots.*

**EMW Pilot:** CMWR NS will hire an EMW Coordinator and begin to implement the Pilot in early 2025. The pilot will run through the end of 2025.

**Welcome Bags Pilot:** To date, CMWR NS has created a job description for the Welcome Bag Coordinator, promoted the job posting, and hired the Coordinator. CMWR NS has begun to implement the program; it will run through the end of March 2025.

## PROJECT IMPACT

The **EMW Pilot** will:

- Improve workers' language skills in English;
- Build workers' connections and community participation in HRM, combating isolation;
- Increase workers' confidence in navigating the Canadian employment market and legal system; and
- Deliver essential information about work hazards and labour rights.

The **Welcome Bags Pilot** will:

- Increase workers' access to relevant services and community resources;
- Enhance workers' understanding of their rights and support workers to exercise these rights;
- Increase workers' awareness of CMWR NS and know how to connect with the organization; and
- Provide workers' with access to items that are useful in emergency situations.

In the long term, both pilots are designed to ensure that migrant workers are better supported and living in safer conditions while in HRM.



Photo credit:  
Terrel Daniel Photography



# Indigenous Food Justice and Sovereignty

**Recommendation 23e.** Fund a full-time food coordinator staff position at the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre (MNFC).

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In partnership with the JustFOOD Team, the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre (MNFC) created a full-time Food Coordinator staff position. This role was filled in July 2024.

The Coordinator works with all program leads within MNFC, establishing a community-based network around food justice and sovereignty for the urban Indigenous community. The Coordinator oversees various food-based programming, and coordinates the following services and activities: community fridge/freezer, food bank, community gardens, community feasts, food preparation, nutrition/budgeting classes, and Indigenous land-based food knowledge sharing.

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Lead:** MNFC is leading the development and delivery of the Indigenous food program with support from the JustFOOD Team.

**Partners:** A diverse group of community partners is dedicated to fostering collaborative relationships aimed at strengthening food security and sovereignty for Indigenous clients. Internal partners include Atelihai Inuit, Junior and Senior Youth, Early Years, Every One Every Day, Diamond Bailey, Christmas Cheer, 7 Sparks, and Housing. External partners include Nourish NS and the Native Council of Nova Scotia.

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

The Coordinator role was filled in July, 2024. As of January 1, 2025, the Coordinator and supporting MNFC staff have:

- Hosted 20 community kitchen sessions;
- Supported 75 clients;
- Distributed \$8,000 in emergency food gift cards;
- Designed and delivered an innovative back-to-school lunch and snack initiative;
- Distributed 360 Bannock in a Bottle and 360 Soup in a Jar; and
- Offered seasonal Christmas cookie dough workshops.

Through 2025, the Coordinator and supporting MNFC staff will continue to design and deliver food access and literacy programming, providing emergency food relief and increasing community awareness of traditional food practices and skills. The Coordinator and JustFOOD team members will work together to secure additional funding to support program delivery.



## PROJECT IMPACT

The Coordinator and related programming staff have made a significant difference in the lives of 75 clients by addressing food access and nutritional needs. Key impacts include:

- **Gift Cards Distribution:** Providing immediate financial relief to support families in purchasing essential food items.
- **Community Kitchen Sessions:** Encouraging skill-building, social connections, and healthy meal preparation through shared cooking experiences.
- **Back-to-School Lunch and Snack Initiative:** Supporting youth and families with creative and nutritious ideas to make school lunches and snacks both fun and healthy.
- **Bannock in a Bottle and Soup in a Jar:** Offering convenient, ready-to-make meal options, reducing food preparation stress while promoting homemade, nutritious meals.
- **Seasonal Christmas Cookie Dough Workshops:** Bringing communities together during the holiday season to share joy, traditions, and culinary skills.

These initiatives collectively strengthen food access within the urban Indigenous community, enhance cooking confidence, and foster supportive networks and connection among participants.

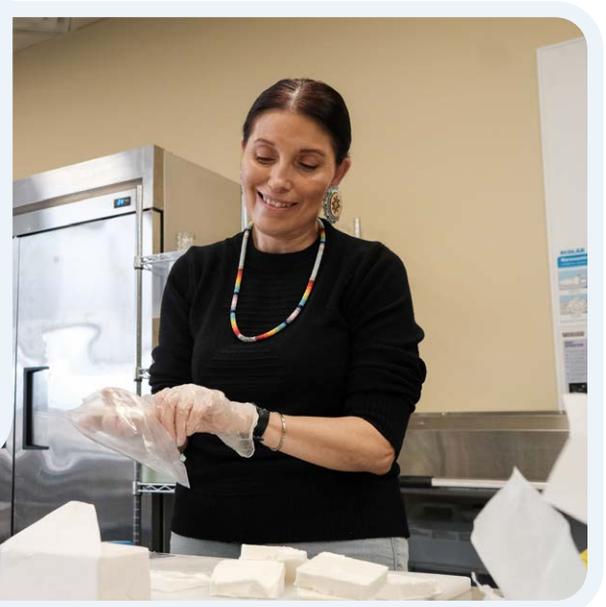


Photo Credit: Ben Lemphers



# African Nova Scotian and Black Food Justice and Sovereignty

The *Blend it Forward* program aligns with the African Nova Scotian and Black (ANSB) Food Justice Team's goals as outlined in Part B of the *JustFOOD Action Plan*.

**Recommendation 28a.** Support ANSB community partners in hosting traditional food-workshops and programs.

**Recommendation 29.** Develop community infrastructure and projects that create economic and social benefits in ANSB communities.

**See Part B Implementation Strategy 29 (page 90).**

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In partnership with the JustFOOD Team, One North End Community Economic Development Society created a full-time African Nova Scotian and Black (ANSB) Community Food Coordinator staff position. This role was filled in July 2024.

The Coordinator works to advance community-level food projects, growing food justice and sovereignty within ANSB communities while advancing related *JustFOOD Action Plan* recommendations.

In collaboration with the ANSB Food Justice Team, the Coordinator designed and delivered the [\*Blend it Forward\* program](#), an Africentric food literacy initiative designed to equip African Nova Scotians with skills to prepare nutritious, culturally relevant meals. Held once a week over five weeks in October, each session focused on hands-on cooking and nutrition education. Participants learned how to use a Ninja Pro Blender to create healthy meals, and participants received a free Ninja Pro Blender for continued use and practice at home. Each session included a 45-minute food literacy segment to ensure cultural relevance and engagement.

