

Strategic Action Plan

2025-2028





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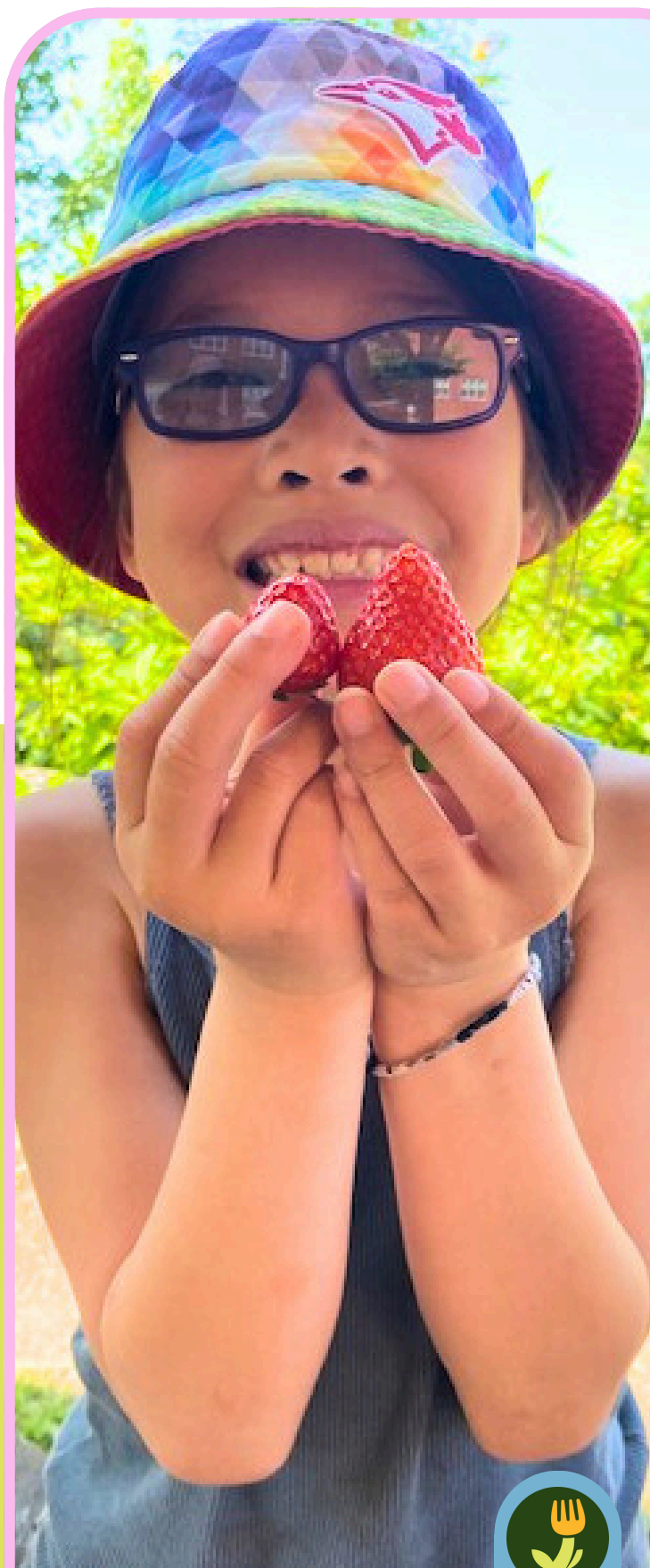
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About the Plan

Our Strategic Action Plan serves as the overarching framework to guide our decision-making and activities. It includes our Theory of Change, which provides a roadmap for facilitating change and advancing the outcomes we aim to achieve.

Together, they help us stay accountable to our intended impact, our values, and the unique role we play in Nova Scotia’s food system.

In the spirit of learning and reflection, we view our strategic plan as a living document that will be refined each year.



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the land where we live, prepare and share food is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. Mi'kma'ki is covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship, and as treaty people, we humbly commit to the mutual agreements of peace, respect, and friendship reflected in these living documents.

We recognize the vital role that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities play in the stewardship of the lands and waters that sustain our food systems. We also acknowledge the many harms of colonization on Indigenous food systems — including the disruption of traditional knowledge, the dispossession of land, and the erosion of Indigenous foodways and food sovereignty. At Nourish Nova Scotia, we are committed to honouring and uplifting Indigenous Food Sovereignty through ongoing learning and relationship-building with Mi'kmaq communities. We strive to support and promote Indigenous-led food systems. As part of this work, we invite those who engage with us to reflect on the historical and cultural influences that shape our food systems, our diets, and our unique connections to food.

