



**Nourish**  
Nova Scotia

# Annual Report

2023-2024



# Land Acknowledgement

We live and work in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. Mi'kma'ki is covered by Treaties of Peace and Friendship and as treaty people, we humbly commit to the mutual agreements of peace, respect, and friendship that are reflected in these living documents. This land acknowledgement is a commitment to build upon, and as part of meaningful action toward Truth and Reconciliation, Nourish Nova Scotia is committed to honoring and uplifting Indigenous Food Sovereignty.

Learn about the Treaties: [Treaty Education Nova Scotia - Home](#)

Find out more about Mi'kmaw place names: [Mi'kmaw Place Names Digital Atlas](#)







# Our Dream

## **All young people in Nova Scotia:**

Have skills and confidence to cook their own meals.

Are supported to choose foods that nourish their body, mind, and spirit.

Feel connected to where their food comes from and a sense of stewardship for the lands and waters that provide for our food system.

## **Our schools and communities are places where:**

There are opportunities for young people to shape positive food experiences.

Food brings communities together to celebrate our unique identities, cultures, and family traditions.

Food sparks joyful experiences with our peers, family, and communities.

## **In every neighbourhood or community:**

Spaces for young people to grow and harvest food are abundant.

Locally grown foods are available to enjoy close to where we live.

There are inviting spaces for young people to cook together and connect with community around food.

# A Message From Our Chair



When I joined Nourish Nova Scotia as Board Chair just one year ago, I knew that I was joining a group of people who were passionate and committed to supporting food literacy and farm to school programs. I knew about the unique ways that Nourish staff were engaging with youth to change how we talk about food and to build skills and knowledge that will benefit our communities across the province for decades to come.

Nourish Nova Scotia has embarked on a strategic planning initiative that will allow us to build on the successes of the first decade, and expand our network and impact across Nova Scotia. We are also working with the Province to strengthen support and awareness for the universal school food program that was announced this year. While this work is on-going, this was a significant move forward in the advocacy for universal, healthy school food.

This year has been a year of growth and change for Nourish Nova Scotia and while we are still in the midst of these changes, I am excited about the ideas and initiatives that are being planned, and the potential impact that Nourish will have in the immediate and long-term future. I look forward to continuing this important work and to collaborating with my colleagues on the Board and the Nourish team. I value their insight, experience and dedication to this organization!

Marilee Sulewski, Chair

## Board of Directors



Debbie Madore



Janice Silver



Heather Morse



Maria Wilson



Nancy Saul-Demers



Monica Rodriguez



Helen Wong



Irene Ogada



Sue Vincent





## A Message From Our Executive Director

Having stepped into the role of Executive Director with Nourish Nova Scotia in April 2024, I've come to see the strong foundation that's been laid over ten+ years, and the immense potential of what lies ahead. Over the past year, the team at Nourish Nova Scotia has worked across school and community settings to engage young people in hands-on learning and take action on food issues that matter to them. We've sparked youth engagement in food through funding, mentorship and support, and we've played a significant role in the shifting landscape of school food across Nova Scotia and Canada.

In our work, we are continually reminded of the passion and creativity that young people bring to food and the development of more just and resilient food systems. As our work grows, I look forward to nurturing new pathways for young people in Nova Scotia to help lead the way to a new food future.

