

What We Heard

JustFOOD Workshop #1 Report

April 29, 2021

JustFOOD

Action Plan for the Halifax Region



HALIFAX



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Overview

JustFOOD Workshop #1 brought together people from across the food system to connect, learn about JustFOOD, and brainstorm actions that we can take to improve the food system in Halifax. If this summary does not accurately reflect the thoughts you shared in the workshop OR you were unable to attend but would like to provide comments, please let us know in the [attached survey!](#) To view the detailed **transcripts** from the workshops, [CLICK HERE](#)

On March 25th and 27th, we held three virtual workshop sessions hosted on the Zoom platform, with a total of 91 registrants. For insights on who attended the workshop, check out these summary graphics [here](#). Each workshop began with an introduction of JustFOOD, including how we got here, an overview of the objectives of the action plan, purpose of the workshops, and the next steps in the process. A key objective of the workshop was to test the draft Food Systems Goals (Figure 1). The inner ring contains the five Principles of the [Halifax Food Charter](#), expanding out to draft Goals reflecting how these principles could lead to positive food system change.

In the workshop, participants were moved into small working groups of 6-8 people and worked together on four different group activities. In the first breakout activity, participants shared how they connect to or work with the draft food system goals (Figure 1). Participants then discussed the goals and identified what might be missing or changed to better reflect what they want JustFOOD to achieve. Participants then explored possible actions to achieve the food system goals, and explored together the impact that a 'game-changer' scenario could have on the food system.



Figure 1: Draft Food Systems Goals & Food Charter Principles for JustFOOD

Themes Identified

In the process of summarizing these exercises, we identified two theme categories: **areas for action**, and **suggestions for the JustFOOD framework**.

Action Areas	Suggestions for the Framework
Collaboration	Indigenous sovereignty
Governance & Policy	Better acknowledging climate change
Education & Awareness	More collaboration (collective impact)
Community Ownership & Control	Plain language goal definitions
Infrastructure	Defining food as a right
Funding	Treating food as an asset

Summary of Breakout Activities

[CLICK HERE](#) to see all summaries and transcripts

Below is a summary of each breakout activity and the key themes that came up. We acknowledge that due to technology challenges, some exercises were incomplete, and in some cases, we did not have recordings of the breakouts to refer back to as we compiled summaries. Therefore, if any of the [transcripts or summaries](#) do not accurately reflect the thoughts you shared in the workshop, please let us know in the [attached survey!](#)

You may also notice that some summaries look different than others. In order to reflect the diversity of conversations that were held, not all notes were recorded or summarized in the same way. If you have any questions about the summaries, please let us know!

Exercise #1: Alignment with Draft Food System Goals

Purpose: *To learn more about others in the group, see how their work connects with the draft food system goals, and consider how the goals connect people doing work in different sectors of the food system.*

In response to the question “Which of the food system goals does your work advance or align with?”, some participants listed one goal that their work most closely aligns with, while others noted that their work connects to all five goals. These connections are summarized in the graph below.

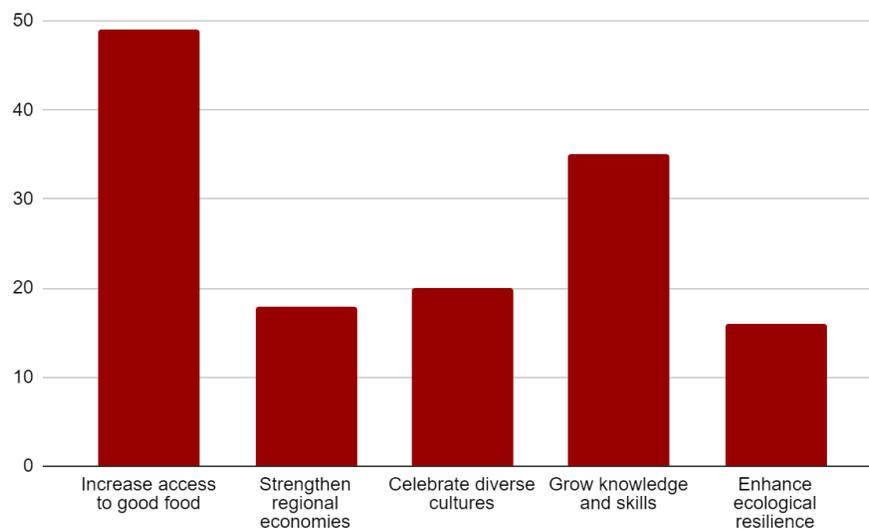


Figure 2: Participant's connections to the draft food system goals

Exercise #2- Testing the Draft Food System Goals

Purpose: *Identify how participants work outside these goals, and brainstorm what might be missing or need to be changed in the draft goals to better reflect their vision of what JustFOOD should achieve.*