### Divergence During Implementation:

- **Shift in Session Format:** The program initially planned for two meals per session but adjusted to one meal, allowing more time for in-depth nutrition discussions and exploration of food culture.
- **Increased Focus on Nutrition Education:** Participants requested more focus on topics such as portion sizes, healthy fats, and label reading, prompting a deeper dive into these areas in future iterations.

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

- **Cheyenne Jones (Food Coordinator):** Developed and co-facilitated the program, providing leadership, content development, and overall management.
- **Nickaya Parris (Registered Dietitian):** Created and delivered the nutrition education component, ensuring the content was culturally relevant.
- **African Nova Scotian and Black Food Sovereignty Working Group:** Provided guidance and oversight, instrumental in developing the Community Coordinator role.
- **ONE North End:** Hosted the Coordinator position and offered organizational support.



- **Chef Leon Hamilton:** Prepared the final celebratory meal, contributing to program success and community engagement.
- **Other Partners:** Terrel Daniel Photography (documentation), M4 Media (videography), Northgrove and St. Andrews Community Centres (session hosting), Atlantic Superstore (food support), Canadian Tire (blender discount).

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

The Coordinator role was filled in July, 2024. The Coordinator and the supporting ANSB Food Justice team have:

- Designed and delivered five weekly workshops, teaching food preparation and nutrition skills.
- Incorporated culturally relevant nutrition education aligned with Africentric principles.
- Completed pre- and post-program evaluations showing significant knowledge gains.
- Provided Ninja Pro Blenders to all participants to support continued learning and use.

### Next Steps:

- **Expand Reach:** Develop a “Train the Trainer” program to equip facilitators to deliver the program in other communities.
- **Provincial Rollout:** Host the program in all ANS communities across Nova Scotia, with plans for expansion into the broader Black community.
- **Online Program Development:** Create an online version to increase accessibility and generate revenue for the Black Food Center.
- **Development of a Black Food Center:** Through 2025, the Coordinator and ANSB Food Justice Team will explore the development of a Black Food Centre, as described in Implementation Strategy 29.

## PROJECT IMPACT

The Blend it Forward program strengthens food sovereignty and improves food literacy in African Nova Scotian communities by:

- Providing hands-on cooking and nutrition education, focusing on affordable, healthy meals that respect cultural food practices. Participants showed significant improvements in food skills and nutrition knowledge, particularly with plant-based proteins and macronutrients.
- Delivering culturally relevant food literacy education that supports community-led food systems, improves culturally specific food knowledge, and increases awareness and understanding of food sovereignty.
- Increasing community connection and engagement. Participants expressed significant interest in family-level participation, particularly parents and children, highlighting a potential for future program expansion.
- Establishing leadership and building capacity. The program donated a complete table setting to Chef Leon Hamilton to support his business, enabling him to service larger events.

### Key Outcomes:

- 91.6% of participants (22/24) reported achieving their learning objectives.
- 58.3% (14/24) tried new foods, and 67% (16/24) replicated recipes at home.
- Participants expressed interest in extending the program to include family members and deeper discussions on health topics.



### Participant Feedback:

- *"The recipes were simple yet delicious. I never thought I'd make my own hummus!"*
- *"I appreciated learning practical knife skills and trying new foods I'd never considered before."*
- *"I spend most of my days alone and don't eat well. This program helped me leave my house to meet new people. I'll miss the fellowship".*





# Community Orchard Pilot

**Recommendation 31b.** Increase the planting of food-bearing trees when planting new trees in parks and on other civic lands, and encourage community stewardship of these community orchards through partnerships with local gleaning organizations.

See aligned recommendations:

**Recommendation 17.** Use Municipal facilities and assets to offer food programs, grow food, and support public food infrastructure.

**Recommendation 31 a vii.** Promote and explore expansion of the Urban Orchard program that may provide free fruit trees to gardens on Municipal land.

**See Part B Implementation Strategy 17 (page 82).**

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The **Community Orchard Pilot** supports the integration and maximization of Municipal assets for food demonstration, production, access, and literacy by planting fruit/nut trees on centrally located, well-accessed Municipal land. The Pilot will expand and revitalize the Leighton Dillman Community Orchard and will build community capacity for tree planting and care through provision of training opportunities.

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Lead:** The JustFOOD Team, HRM Horticulture, and HRM Parks and Recreation have collaborated to advance this project.

- **The JustFOOD Team:** Coordination of training, project planning, and community engagement.
- **HRM Horticulture:** Procuring trees and leading ongoing maintenance of trees, using knowledge received from training.
- **HRM Parks and Recreation:** HRM Naturalization Coordinator supporting tree selection and planting, coordinating this project into broader HRM naturalization and edible perennial strategies.



**Partners:** Community members have provided feedback on site location and will eventually be involved in volunteer support of the orchard.

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

**Orchard Care Training:** Municipal staff and community partners are receiving training on growing and maintaining fruit/nut trees which will increase collective capacity to establish and maintain orchards. To date, four HRM Staff



have registered for the *Certificate in Fruit Tree Care* course administered by [Orchard People](#), a Canadian fruit tree specialist organization. An additional round of staff and community members will complete the training in preparation for Spring planting. Knowledge gained from this training will inform the tree selection and planting that will take place in Spring 2025, to ensure the success of the trees.

**Community Engagement and Participation:** The exact planting site within Leighton Dillman required additional community engagement to avoid disrupting high-traffic green space areas and identifying an accessible site that will encourage participation in the orchard. To date, the JustFOOD Team has hosted an engagement event for neighbours of the Leighton Dillman Park to explore site options for expanding the existing Community Orchard. Approximately 20 community members joined to provide feedback on tree locations. This feedback, along with feasibility assessments from the HRM Horticulture team, are informing site planning for Spring 2025.

**Fruit Tree Literacy & Education:** Interpretive signs that include information on the fruit trees, how to care for them, and how to harvest fruit are being designed and will be placed around the Community Orchard.

**Orchard Maintenance:** HRM Horticulture Gardeners have committed to regular maintenance of the trees. Future work will be done to establish a community volunteer group to support this maintenance.



## PROJECT IMPACT

The Community Orchard Pilot demonstrates and normalizes food production in public spaces, while also acting as a food literacy and education asset. Community members gain increased access to fresh fruit, while learning about, caring for, and harvesting fruit trees. Municipal staff and community members who participate in the training will grow regional capacity for other community orchards.

The Pilot also revitalizes the existing Leighton Dillman Community Orchard and re-engages community members in the space, encouraging community level participation and connections.