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

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





About Nourish Nova Scotia

Nourish Nova Scotia is a registered charity that equips young people to learn about food and transform the food systems around them. We know that the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes in relation to food are essential for developing healthy habits and nurturing positive experiences with food. We also know that when young people have opportunities to play an active role in shaping the food system around them, they build their own capacity to lead meaningful change.

We work across school and community settings to increase equitable access to nutritious foods; strengthen community food infrastructure, and facilitate youth engagement in programs and policies that support young people to grow, harvest, prepare, and cook nourishing foods.

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.

Vision

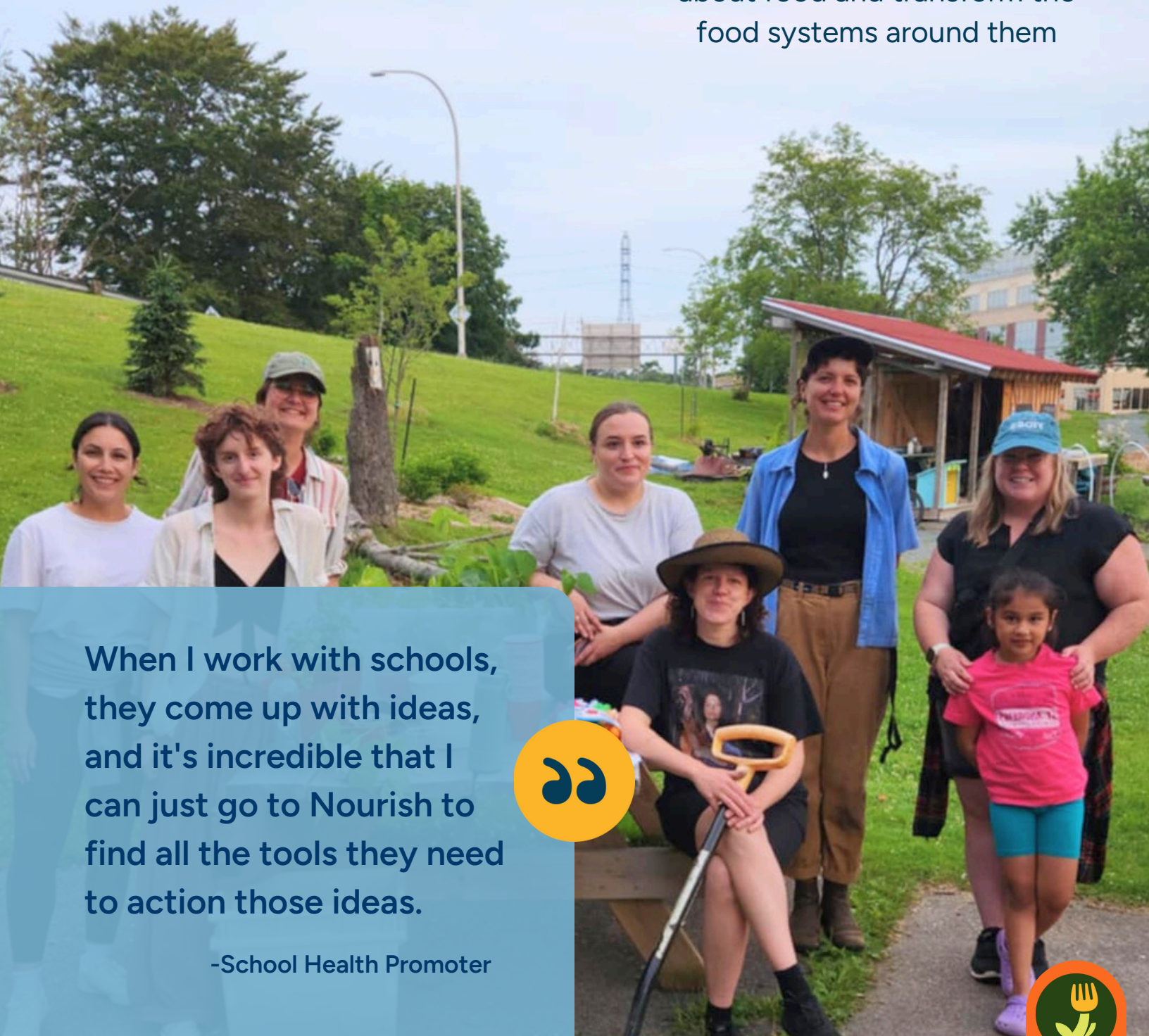
Young People in Nova Scotia are Well-Nourished to **Live, Learn and Play**

Mission

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

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

We work directly with youth, and with youth-serving organizations, to support youth participation in food access, literacy, and leadership initiatives. We do this 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 practices.
- ★ Strengthening networks of youth and partners to advance food-related issues that impact diverse young people across Nova Scotia.





