

Innovation Grant Impact Summary

In the first year of the Innovation and Learning Grant, Feed Nova Scotia funded 14 projects focused on trying new ideas to address food insecurity. In most cases, we were the sole funder, in others we provided partial funding to move ideas forward. Our investment contributed to the following impact:

Food Distribution \$257,000

Over 33,000 meals, 600 snacks, and other food items distributed to community.

One permanent and affordable community market launched.

Plus...

The implementation of dignified and creative ways to increase access to affordable food.

The addition of new equipment and infrastructure that can be used for additional work and projects.

Reduction in social isolation for community members.

Growing Produce \$124,062

Over 100 children and almost 50 youth engaged in farming education.

95 high-yield growing containers and 300 seedling plants distributed to equity-deserving households.

Over 300 eggs produced and distributed to community members.

Over 15,000lbs of organic produce grown and sold in markets.

Plus...

Strengthened community knowledge about growing and producing food.

Expanded avenues for idea sharing between communities.

System Change \$165,460

28 community engagement sessions, workshops, and events hosted to imagine and inspire change.

47 youth engaged in leadership development.

Two newly established organizations focused on food sovereignty.

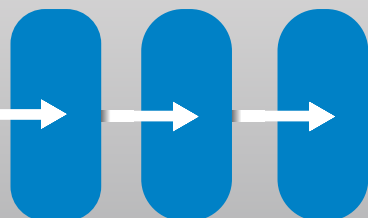
One municipal food strategy informed and led by Indigenous voices.

Over \$1,000,000 in new funding for the expansion of project work.

Plus...

Participants have become advocates for change.

ACROSS ALL PROJECTS



Nine new employment opportunities, most of which were hired from within the communities served, and which included BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIA+, and youth community members.

A large bank of volunteers, community partnerships, and expanded community capacity that are ready for future action.

Adsum for Women and Children: Food Security at The Bridge

Amount Funded: \$50,000

Proposal:

Adsum for Women and Children received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant to launch and test a meal program for a new 200 bed shelter that would center dignity, agency, and choice in food access, and support the local economy.

What happened:

Adsum staff launched the meal credit program in partnership with three local restaurants who offered meals that ranged in cost from \$10 to \$30. Meal credits were issued to shelter clients via a monthly gift card. Shelter clients could choose which gift card they wanted each month.

Outcome:

- Between 180-250 people experiencing homelessness accessed this program every month for 10 months.
- Over 2,000 meals were enjoyed in local restaurants by people experiencing homelessness.

And...

- Clients reported higher levels of social connection, excitement, and positive feelings about being in the community.
- Clients reported reconnecting with family members, going on first dates, or building friendships with other clients through shared outings to participating restaurants.
- More clients opened up to staff about their experiences with food insecurity.
- Local restaurants reported satisfaction and gratitude for the increased business and revenue.
- The program enabled an open line of communication between shelter staff and local businesses and reduced stigma in the local business community about people experiencing homelessness.

Key Insights:

- The positive impact of choice-based food access initiatives on social connections and general wellbeing for marginalized communities.
- The importance of programs and initiatives that offer autonomy and choice to populations who have so many aspects of their lives controlled by others.
- The opportunities for partnerships between shelters and local business to challenge stigma and transform connections and relationships between both parties.

What's Next:

- Adsum concluded the program after a 10-month period having achieved significantly improved relations with the local business community and in parallel to securing long-term funding from the Government of Nova Scotia to provide a comprehensive meal program for their shelter clients.

Cobequid Food Security Network: Sackville Soup Program

Amount Funded: \$27,000

Proposal:

The Cobequid Food Security Network received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant to launch and test a soup preparation and distribution program to community members in need, utilizing volunteer support and local partnerships.

What Happened:

A professional kitchen was used to prepare soup by a team of volunteers, which was then distributed to three freezers located at partner organizations in the community. Community members were able to access the freezers anonymously, reducing the stigma associated with food support.

Outcome:

- 30 volunteers were actively involved in producing and distributing soup.
- 200 meals worth of soup were distributed to freezers every week over a 6-month period.
- Over 5,000 servings of healthy, made-from-scratch soup were distributed to the Sackville community.
- The Cobequid Food Security Network incorporated as non-profit organization, which unlocked access to further funding opportunities.
- The Network leveraged the frozen soup project to obtain a \$150,000 grant from the Government of Nova Scotia, some of which will support the continuation of the program and increase production capacity to 300 soups per week.