*"The training offered by Orchard People provides a comprehensive and practical understanding of fruit production. Fruit production involves a lot more than just growing trees or shrubs. Successful fruit production requires careful planning, including site selection, soil testing, pruning and pest and disease management. Each of these steps directly impact both the quality and quantity of fruit harvested.*

*Unlike other plantings, fruit trees require a long-term investment, as they do not produce fruit for the first three years. However, with proper training, this investment yields healthy, productive trees that provide food for decades. Fruit production is a form of urban agriculture that requires both scientific knowledge and hands-on skill. The Orchard People course equips individuals and communities with these essential tools through written materials and instructional videos, ensuring that community orchards and urban fruit trees thrive for years to come."*

*Fruit/nut tree training participant*



# Urban Agriculture

**Recommendation 32.a.i.** Enable and fund the development of a Community Plots Pilot.

**Recommendation 32.a.ii.** Create and fund an Urban Agriculture Specialist staff position within the Municipality.

**Recommendation 32.a.vi.** Establish a Community Garden Grant Program.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Urban Agriculture Specialist (UAS) will support the expansion of HRM's Community Garden Program, administration of the new Community Garden Grants Program, and development of additional Municipally-led urban agriculture programs, including the Community Plots Pilot, altogether increasing HRM's knowledge base and capacity to provide opportunities for community food production.

The Community Plots Pilot will increase access to growing space through the development of plots for community organizations and groups, increasing community access to growing spaces. This year, the Plots Pilot distributed water infrastructure to HRM community gardens. In future years, the Plots Pilot may advance a Municipally-run, low or no-cost plot rental program.

The Community Garden Grant Program will increase support for new and existing community gardens on municipal land to acquire resources and infrastructure, maintain/expand gardens, and conduct accessibility audits.

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Lead:** Municipal Food Team and the JustFOOD Team

**Partners:** The JustFOOD Team, Municipal Teams and Departments (including Parks and Recreation, Community Developers, Solid Waste, HalifACT, and Diversity and Inclusion), Spencer House, Atlantic Street Pallet Shelter Community, NorthGrove, and Nourish Nova Scotia

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

**UAS:** The UAS job description has been finalized and is being rated in preparation for posting. Once hired, the UAS will work with municipal and community partners to increase opportunities for food production on municipal assets and support urban agriculture work across the Region. The UAS will work with HRM's Community Developers to transition the administration of the Community Garden Program and Community Garden Grant Programs to the Municipal Food Team, with Community Developers continuing to provide community expertise, support for community capacity building, and linkage to recreation resources.

**Community Plots Pilot:** Five new Community Plots Pilot sites are being advanced, with the development of new beds for community use: (1) Spencer House, (2) Belmont Arms Oasis, (3) Avonhurst Gardens Oasis, (4) Atlantic Street Pallet Shelter Community, and (5) Farrell Street Park.

**Sites 1-3** are grouped under the Oasis "Aging in Place" program, which offers recreational and social programs in "Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities". **Site 4** will provide transitional housing residents with access to growing spaces, fostering connection to green spaces, access to fresh produce, and beautification of the new



housing. **Site 5** is the exploration of the opportunities and visioning towards the use of Farrell Street Park for high density community agriculture uses, including food production, storage, processing, and distribution.

Due to hiring delays for the UAS, surplus funds are being used to facilitate the purchase of water infrastructure for HRM community gardens. This use of funds responds to feedback gathered directly from HRM community gardens regarding inadequate water access and increased climate impacts. Water infrastructure may include rain barrels, gutters, water tanks, water pumps, rain garden features, or sub-irrigated planters.

All municipal garden groups were contacted to gauge interest in water infrastructure. Upon expression of interest, the JustFOOD Team worked with each garden to procure water infrastructure according to their unique needs.

The following ten gardens will be receiving water infrastructure through this initiative:

- Birdland Community Garden
- BLT Community Garden
- Flandrum Hill Community Garden
- Glen Garden
- Guy Jacobs Community Garden
- Hope Blooms
- North End Community Garden
- Peninsula Urban Garden Society
- Prescott Street Community Garden
- Prospect Road Community Garden

**Community Garden Grant Program:** An application form, assessment rubric, and final report for the Grant Program have all been developed with the support and review of HRM Community Developers and a representative from the HRM Community Grants Program. This program requires an amendment to the Administrative Order Respecting Community Gardens, slated for Council's consideration in March, to be followed by the launch of the Grants and fund distribution before 2024 fiscal year end, in support of Spring projects. Subsequent years will have a January intake and application review, to ensure funding is dispersed prior to the growing season.

## PROJECT IMPACT

The **UAS** will promote community-level food access and sovereignty, prioritizing equity-deserving groups and underserved communities. They will serve as a resource on urban agriculture best practices, advance engagement with communities to inform Municipal food production, and support equitable participation in our food system. They will also increase the capacity of other HRM staff through assuming the administration of municipal food production programs and by providing expertise in urban agriculture.

The **Community Plots Pilot** will increase participation in urban food production through development of additional garden sites and provision of resources such as water infrastructure, soil, compost, seeds, and seedlings. The Plots Pilot will be managed and guided by the UAS upon hiring.

**Site 1-3:** The Oasis "Aging In Place" Program is founded on three pillars: preventing social isolation, facilitating better nutrition, and promoting physical fitness for members.

**Site 4:** Growing space infrastructure at the Atlantic Street Pallet Shelter Community will support social connection and community building among residents, beautify the site, provide therapeutic benefits, increase fresh food access, and facilitate food literacy skill development.



**Site 5:** Farrell Street Park is a large, underused open space located in Dartmouth North, a community with high poverty rates and barriers to social connection. This project will focus on activating the underused park space and addressing barriers to food production experienced by Dartmouth North community members, including inequitable access to growing space. As a community development initiative, it will provide residents with an opportunity to imagine what a community farm could look like and how it could serve them.

Water infrastructure will support community gardens to respond to increased climate pressures and impacts. This infrastructure will also increase food production capacity and environmental sustainability.

The **Community Garden Grants** Program will reduce barriers to participation in food production and increase the accessibility and sustainability of community gardens. Community garden groups do not have a dedicated funding source and are often unable to secure funding for site development or for necessary resources and supports such as water infrastructure or raised beds, especially where municipal water access does not exist and/or municipal soils are contaminated. The Grants Program will increase the impact and accessibility of the existing Community Gardens Program for both current gardens and the waiting list of groups interested in new gardens.





# Backyard Sharing Program

**Recommendation 33d.** Work with partner organizations to develop a backyard sharing program.

**Recommendation 33.** Protect and enable secure access and tenure to land for sustainable food production. This includes land for community gardeners and small producers.