This exercise was designed for the group to think critically about the food system goals. The food system goals were drafted from principles from [Halifax Food Policy Alliance's](#) engagements, which resulted in the Halifax Food Charter. These goals are a framework for what we want JustFOOD to achieve, and this exercise was designed to

test if these goals make sense as a structure for JustFOOD, and identify anything missing.

Participants had many suggestions and ideas for how the food system goals can be more holistic. The main themes were for the goals to:

- be more clearly defined to consider the wide-ranging impacts of the plan;
- have more emphasis on education, community ownership, and choice, and;
- emphasize collaboration and partnerships.

Participants also noted that some categories were too broad to accurately capture what the goals & principles aim to achieve. For example, participants gave suggestions to better define the social justice & celebration goals to emphasize food as a right, and to acknowledge root causes of the issues that social justice work addresses. Feedback on the food systems goals is deeply valuable and will be reflected in an updated Framework and incorporated as JustFOOD evolves, see the **'Incorporating Feedback'** section of this report.

Exercise #3- Moving to Action

"What are the actions, supports, and resources needed to strengthen our food system?"

This question was for participants to share their ideas for BIG actions, supports and resources to strengthen our food system. There were a large variety of actions shared by participants throughout this exercise and also in others. For in-depth notes and the ideas shared during the sessions, please [CLICK HERE](#).

The key themes & action ideas identified were:

1. Collaboration

- a. Develop a hub for folks to share a contact directory, share volunteer resources, build awareness of existing programs and resources, and support working across sectors.
- b. Create a Department of Food at the provincial level, Municipal Food Coordinators & people on-the-ground to support coordination of efforts

2. Community Ownership & Control:

- a. Tap into community; opportunities to leverage existing valuable knowledge
- b. Advocate from the bottom-up to support policy change
- c. Allow community to define food security for themselves

3. Funding:

- a. Provide consistent, long-term funding for the people & groups doing food work.
- b. Develop a database of existing funding programs (connected to the hub - encourage groups to collaborate)
- c. Create financial support for youth to enter food - related careers (e.g. agriculture)

"If we want to build a strong community, we need to build strong connections with people, and food is one of the ways we connect. It's in everything we do; there's never been a funeral, a wedding, or a graduation that doesn't involve food. We do it with every celebration we have, it's built into our social contacts with each other. Increasing our ability to access food in a communal way builds everything about us"

4. Infrastructure

- a. Develop a physical food hub, to make our supply chain local and more sustainable
- b. Assess the vulnerability of the food system to prepare for climate events
- c. Improve transit for people to access food and other resources

5. Governance and Policy

- a. Institute a food lens across sectors of government, for example, food care model for health care (food as medicine)
- b. Incentivize local institutional procurement
- c. Develop more corporate accountability
- d. Include Indigenous perspectives in decision making
- e. Get universal basic income
- f. Change policies to support agriculture and food production (e.g. zoning for gardening in underutilized urban spaces)

6. Education

- a. Increase awareness of existing programs and resources
- b. Add food skills education to school curriculums (including gardening programs)
- c. Grow awareness of how to access affordable and nutritious food for people of all ages

Exercise #4 - Testing Change

Purpose: to explore what happens when you introduce a significant challenge or gamechanger into the system. What impact could a significant change have on participant's work and the larger system?

The game-changer questions introduced an idea for change that invited participants to explore how it could impact the food system. The questions were designed to spark conversation and thoughts about what JustFOOD can achieve. There were five questions in total, loosely aligned with the food system goals and principles, with 2 of the 10 groups exploring each one.

The Gamechanger questions were:

1. What if all cultures (from Indigenous to newcomers) were supported to grow and share knowledge of their foods? *(Group 8 changed the question to "What if all cultures (from Indigenous to newcomers) COULD grow and share knowledge of their foods?", to better acknowledge systemic barriers and reflect a sovereignty versus patriarchal/charitable approach.*
2. What impact would guaranteed basic income have on the food system?
3. How might giving preference to local food in institutional procurement impact the local food system?
4. What would happen if everyone had access to the land and knowledge needed to grow their own food? For example, what if this was part of the public school curriculum?
5. Rather than thinking of food as a commodity, what happens when we think of food as an asset? What changes could this bring to our food system?