And...

- Community connections were strengthened through volunteer engagement and the provision of an outlet for residents to contribute to their community.
- A new partnership was developed with Building Future, who support individuals with intellectual disabilities, to support further development of skills and experience.
- Feedback from recipients indicated high levels of appreciation for the program and the importance of a low-barrier service to access free food.

Key Insights:

- The role of collaborative partnerships that leverage existing infrastructure, people power, and skills of local or regional organizations.
- The preference of people who experience food insecurity for low-barrier food access that does not explicitly identify them as 'in-need'.
- The benefits of formalizing as a non-profit organization to unlock further funding.

What's Next:

- The Cobequid Food Security Network will continue to expand the program by increasing the number of soups prepared weekly and installing more freezers in additional community spaces. New partnerships with local schools are also being explored to involve students in the network's food preparation initiatives.

Common Roots Urban Farm: Caja Containers

Amount Funded: \$26,062

Proposal:

Common Roots received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant to launch and test a high-yield growing container program for new immigrants and African Nova Scotian community members currently on the wait list for a community farm plot.

What Happened:

The team purchased and distributed high-yield, low-maintenance Caja containers with soil, culturally appropriate seeds, and produce seedlings to almost 100 households, and provided instructions and ongoing support for container gardening.

Outcome:

- 80 Caja containers filled with soil and amendments were distributed to food-insecure households around Halifax.
- 15 additional containers were distributed to local organizations serving people experiencing food insecurity.
- 300 vegetable seedlings were distributed.
- 66 households were directly engaged in enhancing their knowledge and skills in container gardening.

And...

- Participants with travel or mobility barriers had the opportunity to develop gardening skills and grow food in their own space.
- Participants reported increased access to fresh food throughout the growing season, with a 93% success rate in growing food and a 100% satisfaction rate with the program.
- Participants appreciated the convenience of growing at home, as this reduced the risk of produce theft common in community plots.

Key Insights:

- There is a significant demand for small-scale gardening solutions among food-insecure households.
- The enthusiasm for the project highlights the importance of accessible and sustainable gardening options for food insecure communities.
- Container gardening, while effective, remains costly, which reinforces the need for continued support and funding for such initiatives.

What's Next:

- There is keen interest among participants in continuing to use the containers for future growing seasons. The containers will sustain growth for multiple years to come and Common Roots will leverage its connections to continue to access seedlings to supply the program.

Crows' Commons: Land Sharing for Community Food Systems

Amount Funded: \$48,230

Proposal:

Crows' Commons received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant to embark on a journey to transition their 12-acre privately owned land to collective ownership with the goal to increase land access and foster food sovereignty for queer, trans, and other marginalized communities.

What Happened:

The funding was used to develop a pathway for land sharing. Key components of the program involved coordinating with consultants, environmental scans, and engaging the community in dialogue and planning.

Outcome:

- A comprehensive governance and financial model to action was developed, informed by:
 - o 11 interviews with other land sharing groups
 - o Ongoing networking with an additional 5+ community land sharing groups
 - o A day-long engagement session with 14 participants at Asitu'lisk
 - o A day-long Queer Farmers Gathering with 30 participants
 - o Two drop-in sessions with three attendees
- A network of over 100 equity-deserving rural farm contacts was developed for ongoing learning.

And...

- Relationships were strengthened between queer, trans, and marginalized communities, increasing visibility and connection.
- Valuable legal research was conducted on land-sharing models, which contributed to the broader field of community land trusts.
- Awareness was raised about alternative land tenure models and intersecting issues of food sovereignty, disability justice, and 2SLGBTQIA+ liberation.

Key Insights:

- The key role of building community connections and mutual support in land access and community food production for equity-deserving communities.
- The importance of prioritizing relational approaches to building connections across equity-deserving communities, with an emphasis on slowing down to build trust and meaningful connections.
- The importance of horizontal knowledge exchange and mentorship for navigating complex issues.

What's Next:

- Crows' Commons is in the final stages of its legal transition of land ownership to Crows' Commons Cooperative (CCC) and eventually to a Community Land Trust.

