

# Executive Summary

**The Maine Food Convergence** Convening organizations, networks, groups, and individuals to catalyze collective action towards a thriving Maine food system that is equitable, just, and regenerative.

## Overview

In 2019, a group of five grassroots initiatives working on food systems issues in Maine began planning a month-long series of virtual discussions that evolved to center racial justice and equity related to food systems and communities, climate, and local economies. The following report recaps the purpose of the Convergence, collaborations that developed through and following the event, challenges we continue to confront and areas groups working in the Convergence space see as opportunities moving forward. The authors of this report recognize that by opening these conversations, we are only at the very beginning of supporting shifts in power and leadership in Maine's food movement. Over time, our hope is that the Convergence space will become more inclusive and support advances in social and racial equity within organizations involved in the movement and in the ways our entire food system looks and operates.

## Our Values



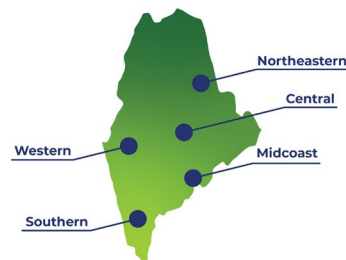
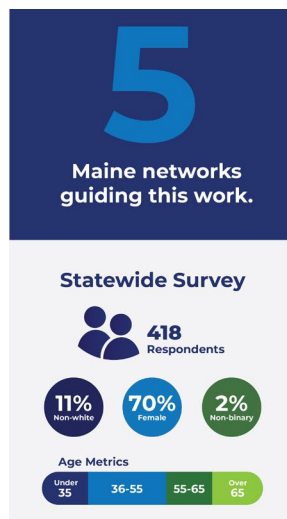
**Equity and Collective Power.**



**Networking Differently.**



**Systems Thinking.**



**5 Regional Dialogues** informed the Convergence.



## Lessons Learned

The following themes and questions emerged from the presenters and storytellers, and through the act of planning & hosting the Convergence:

- How do we transform our networks so the work being done to improve Maine's food systems is guided by those most impacted by the inequities of our current system?
- There is historic & current colonization and oppression in Maine institutions that denies the role and greatly limits the ability of Indigenous communities to steward and preserve the land and waters.
- Some of the "innovative" ways white organizers approach healthy food systems such as "regenerative agriculture" or "permaculture" are Indigenous technologies that are not recognized as such.
- There isn't a shared vision yet across all communities in Maine for what a food system that works for communities and the environment should really look like.
- How do food system leaders show up for and respectfully support efforts led by BIPoC, youth, and other people impacted by systemic inequities?
- How do we create spaces and organizations where all people can bring their full selves to the table and contribute?
- How do we shift the narrative of the food system away from placing blame on individuals for experiencing food insecurity to placing responsibility on the system for supporting us all to thrive?

Please read the full report for the many more themes and questions.

Coordinators believe the Convergence created an important space to raise issues from communities whose priorities and perspectives are frequently missing from conversations and from initiatives aimed at improving the food system. But if the goal of people who come to this space is to improve social and racial equity and inclusivity in the food system, we recognize the immense work that is yet to come.

# Actions Following the Convergence

## Solidarity Work

Building collective power starts by building relationships with partners most impacted by the inequities in our food systems. Two such partners who have provided critical leadership in this work since the convergence are [Racial Equity & Justice](#) and [Maine Youth Action Network](#).

## Working Groups

Several key areas for cross-state, cross-sector collaboration were identified during the convergence, and these areas are transforming into collective action workgroups. groups have been building over time- some slowly, some quickly, and coming into year two after the convergence, we hope to bring more groups to fruition. Groups that are already convening include:

- [Collective/Cooperative Food Processing Infrastructure](#)
- [Maine Food Policy Work Group & Advocacy Alliance](#)

## Networked Communications

We are exploring how to leverage shared communications to increase the capacity of our individual initiatives, to lift up the work of our allies, and to work together to shift the narrative.

## More Takeaways from the Convergence

Actions on the following priorities are in motion through the work of various groups across Maine. For more information, visit our website.

- [Promote equity and support tribal sovereignty](#) • [Advocate for a thriving wage for all](#)
- [Increase Promotion and Consumer Awareness of Local Foods](#) • [Building Relationships Between Local Buyers and Local Producers, farmers and fisherpeople](#)

## Exploring Existing Work in Key Areas

Another critical component of creating lasting food systems changes is knowing what's already being done. Rather than waste valuable resources with extraneous studies, surveys, questionnaires or development strategizing sessions, we are doing a little research, and discovering some excellent examples of ways folks are already addressing many of the issues identified during the convergence. For example, [Fork Food Lab](#) in Portland provides a community food processing hub that helps entrepreneurs get their food businesses started. The [Wabanaki Alliance](#) is an alliance of indigenous tribes in Maine that is doing education and advocacy around tribal sovereignty. [The Impacted Communities Recs & Review on Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030 provides a thorough analysis by folks who have experienced hunger in Maine of how to solve it.](#)

By understanding this work that is already being done, our convergence partners can offer support, allyship, or aid in expansion where it is necessary, rather than creating entire new groups or systems.



## Calls for Collaborative Action

Connect with regional and statewide food system planning efforts: [Ending Hunger by 2030](#), [Food Solutions New England](#), [New England Feeding New England](#), [Lessons from the Pandemic](#).

[Sign up for our Convergence news here](#) to keep an eye out for inspirational events and other learnings and opportunities.

Follow us on [Facebook](#) for news from the Convergence & all of our network partners

Join our [network map!](#) | [Connect](#) with us to explore collaborations.