

Summary

JustFOOD Halifax Network Launch

June 11, 2026
St. Mary's Boat Club, Kijipuktuk / Halifax

JustFOOD Halifax · justfoodhalifax.ca

Facilitation & Harvest by Colab · colab.ca





We're already growing, we just need to grow together.



JustFOOD Halifax Network Launch



On June 11, fifty-one people, representing 29 organizations, gathered at the St. Mary's Boat Club for the soft launch of the JustFOOD Halifax Network.

People came from across the food system: from community gardens and food hubs, from public health offices and frontline programs, from farmers' markets and advocacy organizations, from Black and Indigenous communities, from rural HRM and from the heart of the city. People brought decades of experience, deep relationships, and honest perspectives, and shared all of it generously.

The event made space for conversation, organized around the seven themes of the JustFOOD Action Plan. Groups surfaced real energy, and real honesty. People named what isn't working alongside what is. Working groups began to take shape. Connections formed across organizations that hadn't found each other before.

The pages that follow capture what each group discussed and decided. These belong to everyone who was part of it.

What we heard, loud and clear

People are craving connection.

The opportunity to talk, share, and learn alongside others doing this work is genuinely valuable and not something people get enough of.

Our commitment: We'll keep finding ways to bring people together.

People are ready to collaborate.

This is worth celebrating. Not every community is. The energy in the room was generous, practical, and pointed toward action.

Our commitment: The Support Team exists to make collaboration easier by handling planning, logistics, and reporting so you're free to dream and build.

Relationships come before structure.

We heard clearly that trust needs to come before working groups, especially in the Food Sovereignty and Equity space. The network is about people, not just the work.

Our commitment: We're listening. We'll ask how the network can best support relationship-building, not just task completion.

People want to understand what working groups actually look like.

The concept resonated but people wanted more concrete information before committing.

Our commitment: We'll make this more tangible. Expect more information soon about how working groups function, what they do, and how the Support Team will make participation as light as possible.

The following pages
are **summaries** of the
conversations
organized around the
seven themes of the
JustFOOD Action Plan

Reducing Food Waste

Leading + Connecting

Getting Food Where it's
Needed

Food, Health and
Community Well-Being

Advocacy + Systems
Change

Food Sovereignty + Equity

Growing Food + Community
Food Production

Reducing Food Waste

A coordination opportunity, not a shortage problem: the food and the will to recover it already exist; what's missing is the connective infrastructure. There is meaningful activity already underway in composting, redistribution, and food literacy, but it is fragmented and under-resourced at the institutional level. The group sees gleaning, volunteer mobilization, and stronger coordination with the Getting Food Where It Is Needed theme as the most immediate opportunities.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- Increasing volunteer participation through high school, post-secondary, and community development hours
- Expanding existing food recovery and redistribution efforts
- Increasing awareness and participation in food waste reduction initiatives
- Gleaning fruit trees in HRM, including city-owned trees

WORKING GROUP POTENTIAL

No specific working group was identified, though related themes (food recovery, waste reduction, gleaning, and surplus distribution) surfaced repeatedly and may inform future structure.

"Food recovery isn't primarily a food problem. It's a coordination problem."

Leading & Connecting

A network with real assets is already in motion, but one that needs to decide what it's for before deciding how it's structured. The conversation surfaced a rich landscape of existing networks at every level, from the Preston Food Network and Musquodoboit Collaborative Food Network to federal Right to Food initiatives, alongside a consistent frustration: these efforts are not well-connected to each other, and the competitive funding environment works against collaboration. The group's sharpest question was not what to build, but how to better align and resource what already exists.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- Bringing shared challenges and opportunities to the network for collective thinking
- Developing common messaging and skills exchange among members
- Exploring collaborative funding applications
- Learning from successful examples in other regions

WORKING GROUP POTENTIAL

Participants saw this as an exploratory conversation: further discussion is needed before determining whether a formal working group makes sense.

"How do we better connect, align, and resource existing efforts rather than creating new structures?"