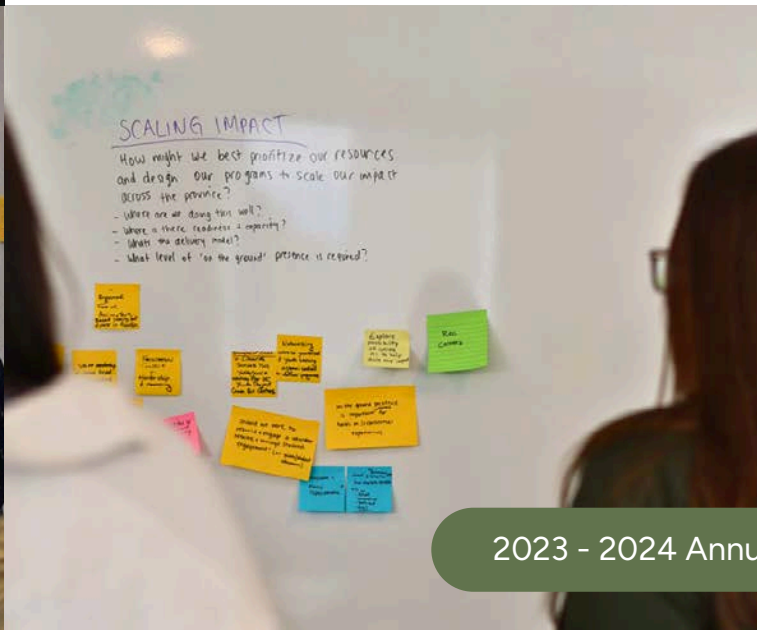
Aimee Gasparetto, Executive Director



# A New Theory of Change & Roadmap

In the Spring of 2024, the Nourish Nova Scotia team and board initiated a planning process to map our Theory of Change and create a roadmap for current and future work. Through this process, we have taken time to **honor the work that got us here, identify emerging shifts, and shed light on the insights that will carry us forward.** As we remain steadfast in our commitment to creating nourishing food environments for children and youth in Nova Scotia, we also recognize the opportunity to facilitate new and diverse pathways for young people to drive these efforts. Rooted in principles of collaboration and co-creation, our emerging Theory of Change and Roadmap will guide our work over the next three years.

We look forward to sharing the full plans in January 2025.





# Vision

Young People in Nova Scotia are  
Well-Nourished to Live, Learn and Play

# Mission

We inspire and equip young people in  
Nova Scotia to learn about food and  
transform the food systems around them



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When I work with schools, they come up with ideas, and it's incredible that I can just go to Nourish to find all the tools they need to action those ideas.

-School Health Promoter



# How We Work

Through our work, we are cultivating generations of youth food leaders - confident and capable of supporting individual, family and community health through food, and activating positive food systems change - now, and for generations to come.

We inspire and equip young people to learn about food and lead food systems transformation through:

- ★ Co-designing programs that increase access to nutritious foods and create opportunities for young people to build knowledge, skills, and confidence around food.
- ★ Leading advocacy related to the development of sustainable, just and equitable food systems, with a focus on youth-informed policies and practice.
- ★ Strengthening networks of youth and partners to advance food-related issues that impact diverse young people across Nova Scotia.





## Advocating for School Food in Nova Scotia



## Advocating for School Food in Canada

Nourish Nova Scotia hosts and coordinates the activities of the Nova Scotia Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food (NS-CHSF), which brings together diverse partners across the province to advocate for local school food programs. This year marked a significant milestone with the announcement of a pay-what-you-can lunch program supported by an initial \$18.8M and eventual \$100M investment from the provincial government. This program is affordable for all and free for those who need it, focusing on elementary students in the 2024-2025 school year and expanding to all schools by 2027-2028.

The NS-CHSF celebrates this new program as a huge step in the right direction. **We will continue to advocate for ongoing evaluation and improvements as the program grows and expands to ensure it reaches its full potential in feeding students and supporting local food systems.**

We have been advocating for a universal cost-shared healthy school food program for Canada as a member of the Coalition for Healthy School Food (CHSF) since 2014. Advocacy for policy change takes considerable time and effort, but it has certainly paid off this year!

On April 1st 2024, the Federal government announced \$1B over five years for a National School Food Program. This investment will feed about 400,000 more students than current programs. The funds will flow through bilateral agreements with provinces and territories, and separate agreements with First Nations, Inuit, and Metis communities.

On June 20th 2024, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau launched the National School Food Policy at Northumberland Regional High School (NRHS) in Pictou County, NS. This policy closely mirrors the CHSF's Guiding Principles. NRHS was chosen due to their exemplary school food program and the advocacy letters they wrote to the Prime Minister and their local Member of Parliament, Sean Fraser.