East Preston Daycare Centre: Community Kitchen Project

Amount Funded: \$50,000

Proposal:

The East Preston Daycare Centre received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant to relaunch a bi-weekly community-led cooking and food box program as a dignified and de-stigmatized alternative to food banks.

What Happened:

The team relaunched the program in Fall 2023, however full progress was impacted by an emerging need to renovate the centre's kitchen, as well as capacity issues due to Feed Nova Scotia's 2023 Christmas program, which used the centre as a distribution hub.

Outcome:

- Two community information sessions were held with 15 community members to gather feedback on community preferences for cooking classes.
- Three community-led cooking classes were held with 10 community members attending each class.
- Three family meal nights were held, with 180-200 community members in attendance, to enjoy a community meal together.
- 10 food hampers were distributed to households experiencing food insecurity.

And...

- The program fostered intergenerational interactions and strengthened community bonds.

Key Insights:

- The importance of ensuring that participants feel respected and valued when accessing food support programs.
- The importance of listening to community needs and preferences to build high participation and satisfaction rates.
- The role of inter-generational programming in fostering strengthened community and family ties.

What's Next:

- Due to challenges related to the kitchen facility and capacity issues, the East Preston Daycare Centre will continue to implement the program into 2024-25. The Centre has formed an advisory committee to support program development and to secure additional funding as needed.



Front Street Community Oven: Kickstarting Co-operative and Regenerative Food Access in Rural Nova Scotia

Amount Funded: \$50,000

Proposal:

The Front Street Community Oven received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant to help build local capacity for advocacy and social change by bringing corporate groups and community leaders together through food. The program was focused on group cooking to build interest, coordination, and commitment to advocacy.

What Happened:

A Changemaker Connector series of co-cooking events was launched and piloted by the Oven.

Outcome:

- Through 22 events, small business, non-profits, university departments, and local government were brought together for co-cooking, relationship development, and exploration of the root causes of food insecurity.
- A plan was developed to make and distribute 4,000 community meals to food insecure community members via community cookouts by the end of 2024.
- \$50,000 was secured from Acadia University and the Town of Wolfville to support further community food programming.

Key Insights:

- The potential for team-building cooking activities for businesses and community leaders to explore and discuss food insecurity and build collective commitment for action.

What's Next:

- The Front Street Oven intends to continue engaging community leaders through cookouts to strengthen relationships, share understanding of the root causes of food insecurity, and to build collaborative advocacy and food access strategies and responses.

And...

- Relationships and trust were built and strengthened among local community leaders.
- Regular community cookouts with discussions centered around food insecurity deepened community awareness of the root causes, and ways to take action and advocate for change.

Halifax Regional Food Hub: Regional Food Hub Start-Up

Amount Funded: \$20,000

Proposal:

The Halifax Food Hub received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant to hire an Executive Director to launch the Halifax Food Hub.

What Happened:

After funding was received, the consortium of partners identified a need to secure more funds before initiating a hiring process and shifted focus to incorporate as a non-profit cooperative and to secure additional funding.

Outcome:

- The consortium succeeded in incorporating the Halifax Regional Food Hub as a non-profit cooperative and secured \$850,000 from the Government of Nova Scotia to launch the Hub and hire an Executive Director.
- An Interim General Manager was hired to bridge initial operations while a formal search to hire a permanent position was launched.

And...

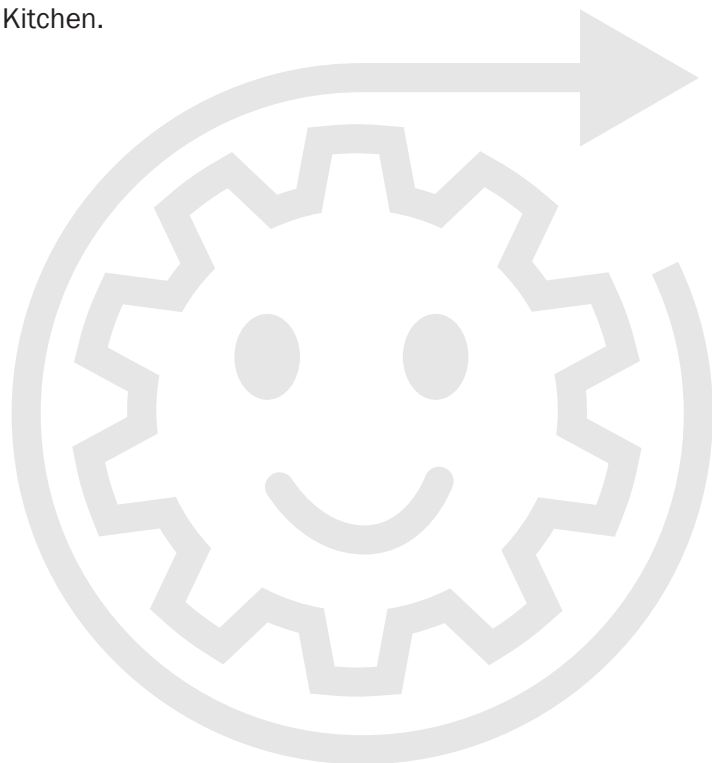
- Relationships have been considerably strengthened between consortium partners: Feed Nova Scotia, Nourish Nova Scotia, Farmers Markets of Nova Scotia, the Mobile Food Market, and Novalea Kitchen.