The Context

The well-being of children and youth is at risk.

Severe food insecurity and a cost-of-living crisis, set against the backdrop of a climate emergency and growing racial inequities across the food system are defining our current reality. According to a [report](#) on child and youth well-being in Nova Scotia, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted young people, who rely on school food programs for nutritious meals, who lack access to safe places to play or gather, and who need positive and nurturing human connections to support their development.

A crisis of food insecurity in Canada.

In 2023, 40% of children under 18 in Nova Scotia lived in food-insecure households ([source](#)). Data related to household food insecurity in Canada shows that households with children under 18 are more likely to be food insecure than those without, and that the highest percentage of individuals living in food-insecure households identify as Black and Indigenous ([source](#)).

A food system that is increasingly unjust.

Growing public consciousness about equity and social justice is leading communities to reimagine food systems in order to advance food justice and sovereignty. In Nova Scotia, this has particular relevance for African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq communities, who face the deliberate dispossession of land and other harms done by colonialism and systemic racism and oppression. This is big work that requires many people advocating for transformative programs and policies that can meet the magnitude of the issues we face.

A recognition that urgent change is needed.

Increased recognition of the role and impact of nutritious food on the social and emotional development of young people, is creating new opportunities to prioritize supportive food programs and policies. At the same time, community organizations are incorporating food access and literacy initiatives into their work, to both address urgent needs and build community capacity. Meanwhile, a [movement](#) is contributing to the development of universal school food programs in Canada. Most recently, significant federal and provincial investments in school lunch programs have been announced in almost every province, including Nova Scotia, which has committed the third largest investment in Canada.





The Context

A strong foundation to build on.

Over our 12 years of activity, Nourish Nova Scotia has become a respected voice in advocacy and policy, with established networks of partners across local, provincial and national levels. We have facilitated youth leadership in food programs and events and developed a robust set of tools and resources to support food literacy education. We have also grown a dedicated and experienced team with subject matter expertise, and a culture of care and forward-thinking action.

With a strong foundation from which to grow, we are adapting to meet the context of this shifting landscape. As we look ahead to Nourish Nova Scotia's second decade of impact, we see opportunities to build on our successes to reach more young people, contribute to supportive spaces for youth leadership in food, and amplify youth voices in food system advocacy. To meaningfully engage in this work, we also recognize the need to strengthen our focus in justice and equity across our organization and work, while deepening relationships with African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq communities.

With this new theory of change and strategic plan, we aim to bring to this next chapter a greater clarity of our purpose, values, and intentionality about our intended impact, and coherence in our approach and programming.

“

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



Our Values

At Nourish Nova Scotia, the way that we work is as important as what we achieve. Embedding our values into our work is a crucial part of our approach.



Youth- Driven

We centre diverse youth voices and perspectives in our decision making, and prioritize making space for youth to lead the way.



Collaboration

We work in partnership to advance youth food literacy and leadership. We acknowledge the strength in working together and approach partnerships through a foundation of trust, openness, and empathy.



Food Sovereignty

We prioritize practices and policies that enable equitable access to food. We are committed to interrogating and disrupting the colonial structures and systemic racism that underpin our food system, and working towards community food sovereignty.



Grassroots

We believe that collective action at the local level can spur systemic change. We bridge community leadership and action to the advancement of food systems transformation.



Learning

We take an adaptive and responsive approach and advance evidence-based methods and approaches that have practical application in communities. We honour many ways of knowing and being to inform on-going thinking and practice.



Interconnectedness




We nurture relationships between people, land, and nature through food. We recognize the power of local food systems to support the well-being of people and our environment.



Our Dream

Our theory of change serves as the overarching strategic framework guiding our decision-making and activities. It helps us stay accountable to our intended impact, our values, and the unique role we play in the food ecosystem. An essential part of our Theory of Change, is the ultimate impact we aspire to:




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...

