



# House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry

March 22, 2023



# Vermont Housing & Conservation Board Statutory Purpose



“the dual goals of creating affordable housing for Vermonters, and conserving and protecting Vermont’s agricultural land, forestland, historic properties, important natural areas, and recreational lands of primary importance to the economic vitality and quality of life of the State.”

10 V.S.A.15 §302

# Vermont Housing & Conservation Board Multiple Goals



VHCB's multiple goal mission illustrated in Shaftsbury, where investments supported public access to a beach on Lake Paran, new housing connected by trails to the village of North Bennington, close to child care, a school, and the library, and historic preservation of the Robert Frost House.

# VHCB Housing Programs



Bayview Crossing, South Hero



McKnight Lane Net Zero Modular Homes, Waltham



Shared equity home, Brookline

- Rental Housing Development, Rehabilitation & Preservation
- Home Ownership
- Home Accessibility Improvements
- Community Planning & Technical Assistance
- Farm Worker Housing
- Manufactured Home Communities
- Housing for persons experiencing homelessness



# Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice

## Champlain Housing Trust – Farmworker Housing Repair Loan Program

A loan fund to finance the repair and improvement of farmworker housing has been recapitalized with \$906,000 and a pilot program for new construction of farmworker housing will be developed with \$620,000 awarded by VHCB. Since it was launched earlier this spring, the Champlain Housing Trust has committed \$500,000 in loan capital to improve 21 farmworker housing projects housing more than 100 farmworkers living and working on farms in Vermont.

# Conserving Vermont's farms, forests and lands



Kingdom Trails, Burke



Long Winter Farm,  
Stowe



Samuel Read Hall,  
Brownington

- Recreational Lands, Forests, and Natural Areas Conservation
- Agricultural lands conservation
- Historic Preservation
- VHCB Farm & Forest Viability Program
- Water Quality
- Land Access & Opportunity Board



## **VHCB Results: FY 2022 and FY 2023**

**State Investment: \$56.6M**  
**Leverage: \$352.7M**

- 1,218 homes and apartments
- 24 farms; 4,176 acres conserved
- 20 natural areas; forests; parks and trails: 4,500 acres conserved
- 4 historic preservation projects
- 154 farm and forest enterprises were provided business planning and technical assistance.

### **VHCB Program Impacts**

- Downtown/Village Revitalization
- Outdoor Recreation
- Housing the Homeless
- Rural Community Development
- Homes for Workers
- Farm and Forest next generation transfers
- Water Quality
- Historic Gathering Places



