

Innovation and Learning Lab Grant Stream

2024-25 Grantees

THEME:

**Increasing access, availability and/or
choice of food**

Cape Breton Food Hub



Context:

- As food insecurity continues to grow across the province, substantial amounts of fresh produce grown every year is ploughed-under due to not meeting cosmetic standards of large grocery stores or due to the cost of extracting it from fields.

Proposal:

- To harvest surplus farm produce from across the region, process and preserve produce in a licensed kitchen and distribute it to local affordable food programs to prevent waste.

Equity Lens:

- Vulnerable and low-income families, seniors, newcomers and households with children in underserved food apartheid and rural communities of Cape Breton Island.

Potential Impact:

- Reduction of food waste, development of new partnerships for sustained access to surplus food, increased access to nutritious affordable food via community food programs.

Learnings:

- Potential opportunities and impact of a coordinated farm gleaning project on regional food insecurity. Potential to transfer learnings and approach to mainland hubs (Halifax Food Hub, the Station Food Hub).

Richmond River Roots



Context:

- Richmond River Roots Market Garden Society's mission is to contribute to food security, food sustainability and food sovereignty in Richmond County and surrounding areas. The organization has developed a partnership with Dr Kingston Memorial Community Health Centre to design and deliver a 'food as medicine' program for low-income households.

Proposal:

- To launch a social and medical prescription food program for people suffering from chronic illnesses, social isolation and food insecurity.

Equity Lens:

- Population around River Bourgeois Cape Breton experiencing chronic illnesses, social isolation and food insecurity.

Potential Impact:

- Delivery of fresh produce boxes weekly to 25 households over a 36-week period (900 boxes in total). Increased consumption of fresh produce for low-income households with chronic health conditions. Evaluation of impact on health and wellness

Learnings:

- The challenges and opportunities of a rural-based social prescription food project. Potential to adopt/adapt to other contexts.

The POSSE Project



Context:

- Peer Outreach Support Services and Education (POSSE) facilitates non-judgmental harm reduction and human rights training for youth and adults 15-35 years. The idea for this project was brought forward by youth and young adults living on reserve who want to develop food skills and deepen their connection with their culture.

Request:

- To run an Indigenous youth leadership program integrating cooking skills, connection to traditional food and culture and communal food access.

Equity Lens:

- Sipekne'katik First Nations (East Hants).

Potential Impact:

- Immediate access of up to 120 cultural meals for Indigenous community members every month. Skills development for youth, social connection.

Learnings:

- Promising practices in building Indigenous youth leadership and community food distribution.

Cape Breton Youth Project



Context:

- Queer and trans community continue to experience barriers to food banks located in religious spaces and buildings. The need for inclusive and safe service models for the community has been documented in recent research conducted by Feed Nova Scotia and Mount Saint Vincent University.

Proposal:

- To build and operate a youth-led food pantry at a 2SLGBTQIA+ safe organization to increase dignified food access for the queer and trans community.

Equity Lens:

- 2SLGBTQIA+ community in downtown Sydney.

Potential Impact:

- Increased access to low-barrier food for queer youth and families experiencing food insecurity.

Learnings:

- Models of dignified food access designed for and by 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Nova Scotia Mobile Food Market



Context:

- The Nova Scotia Mobile Food Market operates multiple markets throughout Halifax Regional Municipality. The MFM's Market Bucks program connects very low-income households to fresh produce in the form of a paper coupon that can be redeemed. Annual revenue for the Market Bucks program is expected to increase through 2024 as the MFM launches a tiered pricing system at their markets.

Proposal:

- To digitize the MFM's Market Bucks Program by creating a virtual platform, introducing cards and QR codes to enhance accessibility, dignity, and efficiency at community markets.

Equity Lens:

- Vulnerable and food-insecure/low-income communities in Fairview, North Dartmouth and North-end Halifax, who may have barriers to accessing pay-based food security programs.

Potential Impact:

- Transformation of the MFM's Market Bucks Program, a streamline of distribution of the subsidy.

