



HALIFAX



JustFOOD

Action Plan for the Halifax Region

STATUS UPDATE REPORT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
FEBRUARY 2025



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.

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