**See Part B Executive Summary 33d (page 31).**

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Throughout the development and implementation of the JustFOOD Action Plan, community members identified a need and interest in greater access to low-barrier spaces for growing food. The **Backyard Sharing Program** will match residents that have available land with those who are seeking land for food production and will provide tools to guide the development of land host / land user relationships. Backyard sharing is a mutually beneficial relationship, “neighbours helping neighbours”, in which available or underused land can be shared for positive social and ecological benefits while strengthening social connections and access to land for food production.

The Program will identify potential sites or “backyards”, connect interested gardeners with interested land hosts, and offer tools to support the two parties to enter into an agreement. The JustFOOD team, including the forthcoming Urban Agriculture Specialist, will guide matchmaking, site assessments, and program monitoring and evaluation.

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Lead:** The JustFOOD Team and Municipal Food Team

**Partners:** HRM GIS Staff and Corporate Communications, Community Food Partners

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

The JustFOOD team, Baxter Research Group, HRM Corporate Communications, and HRM Risk and Legal Services have collaborated to develop a **Backyard Sharing Guide**. The Guide includes definitions of key roles, intake forms for land hosts and gardeners, a site assessment form, and considerations to assist program participants in crafting and customizing a partnership agreement.

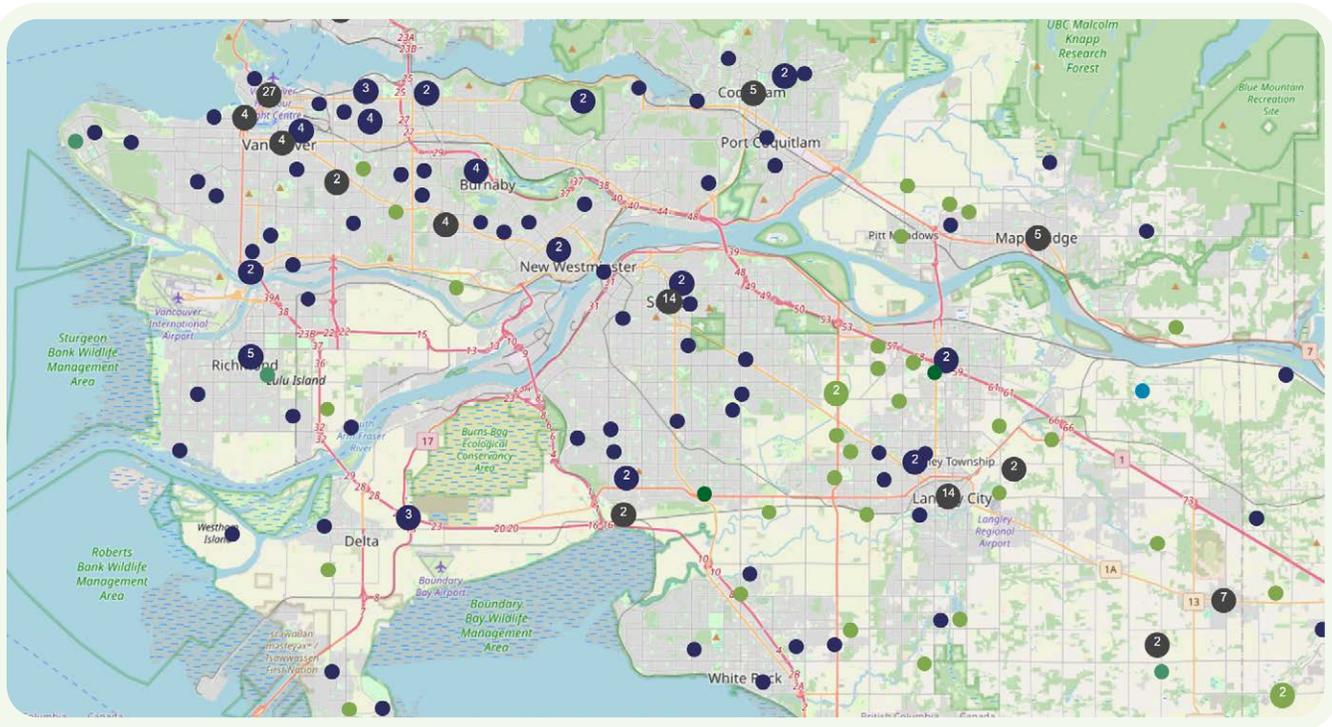
The Backyard Sharing Program is set to launch in early 2025, *later than originally anticipated due to delays in hiring staff for the Municipal Food Team and the Halifax Food Council*. Next steps include continuing to work with GIS Specialists to advance the mapping platform that will be used to identify potential gardening sites and connect land hosts with interested gardeners. Conversations are underway to determine the best host platform (either halifax.ca or the JustFOOD Virtual Food Hub).



## PROJECT IMPACT

The **Backyard Sharing Program** will:

- Increase access to and awareness of available growing spaces in HRM;
- Promote relationship building and connections between community members;
- Normalize food production and challenge the privatization of land in favour of the sharing of resources;
- Build community capacity for urban food production and knowledge sharing;
- Increase community food access; and
- Promote opportunities for the growing of culturally relevant crops and traditional or culturally-specific farming practices.



[Resource sharing map](#) hosted by the Young Agrarians, including backyard sharing listings. This map is funded by multiple levels of government.



# Halifax Regional Food Hub

**Recommendation 39.** Improve and expand infrastructure that links buyers to sellers. This will build social cohesion and trust, support cultural exchange, and ensure sustainable livelihoods.

**Recommendation 39a.** Continue to support the development of the Halifax Regional Food Hub and provincially supported community food networks, creating centralized infrastructure to store, process, market, and distribute local food to serve HRM

**See Part B Implementation Strategy 39a (page 106).**

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Halifax Regional Food Hub (HRFH) is an active and emerging nonprofit co-operative committed to building and strengthening Nova Scotia's local food system through connecting local producers in mainland Nova Scotia to wholesale buyers in HRM. By supporting local producers, building Nova Scotia's local food infrastructure, and creating efficient channels for food distribution, the HRFH will increase our Region's economic resiliency, food security and food sovereignty.

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Lead:** The founding partners and co-operative members are committed to continuing to provide leadership to expand and enrich the co-operative membership and commence operations of the "minimum viable food hub". Founding partners include Feed Nova Scotia, Halifax Food Policy Alliance (Halifax Food Council), Mobile Food Market, Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia, Nourish Nova Scotia, and Novalea Kitchen and Market.

**Partners:** The Province of Nova Scotia is a key funder of the project. Flourish Community Development Co-op have and continue to support the planning and realization of the HRFH.