The conversations for each group were very thoughtful and critical, and many of the themes that came up in this exercise correlate with the themes from other exercises. This exercise helped test the possible impact of some of the action areas identified in exercise #3, and identified important considerations as we approach work in areas such as social justice and education.

While each game-changer question sparked detailed conversation about the possible impacts the scenario could create, the key themes that came up in this exercise include the need for education and prioritizing community empowerment. Participants

identified that scenarios such as basic income or local procurement policies are crucial, but would only have the most impact if people also have the ability and knowledge to access the food that they need and want. There were observations about how 'access' also means different things to different people. These themes brought to light the need for JustFOOD to build the foundation of **food as a right** in order for other actions to be most impactful. These connections are reflected in the updated food systems story & goals diagram, in the '**Incorporating Feedback**' section. [CLICK HERE](#) for the notes from each group's discussion in response to the game-changer question.

Incorporating Feedback

Your feedback is crucial for moving forward with JustFOOD. We are adapting our framework to include new “strategies for success” to guide the Plan, as well as defining and updating the food system goals to reflect your feedback.

The image below is a new draft of the food systems goal diagram introduced in Workshop #1, designed to better communicate the goals, principles, and strategies for success that will support us to work together towards food justice. This graphic will be accompanied by the “story of JustFOOD”, language describing the key elements of the JustFOOD Framework. This will be carried forward and evolved through future engagements.



Figure 3: Updated Framework for JustFOOD

Vision

JustFOOD is working towards a Halifax region where no one is hungry, where food & people are celebrated, where the local economy is strong and the environment is protected for generations to come.

Food Justice and Food Sovereignty

Food Justice is at the core of JustFOOD. Food justice acknowledges that while food is a human right, our food system is not neutral; we don't have a level playing field. The rules, who gets to set the rules, and the functioning of our food systems contain oppressive and colonizing forces that create and sustain inequities.¹ Food justice is about making sure that the benefits and risks of how food is grown, processed, distributed, and disposed are shared fairly.

Food Sovereignty is the right to healthy and culturally appropriate food that is produced sustainably as well as the right of people to define their own food system. JustFOOD seeks to increase our understanding of food justice and increase capacity for food sovereignty.

JustFOOD has developed the following story to illustrate the intricacies and dependencies surrounding food justice and sovereignty. Recognizing that everyone's experiences are unique and barriers are varied, JustFOOD will continue to work with community to better understand and reflect food sovereignty and justice:

The Circle of Food as a Human Right

Food is an asset and a gift of the earth

This asset and gift is a relationship, with responsibilities

These relationships and responsibilities are the foundations for sovereignty and justice

Sovereignty and justice create equitable access

Access gives us choices

We celebrate our choices with sharing

Sharing and celebration are how we grow and exchange assets and gifts of food

Food is an asset and a gift of the earth

¹ Food Arc, 2018. *Dig In! Some Common Food Terms*. Available from https://foodarc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Dig-In-Some-Common-Food-Terms_2018.pdf.

Food Charter Principles

Social Justice

We all need to eat. Everyone deserves good food that they need and enjoy. We should be able to produce, prepare and access food safely and with dignity.

Health and Well-being

Food is crucial for health and wellbeing, it nourishes and connects us. Communities must be supported and empowered to make it easy to grow, get, eat, and share good food.

Environment

Food and the earth are precious. We need to produce, share, and eat food in ways that protect the environment and our future.

Local Economy

Supporting local farmers, fishers, and producers is an essential part of the food system. Local food strengthens our communities and helps us adapt to changes in our world.

Celebration

Food brings people together. It helps us celebrate our culture and traditions, and learn more about each other.

Food System Goals

Define Food as a Human Right

Access to food is a basic and foundational human right which we work to make a living reality through systemic change.

Sample strategy: Promote living wage policy to meet basic needs like food and housing

Grow Knowledge and Skills

People have the ability and tools to access and share knowledge and resources to grow, access, and prepare food.

Sample strategy: Expand food literacy programming in public education; use public spaces for food initiatives

Enhance Ecological Resilience

Lands and waters are honoured, protected and restored so they can sustain us to grow, share, and consume food for generations to come.