Learnings:

- Effective methods to distribute funding through an alternative digital currency. The future potential expansion of the MFM outside of Halifax will inform how this tool develops and grows.

Annapolis Valley Frugal Moms



Context:

- AVFS is a mutual aid community group focused on supporting community members along the Annapolis Valley. The group has witnessed a sharp increase in unhoused populations and marginally housed populations throughout the Valley.

Proposal:

- To provide outdoor cooking equipment and workshops on safe use for homeless community, distribution of canned and fresh greens to marginally housed and pallet housing residents, connecting voices and experiences to local community advocacy.

Equity Lens:

- Unhoused, precariously housed, at-risk of being unhoused populations in Windsor, Digby, Kentville, Berwick, and Middleton areas.

Potential Impact:

- Increased access to outdoor cooking equipment and safe skills to cook for 30+ unhoused community members, knowledge development in growing and canning for 45 marginally housed community members, distribution of fresh and canned food to participants.

Learnings:

- Effective methods of connecting unhoused and marginally housed communities to food and equipment. Replicability for pallet shelter communities in other areas throughout the province.

Live Well/Calvary Temple



Context:

- Live Well has operated CONNECTCare since 2019 to provide various community supports to populations living in poverty living along the Digby Neck and Islands. Key activities to date include food distribution pop-ups, community garden development, greenhouse development and youth engagement programs.

Proposal:

- To launch and deliver a year-long meal kit, credit score counselling, food workshop and home repair grant application support program across a chain of rural and remote islands in the Digby region.

Equity Lens:

- Mostly senior population living in food apartheid communities of Digby Neck and Islands with limited access to essential services.

Potential Impact:

- Distribution of food to 300 households every month in remote island communities. Connection to supports to address housing repair needs and/or credit score barriers to accessing bank loans. Community connection and relationship development.

Learnings:

- Effective integrated food and financial programs for remote/hard-to-reach communities through trusted partners. Transferability of model to other similar locations.

Common Roots



Context:

- Common Roots has over 130 community plots, over half of which are gardened by people who are food insecure. In 2023, the market garden and community garden yields were down by half. Although weather played a part, urban deer were noted as major reason for the decrease.

Proposal:

- To increase market garden and community garden harvest by development of humane and innovative sensory tools to deter deer from growing space.

Equity Lens:

- Newcomers and low-income households living in Dartmouth communities.

Potential Impact:

- Increased seasonal harvest for community garden plot holders, increased yields for market garden affordable produce sales.

Learnings:

- Effective methods for deterring deer in urban farm settings. Transferability of learnings to other contexts to maximize garden yields.

Community CARES Youth Outreach



Context:

- Community CARES provides the space, resources and supportive environment where young adults and families can refocus their lives, regain their education, and develop skills/experience to support themselves and their families. The idea for this initiative came through direct consultation with youth.

Proposal:

- To support establishment of a peer-led initiative that will include youth cooking sessions, kitchen skills and safe handling certification and the launch of a free food market for the community.

Equity Lens:

- Low-income youth living in Sydney Mines.

Potential Impact:

- Establishment of a monthly food market in the community. Direct food and employment skills development for participating youth, development of leadership skills

Learnings:

- Challenges and opportunities around the development of community-led free food markets. Impact of skills development on youth seeking employment. Transferability of the approach for other communities/contexts.

THEME:

Increasing community-led production of food

Akoma Family Centre



Context:

- In September 2021 Akoma purchased a Hydroponic Farm from a local farmer with funding from ACOA. The goal of the hydroponic garden is to be self-sufficient and provide food to the community at low cost or no fee. The hydroponic farm currently grows lettuce and basil for distribution to the community. Production is year-round.

Proposal:

- To plan and run a skills building summer camp for African Nova Scotian youth to connect them to innovative growing technology, directly grow food for community, learn about the history of African Nova Scotian farming and share their learnings and insights at a year-end community advocacy session.