-  Young people have opportunities to participate in positive food experiences.
-  Food sparks joyful experiences with our peers, family, and communities.
-  Food brings communities together to celebrate our unique identities, cultures, and family traditions.

In every neighbourhood or community there are...

-  Abundant spaces for young people to grow and harvest food.
-  Locally grown foods are available to enjoy close to where we live.
-  Spaces for young people to cook together and connect with community around food.



Our Theory of Change

Nourish
Nova Scotia

Shaping Local Food Systems

- Contributing to school and community food initiatives.
- Advocating for food policies and programs.
- Influencing a thriving and resilient local food system.

Cultivating Vibrant Places to Gather and Learn

- Growing and harvesting food together.
- Connecting to the landscapes that provide for our food.
- Preparing, cooking, and sharing meals with each other.

Building Knowledge and Agency

- Fostering skills, confidence, and attitudes around food.
- Enjoying food that nourishes the mind, body, and spirit.
- Engaging in positive experiences with food.

Local News
YOUTH ARE TRANSFORMING
FOOD SYSTEMS IN NOVA SCOTIA

Our Mission: Young people in Nova Scotia are equipped to learn about food and transform the food systems around them.



The Journey to Impact

By 2030, Nourish Nova Scotia aims to build a strong foundation for young people in Nova Scotia to support and lead positive food systems change - at home, at school, or in their community. To make meaningful progress, we strive to:

1. Engage young people in all regions of Nova Scotia in experiential learning about food across school and community settings.
2. Build capacity and alignment among a wider, more diverse, and active network of partners who are supporting youth-focused food initiatives.
3. Build capacity for more young people to participate in food initiatives and food-related advocacy.
4. Contribute to a robust school food program in Nova Scotia, where the needs of diverse students are being met, the impacts of school food are well-understood, and progress is being made to align school food with broader food system goals.
5. Expand support and investments for those most impacted by food insecurity and prioritize relationships with Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities.
6. Be a recognized leader in facilitating youth engagement in food systems transformation in Nova Scotia.
7. Be a "go-to" source for evidence-informed resources and tools related to food literacy education.
8. Capture and share our impact through strong evaluation practices and story-telling.
9. Cultivate a diverse base of funders and supporters that are meaningfully engaged, contributing to our long-term success and sustainability.
10. Support a healthy and inclusive workplace that reflects diverse perspectives and lived experiences.





As a Youth-Driven Organization:

We believe:

- Youth are the future and the starting point to building a healthy and empowered generation
- Youth have the right to healthy and positive relationships to food
- Youth benefit from a supportive network of peers & trusted adults
- Youth have the capacity, creativity and are equipped to contribute relevant solutions

We are practicing this by:

- Expanding our Youth Food Leaders program
- Working with youth on the design and development of school growing projects
- Providing funding for youth-led initiatives
- Working in partnership to support youth-led and youth focused initiatives
- Creating a designated staff role for youth engagement, and developing a youth engagement framework
- Mobilizing opportunities to hire youth interns and volunteers

We are working on:

- Exploring the creation of a youth advisory council
- Building internal capacity to practice meaningful youth engagement
- Deepening partnerships with youth-led and youth-serving organizations in Nova Scotia
- Listening to feedback from youth to inform programming and strategy
- Creating stronger links to post-secondary institutions
- Facilitating opportunities for youth advocacy





Food As a Driver for Change

Food is a powerful lever for systemic change: Transformation of our food system has the power to mitigate and adapt to climate change, create equitable employment and drive local economies, and build community food sovereignty. These multiple and inter-locking goals can be advanced by working to build a more diverse, resilient, and localized food system; One that is rooted in supporting and uplifting the people who grow our food, protecting the natural ecosystems that provide for our food, and investing in local food infrastructure to support community-led solutions.

Everybody Eats. But access to food isn't the same for everyone: Food insecurity is directly related to inadequate income; it is influenced by issues such as precarious and low-wage work, rising costs of living, access to affordable childcare, and systemic racism and oppression. Across Canada, Black and Indigenous households face the highest rates of food insecurity ([source](#)) and across the ten provinces, over a third of Black Canadian children are food insecure, compared to 12% of white children ([source](#)). One's ability to access food is disproportionately impacted by factors that include (but are not limited to) where you live, whether you are on social assistance, if you rent versus own a home, and if you identify as being part of a racialized community.

