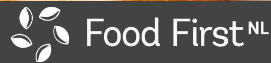


Rethinking Food Charity in Newfoundland and Labrador

Project Overview & Reflections



Madison Hynes, Program Assistant
February 5th, 2026



About Food First NL

Food First NL's **vision** is a province where everyone can eat with joy and dignity.

Our **mission** is to advance the right to food in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We accomplish our mission through four **strategic pathways**:

- Advocating
- Organizing
- Taking action
- Valuing people

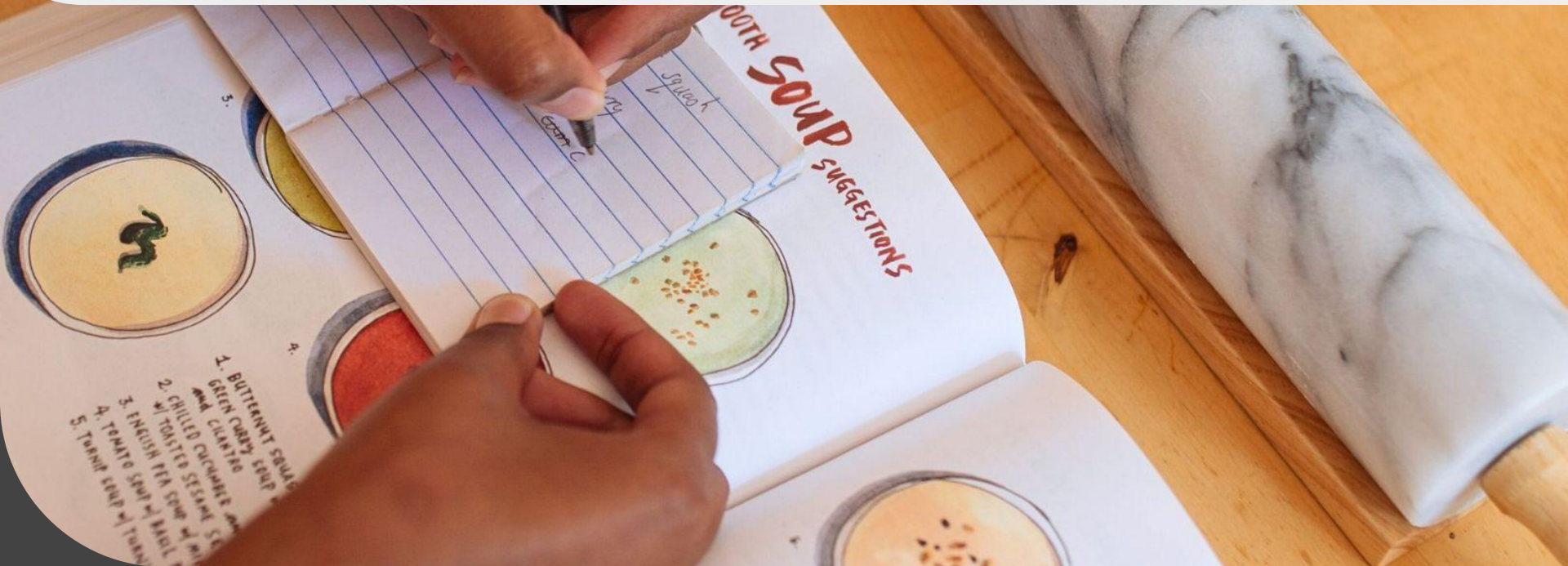


Our Work in 2025

- Acting as a **resource hub** for food organizations
- Leading and supporting **collective action** on issues impacting food security
- Scaling **social enterprise** solutions to food system gaps
- Consulting about the roll-out of **school food** programs across the province
- Supporting **regional** food action
- Creating more space for voices of **lived experience**



Why and What is Rethinking Food Charity?