Equity Lens:

- African Nova Scotian youth living in the Prestons.

Potential Impact:

- Youth leadership and farming skills development for 20 youth, increased distribution of fresh food to the food network in the Prestons. Youth experiences and insights included in community advocacy session.

Learnings:

- Effective partnerships for building African nova Scotian youth leadership in farming. The role of youth programming in community advocacy.

The North Grove



Context:

- In 2023, The North Grove received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant to test a targeted youth leadership summer program for youth 12-15 years old. The program was a huge success, with 100% of participants continuing to volunteer with the organization and bridge connections with their families to services and programming.

Proposal:

- To scale out the 2023 youth-leadership summer program to a year-round program incorporating immediate food access and food literacy with creative arts programming to inform advocacy.

Equity Lens:

- 20 youth between 12-15 years old from low-income households, African Nova Scotian youth, Black youth, newcomer youth living in Dartmouth North.

Potential Impact:

- Deepened local youth engagement and leadership in food security programs and services. Youth voices leading storytelling and advocacy around food insecurity.

Learnings:

- Promising practice in engaging grey-zone youth in multi-faceted leadership programming. The power of youth first-voice in advocacy. Transferability of approach to other contexts/organizations.

Digby Area Community Gardens



Context:

- Digby Area Community Gardens is a registered non-profit established in 2014 with 1700 square feet of centrally located public space. DACG is dedicated to the principle of community food security and aims to build community through gardening, exercise, food preparation and identifying climate-friendly solutions to resiliency.

Proposal:

- To support coordination across a network of community gardens and partners in the community to promote food sovereignty. Plans include an affordable farmers market, a cooperative/social enterprise, and food literacy workshops to empower residents.

Equity Lens:

- Low-income seniors and families, youth, single parent families in Digby area.

Potential Impact:

- Coordinated crop growth, development of a local 'system' approach to growing and distributing fresh, affordable produce across the community, increased access to fresh, affordable produce, relationship development and social connection.

Learnings:

- Challenges and opportunities in developing garden networks and coordinated crop growth at a community level. Transferability of approach to other communities and contexts.

Transition Bay St Margarets Association



Context:

- Transition Bay St Margarets is a part of an International Transition Town movement of local initiatives and regularly presents programs and initiatives to help the community, frequently in partnership with other organizations. Projects have included a wide-range of gardening, food production and preservation workshops, off-grid workshops, affordable housing innovations and numerous other topics to build local skills and resilience.

Proposal:

- To partner with a local food bank and build 10 food growing gardens with food insecure households, promoting local food self-sufficiency through mentorship and documenting the project's progress for broader learning.

Equity Lens:

- Low Income and marginalized households accessing St Margaret's Bay Food Bank, prioritizing households with children and youth.

Potential Impact:

- Increased food production skills and seasonal access to fresh food for 10 food insecure households. Potential ripple-effect peer-to-peer learning for neighbours of participating households. Relationship development between the organization and food bank for future collaboration.

Learnings:

- Effective and low-cost approaches to increase food bank client access to fresh free produce. Role of mentoring and coordinated planning to building food access. Transferability of learnings to other contexts across the province.

Weymouth Waterfront Development



Context:

- The Weymouth Waterfront Development Committee has a mandate is to develop and maintain the waterfront area on both sides of the Sissiboo River as well as develop and maintain the cultural and heritage aspects of the village of Weymouth and surrounding area for the benefit of the community at large. Recently the organization has led development of a community food garden and food growing boxes throughout the community.

Proposal:

- To pilot a hen and coop rental program for 10 low-income community members. Training and materials will be provided to allow participants try hen-keeping before committing fully.

Equity Lens:

- Low-income families and seniors around rural areas of Weymouth and Digby.

Potential Impact:

- Uptake of hen-keeping for up to 10 local households. Increased community access to fresh eggs. Skills development in hen-keeping with potential to transition to owning hens full-time.