Key Insights:

- The benefit of working with subject matter experts in establishing a cooperative and understanding legal requirements.
- The value of slowing down to assess the viability of the initial proposal and vision, and adjust to ensure a strong financial foundation as a first step.
- The ability of funders to be flexible, and to pivot and adjust the project's focus was essential in overcoming unexpected challenges.

What's Next:

- The Halifax Food Hub is currently recruiting an Executive Director to secure a space and launch operations in early 2025.



Hope Blooms: Rural and Urban Agro-Educational Centres

Amount Funded: \$50,000

Proposal:

Hope Blooms received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant to launch and test a rural extension of the organization's urban farm for BIPOC youth and to increase subsidized fresh food supply to the weekly farmer's market for the 2023 summer.

What Happened:

Hope Blooms successfully ran a rural growing operation, which directly engaged youth in operations and supplied Halifax markets with fresh, organic produce.

Outcome:

- Over 15,000 pounds of organic food produced from the rural farm to supply 12 farmer's markets throughout the growing season.
- 150 families were reached through the market and were able to access fresh organic produce for affordable prices.
- 104 children and 25 youth leaders were engaged in learnings around food production and harvest.
- Three BIPOC community members were employed.

And...

- Youth were able to explore new parts of Nova Scotia and enhance their appreciation for the province's natural beauty and resources.
- Through the design and implementation of a solar-powered irrigation system, youth gained hands-on experience in sustainable agriculture and renewable energy.
- The program provided a healing space for BIPOC community members, allowing them to reconnect with the land and address intergenerational trauma associated with agriculture.

Key Insights:

- The benefits of urban-rural linkages for urban and BIPOC youth to connect with the land while building skills and community.
- The importance of addressing accessibility challenges and creating pathways for BIPOC youth to participate in rural initiatives.

What's Next:

- Hope Blooms will continue to develop its connection and relationship with the farm owners to further develop the program for future youth cohorts, and will explore expansion into additional rural settings, with potential to collaborate with local schools.

Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre: Indigenous Food Sovereignty and Governance

Amount Funded: \$47,230

Proposal:

The Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant (via the Halifax Food Policy Alliance) to resource a process for Indigenous elders to develop a plan and funding request to Halifax Regional Council to advance Indigenous food sovereignty.

What Happened:

The Halifax Food Policy Alliance worked with the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre to develop structures to advance Indigenous food sovereignty and justice.

Outcome:

- An Indigenous Food Coordinator was hired and the Mijijjewey Kepmite'timi'k Indigenous Governance Body was established to provide guidance on centering Indigenous perspectives and approaches in JustFOOD.
- A request for resources to advance Indigenous food sovereignty, shaped and led by Indigenous community, was submitted to Halifax Regional Council as part of the JustFOOD Halifax Action Plan.

And...

- Relationships were strengthened between the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, the Mi'kmaq Child Development Centre, Every One Every Day, and the Halifax Food Policy Alliance.
- Ongoing funding has been secured through Halifax Regional Council to support the Coordinator and Mijijjewey Kepmite'timi'k Advisory in the advancement Indigenous food sovereignty.

Key Insights:

- Creating mechanisms to link the coordinator into larger food systems work was essential to avoid a siloed approach, and to ensure Indigenous perspectives and priorities remain central.
- The importance of flexibility in timelines and focusing on reciprocity in relationships to ensure trust, mutual benefit and support.
- Long-term commitment and care for relationships is critical to demonstrate alignment of values.