# Farm to School Snack



Farm to School Snack is a **monthly program that provides locally grown vegetables and fruit from Nova Scotia farms to students** in participating schools. In the 2023/24 school year, four new schools outside of the Annapolis Valley joined the program, for a total of 15 schools. With support from the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, these schools received start-up grants to help launch their programs.



Students in participating schools across the province had the opportunity to taste test and learn about a variety of local produce, such as candy cane beets, celeriac, kohlrabi, asparagus and microgreens.

While the program is primarily supported by parent volunteers, many schools are creating hands-on opportunities for students in the kitchen to prepare and serve the monthly snack. Feedback from schools indicates that **students are excited to try these local foods, and that the program is making a positive impact on school food environments.**

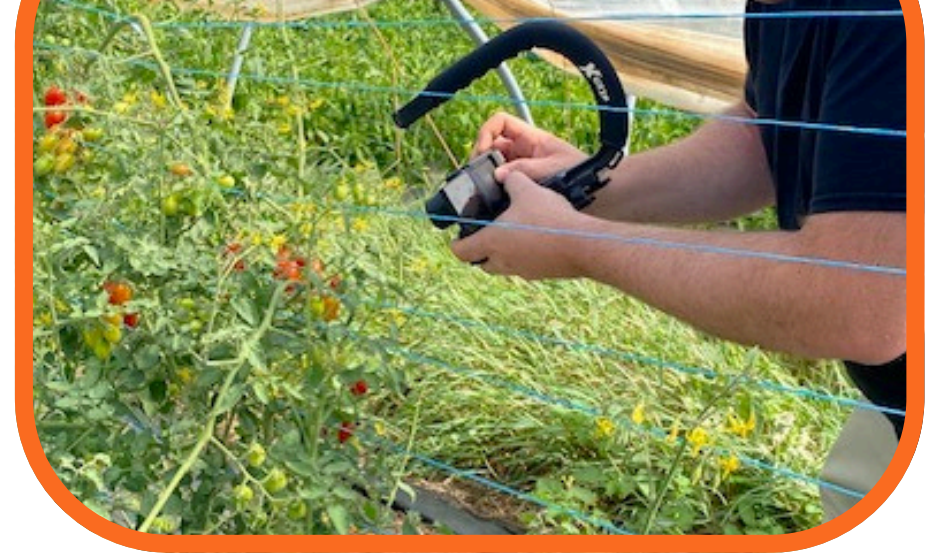




# Farm to School Snack

In partnership with Agriculture in the Classroom – Nova Scotia, the Farm to School Snack program expanded to include the creation of curriculum resources and the production of a local "How Does It Grow?" video series.

The first round of curriculum sheets features blueberries, carrots, cucumbers, peppers and tomatoes. These resources will provide teachers with curriculum activities to enhance the monthly snack and will be available to schools in 2025.



The goal of the video series is to **engage students with the process of growing vegetables and fruit in Nova Scotia**. Blue Cow Marketing has captured the many stages of planting, growing and harvesting of the program snacks at seven Annapolis Valley farms. The series will be hosted by an elementary school student, narrated in both English and French, and will be available to schools in 2025.





# Grow Eat Learn



Grow Eat Learn (GEL) is a province-wide program to support, enhance and grow school community food gardens in Nova Scotia. Its development has been informed by the local knowledge, wisdom, and experiences of diverse garden leaders, teachers, and communities.

With support from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, we launched phase one of Grow Eat Learn, which will inform future phases of the program. This included **providing \$5000 grants to nine school community projects and the recruitment of four regional garden mentor volunteers to connect with an additional twelve schools.** School growing projects ranged from food forests to school-wide hydroponics.

