

JustFOOD Storm kit Project

Sharing learnings from
emergency food planning



JustFOOD Action Plan for the Halifax Region



HALIFAX FOOD
POLICY ALLIANCE

HALIFAX



Project Purpose

Food is a critical consideration during emergency and climate events; however, ensuring we are properly prepared can be challenging logistically and financially. Acute events, such as hurricanes, winter storms, and power outages, further exacerbate the existing inequalities and vulnerabilities in our food system and disproportionately impact individuals who are already facing food insecurity.

This project set out to strengthen **community emergency preparedness** and enhance **local food system resilience** by developing and distributing emergency storm kits containing **local, nutritious, shelf-stable foods** — and by sharing what we learned so others can do the same.



Project Team

This initiative is part of the **JustFOOD Action Plan for the Halifax Region**, a long-range strategy for building a **healthy, just, and sustainable food system**. Fostering partnerships across the food system and **building capacity for action** are central to JustFOOD. This project was delivered through collaboration between:



The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)



The JustFOOD Team



Feed Nova Scotia



Funding and Support

This project is supported by the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund, delivered by the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities on behalf of the Province of Nova Scotia.



Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund



What We Set Out to Do

The goal for this project was to:

- **Increase emergency food preparedness** by building community capacity and knowledge
- **Leverage emergency planning** as an opportunity to strengthen Nova Scotia's local food system
- **Prioritize equity** by focusing on communities that face higher barriers during emergencies
- **Track learnings** through choice-based models and engagement

To achieve this goal, we developed **Emergency Food Storm kits** designed to be easy to store at home and ready to use when needed. Kits contained:

- One full day supply of **locally-sourced, shelf-stable food**
- Non-food **emergency supplies and resources**.



What Happened (and What We Learned)



Challenges

As we began preparing for this project we realized that it would be very complex to balance all of our goals: having a shelf-stable kit containing local, nutritious, and culturally appropriate products. Some of the challenges we faced included:

LOCAL PROCUREMENT

Developing the kits highlighted how challenging it is to source local, shelf-stable food items. It was also difficult to be aware of the local products available to us, highlighting that, while some do exist, there is an overall lack of local retailers that explicitly focus on distributing local products. The [Taste of Nova Scotia](#) database and the [Nova Scotia Loyal Directory](#) proved to be useful tools to identify products.

Overall, determining kit contents underscored the reliance we have on mainstream, corporate grocery stores and imported food products.





STORAGE SPACE & DISTRIBUTION INFRASTRUCTURE

A lack of adequate food storage space within the municipality was a major barrier that we faced. This not only posed delays for our project, but also highlighted the region's limited capacity for ongoing emergency food stockpiling. While we were able to temporarily secure municipal storage space for this project, this limitation poses a significant barrier for any future iterations of this project.

Additionally, this project was only possible due to having the **JustFOOD Community Food Distribution Truck**. The municipally-owned refrigerated truck provided the capacity to move the bulk food items and kits from the warehouse to be distributed.



30.3%
of HRM residents
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households



DISTRIBUTION

Finally, prioritizing distribution was another complex issue. Emergency events amplify existing food system vulnerabilities. With **30.3% of HRM residents living in food insecure households**, we know that the need is high.¹ Many residents face barriers accessing adequate food on a daily basis, let alone stockpiling additional food in case of emergencies. Conversations with community partners and previous municipal efforts helped us narrow in on our priority demographic for this project.

Overall, distribution of emergency preparedness kits is a **complex and resource-intensive** initiative and requires:

- A strong local supply chain
- Adequate storage & distribution infrastructure
- Clear, equitable distribution plans

¹ [Local Context - JustFOOD](#)

Storm Kit Participants & Distribution

Research and partner consultations revealed that newcomers and international students face unique vulnerabilities during climate and emergency events. This focus also built on a previous Emergency Storm Kit initiative containing non-food items, led by the HRM Environment and Climate Change Team, and targeted at newcomers. The feedback received from this initiative helped provide a better understanding of newcomer needs for this round of food kits. Some of the barriers faced by this priority demographic that these kits aimed to address were:

- **Less connection** with local emergency resources and protocols
- High rates of **food insecurity**
- **Less familiarity with local climate events**

To address these barriers, we partnered with:

- **Halifax Refugee Clinic**
- **Dalhousie University International Centre**
- **Mount Saint Vincent University International Education Centre**