What's Next:

- The benefits and impacts of this project will be realized over time as the Indigenous Food Coordinator implements JustFOOD Halifax Action Plan recommendations and performs their role within the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre.
- The coordinator will enhance the ability to provide cross-departmental food programming, focusing on traditional food access and knowledge, and integrating food sovereignty and justice perspectives into the Centre's work.
- This support is expected to increase the capacity of both Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre and the Halifax Food Policy Alliance to identify and address food sovereignty and justice issues.

Mobile Food Market: Infrastructure Development Project

Amount Funded: \$50,000

Proposal:

The Nova Scotia Mobile Food Market received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant to scale its bulk buy service into three new rural communities and to support the creation of a new storefront and community market in North Dartmouth.

What Happened:

Due to the capacity issues and logistical challenges involved when engaging in rural communities, the Mobile Food Market shifted its focus to grow bulk buy services with urban community partners and to launch their weekly community market at their homebase in North Dartmouth.

Outcome:

- The North Dartmouth community market successfully launched in early 2024, operating every Tuesday from 4.30-7.30pm.
- Market attendance grew from 70 to over 150 visits per week.
- One new part-time staff member was added to the team.
- Two new bulk-buy delivery days were added to the Mobile Food Market schedule, and logistical improvements were made.

Key Insights:

- There is strong support and interest in the community for affordable food access services.
- The importance of scaling initiatives to fit unique contexts and at a pace that does not compromise existing service standards.

What's Next:

- The Mobile Food Market will continue to run its weekly market from North Dartmouth and to incrementally expand its bulk buy service to community partners across HRM.

And...

- Relationships with the community were strengthened through volunteer engagement and support for market operations.
- Shelf-life of produce was improved due to increased capacity to refrigerate.
- The market evolved into a community hub where local community members are able to gather and socialize.



North End Community Health Centre: Food Programming Pilot

Amount Funded: \$50,000

Proposal:

The North End Community Health Centre received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant to scale a Vancouver-based daily meal program to their health centre and community space, the Mobile Outreach Street Health (MOSH) program, and selected north-end schools.

What Happened:

The program was launched and incrementally scaled in various settings throughout Halifax, with ongoing adjustments and refinement based on feedback from recipients.

Outcome:

- Approximately 16,000 meals were provided within the community, including one meal per day (breakfast or lunch) for 320 students at a local school.
- Over 50 dietary restrictions were successfully accommodated, including Halal, dairy-free, gluten-free, vegetarian, and vegan options.

What's Next:

- The health centre will continue to run the program and explore opportunities to increase the frequency and variety of meals offered. They will be collaborating with Dalhousie University to evaluate client satisfaction, identify gaps in services, and explore the broader impact of the program.

And...

- The Centre's Patient Navigator used food as a starting point to build trust, engage in meaningful conversations, and offer referrals to additional services.

Key Insights:

- The role of food provision initiated deeper conversations with clients, which gave further insight into underlying causes and barriers.
- The benefits of combining food provision with support services created a more comprehensive approach to addressing community needs.



Nourish Nova Scotia: Community Food Coordination North End Halifax

Amount Funded: \$30,000

Proposal:

Nourish Nova Scotia received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant to design and coordinate an integrated food service delivery model for three schools located in the Halifax's north end, and to provide logistical coordination for food access.

What Happened:

A Community Food Facilitator was hired to improve and expand food offerings in the three schools, with a particular focus on Joseph Howe Elementary.

Outcome:

- Joseph Howe Elementary saw a significant increase in nourishing lunches that were offered: meals were up from 136 to 600 meals per week and reflected the dietary needs of their students.
- Multiple bulk baking sessions resulted in hundreds of muffins being distributed across schools, supporting breakfast programs.
- Over 800 children and youth were reached through the program, including active involvement in food preparation and literacy activities.
- Over six organizations were regularly involved in food provision.
- Two new volunteers were recruited for Joseph Howe.

And...

- The program introduced diverse food options that reflected the cultural backgrounds of the students, which helped to foster a sense of belonging.
- The program enhanced opportunities for strengthened collaborations with community organizations, paving the way for shared learning and resource pooling. It encouraged community involvement, including volunteer participation in baking sessions and meal distribution.
- Surplus food was effectively managed and distributed to families in need, reducing waste and supporting food security in the community.
- School staff and the Community Food Facilitator involved students in food program delivery, fostering food skills and consistent program execution.