Through this phase of Grow Eat Learn, we facilitated an impactful virtual knowledge-sharing space for the garden leaders and mentors, while building connections and strengthening our understanding of the diverse garden landscape across Nova Scotia. As we move into the next phase, **we will continue to build a strong network of youth-centered growing projects happening in schools and communities across the province.**





# Grow Eat Learn

Across Grow Eat Learn activities, a range of school garden projects were supported and expanded through a mix of funding, resource-sharing, and mentorship connections. Through a series of educational planting events, we also facilitated the planting of pollinator and tea gardens in diverse garden spaces; Overall, contributing to increased neighbourhood biodiversity and public awareness about why this is important community action for ecosystem health and responding to climate change.

**43** School garden projects supported

**\$62,500** Distributed for garden grants

**250** Pollinator and tea plants propagated and planted





# Garden Feature: From Seed to Salsa

From Seed to Salsa is a 3-part Grow Eat Learn garden program designed for elementary-aged youth that offers experiential learning around growing and preparing food. **Over 120 grade 3-6 students at Harbour View Elementary participated** in a number of Spring and Fall sessions that focused on making fresh salsa – starting with the seeds! They began with seeding and caring for plants in the classroom over 2 months, followed by getting into the garden to plant their seedlings.

After a summer away from school, students returned to find their plants thriving and ready for harvest (thanks to care by the Summer Student Garden Club and the garden leaders, Roseanna and Carol!). During the salsa making session, students learned some fundamentals of cooking literacy by practicing a safe chopping technique and experimenting with different levels of spice and other variations. For some students, it was their first time being trusted with a knife and cooking project.

“

Youth are so different in a garden setting; I am not sure if it is from working so close to the earth. But I find so many children that normally struggle with behaviours or big emotions thrive when they are in a garden. I also love teaching kids to cook and prep, so being able to make a meal that you started from seed provides a sense of pride like no other.

- Schools Plus Community Outreach Worker and Pilot School Garden leader, Emily Hammond

Seed



Plant



Harvest & make salsa



Eat salsa!





# Nourish Your Roots

Nourish Your Roots is a farm-to-school fundraiser aimed at supporting school food programs while contributing to Nova Scotia's local farm and agriculture economy. In 2022, after reviewing financial and survey data on the fundraiser's impact in promoting healthy school fundraising, and connecting schools with local farmers, an adapted version of Nourish Your Roots was created. Moving away from a one-size-fits-all provincial model, the 2023 version of the fall fundraiser focused on more **flexible and localized approaches, connecting individual schools with farm partners in their own regions.**

Partnerships were formed between schools and farms across the Annapolis Valley, South Shore, Halifax Regional Municipality, and Bear River First Nation. The funds raised supported breakfast, snack, and lunch programs in the participating schools.

35

Participating schools  
+ 1 childcare center

\$22,572

Funds raised for school  
food initiatives

\$72,292

In revenue for  
local farms



As Nourish Your Roots evolved, new partnership opportunities emerged to help schools fundraise with local products to support their food initiatives. Bramble Hill Farm introduced a new farm-to-school fundraiser and with support from Nourish Nova Scotia, launched its Micro Garden kit fundraiser in December 2023 with two local schools.

This was followed by a broader rollout in the Spring, reaching seven schools across the province. Schools fundraised with both individual Micro Garden kits (pea shoots) and 3-pack kits (pea shoots, radish, and sunflower).

During the spring campaign, a total of **895 kits were sold, raising \$1,665 to support school food programming in the participating schools.**



# Activating Kitchens with Youth and Community

This pilot initiative brought diverse partners and volunteers together to strengthen food access through a range of community and kitchen activations. We worked with partners across the Halifax Regional Municipality, Cape Breton, and the Annapolis Valley to **activate underutilized kitchen spaces to prepare nutritious foods for unique community offerings**. Across a range of kitchen activations, participants had opportunities to foster new connections and a sense of belonging in community, while building knowledge, skills, and confidence around food.