The Impetus Behind Rethinking Food Charity

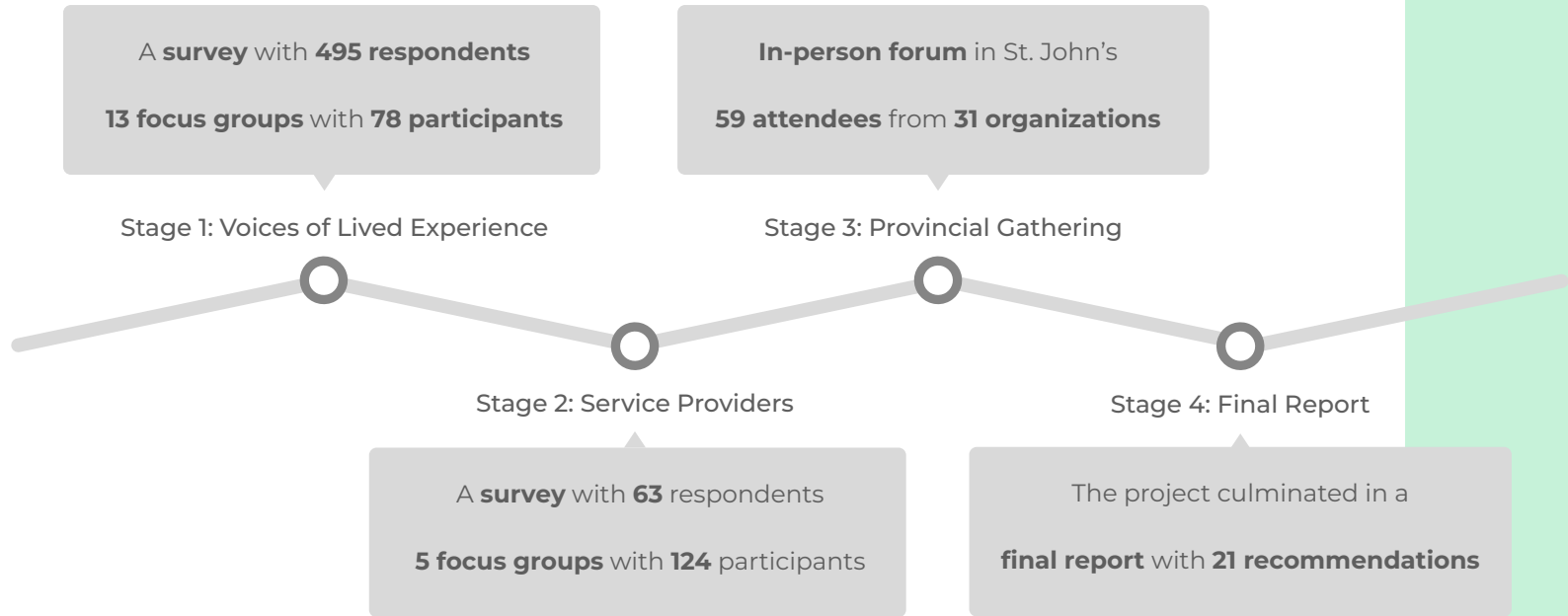
- Planned a **Food Banks Convening** pre-pandemic; the pandemic shifted our focus
- Became a direct food charity provider through the **Community Food Helpline**
- Frontline work revealed **system gaps** and amplified **voices of service users**
- Built relationships within the food charity space, sparking the question:

“How can the system better serve people and support those delivering it?”



Food First^{NL}

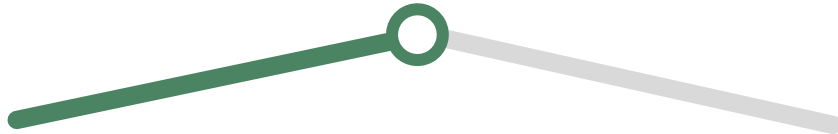
The Rethinking Food Charity Process



The Rethinking Food Charity Process

A **survey** with **495** respondents
13 focus groups with **78** participants

Stage 1: Voices of Lived Experience



A **survey** with **63** respondents
5 focus groups with **124** participants

Stage 2: Service Providers

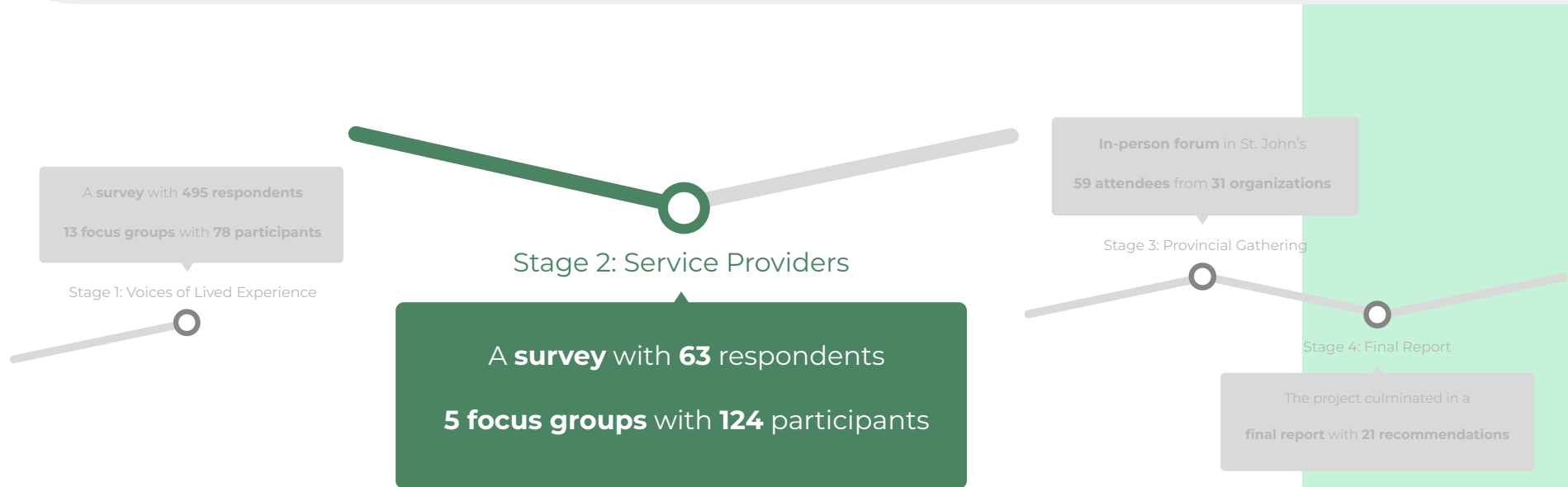
In-person forum in St. John's
59 attendees from **31 organizations**

