

Knowlton Academy, Knowlton, QC

Farm to Cafeteria Canada

2026-2030 Strategic Plan

farm to Cafeteria Canada | De la ferme à la Cafeteria Canada



WL McLeod Elementary School, Vanderhoof, BC

About Farm to Cafeteria Canada

Our Vision
Food systems that nourish people and the planet.

Our Mission
To transform how food is experienced, learned and celebrated in all schools across Canada.

We help schools and organizations across the country build comprehensive school food programs that align with the National School Food Policy by providing resources, training, funding, and opportunities for knowledge sharing and relationship building. This enables children and youth to eat, grow, harvest, and cook food; connect with where their food comes from; and develop a love of fresh, culturally relevant and nourishing food.

Successes from 2021-25

From 2021 to 2025, we provided 291 grants directly to schools, sharing $1.4 million and reaching over 120,000 students across the country. We also established 4 new grant programs, further expanding our reach and directly contributing to National School Food Program and Policy objectives, including maximizing opportunities to source food locally and foster connections with local food producers, hunters and harvesters, processors and suppliers.

Thanks to a recent grant stream, we've seen

97% of schools increase students' willingness to try new vegetables and fruits.

94% of schools increase healthy food access, as well as opportunities for students to learn and demonstrate gardening, cooking and other food skills.

87% of schools increase the amount of local food they buy from local producers, fishers and other providers.

Our work:

1. **PROVIDES** access to healthy food at school that is locally and sustainably sourced
2. **ENGAGES** students in hands-on food literacy
3. **CONNECTS** students to their broader communities, including those involved in their local food system.

We refer to this as the "farm to school" approach, or, to better reflect the diversity of local and traditional foods that can be enjoyed in schools from coast to coast to coast, the "local food to school" approach.

At a governance and organizational level, out of our 2021 strategic planning process we were able to make progress in the following areas:

Brand clarity & evolution - we:

- Re-scoped F2CC's **brand identity** (vision, mission, and key messages)
- Became a stand-alone charitable organization
- Built a strong governance foundation, growing funding and our team
- Narrowed our focus to schools rather than all public institutions

Equity - we:

- Updated F2CC's **grant application** and selection processes to be easier to access, including simplifying the application and reporting processes
- Grew our efforts relating to **Indigenous food and foodways in schools**
- Became a **Good Food Organization**
- Launched the **School Food and Food Education Training Hub**
- Began the development of an equity framework as well as equity-based organizational structures and policies

Impact and evaluation - we:

- Integrated our **Evaluation Framework** into our grant reporting processes
- Developed a **Theory of Change** and brought our "7 spheres of capacity building" into our reporting processes
- Began to develop **data protocols** to support Indigenous data sovereignty
- Became the administrative host of the **Coalition for Healthy School Food**

Youth engagement - we:

- Completed a small **youth engagement project** in spring 2022
- Continue to explore how we can support educators and school food practitioners to engage youth



Cobequid Consolidated Elementary School, Old Barns, NS


Gidgalang Kuuyas-naay Secondary School, Queen Charlotte, BC


Kinkora Regional High, PEI


Roots to Harvest,Thunder Bay, ON

Opportunities for the Future

We are at a significant moment in time for school food in Canada. On April 1, 2024, the federal government announced that it was investing $1 billion over 5 years in a National School Food Program. This was followed in June 2024 by the release of the highly anticipated National School Food Policy, whose visionary guiding principles include supporting food and nutrition knowledge and skills, as well as sourcing food locally where possible. And on March 26, 2026, we achieved another significant milestone when the National School Food Program was made permanent through legislation.

With federal funding flowing to school food programs across the country, as well as increasing investment from provinces, territories, and municipal governments, we are witnessing significant interest and growth in school food programs. There is growing interest in the role that these programs can play at the international level as well. The global **School Meals Coalition** was launched in 2021 in recognition of the critical importance that school meals play for health, education and food system resilience, and the 2025 **EAT-Lancet Commission** highlighted that school meals can be a key driver of essential food system transformation if these programs are planned intentionally and focus on sustainability.

Given these trends, we are seeing a growing need for and interest in resources, inspiration and guidance, especially relating to comprehensive school food programs that advance all of the elements of the Policy. In light of the momentum that's building, F2CC has the opportunity to make a significant impact towards supporting the growth and expansion of school food programs across the country.