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

The HRFH has, to date:

- Formally established as a not for profit co-operative;
- Secured \$850,000 in funding via the Nova Scotia Community Economic Development Fund, supporting implementation of the business plan and ongoing work to stand up a minimum viable food hub;
- Explored municipal land holding opportunities with HRM Real Estate. Due to housing and homelessness pressures and third party operation of business parks, no immediate prospects have been identified to support HRFH;
- Hired a Managing Director to advance operational, budgetary, and human resource logistics;
- Completed a job description and, with the support of Placemaking 4G, has begun recruitment processes for the Executive Director role; and
- Advanced member recruitment to enrich the Board and to increase representation from producers and institutional and commercial buyers.



Once the Executive Director is in place, The HRFH is poised to take its next steps towards commencing operations of the Hub. This will include the following:

- Onboarding new Board members, increasing HRFH diversity, expertise, and trust in leadership;
- Securing wholesale buyers (organizations, institutions, and independent food businesses) and primary/secondary producers to join the Co-op;
- Establishing a centrally located space, leasehold improvements, and equipment;
- Hiring and training additional staff; and
- Launching Phase 1 to commence operations.

## PROJECT IMPACT

The HRFH will provide services including aggregation, storage (dry, cold, and frozen), online ordering and payment processing, order fulfillment, and last mile delivery. Wholesale buyers will include community organizations, public institutions, and independently-owned restaurants and retailers. A “hub-and-spoke” model will allow for greater efficiency, collaboration, and scale of impact in connecting and supporting producers, buyers, and other food hubs throughout Nova Scotia.

As a trusted not-for-profit co-operative, the HRFH will bridge the gap between regional producers and local buyers by fostering relationships, removing barriers to accessing local food, building economies of scale, and providing resilient infrastructure. A key objective of the Hub is to empower the food sector and communities through knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and innovative practices, ensuring access to local products while building the future of our food system.

The HRFH is working towards a co-operative enterprise to:

- Increase consumer access to trusted local food;
- Increase access for wholesale buyers to a wide diversity of high quality local products;
- Advance the viability and create infrastructure to support the buy local movement;
- Enhance market access for farmers and food producers, allowing them to expand and grow their enterprises;
- Enhance the security, sovereignty, and resilience of Nova Scotia’s local food system; and
- Increase retention and circulation of food dollars in the local economy.





# HRM Emergency Food Response

**Recommendation 45b.** Develop an emergency food plan with funding and resources for emergency responses. In this work, develop partnerships and options for the storage, transportation, and equitable distribution of food during crises.

**Recommendation 45.** Develop an emergency food program. This program will help coordinate efforts to increase the resilience of local food systems to climate change and food-supply shortages, particularly in those areas and communities most vulnerable to climate change impacts and breaks in the supply chain.

See aligned Status Update 45b.ii. HRM Community Food Distribution Pilot.

**See Part B Implementation Strategy 45b (page 109).**

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The advancement of HRM's emergency food planning has focused on building partnerships with community organizations and increasing municipal capacity to support emergency food responses. This planning strengthens HRM's Emergency Management Office's (EMO) emergency response tools, including the Hazard, Risk, & Vulnerability Assessment project, and the SATURN (situational analysis and response) refresh.

Emergency food planning to date has included the following:

**Emergency Food Partners Roster:** The Emergency Food Partners Survey, conducted prior to hurricane season 2023, gauged a range of community partners' interest and resources to support emergency food responses. Building on this survey, the JustFOOD team, EMO, and Procurement have collaboratively developed an **Emergency Food Partners Roster** of community organizations and mobile food providers who are interested in playing a role during emergency responses, should EMO determine they are needed.

**Emergency Food Truck:** The **Emergency Food Truck Coordinator** and the Municipal Food Team will operate the **Emergency Food Truck** during times of emergency, provide expertise on community food distribution and connection with community food partners, and work with partners like [Second Harvest](#) (see update 45b.ii), the [Mobile Food Market](#), and others to increase municipal capacity for emergency food responses.

**Emergency Storm Kits:** In partnership with Feed Nova Scotia and funded by the [Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund](#), HRM will distribute **Emergency Storm Kits**, with the goal of increasing their emergency preparedness. The kits will provide non-perishable food and other emergency supplies to a sample group of up to 1,500 HRM residents, with an emphasis on local, sustainable procurement designed to ensure positive economic impact.

**Sustainable, Off-Grid Cold Storage:** HRM, in collaboration with the [Ecology Action Centre](#) (EAC), [Open Studio One \(OSO\) Planning & Design](#), and [Common Roots Urban Farm](#), has been awarded **\$74,043 in funding** from the [Low Carbon Communities](#) (LCC) Program for Feasibility and Upscaling of **Sustainable, Off-Grid Cold Storage**. Lack of access to cold storage has been identified as a significant barrier for food programming in our region and frequent



power outages can result in the loss of increasingly costly food stores, which many residents and organizations struggle to replace. As the climate crisis continues to threaten our food system, off-grid cold storage infrastructure can be used for emergency food responses and for the distribution of food stores to support vulnerable residents. The development and sharing of cold storage designs and infrastructure will support community food programs and sustainable approaches to increasing access to fresh food in non-emergency times.

**HalifACT Resilient Communities Working Group:** this municipal working group works across business units to provide direction to and accelerate the HalifACT actions that support HRM communities' abilities to collectively prepare for and recover from climate change events and their impacts. The group meets monthly to share progress and challenges with ongoing community resilience initiatives. Focus has shifted from creation of new programs to working together to increase awareness/understanding, outreach, and impact of existing initiatives and reduce silos and barriers to advancing these. The working group has provided critical expertise and resources, crucial for the progress of the emergency food planning initiatives referenced in this update.

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Leads:** Municipal Food Team and Emergency Management Office (EMO)

**Partners:** HRM Procurement and Environment & Climate Change (ECC), Province of Nova Scotia (funder), Second Harvest, Feed Nova Scotia, and Emergency food partners (including regional nonprofits and businesses)

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

The **Emergency Food Partners (EFP) Bids and Tenders** intake forms are complete and a Communications Plan for promotion of the opportunity is in development. The *Bids and Tenders* program will launch in February 2025. Corporate Communications is supporting the launch to ensure clear messaging on the purpose of the Roster and creative promotion to reach communities and organizations that may not be familiar with HRM Procurement opportunities. The Roster will be updated via annual check-ins and a call for applications to ensure that EMO has accurate information on the potential roles and resources of interested partners that can be actioned in response to an event and to confirm that partners are still interested in participating, should they be called upon. The Municipal Food Team will oversee the ongoing updating of the roster, while EMO will coordinate use of the Roster and activation of the EFPs.