Food forms a critical part of our identity, helping to shape our sense of belonging in family and community: Foods are associated with culture, heritage, and our connection to the places we call home. In a specific region or place, how food is grown, prepared, and consumed can also shape the unique customs, values, and stories carried by the people who live there. In this way, the places we come from play a role in what we eat, and what we eat helps to shape our sense of who we are.

Many young people do not have positive experiences with food, affecting their well-being and the ability to learn: Sufficient access to nutritious food and the ability to have positive experiences with food, are vital parts of our well-being and social development across different life stages. Learning about food and eating together from an early age can help develop lifelong knowledge and skills, foster positive relationships with food, and enhance a sense of belonging within family and community.





Strategic priority #1

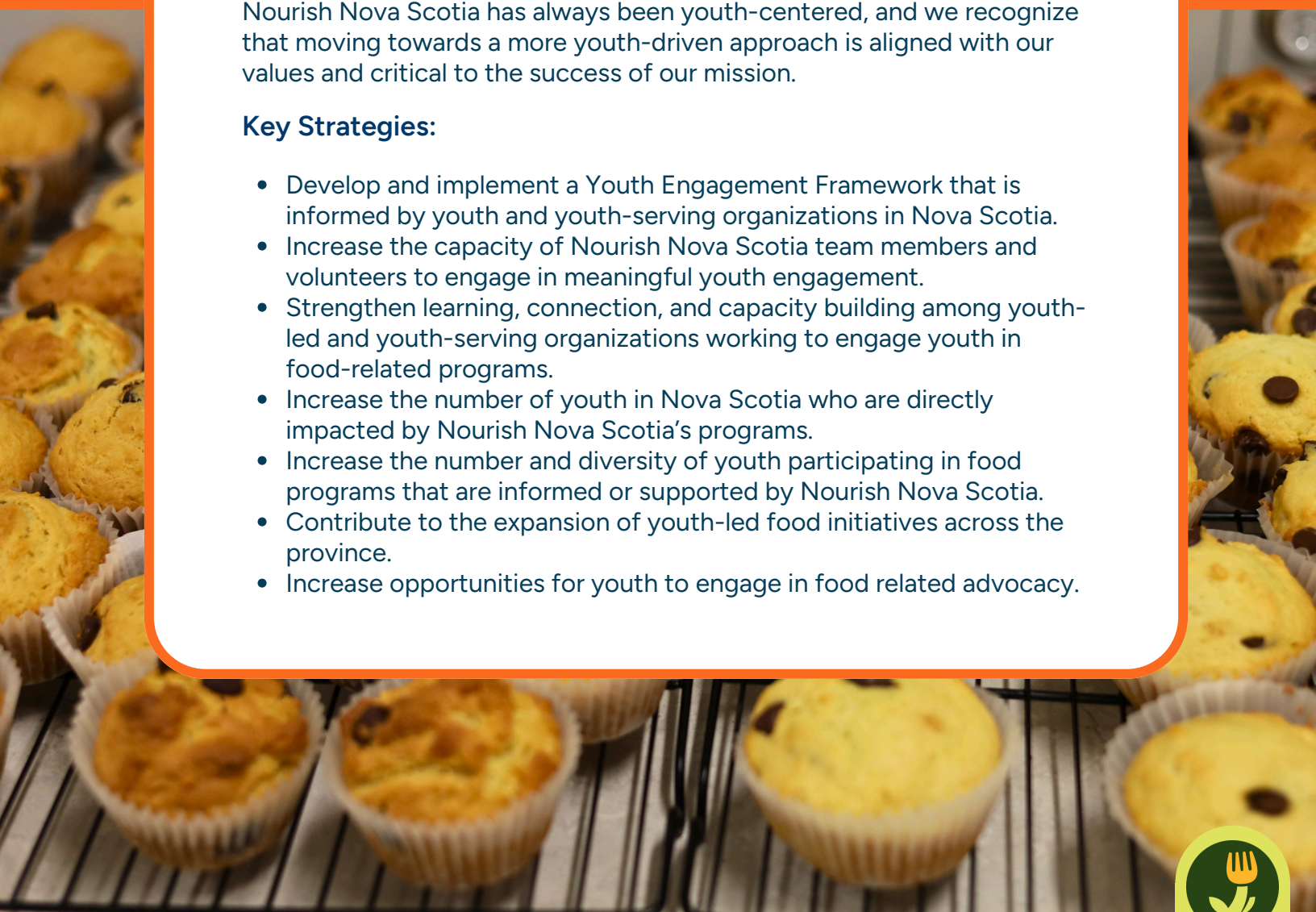
Build Capacity for Impactful Youth Engagement and Leadership in Food

Why It's Important:

When thinking about our food system, youth need to be involved in decision making about the programs and policies that affect them. Nourish Nova Scotia has always been youth-centered, and we recognize that moving towards a more youth-driven approach is aligned with our values and critical to the success of our mission.