Key Insights:

- The role and benefits of a partnership approach to program impact and success.
- Locally sourced food helped to support surrounding businesses and the economy, while ensuring that the community was reflected in the meals that the students ate.
- The benefits of involving students in program delivery enhanced skills and confidence.
- Starting with a smaller scope allowed for deeper impact and better evaluation, which proved the value of localized, focused efforts.

What's Next:

- Nourish Nova Scotia will build a volunteer base to support ongoing food programs at the three schools and will advocate for government investment in dedicated school food program coordinators.

The North Grove: Seeding the Future

Amount Funded: \$20,000

Proposal:

The North Grove received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant to launch a youth leadership program focused on hard to reach 'grey-zone' youth aged 12-15.

What Happened:

Responding to the identified gap for youth programs, the North Grove developed two new programs: a Farm-to-Table program for youth ages 8-11 and a Youth Volunteer Program for ages 12-15. The Farm-to-Table program connected youth to urban farms, teaching them about growing food and cooking skills. The Youth Volunteer Program, in partnership with the local high school, engaged youth in farming, meal preparation, and child development, which helped them build entry-level job skills.

Outcome:

- 22 youth engaged across both programs, with 12 in the Farm-to-Table program and 10 in the Youth Volunteer Program.
- Approximately 600 snacks and 250 meals were provided to the youth during the programs.
- Youth volunteers played a key role in meal preparation, farming, and assisting with the Good Food Market, which became their favorite activity.

And...

- Families of the participating youth began attending other programs at North Grove, expanding the program's reach.
- 100% of the youth volunteers returned to help with ongoing activities after the program, which demonstrated strong ties to North Grove, and a testament to the program's success.
- Youth volunteers built relationships with other community members, which enhanced the sense of community and collective care.

Key Insights:

- Programs targeting this age range are essential for building community connections and giving youth meaningful roles. Youth appreciated being part of larger community efforts, particularly enjoying activities that involved volunteers of all ages, which reinforces the value of intergenerational programming.
- Youth hold significant hope, optimism, and creativity – they show awareness of challenges in their community, and empathy towards their peers.
- The core function of food as a tool for community engagement and community building activities.

What's Next:

- The North Grove received further funding from the Innovation and Learning Grant in 2024 to scale out the 2023 youth-leadership summer program into a year-round program that will incorporate immediate food access, food literacy, and advocacy with creative arts programming.

Veith House: Kji'puktuk Community Hen Project

Amount Funded: \$28,000

Proposal:

Veith House received funding from Feed Nova Scotia's Innovation Grant to launch a program that focused on building community resources and knowledge to support urban hen keeping.

What Happened:

The team constructed an urban farm coop, purchased hens, trained volunteers in hen care and distributed eggs to the community. A second component of the program to distribute 15 coops to equity-deserving households was delayed due to planning/zoning complications and concerns related to hen health.

Outcome:

- The coop was successfully set up in the urban farm, serving as a focal point for community engagement.
- 10 community hens were purchased and settled into the coop.
- 20 volunteers were trained and actively participated in daily care routines.
- Three workshops were held to give 25 participants hands-on experience in hen-keeping.
- Around 300 eggs were produced by the hens and were distributed to community breakfast gatherings and food pantries.
- Although the distribution of the 15 coops for equity-deserving households was delayed, other avenues are being explored to safely deliver the coops to community members.

And...

- Community bonds were strengthened through volunteer engagement and educational workshops.
- The project also contributed to sustainability through an enhanced on-site composting system.

Key Insights:

- The importance of connecting with hen experts and experienced community members to support the project and help navigate challenges effectively.
- The benefits of community involvement, particularly in volunteer recruitment and training.
- The importance of budgeting for emergencies and having contingency plans in place, particularly when dealing with health issues experienced by the flock.
- Animals can be a powerful tool to generate care and foster engagement with food systems.

What's Next:

- Veith House will continue operating the community coop and is planning more workshops, including children-focused sessions, to further engage the community and share the knowledge gained.
- The organization received further funding from JustFOOD in 2024 to develop a knowledge exchange hub and provide bulk buy supply to community hen owners living in the north end of Halifax.