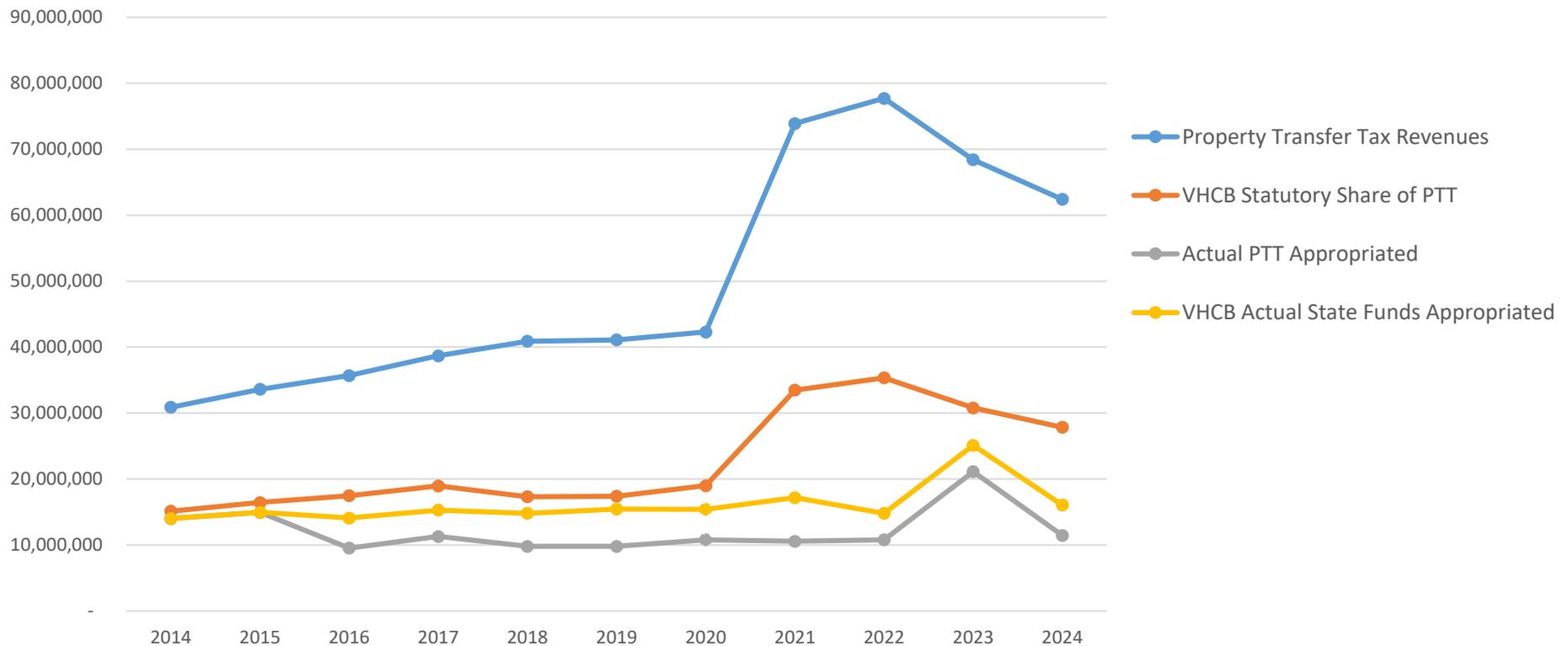
## 35 Years of Housing & Conservation

- 170,918 acres on 789 farms
- 275,699 acres of working forests, natural areas and recreational lands
- 15,000 affordable homes – rental and homeownership
- 81 historic buildings have been restored for community use
- 900 businesses have enrolled in our Farm & Forest Viability Program
- Over 600 AmeriCorps members have served through VHCB AmeriCorps
- 2,828 homes with reduced lead paint hazards
- \$400 million invested leveraging \$2 billion for Vermont communities

# Appropriations to VHCB for Base Funding 2013 to 2024

Does not include One-time Appropriations of State and Federal Funds

### VHCB Appropriations 2013-2024





## VHCB FY24 Budget – Governor’s Recommendation

Bill	Source	FY 24 Recommendation	FY23 Allocation	Program
Budget Bill	One-Time General Funds	\$ 10,000,000.00	\$10,000,000	Housing
Budget Bill	ARPA	N/A	\$30,600,000	Housing and Water Quality
Budget Bill	Property Transfer Tax	\$ 11,462,855.00	\$21,128,985	Housing and Conservation
Capital Bill	Capital Bill	\$ 1,800,000.00	\$1,800,000	Housing and Conservation
Capital Bill	Capital Bill	\$ 800,000.00	\$200,000	Agricultural Water Quality Projects
Capital Bill	Capital Bill	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$2,000,000	Land Conservation and Water Quality Projects
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 26,062,855.00</b>	<b>\$65,728,985</b>	



The Cleveland Family, Mettowee Valley Farmers in Pawlet



Butternut Grove Condominiums, Winooski



Clemmons Family Farm, Charlotte

## Future Pipeline

### Housing, Conservation & Historic Preservation

- Agricultural and natural areas in the near term exceed \$30 million in requests to conserve over 43,000 acres including 56 farms.
- \$200 million for more than 2,000 rental housing developments, homeownership and accessibility

# Conservation of Forestland, Natural Areas, Recreational Lands

- Since 1987, VHCB has supported the conservation of 275,700 acres of natural areas, forestland and recreational lands.
- Protecting habitat, connected landscapes, and biodiversity
- Expanding State Parks, and Wildlife Management Areas, and protecting permanent public access to conserved lands.