Key Strategies:

- Develop and implement a Youth Engagement Framework that is informed by youth and youth-serving organizations in Nova Scotia.
- Increase the capacity of Nourish Nova Scotia team members and volunteers to engage in meaningful youth engagement.
- Strengthen learning, connection, and capacity building among youth-led and youth-serving organizations working to engage youth in food-related programs.
- Increase the number of youth in Nova Scotia who are directly impacted by Nourish Nova Scotia's programs.
- Increase the number and diversity of youth participating in food programs that are informed or supported by Nourish Nova Scotia.
- Contribute to the expansion of youth-led food initiatives across the province.
- Increase opportunities for youth to engage in food related advocacy.





Strategic priority #2

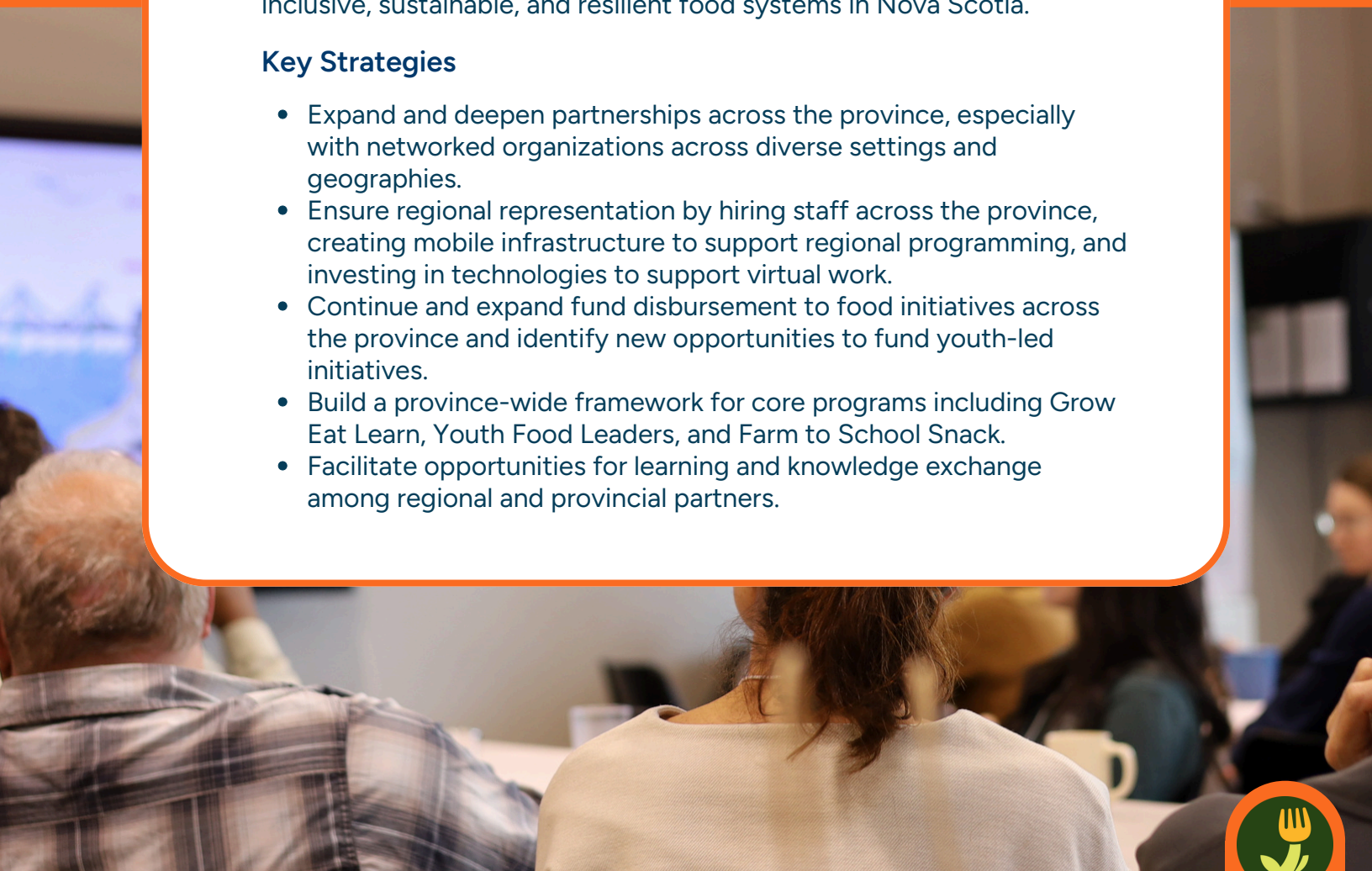
Meaningfully Engage Youth and Partners Across All Regions of Nova Scotia