Sample strategy: Coordinate with HRM's Climate Action Plan and Provincial climate and agricultural initiatives.

Strengthen Regional Economies

A robust local food system is supported by Nova Scotia's abundant food assets and expertise.

Sample strategy: Expand and connect local food infrastructure for food processing, storage and distribution

Share Our Diversity

Through the establishment of food as a human right, communities are strengthened and brought together through growing, accessing, preparing and sharing food across cultures.

Sample strategy: Encouraging school food and garden initiatives to grow and share different food cultures, and involve many generations.

Strategies for Success

The following are guiding principles for how we can work together to help make JustFOOD come to life:

1. **Work Together:** We will work across sectors, learn from each other, and build on our strengths. We will prioritize and coordinate measurable goals and actions that focus and enhance our collective impact.
2. **Respond to Changing Needs:** What is needed now may be different from what is needed later. While the guiding principles remain constant, the goals, strategies, and how we measure success should adapt to shifting needs and contexts and be reviewed in regular cycles.
3. **Measure Progress:** Measurement (and monitoring) informs progress. Through the adoption of common food system goals and tools to measure success, stakeholders will work together to collect relevant data and assess progress on an on-going basis.
4. **Engage Local Leadership:** Regional food systems should reflect the unique needs of each region. Local leadership and regional collaborative governance are required

to link experience and influence across sectors and inform relevant action.

5. **Be Bold:** Working toward a just food system requires creativity and imagination. This is an opportunity to test new ideas, innovate, and challenge the status quo.
6. **Plan for Future Generations.** Our work needs to be rooted in principles of Indigenous food sovereignty, environmental justice and social justice so that our actions nourish our land, water, and communities for generations to come.

Next Steps for JustFOOD:

Please stay involved! In Workshop #2 we will build on the actions and game-changers that were identified in Workshop #1, by identifying possible strategies, and paths towards action. Part of this process is for participants to help us design the path forward, so if you have any suggestions about the process or content for Workshop #2, please let us know in the [attached survey](#).

Staying Involved

Workshop #1 is just the beginning of the engagement for JustFOOD. There will be more opportunities to provide feedback, share ideas, and lead the development of JustFOOD in the months to come.

- WORKSHOP #2 - End of May/Early June
 - Please share with your networks! Workshop #2 is open to everyone - not only for participants of Workshop #1. We will be sharing more information soon about Workshop #2, which will include the times and more information about the process.
- CIVIC DINNERS
 - Stay tuned for information to come on our Civic Dinners! We will have 500 meal kits for 6-8 people to share a meal and enjoy a conversation about JustFOOD (once COVID restrictions allow).
 - We're currently sorting out the details for getting these kits out to the community. If you are interested in hosting or supporting this, [let us know!](#)
- HOSTED CONVERSATIONS

- Let us know if you're interested in hosting your own engagements on JustFOOD in your networks! We're creating an easy to use engagement toolkit with information on JustFOOD and questions and conversation starters to get your group thinking about how we can work together to improve our food system.
- 1-ON-1 CHATS
 - Do you have additional thoughts or ideas you want to discuss beyond what was covered in Workshop #1, or the attached survey? We're happy to have 1-on-1 calls to explore these ideas further. Feel free to reach out to justfood@ecologyaction.ca to schedule a time slot to discuss (pending availability) if this is something you might be interested in.
- FIRESIDE CHATS
 - Stay tuned for a schedule with times & topic areas for bi-weekly, drop-in Zoom calls to dive deeper into various topics we're exploring with JustFOOD, and to connect with others.
- TAKE THE FOOD EXPERIENCES DURING COVID-19 SURVEY
 - [Our survey](#) is still live on Shape Your City!
 - We've received over 260 submissions to help us understand the impacts of the pandemic on people's experiences with food and learn more about our food system. This will inform JustFOOD and future emergency responses.

Summaries & Transcripts

There were a total of 10 different breakout groups in the three workshop sessions. We have provided a link [HERE](#) which includes a folder for each breakout group. You are welcome to read any and all of the materials. You may want to use them to refresh your memory, compare and generate ideas, or help inform others of these processes.

Each folder includes:

- A written summary of the breakout session, including key themes
- A MURAL board for exercises 1 & 2 (food systems goals discussions)
- A MURAL board for exercise 3 (identifying actions for systems change)
- A MURAL board for exercise 4 (notes exploring a game-changer scenario)