Brownsville Forest, Stowe

# Outdoor Recreation



Alburgh Bluffs

Supporting Vermonters' health and the state's economy through investments in outdoor resources including: enhancing trail systems, access to water, land for hunting and fishing, hiking, skiing, biking and snowmobiling.



Newport



Lily Pond Highlands, Athens, Brookline, Townshend

# Farmland Conservation

Since 1987, VHCB has supported the conservation of 789 farms (170,918 acres).

In FY22 & 23 VHCB helped conserve 24 farms (4,200 acres).

Conservation facilitates farm transfers.

Strong partnerships (VLT, NRCS)

Approximately 20% of VT farmland has been conserved.

Water resource protection critical.



Rupert Valley Holsteins, West Rupert

# Farmland Conservation

“The overwhelming local support we received demonstrates the importance our community places on ensuring working farms continue to have a home in our town.”

— Kristen Sharpless  
Executive Director, Stowe Land Trust



**Ricketson Farm, Stowe**

# Farmland Succession: Intergenerational Transfers



Land conservation and business planning support to farm and forest businesses helps new farmers afford farmland and diversifies agriculture.

# Farmland Conservation



Weed Farm, Sutton

# Protecting Water Quality



“... the protection of lands for multiple conservation purposes, including **the protection of surface waters** and associated natural resources.”

10 V.S.A.15 §303

# Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program

- 20 years of in-depth advising
- 900+ farm, food & forest products businesses served

## In 2022:

- 154 enterprises engaged. Combined, they generate approximately 462 jobs and \$34.7M in annual gross sales.
- 1/3 clients engage in transition planning

NEARLY  
**\$2.85M**  
IN LOANS &  
GRANTS  
ACCESSED

**70%**  
OF CLIENTS REPORTED  
INCREASED  
GROSS SALES

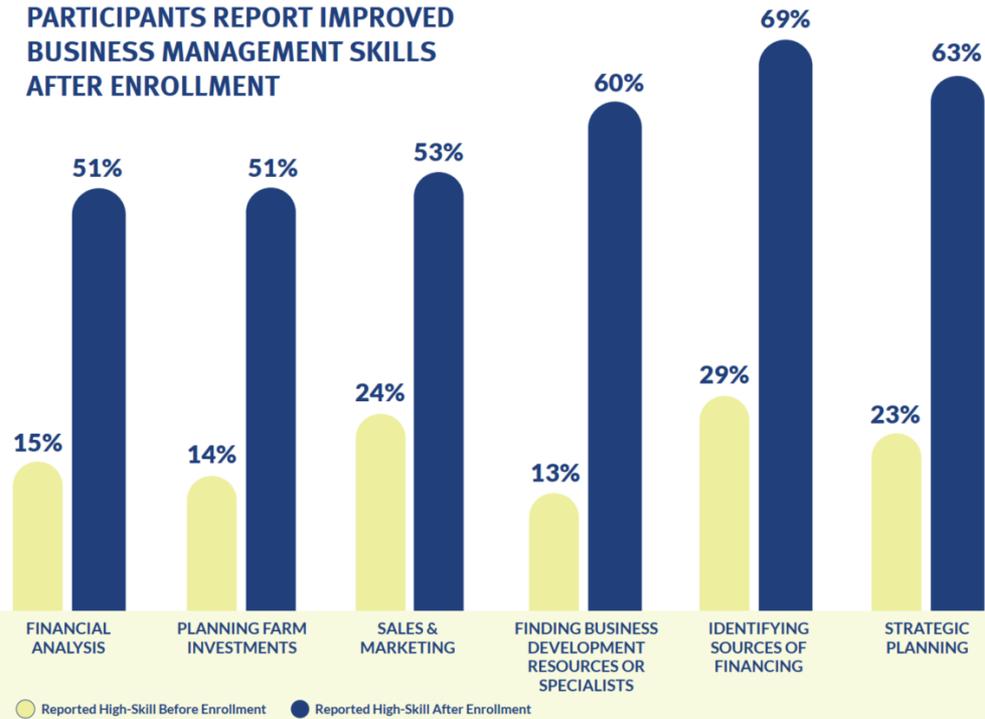
**61%**  
OF CLIENTS REPORTED  
INCREASED  
NET INCOME