Getting Food Where it's Needed

Strong existing infrastructure is held back by transportation, storage, and information gaps, and there's real energy here to build shared systems. Programs like the Halifax Food Hub, Upward Kitchen, and HRM's Community Food Distribution Truck are doing significant work, but organizations are straining under logistics that depend on personal vehicles, inconsistent storage, and out-of-date resource information. The group is ready to work together on practical solutions: infrastructure mapping, shared storage knowledge, and a simple coordination system that doesn't require new bureaucracy.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- Network building around food distribution
- Knowledge sharing on storage capacity and refrigerated infrastructure
- Infrastructure mapping and B2B (business to business) connections
- Developing a "telephone tree" style communication and coordination system

WORKING GROUP POTENTIAL

Interest in a working group, with potential focus areas including distribution and logistics, infrastructure mapping, storage and refrigeration capacity, and surplus redistribution.

Food, Health & Community Well-Being

A wide and active landscape of programs whose biggest shared need is visibility: knowing what already exists and who to call. From the North End Food Network and YWCA Halifax to community kitchens, school partnerships, and urban farms, there is a remarkable density of work underway; the gap is not effort but navigation. Participants were drawn again and again to the same idea: a connective layer that helps people find each other, make referrals, and share resources: a "network of networks" rather than a new program.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- Creating an online ecosystem map accessible virtually
- Developing a "call a friend" network
- Building a "network of networks" through JustFOOD
- Hosting an annual gathering and exploring a Nova Scotia Right to Food Summit

WORKING GROUP POTENTIAL

Everyone expressed interest, especially in supporting specific projects, but time and capacity is limited.

"When I need help, information, or a connection, how do I know who to call?"

Advocacy & Systems Change

The clearest call to action of the day: participants are ready to organize around a shared ask, not just share information. The conversation named something bluntly that many in the room have felt for years: food does not have a clear home in government, and one-time project funding makes sustained systems change nearly impossible. Despite that frustration, the energy in the room was not resigned: it was pointed, with a shared conviction that the solutions already exist and what's needed now is a coordinated, collective voice to move them forward.

“Food doesn’t have a home in government.”

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- Developing a direct, specific, and coherent advocacy ask from the collective
- Tailoring asks to the appropriate level of government
- Bringing organizations and grassroots voices together around common priorities
- Coordinating messaging and amplifying community voices

WORKING GROUP POTENTIAL

Clear yes. Potential focus areas include clarifying advocacy priorities, government relations, mobilization, and coordinated communications.

Food Sovereignty & Equity

Real momentum exists, but the group named honestly that capacity has to come before formal structure. African Nova Scotian and migrant worker food organizations, community markets, culturally relevant food initiatives, and Black food sovereignty work are all active in this space, and the conversation was one of the richest of the day for the specificity and depth of what participants shared. The group's wisdom was clear: trying to build a working group before relationships and trust are in place risks burning out exactly the people the network most needs to sustain.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- Bringing together people and organizations doing similar work to share learning
- Helping government understand the impact of community food programs
- Creating a directory or "helping tree" for food access information
- Reducing barriers to accessing food and services

WORKING GROUP POTENTIAL

Not immediately. Participants noted limited capacity, with many organizations running on one or two staff. The group favoured relationship-building first, with formal structure to follow as trust and bandwidth grow.

"Food sovereignty and equity require more than food access. They require community leadership, culturally relevant supports, intergenerational learning, and long-term investment in people and relationships."

Growing Food & Community Food Production

A theme rich in existing infrastructure and ready to formalize, with a clear and named gap around who isn't yet at the table. Community gardens, hydroponic farms, school gardens, social enterprise farms, and urban agriculture programs are all represented in the room, and participants moved quickly to practical, shared priorities: coordinating resources, identifying new growing spaces in HRM, and building incubator farm models. The group also named explicitly that Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, immigrant, and newcomer growers are largely absent from this conversation and that strengthening those pathways is as important as building new infrastructure.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- Sharing resources and knowledge through a group chat or shared channel
- Exploring deer and rodent mitigation and rainwater collection systems
- Pursuing upskilling and training opportunities
- Sharing infrastructure and equipment across groups

WORKING GROUP POTENTIAL

Interest in a Food Production & Growing Capacity working group, focused on identifying HRM spaces for production, incubator farm models, and community growing infrastructure.

“Same resources, same challenges, same pests. Why are we each figuring this out alone?”



Thanks to everyone
who joined.
Stay tuned for more!

www.justfoodhalifax.ca