The North Gove, Emergency Food Partner

Photo Credit: Terrel Daniel Photography



The **Emergency Food Truck Coordinator** was hired in November 2024 and will be working with the wider Municipal Food Team, EMO, Second Harvest, and other food system actors to strengthen food access in emergency preparation and response.

Template **Emergency Stormkits** have been developed and consultation with community distribution partners has begun. The assembly of supplies and distribution of kits will begin in early 2025. ECC staff are supporting the environmental scan.

The **Off-grid Cold Storage Feasibility Project** is phase three of a four phase collaboration:

- *Phase One* (complete, funded by HRM's [Climate Action Challenge](#)): the development of renewable energy, off-grid cold storage prototype ideas (design exploration only) through a series of design engagements.
- *Phase Two* (underway, funded by ECC through HRM's Community Food Grants Update 1b.i): development of an open-source technical design package, with the initial build of a full-scale, operational prototype at CRUF BiHi Park.
- *Phase Three* (commencing in February 2025, funded by LCC): feasibility study to explore scaling the prototype design up and out for a range of possible locations and uses. This includes an assessment of barriers and opportunities for community-level adoption and prototype testing and procurement opportunities for larger scale / streamlined local manufacture.
- *Phase Four* (proposed, funding to be sought in 2025/26): implementation and expansion with cold-storage units built and distributed in areas with demonstrated need and community partnership, based on Phase Three results.

## PROJECT IMPACT

Partnerships are critical to effective emergency planning and response, as community-level groups are uniquely attuned to residents' needs, are trusted by communities, and can provide rapid, targeted assistance, ensuring that resources and support are directed where they are most needed. The **EFP Bids and Tenders** will provide EMO with a better understanding of community partners' capacity to lead community-based emergency responses and ensure response expectations are established. The **Emergency Food Truck Coordinator** will further increase knowledge of local food systems vulnerabilities and strengths through their relationships with partners. The **Community Food Truck** will be a key asset to reduce food waste and spoilage and increase food distribution during emergencies.

**The Stormkits** will increase capacity for emergency preparedness and will emphasize the importance of using sustainable supplies and investing in the local economy as part of emergency planning. This pilot will focus on newcomers and international students as groups that can be extremely vulnerable to climate events due to their high rates of food insecurity and limited access to social safety nets.

The **Off-grid Cold Storage Project** will address cold storage infrastructure gaps and sustainable agricultural technology gaps in Halifax and across the Maritimes. It will also address barriers to food storage and distribution, especially during climate emergencies and at grassroots levels.



# HRM Community Food Distribution Pilot

**Recommendation 45b.ii.** Identify, describe, and commit essential infrastructure for the procurement, storage, preparation, and distribution of food supplies such as kitchen facilities with generators, food and refrigerated trucks, and community spaces that will be open during emergencies.

See aligned Status Update 45b.

**See Part B Implementation Strategy 45b.ii (page 116).**

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The **Community Food Distribution Pilot** will maximize the HRM Community Food Truck to bring food into communities; distribute surplus food in partnership with Second Harvest; and support community food organizations in food acquisition and delivery. The new Emergency Food Truck Coordinator will use the Truck to support emergency response, focusing on supporting community food distribution, preparation, and preservation. The Coordinator will also explore options to provide community partners with access to the Truck to support their programs.

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Leads:** Municipal Food Team and HRM Emergency Management Office (EMO)

**Partners:** [Second Harvest](#) (nonprofit food rescue organization), community food organizations, grassroots food system actors

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

The new **Emergency Food Truck Coordinator** position was developed and filled internally in November 2024. The Coordinator is readying the Truck for food distribution, through the establishment of maintenance protocols, installation of a lift gate, acquisition of food distribution equipment, development of operation manuals, and creation of a Truck calendar. Work is also ongoing to identify potential community partners who can be served by the Truck. The Coordinator will continue to work with both community partners and Second Harvest to test and develop the program for the pickup of surplus food for delivery to community partners. The Coordinator is also organizing food safety training and truck orientations for other municipal staff who may be called upon to operate the Truck to support their programs or for use during community events.

The Coordinator and Municipal Food Team are also working with EMO to create activation plans for the Truck and Food Team during emergencies, ensuring staff are trained and able to join the Emergency Operations Centre (see *aligned update 45b*).



## PROJECT IMPACT

The partnership agreement with Second Harvest will support the coordination of food supply and demand in the Region. Regular food distribution schedules will allow the Truck to move food from suppliers to community partners in a timely manner, reducing food waste/loss and freeing up partners' time for program delivery. This will strengthen Municipal relationships with community actors and grow mutual capacity for food distribution and emergency food responses.

The volume of food being rescued and distributed, as well as organizational interest and need for the service will be evaluated on an on-going basis. If there is not enough supply or demand through the partnership with Second Harvest, the Coordinator will explore other options for supporting community food distribution and maximizing use of the Community Food Truck.



HRM Emergency Food Truck Photo Credit: Terrel Daniel Photography



# School Food

**Recommendation 47.** Work with the Coalition for Healthy School Food (CHSF) and the Province to advocate for universal healthy school food programs.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Halifax Regional Council endorsed the Coalition for Healthy School Food's (CHSF) call for a universal, cost-shared, healthy school food program for Canada in March 2022. In October 2024, the Nova Scotia School Lunch Program launched across the province for Pre-Primary to Grade 5 classrooms, with plans to expand to all grades in future years. Members of the JustFOOD Team will continue to sit on the CHSF Nova Scotia Advisory Committee. A strong universal school food program would provide all students with access to a healthy breakfast and lunch during the school day while supporting local economies and food producers. Current advocacy includes asking the provincial government to sign bilateral agreements with the federal government to provide additional funding for the School Lunch Program.

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Leads:** The Coalition for Healthy School Food - NS Advisory (CHSF-NS)

**Partners:** Province of Nova Scotia, the JustFOOD Team, Nourish Nova Scotia, Station Food Hub, Ecology Action Centre, Nova Scotia Teachers Union, Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, Community Health Boards



## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

The 2024-2025 provincial budget committed \$18.8M to a universal 'pay-what-you-can' school lunch program focused on Pre-Primary to Grade 5 in the first year. Over the next four years, the program will expand to include all grade levels, building to an estimated \$100M annual investment by 2027-2028.

CHSF-NS will continue to work with the provincial government and with the national Coalition on addressing concerns with the current lunch program and recommended actions for improvement.

## PROJECT IMPACT

Food insecurity is associated with reduced academic, cognitive, and psychosocial outcomes for children and teens, which creates lasting negative impacts throughout their lives. Universal programs have the potential to remove the stigma that exists when programs target students based on family income, encouraging those who need the program most to access it.

