

# What We Heard

## JustFOOD Workshop #2 Report

July 20, 2021

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**JustFOOD**

**Action Plan for the Halifax Region**



**HALIFAX**



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# Overview

On June 17 and 18th, 2021, we held two virtual workshop sessions hosted on the Zoom platform, with a total of 78 registrants and 30 attendees.

As with Workshop #1 in March, we had a diverse range of participants from across the food system and our local community. Many folks were returning after taking part in the first workshop, and we welcomed a number of new voices to the second JustFOOD Workshop. Leading up to Workshop #2, we updated and built on the previous JustFOOD framework based on feedback from participants in Workshop #1. You can [view the updated Framework here](#).

Building on the themes identified in Workshop #1, our objective was to identify action areas to advance through the development of the JustFOOD Action Plan, and potential strategies for realizing these changes. After a group [presentation](#) on the foundations of JustFOOD, an airing of the [Story of JustFOOD](#) video, and a summary of Workshop #1, we broke into groups to explore and advance action areas.

Breakout groups were organized based on participants' responses in the registration survey to the question *What do you want the JustFOOD Action Plan to achieve?*

Grouping similar responses resulted in 4 breakout categories based around the following JustFOOD Goals:

- Food as a Human Right: Food Access & Sovereignty
- Enhance Ecological Resilience
- Grow Knowledge and Skills
- Strengthen Regional Economies



# Common Themes for What JustFOOD Should Do

Five action area themes emerged from the breakout group discussions:

**Coordinate Collective Action.** Across the breakout groups, the need for a general approach of collaboration and collective action was present - working across levels of government, between organizations, sectors, and communities. There is recognition that food insecurity is a complex issue that connects many policy areas, and that disproportionately impacts marginalized communities. Therefore, actions should be coordinated across jurisdictions, and, where possible, targeted to reach populations that are most impacted.

**Expand Community Food Infrastructure.** All four breakout categories touched on the need for some form of community food infrastructure. These actions mainly focused on creating and supporting a physical Food Hub, or Food Resource Centre. Participants envision a cooperative space with shared kitchens and food equipment, storage and distribution facilities, and a focal point for organizing, learning and sharing food resources.

**Establish School Food Programs.** Participants in three of the four breakout categories spoke of schools as a key place to focus action. School food programming, including breakfast and lunch programs, was mentioned repeatedly as a need that should be supported by JustFOOD. Participants noted that there are many successful models of school food programming, and that impact can be easily measured using data that is already being collected by schools, such as reading levels and attendance. School meals and food skills training have the potential to have far reaching impacts on food justice from basic access and food sovereignty to community involvement and job creation.

**Increase Food System Resilience.** Participants shared that it is critical to ensure our local food system is adaptable enough to withstand shocks brought about by a changing climate. Increasing resilience will involve actions such as policy coordination and data sharing between levels of government, and mapping food and agriculture vulnerability.

**Reflect Community Strengths and Values.** During the workshop, participants responded to the question: *Are there any unique needs or strengths in your community that you would like to see reflected in these strategies?* Responses included:

- the need to decolonize the food system, approach food justice with an anti-hate lens, and discard gendered aspects of food and food skills.

- that faith communities play a role in connecting people and the natural world while sharing and celebrating its abundance.
- the need to embed Indigenous perspectives in the work of the JustFOOD, including two concepts:
  - Netukulimk - Harvest only what is needed and waste nothing. Netukulimk also means “achieving adequate standards of community nutrition and economic well-being without jeopardizing the integrity, diversity, or productivity of our environment”.<sup>1</sup>
  - Etuaptmumk - Two-eyed seeing; with one eye we view the world through indigenous ways of knowing, and with the other we view the world through western eyes

## Key Actions and Strategies from the Breakouts

From the ideas on *What JustFOOD Should Do* discussed in the first breakout session, participants chose two actions to focus on as a group and generate strategies for making these happen. Below are the key actions and strategies from each breakout category, addressed during both workshops.



### Food as a Human Right: Access & Sovereignty

**Action Area:** *Establish School Food Programming in HRM with healthy, culturally relevant breakfast and lunch. Schools are a critical site of intervention for food justice.*

#### Strategies

- Begin by getting parents on board. Tap into community members and parents with skills and passion to contribute. Empower and employ parents.
- Pursue corporate sponsorship and government seed grant funding for pilot project
- Maximize assets; commercial kitchens in schools can do more than feed students, also foster teach employment skills or foster food-based social enterprise

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<sup>1</sup> Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources. <https://www.uinr.ca/programs/netukulimk/>.