- ★ 8 Unique program offerings
- ★ 34 Unique kitchen activations
- ★ 12 Partners engaged
- ★ 434 Participants (approx. 200 children & youth)
- ★ 32 Meals prepared and shared in community





## --- Baking for Breakfast

Over eight months, community volunteers gathered in community kitchens in Halifax and Dartmouth to connect over a shared meal and bake for school breakfast programs across five schools in Dartmouth North and North End Halifax.

- ★ 31 community volunteers
- ★ 1500 hearty breakfast squares
- ★ 200+ vegetable snack packs



In a mash up between Grow Eat Learn and Food Skills, students harvested their own herbs from the Harbourview Garden to create their own unique herbed yogurt dip.

## Food Skills Workshops ---

In partnership with Schools Plus (Halifax Regional Centre for Education), a range of youth food skills workshops were held over the summer.

Workshop skills included making fresh pasta, experimenting with salad dressings, learning how to create different dips and spreads, and exploring a variety of ingredients through a smoothie lab! Students were able to learn valuable food literacy skills while also exploring new food items.

- ★ 8 food skills workshops
- ★ 7 schools across HRM
- ★ 110 youth participants
- ★ 1 community organization

We have been so impressed with the level of enthusiasm and excitement from the students, and this is hugely due to the partnership we have created with your program (specifically both of you)!" "There was HUGE uptake from students and staff. They gave out over 100 bowls of soup (2 ½ pots of soup). What a huge success.

“

## Joseph Howe Elementary's Hot Soup Program

A generous donation from John Ross and Susan Helliwell enabled a collaboration between Nourish Nova Scotia, Tarek's Cafe, and a local courier operator, Geoff Clyke, to provide Joseph Howe Elementary with 200 portions of soup each week, from February to June. This program met important food access needs while engaging youth in school food programming. Youth participated weekly in the delivery of the program, building food knowledge and skills every time.

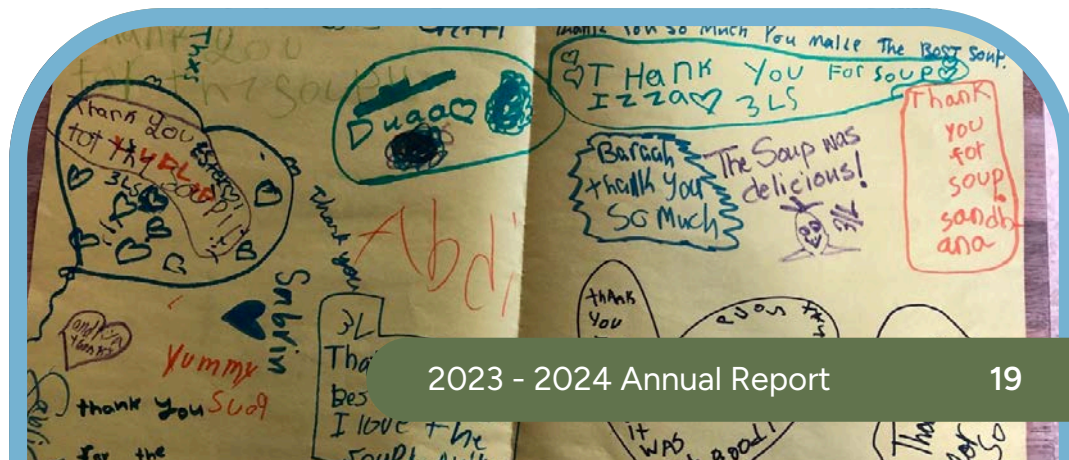
- ★ Over 30 youth volunteers
- ★ Over 200 youth accessing soup weekly
- ★ Over 3,600 portions of soup served
- ★ 2 local businesses supported



## Millwood Soup Program

In partnership with Schools Plus, students who were part of a leadership class at Millwood High were engaged in cooking large batches of soup to serve as part of the school lunch. As part of the program, students experimented with different ingredients and learned new cooking skills to make and serve over 100 bowls of soup to their school at lunch time, over a series of 4 sessions.