Learnings:

- Challenges and opportunities in hen rental as an approach to build community skills, increase immediate access to a food source and build interest for an expanded program at a later date. Transferability of approach to other communities/areas of focus.

THEME:

Supporting service/system coordination

Island Food Network



Context:

- In 2019, community food stakeholders convened to develop the Cape Breton Food Policy Network and to develop a vision for a coordinated approach to addressing food insecurity across the island. COVID-19 impacted connections and progress. There is high interest across many communities to kick-starting and reinvigorate this work.

Proposal:

- To support development of a collaborative and integrated Cape Breton regional strategy to build structures, identify a shared agenda and coordinate efforts to innovate across the island.

Equity Lens:

- Food insecure communities living in five municipalities, five First Nations communities, small rural communities and CBRM.

Potential Impact:

- A cohesive and island-wide strategic plan to guide strategic partnerships, program development, funder investment and a cohesive benchmarking of progress.

Learnings:

- The role and impact of inter-agency strategic plans to guide investment and address complex social issues such as food insecurity.

Inspiring Communities Network



Context:

- Through summer 2023, Inspiring Communities spearheaded an asset mapping initiative on food and food insecurity across five distinct communities. Findings helped to identify community challenges and diverse ideas as solutions. This presents an opportunity for a next step to convene community to imagine and plan for coordinated efforts across the region.

Proposal:

- To create a food security-focused innovation incubator to support idea generation, foster inter-generational learning and community collaboration to develop sustainable local food systems and business models for food security.

Equity Lens:

- Local equity-deserving communities with priority focus on African Nova Scotian and M'ikmaw communities.

Potential Impact:

- Collaboratively designed vision and program ideas for the local food system. Social connection, relationship development, potential partnership development.

Learnings:

- Preferred food-based service models and food sovereignty programs for equity-deserving community members in the Digby area. The role and impact of regional incubators for community-led action.

North End Community Health Centre



Context:

- The North End Community Health Centre is a collaborative community asset that strives to support the health and well-being of our community as informed by the social determinants of health. Through a previous project led by the NECHC, community members voiced concerns that they were not included in key decision-making surrounding food sovereignty in their community.

Proposal:

- To bring local community members and service providers together for a food sovereignty conference and to develop a community food sovereignty network to promote sustainable solutions and community collaboration across the North end of Halifax.

Equity Lens:

- Communities living in the North End of Halifax, with focus on African Nova Scotian, Indigenous and newcomer communities.

Potential Impact:

- Coordinated local action and a unified voice for advocacy around food sovereignty across the community. Relationship development and social connection. First-voice centred in local organization decisions related to food sovereignty.

Learnings:

- Opportunities and challenges in building local, interagency and community-led service/advocacy actions. Transferability of approach to other communities.

THEME:

**Build advocacy/awareness around root causes
of food insecurity**

Community Society To End Poverty



Context:

- CSEP-NS is a Network of community-based direct service organizations located in various regions of Nova Scotia that assist, advise, and advocate for clients, many of whom live in deep poverty.

Proposal:

- To resource expansion of the network to ensure representation from all regions across the province, with particular focus on recruiting equity-led organizations and small to medium-sized community agencies from rural areas, support capacity building and development of a coordinated advocacy agenda across the network.

Equity Lens:

- Populations living in poverty across Nova Scotia, including African Nova Scotians, Indigenous communities, racialized communities, newcomer communities, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, disability communities.

Potential Impact:

- Smaller organizations having a coordinated strategy and collective voice in engaging politicians, policy makers and government officials with levers to effect change.

Learnings:

- Insight into the potential, expertise and strength of smaller organizations joining the advocacy landscape. Coordination with smaller organizations to amplify their advocacy objectives.

Additional JUSTFood Funded Projects

- Common Roots: funding to develop off-grid, crowd sourced cold storage.
- Veith House: funding to develop an urban hen-keeper hub
- Prescott Group: funding to develop a gluten-free community pantry
- RISA: funding to support a youth-focused cooking skills program
- Halifax Development Centre: funding to support a community garden for children