These organizations provided feedback on our kit contents and supported distribution. A smaller number of pre-packed kits were also distributed to community food organizations. It is important to note that, while kits were targeted to newcomer needs through our partnership with newcomer-serving groups, **no one was turned away from receiving a kit.**





Packing Events



The majority of kits were distributed through large packing events at **Dalhousie University** and **Mount Saint Vincent University**. Using the Community Food Distribution truck, we brought bulk amounts of items to both locations, and staff and volunteers were there to help participants compile their own kits. Throughout the event, participants were able to:

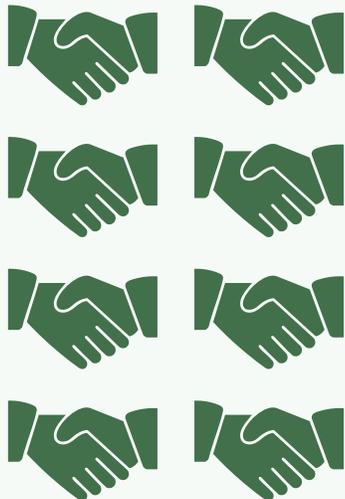
- **Build their own storm kits**, choosing from optional food items
- **Share feedback** and ideas for future kits
- **Connect** with other participants and the project team



This choice-based approach promoted **dignity and accessibility**, while **reducing food waste**, by ensuring participants received preferred items. The events also created a **“snowball” of knowledge**, as the project team had the chance to speak directly with residents and discuss the importance of being prepared, while also learning from participants and hearing their needs. Many participants said that this was the first time they were thinking seriously about emergency preparedness and **left feeling motivated to increase their knowledge and share it with their communities**.



The Numbers



8 distribution partnerships

1500

emergency food kits distributed to HRM residents

5 local food businesses supported

2 distribution events



22 volunteers engaged

Storm Kit Contents: Supporting Local

Each kit contained the following **one-day supply of shelf-stable food** sourced from Nova Scotia producers and retailers:

- **Made with Local** gluten free granola bars
- **The Wild Root Company** crackers
- **Peace by Chocolate** chocolate bars
- **Sperrri** vegan meal replacement drink
- **Mid-East Food Centre** vegan products:
Canned hummus, Canned stuffed eggplant and zucchini, Dates

Kits also included the following non-food items:

- Combined flashlight and battery pack
- **HRM Environment & Climate Change Emergency Preparedness Resources** available in **English, French, Arabic, and Mandarin**

Balancing local sourcing, shelf stability, affordability, and diverse dietary needs was challenging — but the project resulted in a template kit that can be adapted for all needs. Key benefits of these kits are:

- **Fully vegetarian**, meeting diverse dietary needs
- **Well-balanced**, including protein, grains, vegetables, and dried fruit
- **Lightweight, easy to carry home, and suitable for limited storage space**
- **Packaged in burlap bags that could be reused or composted**

By prioritizing local, this project demonstrated the potential of investing in shorter, more sustainable supply chains. A strong local food system leaves communities more resilient in the face of climate events, with more capacity to feed themselves.



Final Reflections: Climate Adaptation in Action

This project focused on **climate change adaptation**, strengthening both municipal and resident capacity to plan for and respond to climate-related risks through:

- **Innovative household-level preparedness** that reduces pressure on municipal infrastructure by supporting stockpiling at home.
- **Equity-focused emergency planning**, reducing barriers for vulnerable residents and encouraging awareness and action.
- **Sharing knowledge and resources** to residents that they can continue to share around their communities
- **Support for local food actors**, promoting them to community members and strengthening their role as reliable community food actors
- **Strengthened relationships across the food system**, fostering collaboration and collective action
- **Creation of a flexible, duplicable pilot** that can be implemented again in HRM or other regions through sharing our learnings

This project demonstrated that emergency planning does not have to be reactive or dependent on long supply chains. Instead, it can create **mutually beneficial opportunities** - where strong, local, and sustainable food actors enhance emergency preparedness, and, in turn, emergency planning strengthens local capacities. Additionally, emergency planning does not always have to be a “doom and gloom” conversation, but instead can be an **opportunity for connection and learning**, which not only improves future project iterations, but makes our communities **more resilient overall**.



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Action Plan for the Halifax Region



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For more information on JustFOOD,
visit justfoodhalifax.ca

To access HRM Emergency Preparedness
Resources, [click here](#).