*Lisa MacDougall, Mighty Food Farm, Shaftsbury*

# Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program

## 2022 VIABILITY PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS REPORT IMPROVED BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS AFTER ENROLLMENT



Myles Goodrich & Rhonda Miller, Molly Brook Farm, Danville

*“We would not be in business without the support of the Viability Program.” —Rhonda Goodrich*

# Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program: Service Provider Network

## Service Provider Network:

- NOFA-VT
- The Intervale Center
- Center for an Agricultural Economy
- UVM-Extension
- Land for Good

In addition, we partner with a wider network to deliver critical services, such as land access work led by the Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust and the Vermont Land Trust.



*The Farm & Forest Viability Team, service providers, and Tim & Janet Taylor - Crossroad Farm, West Fairlee*





*Annie & Andrew Paradee, Long Winter Farm, Stowe*

*“Sam was amazing to work with. He believed in us and advocated for us, which was essential in our project getting approved through the Stowe Land Trust. He was frank with us where our plans needed refining, provided resources and pointed us in appropriate directions. His support was unwavering but also very realistic.” - Annie Paradee*



*Tim Sanford & Janet Long, Luna Bleu Farm, South Royalton*

Tim Sanford and Suzanne Long own and operate Luna Bleu farm in South Royalton, where they have been farming since 1993. They have used the Farm & Forest Viability Program to hone their business strategies and plan for the future.



*Justin Sauerwein, Almanack Farm, Chelsea*



*Mara Hearst, Levy Lamb, Dorset*

Justin owns and manages a 100% grass fed Wagyu-Angus cross cattle farm in Chelsea, VT. He worked with the VT Farm & Forest Viability Program to write a business plan, access financing to purchase land, navigate the conservation process, and expand his business onto new land.

The Levy Lamb flock of sheep rotates intensively on 80+ acres of leased pastures between Dorset, Rupert, and West Pawlet. Mara is currently working on business planning and assessing costs of production with the Program.

# Addressing Emerging Issues – Farmland Transfer & Land Access

*“There are all of these moving parts. It can get very complicated, and Sam has been great navigating all of our family members’ wants and needs. We’re now able to articulate our vision of the farm and figure out how it fits in with my parent’s vision so we can successfully transfer ownership. It’s a complex process, but now we have a plan in place to move the pieces over the next few years.”*



*Jacob Powsner with Bob, Jenna, and Bonnie Baird  
Baird Farm, Chittenden*

# Addressing Emerging Issues – Assisting Organic Dairies



*Geordie & Emery Lynd, Northwind Farm, Walden*

The Viability Program supported 38 organic dairies, 26 of which were former Horizon dairies, in finding new markets and planning for the future in 2022.

# VHCB Vermont Farm & Forest Viability: Supporting the Forest Economy



*Tyler Riggs, LSF Forest Products, Fletcher*



*Tim, Janet, Joe & Matt Angell,  
White Rock Farm & Sawmill, Randolph*

# VHCB Vermont Farm & Forest Viability: Grant Programs

## Water Quality Grants

- Support lasting on-farm investments in water quality improvements
- FY22 Awards totaled \$601,386
- More than \$3.7 million awarded since 2017

## Business Plan Implementation Grants

- Provide capital to bring business planning goals to fruition
- FY22 awards totaled \$195,740
- Awards made to a variety of working lands businesses



*Phelan & Kelsey O'Connor, Pigasus Meats, South Hero (\$40,000 Water Quality Grant for winter pig housing)*

# Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program: Implementation Grants



*Ashlyn Bristle & Abraham McClurg, Rebob Farm, Brattleboro (\$6,000 Implementation Grant for walk-in cooler)*