Why It's Important:

As a provincial organization, part of our mission is to reach youth province-wide and ensure that our work reflects and impacts the diversity of young people that live in Nova Scotia. Young people across the province have different lived experiences related to food and we aspire to meet those diverse needs and interests. Reaching more regions and people will build collective capacity to advance shared goals of more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient food systems in Nova Scotia.

Key Strategies

- Expand and deepen partnerships across the province, especially with networked organizations across diverse settings and geographies.
- Ensure regional representation by hiring staff across the province, creating mobile infrastructure to support regional programming, and investing in technologies to support virtual work.
- Continue and expand fund disbursement to food initiatives across the province and identify new opportunities to fund youth-led initiatives.
- Build a province-wide framework for core programs including Grow Eat Learn, Youth Food Leaders, and Farm to School Snack.
- Facilitate opportunities for learning and knowledge exchange among regional and provincial partners.





Strategic priority #3

Amplify Youth Voices In Advocacy

Why is it important:

Young people need a voice in shaping the policies that affect them. To do this, we must create opportunities for youth to connect to policy processes and engaging ways for them to share their perspectives and experiences. Ensuring that youth are equipped to advocate for supportive food programs and policies is central to our work.

Key strategies:

- Expand membership of the Nova Scotia Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food (NS-CHSF) and develop an evaluation framework to assess progress.
- Facilitate opportunities for youth in Nova Scotia to engage in national youth engagement projects.
- Create opportunities for youth to engage in advocacy through campaigns, story-telling and youth-led events.
- Identify mechanisms to integrate learning around policy development and advocacy into each of our programs.
- Pilot a process to engage youth via School Advisory Councils and Student Councils to inform the next phases of school food programs. Use this information in our Case for Support and support them to advocate through their own internal channels.



Strategic priority #4

Weave Equity and Justice Across Our Work

Why is it important:

Everybody eats. But access to food is not equal for everyone. Our ability to learn about food and engage in positive food experiences is impacted by the social determinants of health. A focus on equity and justice allows us to direct our work to where the need and impact are greatest, and to ensure that the development of food programs and policies reflect the inequities that are embedded in our food system.

Key strategies:

- Ensure that the make-up of our team and board reflect diverse lived experiences and skill-sets and prioritize representation from equity-deserving groups.
- Build capacity of the team and board to develop cultural competency and integrate principles of equity and justice across all facets of our work.
- Expand and deepen relationships with Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities, schools, and networks.
- Prioritize equity-deserving groups in outreach, program offerings, and fund disbursement.
- Develop and implement a framework (practices, policies, decision making) to guide more inclusive and equitable approaches to team support and development, program delivery, partnerships, resource development and fund dispersal.



Fresh Fruit
Fruit is an excellent source
of vitamins and minerals and
may help...