A robust and effective school lunch program has the opportunity to take advantage of the existing relationships many schools have already established with local suppliers and producers, and provide a roadmap for other schools across NS to develop their own relationships with local producers. These relationships have the potential to assist schools in developing menus that meet the unique dietary and cultural needs of their students while supporting the local economy.



# Vermiculture Pilot

**Recommendation 56b.** Explore a vermiculture pilot to provide a limited number of free worm composting bins to community members along with worms, bedding, and education.

See aligned recommendation:

**Recommendation 17.** Use Municipal facilities and assets to offer food programs, grow food, and support public food Infrastructure.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Vermicomposting is a practical way to participate in year-round composting. It uses earthworms housed in closed containers to quickly break down household food waste into high-quality, nutrient rich soil, while reducing the impact on our municipal waste system.

In partnership with the JustFOOD Team, HRM Solid Waste Resources created and delivered a **Vermicomposting Pilot Project** to groups who have an interest in gardening (specifically targeting HRM community gardens).

## PARTNERS/EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

**Lead:** The pilot was delivered by HRM Solid Waste Resources (SWR).

**Partners:** The JustFOOD Team

SWR contacted HRM Community Gardens, [DirectioNS Council](#) members and other groups interested in food security and sustainability to book workshops. Overall, 20 workshops were delivered to 363 residents and 62 complete vermicomposters were given away. The following groups received vermicomposting workshops and bins:

	GROUP NAME	DATE	RESOURCES DELIVERED	# OF BINS	# OF ATTENDEES
1	Hope Blooms	April 8, 2024	Presentation & Bin	1	15
2	Mulgrave Park Learning Centre	July 16, 2024	Presentation & Bin	1	28
3	NSCC Daycare	July 22, 2024	Presentation & Bin	2	19
4	Sackville Community Food Garden	July 24, 2024	Presentation & Bin	3	4
5	TD	July 25, 2024	Presentation & Bin	4	80
6	North Preston Community Garden	July 30, 2024	Presentation & Bin	10	10
7	HRM Daycamp - Fleming Park	July 31, 2024	Presentation & Bin	1	20
8	Prescott Group (Directions Council Member)	August 23, 2024	Presentation & Bin	1	45
9	Building Futures (Directions Council Member)	August 28, 2024	Presentation & Bin	3	25
10	MSVU Community Garden	August 28, 2024	Presentation & Bin	3	6
11	Easter Seals - New Leaf (Directions Council Member)	September 3, 2024	Presentation & Bin	3	25
12	George Dixon Community Garden	September 9, 2024	Presentation & Bin	4	11
13	Sackville Community Food Garden*	September 23, 2024	Presentation & Bin	1	1



	GROUP NAME	DATE	RESOURCES DELIVERED	# OF BINS	# OF ATTENDEES
14	Prospect Road Community Garden	September 25, 2024	Presentation & Bin	2	2
15	HRM – Finance and Asset Management	October 2, 2024	Presentation & Bin	7	8
16	Chebucto Connections	October 4, 2024	Presentation & Bin	4	4
17	Fall River Garden Club	October 8, 2024	Presentation & Bin	6	16
18	Private Garden Group	October 9, 2024	Presentation & Bin	3	4
19	Ducks Unlimited	October 10, 2024	Presentation & Bin	1	38
20	BLT Community Centre/Community Garden **	October 9 & 17, 2024	Presentation & Bin	2	2
*Resident that missed session			TOTALS	62	363
** Session was cancelled & follow-up private session hosted instead					

## PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

Project planning began in Winter 2024 and continued into Spring 2024, with workshops starting in the Summer of 2024. Solid Waste Educators were tasked with hosting 10-15 vermicomposting workshops, which included a presentation on vermicomposting and complete bin set up with participants, with the goal to give away 50 complete vermicomposters.

The development of the project included creating a vermicomposting handbook for participants to take home, creating a PowerPoint presentation on vermicomposting for the workshop, developing two surveys to assess the project (one after the workshop and one emailed 4-6 weeks after the workshop to those that received a bin), and gathering supplies for bin set up (i.e. enough worms for the sessions).

The pilot ended in October 2024. The feedback has been extremely positive; participants were delighted to have the resources available to them, and interest in the project was beyond expectation, **with 20 workshops delivered to 363 people, and 62 vermicomposters given away.**

SWR will continue to promote vermicomposting in the community and deliver workshops when requested. SWR will keep a small stock of worms and supplies to give away additional bins, when possible, to schools, garden groups. However, SWR will not offer a formal vermicomposting project similar to the Pilot Project due to procurement and care challenges with the large quantity of worms required for a project of this size, as well as operational requirements that make this project difficult to manage long term. However, SWR has created a blueprint for the project and will share resources with anyone interested in pursuing this pilot project further.

The Municipal Food Team and the JustFOOD Team will explore ways to share the vermicomposting educational resources through the Virtual Food Hub and other channels, and will support future workshops and giveaways where possible.



## PROJECT IMPACT

- Providing vermicomposting training and kits increases the capacity of community groups to manage their own waste, produce usable compost, and help grow better and more resilient crops.
- Workshop feedback showed that attendees enjoyed the session and felt they walked away with what they needed to maintain a vermicomposter at home and create their own healthy soil for their gardens.
- Due to the interest in the program, SWR exceeded the 10-15 workshops required with 20 workshops completed and 363 residents receiving the workshop. SWR gave away a total of 62 complete vermicomposting bins, 12 more than the goal of 50.

## Post Workshop Survey

Forty-three participants completed a post workshop survey. Of the 43 respondents, 34 had received a vermicomposter, and all agreed or strongly agreed that they had the knowledge and take away information to maintain the bin at home. All eight respondents that attended a session but did not receive a bin either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt they had the knowledge to set up their own bin in the future and seven indicated that they thought they may try vermicomposting in the future. Participants that have never had, and some who never even heard of vermicomposting before, now have the knowledge to start and maintain a vermicomposter at home, helping to reduce waste in our municipal system, and supporting sustainable food production.

Participants of the project enjoyed workshops so much that they passed on the information to colleagues, teachers, friends, and fellow gardeners to book sessions and bring people with similar interests together. Once the project started, word of mouth and participant referrals kept SWR busy and made reaching targets easy. This is a project people are interested in, and the impact could be far reaching for the right group. Individuals who received the vermicomposters have noted that they show their bins and share their knowledge with others. In fact, at an HRM event one facilitator ran into one of the participants and was introduced to the group they were with as “the one who ran the great vermicomposting session I was talking about”. It was clear people were talking about this workshop and their bin with others. A project like this could have a big impact, as interest and excitement over the project was evident.