Staff noticed a visible increase in the confidence and leadership skills of repeat youth volunteers, as well as increased exposure to new foods and soups that had cultural significance among some participants. Fan favorites were the halal chicken noodle soup, corn chowder and lentil soup!





# Launching Youth Food Leaders

In partnership with the YWCA Halifax and YWCA Youth Advisory Council, the Youth Food Leaders pilot provided youth with opportunities for learning and leadership around food. Over the course of pilot, youth participated in skills building workshops, learned from local food professionals, and contributed to food projects in their community. While supporting food access through shared meal preparation and sending food, recipes, and equipment home, the youth food leaders' pilot focused on co-designing unique pathways for supporting youth to be food leaders in their communities.

This series laid the foundation for an emerging Youth Food Leaders Program that will **create opportunities for youth across the province to lead and participate in food initiatives through processes of co-design & experiential learning with youth.**

The Youth Food Leaders pilot was made possible through support via the TELUS Community Boards.

Mayank Ramchandani, a youth food leader and member of the of the YWCA Youth Advisory Council, shared his experience as part of Youth Food Leaders.

I chose to participate in the Youth Food Leaders program to deepen my understanding of food and nutrition on a personal level. [...] Throughout the series, I gained several practical skills and valuable knowledge that I will continue to use. I learned how to cut vegetables more efficiently and discovered new cooking techniques that I can apply in my daily life. Additionally, the program also further developed my interest in entrepreneurship within the community, which has sparked my interest in exploring ways to support and empower local food initiatives.

For him, "one of the most memorable highlights was visiting the Common Roots Urban Garden. It was inspiring to learn about urban gardening and see firsthand how sustainable practices can be implemented in an urban setting."

“

# Nourish Food and Film Challenge



At the thirteenth edition of the Devour! The Food Film Fest, Nourish Nova Scotia continued our role as the youth programming partner and host of the Nourish Food and Film Challenge. We were thrilled to engage with young people from schools across Nova Scotia in conversations and learning about Food on the Coast, the 2023 Devour! Food Film Fest theme.

The winning film was produced by Grace, a student from Beechville Lakeside Elementary school, who took us on a journey through her film all about food from the Northumberland Strait.

Grace chose to use her prize to implement a food program at her school, where Nourish Nova Scotia's Farm to School Snack Program was implemented on 2 occasions, where the Grace and the rest of the lunch time cooking club prepared all the produce at school!

Congratulations and well done, Grace!







# Food Literacy Education

Through school and community partnerships, Nourish Nova Scotia has initiated planning for a range of **food literacy resources that will allow groups and organizations to host their own food skills workshops for children and youth**. This includes resources such as the 'Cooking Club Toolkit' that we developed in partnership with UpLift, and has been informed by existing cooking clubs across the province.

Keep an eye on our website for the launch of our **new learning hub in 2025**, which will feature a range of food literacy resources for youth and youth-serving organizations.

# Funding Support

Through our partnerships, we facilitate the distribution of funds to support food programs in schools and communities.

- ★ \$190,000 dispersed for school breakfast programs in 65 schools across Nova Scotia
- ★ \$59,500 for school community garden projects (9 school community garden projects, 8 Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey schools and 13 small garden grants)
- ★ \$30,000 for school and community food access





# Blue Nose Marathon

We had another great year participating in the Bluenose Marathon, raising more funds than ever, across three teams and 18 fundraising participants. We are so grateful to those who came out to walk and run in support of Nourish Nova Scotia.

**\$11,278 Raised** | 175 Donations

Our steadfast Nourish Nova Scotia volunteer and board member, Nancy Saul-Demers, who raised awareness and \$2000 through her unique fundraising campaign – swimming one kilometer each morning for five consecutive days in Mayreau's Saline Bay – and to community champions like Billy Eickholt, who raised over \$1200 for our programs!