Strategic priority #5

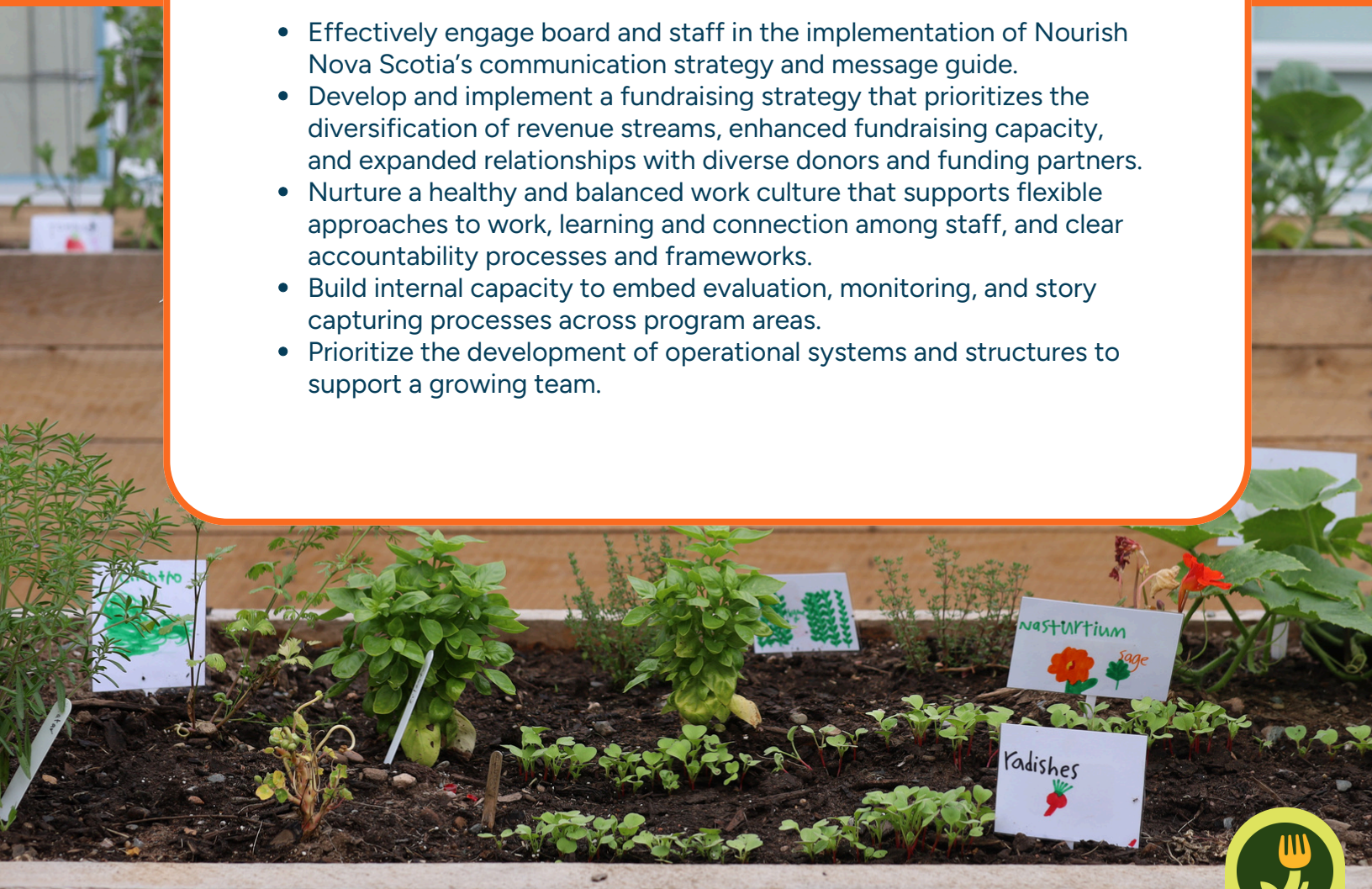
Strengthen Our Core

Why is it important:

Diversifying our funders and supporters and investing in our internal capacity can help to ensure the sustainability and quality of our work, now and for the long term. It is also essential for helping to foster an inclusive and positive work-culture for diverse staff and volunteers.

Key strategies:

- Effectively engage board and staff in the implementation of Nourish Nova Scotia's communication strategy and message guide.
- Develop and implement a fundraising strategy that prioritizes the diversification of revenue streams, enhanced fundraising capacity, and expanded relationships with diverse donors and funding partners.
- Nurture a healthy and balanced work culture that supports flexible approaches to work, learning and connection among staff, and clear accountability processes and frameworks.
- Build internal capacity to embed evaluation, monitoring, and story capturing processes across program areas.
- Prioritize the development of operational systems and structures to support a growing team.





Process & Acknowledgements

How this plan was developed

This theory of change and strategic plan was developed through several phases of work throughout 2024 with funding support from Innoweave. The facilitated process included in-depth interviews with key informants, a working group comprising board and staff that met biweekly to wrestle with the tough questions, many pressure testing conversations with our community, and two in-person board-staff planning sessions.

A living document

In the spirit of learning and reflection, we view our strategic plan as a living document that will be reviewed and refined on an annual basis.

Acknowledgements

We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed insights and perspectives into the development of this plan.