- Look at best practice models - such as France, Initiative at Arthur Hines Elementary in Summerville; a collaboration with Hants Shore Community Health Centre
- Share responsibility - Appoint resources from Public Health to work with schools on establishing and managing a program
- Use program to provide employment, job training opportunities

### **Action Area: *Build Community Capacity through shared food infrastructure***

#### **Strategies**

- Create physical spaces for people to come together around food - to access food, learn about food, teach employment skills, foster social enterprise.
- Explore connections with school kitchens as spaces for community food hubs?
- Offer microloans to support community ideas, and food-based small business
- Invest in youth-led initiatives that encourage knowledge transfer from older generations

### **Action Area: *Advocacy - Frame food insecurity as a public health crisis and get response from decision makers.***

#### **Strategies**

- Consider how advocacy efforts can coincide with current funder relationships
- Include food costs as item in income assistance programs
- Use real stories as a tool for advocacy
- Establish a provincial Food Security Commission
- Focus on Key Audiences: Public Health Officials, Dept. of Community Services, All levels of government, educators at all levels



## **Enhance Ecological Resilience**

### **Action Area: *Reduce Food Waste***

#### **Strategies**

- Public education - raise public awareness of food waste for businesses, organizations, and households.

- Gather data on how much food and money businesses and households are losing due to food waste
- Regulate distinction between “best before” and “expiry” dates on food packaging

**Action Area: *Increase resilience in food system and evaluate risks related to climate change***

**Strategies**

- Research how local farms are being impacted by extreme weather events
- Support farmers to implement resilient practices and adapt to changing weather risks and growing season
- Build more greenhouses
- Coordinate with HRM's Climate Action Plan
- Conduct vulnerability assessment of Region's local food system, including distribution and supply during an extreme weather event that limits access from outside province
- Generate Mapping:
  - Include food vulnerability map in the Regional Plan
  - Climate vulnerability mapping for agricultural areas
- Consider backup refrigeration and alternative power in case of emergency



**Grow Knowledge and Skills**

**Action Area: *Promote Food Skills Sharing and Development in Schools***

**Strategies**

- Strengthen food connections in curriculum - from cooking and shopping skills to school food gardens
- Connect Dalhousie Agriculture and Halifax Regional Centre for Education
- Maximize school kitchens as a community resource: facilities cook for the community, or be used for public education and access

## **Action Area: *Establish Food Hub or Resource Centre***

### **Strategies**

- Avoid perpetual piloting phase: time to move beyond proving there is a need for Food Centres
- Secure commitment for consistent reliable long-term funding
- Maximize partnerships with Community Health Boards
- Physical space is needed for collaboration
- What's required: Commercial kitchen, cold storage, space for sharing meals in a location central to primary users



## **Strengthen Regional Economies**

## **Action Area: *Increase Collective Action and Collaboration***

### **Strategies**

- Increase dialogue between HRM and NSFA to address needs of small producers
- Explore collectives or new business models for equipment sharing
- Honour Indigenous knowledge keepers
- Include farmers in decision making