## Testimonials from the Post Workshop Survey

*“Delighted with my bin and the information provided. What a wonderful way to ‘grow’ my garden and reduce kitchen waste.”*

*“I had never heard of the term Vermicomposting, but thought it was another version of composting. I was surprised and can't wait to try it for myself. Great course!!”*

*“The presenters from waste management are awesome. They are so knowledgeable and answered all questions that our participants had. Have enjoyed the sessions.”*



Vermicomposting Pilot Project Workshop and bin giveaway at Solid Waste Resources office in Lower Sackville for the Sackville Community Food Garden on July 24, 2024. Pictured: Workshop Facilitator, Cyndi Fraser.



## 4-6 Week Post Workshop Survey

Twenty participants that received a vermicomposter completed the 6-week follow up survey. All indicated that they continue to maintain their bin and all but one agreed or strongly agreed that they felt their vermicomposter was doing well (1 indicated they slightly disagreed that it was doing well). Four participants with vermicomposters reached out to SWR with questions/concerns and all strongly agreed they received a timely response.

## Testimonials from the 4-6 Week Post Workshop Survey

*"Thanks to Cyndi at Solid Waste Resources I have a wonderful new hobby that benefits my home and garden ☺."*

*"Our kids at the Mulgrave Park Caring and Learning Centre had so much fun learning about vermicomposting and getting to get their hands dirty and make one themselves. I can't wait to continue to partner in the future!"*



Vermicomposting Pilot Project Workshop and bin giveaway at the Solid Waste Resources office in Lower Sackville for the Sackville Community Food Garden on July 24, 2024. Pictured: Workshop Facilitator, Ally Chant.

HALIFAX



Members of the JustFOOD Team and community partners at an engagement event



**ATTACHMENT 3: ORIGINAL PROPOSED BUDGET & ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS SECURED IN  
2024/25 TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF JUSTFOOD**

**TABLE 1: ORIGINAL PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2024/25 IMPLEMENTATION**

<b>2024/25 ACTIONS PROGRAMS &amp; DELIVERABLES</b>	<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>MUNICIPAL ASK</b>
Fledge & Resource the Halifax Food Council: Governance Consultants, 2 FTEs; Supplies & admin; Advisory Circle honorariums & engagement; Virtual Food Hub	\$282,399.73	<b>\$251,493.48</b>
Funding & Establishing Community Food Grants & Application Assistance	\$185,718.75	<b>\$185,718.75</b>
ANSB Coordinator, Advisory Group, and Pilots through (ONE)	\$110,352.05	<b>\$105,491.05</b>
Indigenous Coordinator, Advisory Group through Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre	\$84,084.00	<b>\$52,584.00</b>
Urban Agriculture Specialist & Food Program Funds	\$103,000.00	<b>\$103,000.00</b>
Community Food & Climate Specialist- ECC Contribution	\$83,000.00	<b>\$0.00</b>
Community Orchard Pilot: supplies, labour, & training	\$8,840.00	<b>\$8,840.00</b>
Community Plots Pilot Program	\$41,400.00	<b>\$41,400.00</b>
Community Garden Grant Program	\$40,000.00	<b>\$40,000.00</b>
Vermicomposting Pilot- workshops & kits- Solid Waste	\$4,565.00	<b>\$0.00</b>
Food Asset Map: consultant & training in food asset mapping	\$25,300.00	<b>\$25,300.00</b>
Emergency Food Truck Coordinator	\$63,381.00	<b>\$0.00</b>
No One Is Illegal (NOII) - Pilots: Welcome Bags & English Classes	\$42,032.90	<b>\$42,032.90</b>
FeedNS Pilots- Social Supermarket and Rural Food Access Pilots	\$170,000.00	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Total 2024/25 Budget as Proposed February 2024</b>	<b>\$1,244,073</b>	<b>\$856,000</b>

**TABLE 2: ORIGINAL VS REVISED BUDGET ALLOCATIONS**

2024 ACTION/PROGRAM/ DELIVERABLE (CONSOLIDATED)	PROPOSED FEB '24	REVISED April '24 (CUTS & ALT FUNDING)
Halifax Food Council (staff, supplies, community participation, Virtual Food Hub, etc.)	\$251,500	<b>\$208,484</b>
African Nova Scotian & Black Coordinator, Working Group, Programs	\$105,491	<b>\$100,000</b>
Mi'kmaw Coordinator	\$52,584	<b>\$52,584</b>
Centre for Migrant Worker Pilots	\$42,033	<b>\$42,033</b>
Community Food Grants	\$185,718	<b>\$93,000</b>
Municipal Food Team (1FTE covered by ECC)	\$83,000	<b>\$62,250</b>
Municipal Programs (Community Orchards, Plots, & Gardens + Program Funds + Food Asset Map)	\$135,540	<b>\$90,240</b>
	<b>\$855,866.00</b>	<b>\$648,591.00</b>

**TABLE 3: ADDITIONAL DIRECT FUNDING SECURED (2024/25)**

FUNDING SOURCE	DESCRIPTION	VALUE
Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund (Province)	Partnership with FeedNS for <b>Emergency storm kit</b> development, distribution, & guidebook.	\$90,000
Feed Nova Scotia Innovation & Learning Lab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership with FeedNS to deliver 2 <b>JustFOOD Pilots- Social Supermarkets &amp; Rural Bulk Delivery</b></li> <li>Funding for <b>Indigenous Advisory &amp; Engagement</b></li> </ul>	\$201,500
HRM Environment & Climate Change	Funding to support food & climate application to <b>JustFOOD Community Food Grants</b> (partnership with FeedNS)	\$38,600
Nova Scotia Health Authority- Public Health	Funding to support <b>participation of diverse voices and engagement efforts</b> for JustFOOD	\$25,000
Medavie	Funding to support <b>JustFOOD governance and implementation</b>	\$75,000
Various Organizations	<b>Conference Attendance</b> support	\$3,700
Low Carbon Communities Grant (Province)	Grant to support <b>feasibility study</b> for scaling up of open source, <b>off-grid cold storage</b>	\$74,000
	<b>Total additional Direct funding secured</b>	<b>\$507,800.00</b>

**TABLE 4: INDIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS FOR 2024/25**

<b>INDIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS from HFWA CORE MEMBERS</b>	<b>ESTIMATED VALUE</b>
Participation on HFWA Steering Committee>HFC Advisory Circle (staff costs for organizations who cover participation)	\$9,000.00
Research & Advice from Baxter Research Group	\$15,000.00
Staff Leadership from Nova Scotia Health Authority- Public Health	\$123,435.00
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATE OF 2024/25 INDIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	<b>\$147,435.00</b>