In the development of our 2026 strategic plan we asked ourselves and our partners the following questions:

What do we do that has the biggest impact?

What could we do that would have the biggest impact?

Where are we most needed in a leadership capacity?

What are we doing that others couldn't do alone or without us?

Where are we most needed in a support capacity?

The following strategic priorities are what emerged from these conversations.

Farm to Cafeteria Canada - Strategic Priorities, 2026-2030



Strategic Direction 1

Build capacity of the sector; Support the National School Food Program and Policy implementation

We are looking to deepen and expand on our areas of strength to help ensure that the National School Food Program roll-out supports the Policy's full set of principles and objectives, including food literacy, local procurement, and strong monitoring and evaluation.

To advance this strategic priority we will:

- Continue to advance our **Indigenous foodways in schools** efforts. Specifically, we will continue to offer and grow our grant program, training opportunities to support the decolonization of school food systems, conversations through the Indigenous School Food Circle, and create space for other important conversations.
- Continue to **offer and expand accessible grant offerings** of all kinds.
- Solidify and expand our **School Food and Food Education Training Hub** as a means to provide desired training for educators, procurement managers, food service providers, and others wishing to gain skills in school food programming and food literacy education.
- Support school communities to **procure more local food** by supporting pilots, knowledge-sharing, research and policy work.
- Explore a **consulting model** to connect those who have knowledge and skills relating to school food program implementation with those looking to build their skills.
- **Advance research** in support of more comprehensive school food programs.
- Deepen our **guiding framework for equity** and be a model for others, e.g. in offering accessible granting, training, and sharing of diverse stories.
- Continue to support **knowledge-sharing, relationship building, and partnerships** of all kinds.
- Support the development of **French resources and knowledge-sharing opportunities**.
- Support more opportunities for **parent engagement** in school food programs.
- Support more opportunities for **youth engagement** in school food programs.
- **Support the efforts** of Canada's school food movement to engage a wide range of people and perspectives, share stories of visionary programs, and advance investment in and good governance of school food programs.



Strategic Direction 2

Focus and expand our communications efforts

We are looking to increase our communications efforts to share the importance and impacts of comprehensive school food programs and position F2CC as the go-to capacity building organization in Canada in this area.

To advance this strategic priority we will:

- Refine and **clarify our brand identity** so that it is reflective of our work.
- Work with all parts of the school food movement to **communicate clear and unified language** about comprehensive school food programs.
- Invest more in **building our communications capacity**, including growing our reach and communicating the importance of this work with decision-makers.

Strategic Direction 3

Grow and diversify our funding to work towards financial independence

Up until now, most of F2CC's income has been from grants and contracts that require specific deliverables. We are looking to grow our unrestricted funds and cash reserves so that we can invest in visionary demonstration projects, maintain our dynamic team, and continue to meet the growing demand for innovation and capacity building in this space.

To advance this strategic priority we will:

- Explore developing **fee-for-service opportunities**, including recovering costs from our School Food and Food Education Training Hub as well as exploring opportunities for consulting services relating to school food program implementation.
- Explore **partnerships to expand our grant programs**, including with values-aligned businesses and foundations.
- Establish and grow a **donation program** to receive financial donations as well as product donations that schools can access.

When the opportunity allows, we will:

- Provide support as an **incubator to host and fund initiatives that provide value to the school food space**. This may include hosting innovative projects that do not have the infrastructure to exist as a separate organization. We may also initiate or support food system efforts in preschool or post-secondary campus settings if the opportunity arises.
- **Host working groups** to convene school food program stakeholders in conversation about relevant themes of interest.
- Communicate the possibilities for using our **Farm to School Evaluation Framework** in support of the development and monitoring of comprehensive school food programs and the progress of the national Policy.
- **Support strong school food policy** through developing and pointing to templates, models, and promising practices.
- **Initiate innovative demonstration projects** that can support a comprehensive approach to school food.
- Consider how to **provide supports across all of our 7 pillars of capacity building** (knowledge, skills, institutional systems and policy, investment, relationships and connections, inspiration, and validation) for each of the principles in the National School Food Policy.



Cobequid Consolidated Elementary School, Old Barns, NS