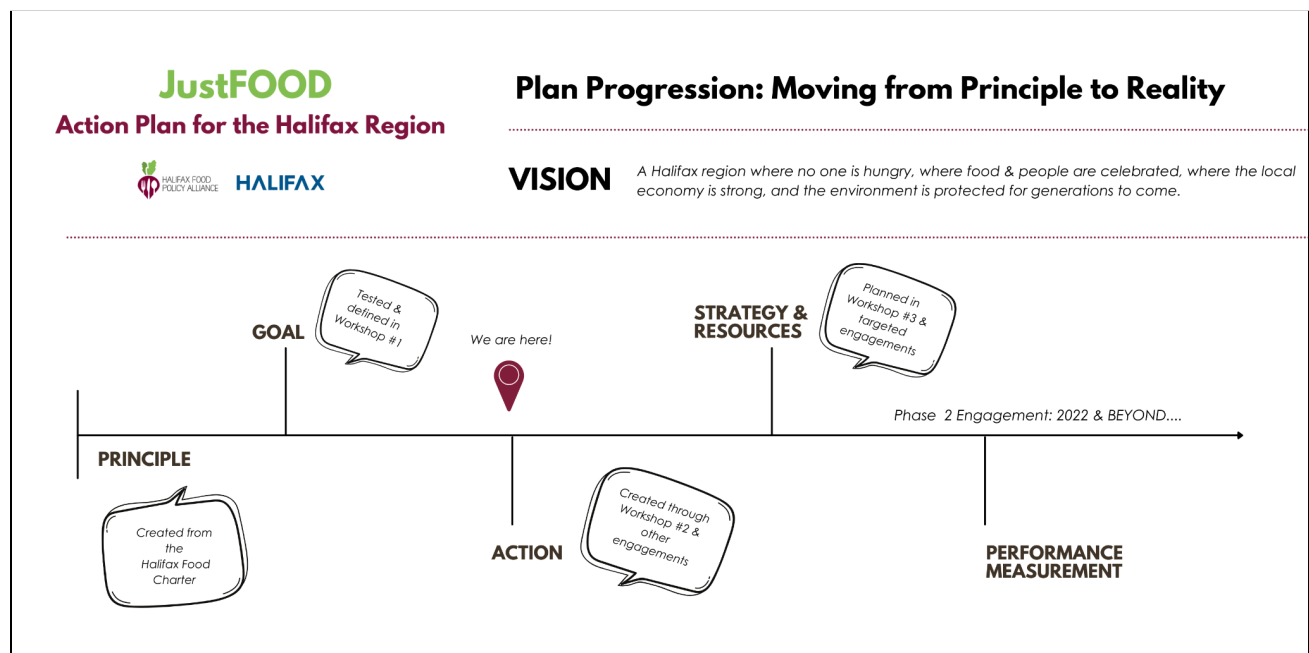
## **Action Area: *Improve Food Distribution Systems***

### **Strategies**

- Rethink distribution networks
- Explore cooperative storage, transport, and distribution
- Seek distribution model that is more economical for producers and therefore a win for consumers.
- Secure seed funding for demonstration project

# Staying Involved: Next Steps for JustFOOD

The information gathered in Workshop #2 will help set the directions for JustFOOD's Action Areas and strategies. We are continuing Phase 1 Engagements to collect actions, strategies and suggestions for JustFOOD through the summer and fall. In the fall, we will reconvene for **Workshop #3**, where we will work together to create a more specific path forward for the identified action areas and identify the resources needed to make these a reality. In Phase 2 Engagements we will be working together to strengthen commitments and gather what's needed for positive change and achieve the goals of JustFOOD.



We are developing **an engagement toolkit** that you can use to talk about JustFOOD with your networks and gather feedback. Keep an eye out for the toolkit, and our **JustFOOD Action Survey** going live in the weeks ahead.

We are also developing a **dedicated JustFOOD website**. This online home of the plan will be a central place to engage, share resources and stay connected. Stay tuned for the launch!

**Engagement continues** for the JustFOOD Action Plan! Here are four opportunities to provide feedback, share ideas, and lead the development of the Action Plan in the months to come.

- 1. Introduce JustFOOD to your networks.** Simply talk to your employees or colleagues about JustFOOD at a time of your choice, using our engagement toolkit as a resource, and encourage them to complete the online *JustFOOD Action Survey*.
- 2. Complete the online JustFOOD Action Survey.** Share your ideas for how to strengthen our food system and increase access to good food. This simple survey will take about 20 minutes to complete,
- 3. Host a Civic Dinner.** Take home one of our locally sourced soup and snack kits and share food and conversation about food action with your neighbours or family. Hosts just need to create a comfy space, share food, and make note of the conversation to easily report back to the JustFOOD team through a simple online survey. We will be offering 500 meal kits with enough food for 6-8 people to share a meal and enjoy a conversation about JustFOOD (once COVID restrictions allow).
- 4. Host your own engagement.** Hosted Engagements are an opportunity for those working in the food system or community to guide deeper discussions into food action. We will provide everything you need to easily host a session with your network in our engagement toolkits and simple report back survey. The Team is available to support you in whatever way you need to make this an informative and enjoyable experience.

If you have any questions or are interested in learning more about these opportunities, please reach out to us at [justfood@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:justfood@ecologyaction.ca)

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