Stage 3: Provincial Gathering

The project culminated in a
final report with **21 recommendations**

Stage 4: Final Report

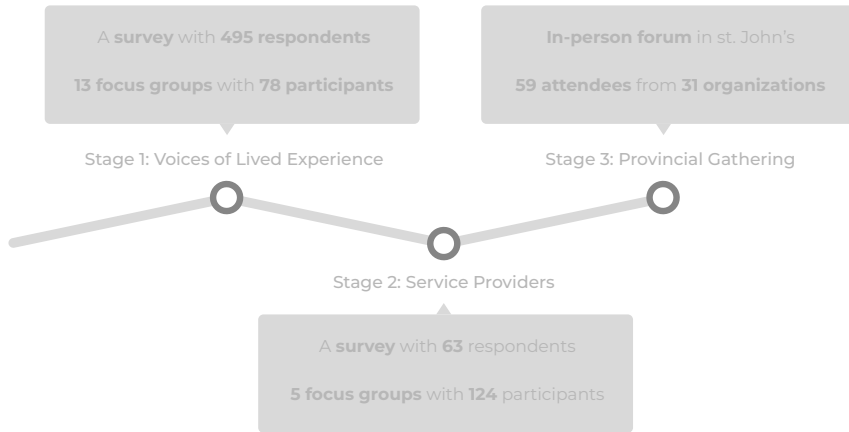
The Rethinking Food Charity Process



The Rethinking Food Charity Process



The Rethinking Food Charity Process

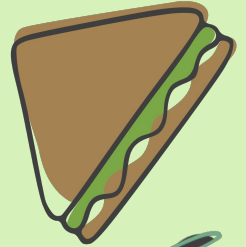


What We Heard: Key Themes



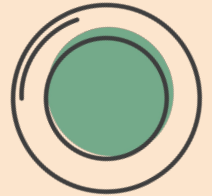
Accessibility

- **Physical, administrative, and scheduling barriers** limit access
- **Transportation, hours, and location** matter
- **Intake processes** can turn people away
- **Ease of access** determines whether support is **usable**



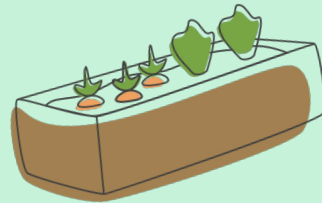
Stigma and Dignity

- **Shame** and **fear** deter people from accessing support
- **Visibility** and lack of **privacy** matter
- Being treated with **respect** is foundational
- **Service delivery** matters as much as **food itself**



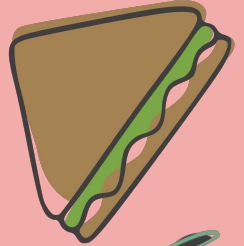
Choice

- **Pre-packaged hampers** limit **autonomy**
- **Food needs vary** by household, culture, and health
- **Choice** supports **dignity** and reduces **waste**



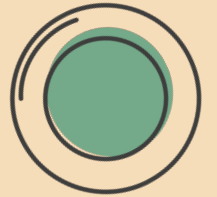
Collaboration

- Most programs are **small** and **resource-limited**
- **High demand** limits time for **systems-level work**
- **Deeper collaboration** can reduce **duplication** and **burnout**



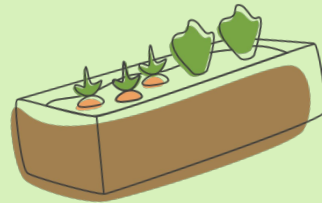
Advocacy

- **Food charities** hold powerful **knowledge**
- Day-to-day operational demands limit **advocacy capacity**
- **Systemic change** requires **collective voice**



Income Solutions

- Food charity does **not solve food insecurity**
- **Poverty** is the **root cause**
- **Income solutions** are **evidence-based** and **dignified**



Core Reflections from **Rethinking Food Charity**



What We Learned About Change

- **Shared understanding** comes before action
- **Acknowledging system limits** reduces blame
- **Mindset shifts** precede structural change
- There are **no quick fixes**
- **Showing up together** is the work



Rethinking Food Charity Today

- Rethinking Food Charity conversations **continue to shape and inform our work**
 - Supporting **implementation of recommendations** with staff time and advocacy
 - Encouraging **advocacy** and **system-level thinking**
 - **Rethinking operations** to better serve people and support staff
- **Systems change** takes time



Rethinking Food Charity in Newfoundland and Labrador

Download the full report

www.foodfirstnl.ca/rethink





Food First^{NL}

QUESTIONS?

Email me! madison@foodfirstnl.ca