## Special thanks to:

**Team Colliers:** Through the dedication of Colliers Project Leaders, including Nourish Nova Scotia's board chair, their team raised over \$1,600 for Nourish programs, directly supporting our mission to nourish children and communities.



**Team Collins:** For the second year in a row, SchoolsPlus Community Outreach Worker, Michelle and her partner, Alastair participated in costume! Read more about why they ran in costume and their passion for food access and sustainability in [this blog post](#).

# Thank You to Making Our Work Possible!

Warmest thanks to our monthly and seasonal donors who are vital to helping us achieve our mission and impact. These contributions allow us to expand our impact with more young people and explore new ways of working in support of our mission.

For others who may be interested in joining us on this mission, we invite you to learn more and [contribute on our website.](#)

## — — — • Funding Partners

TELUS Community Boards  
Medavie Foundation  
Feed Nova Scotia  
Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture  
United Way Halifax  
Farm to Cafeteria Canada  
Food Secure Canada  
Engage Nova Scotia  
Breakfast Club of Canada

## — — — • Sustaining Partner



## Major Donors (over \$5000) — — — — —

Energy Atlantica - \$5000  
The John and Jeanne Eyking Family Foundation - \$6000  
Bell Aliant - \$5000  
Gordon & Susan Thompson Charitable Fund - \$8000  
Nova Scotia Seafood Alliance - \$25,000

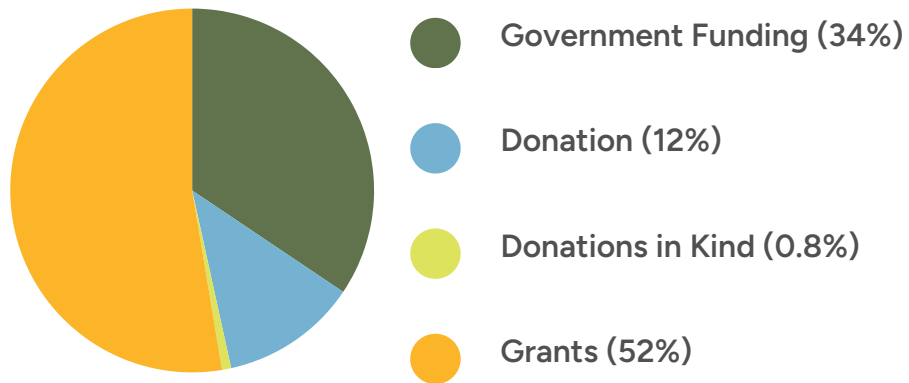
## Corporate Donors (over \$1000) — — — — —

Grant Thornton LLP  
Sysco  
RBC  
Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia  
Domus Realty  
Atlantic Central

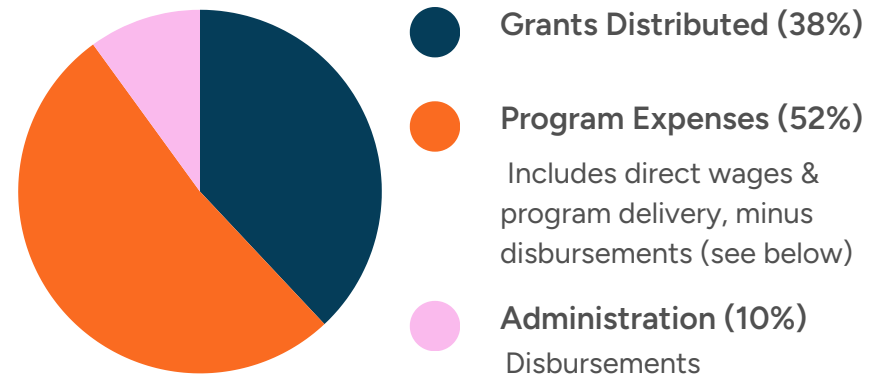


# Financial Sustainability

**Revenue: \$881,655**



**Expenses: \$814,939**















**Nourish**  
Nova Scotia

**Learn More and Join Us!**

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