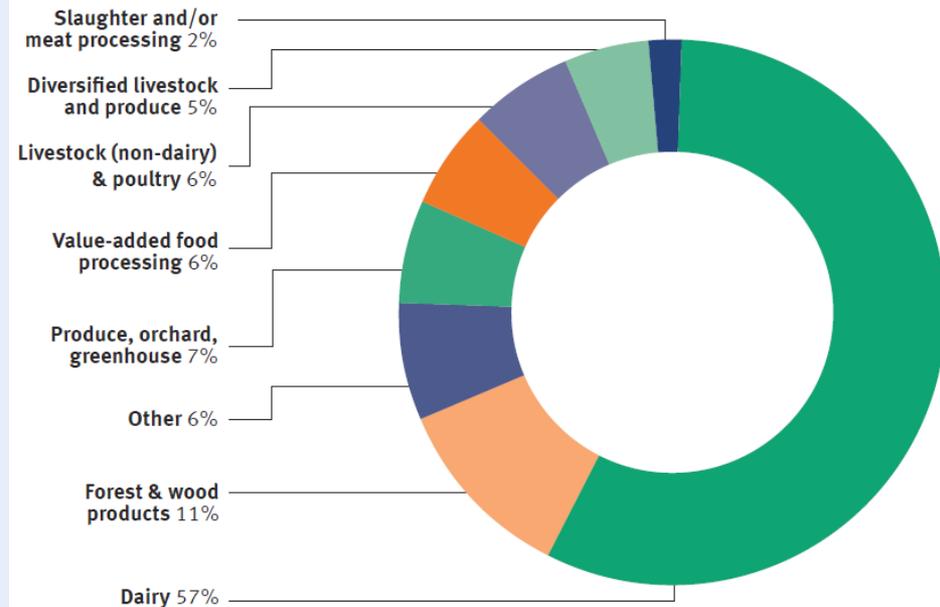
*The Helman/Grazanio Family, Sandy Bottom Farm, Isle La Motte (\$10,000 Implementation Grant for a four-season wash/pack station)*

# Viability Program: COVID-19 Response and Recovery Coaching

In 2020-2021, we expanded our program to offer services to an additional 556 businesses:

- Short-term, emergency management support
- Sales & marketing technical assistance for contactless sales
- 400 working lands businesses received support on state pandemic relief applications

## BUSINESSES SERVED THROUGH COVID RESPONSE & RECOVERY COACHING



556

BUSINESSES SERVED

83%

WERE ASSISTED IN NAVIGATING RELIEF PROGRAMS

400

PRODUCERS SUPPORTED WITH ACCESSING VT COVID AGRICULTURAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM GRANTS

28%

SUPPORTED WITH FINANCIAL & CASH FLOW

20%

SUPPORTED WITH SHIFTING MARKETS

# Viability Program: COVID-19 Response and Recovery Coaching



*“Our limiting factor was time. Jen was instrumental in encouraging us to apply for resources we needed to secure an incredible employee we desperately needed, but would’ve never been able to hire without the funding.” —Kara Fitzbeauchamp*

*Kara Fitzbeauchamp, Evening Song Farm, Cuttingsville*

*Photo credit Adam B. Ford*

# Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)

- Assists small towns, businesses, and organizations with accessing critical funding for economic development projects
- Focused on working lands, outdoor recreation, and community-based economic development
- ***Since 2017, \$525,000 in REDI funds has helped secure more than \$10M in grants for businesses & communities***



*NBRC Grant for Sanborn Covered Bridge & Riverfront Park, Lyndonville (\$350,000) Rehabilitation*

# Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)



*Bridgewater Community Center at Historic Village School, Bridgewater Area Community Foundation (\$430,000 in Community Development Block Grants)*

*“Assistance through the REDI program was key to our successful grant application. As a volunteer organization, we couldn’t have managed the application and follow-up process without support.”*



*Agricola Farm, Pantou (Received \$204,000 VAPG with REDI support)*

REDI connected Agricola Farm a business planner and grant writer to prepare a business plan, feasibility analysis, and application for a USDA Value Added Producer Grant. Awarded \$204,000, they have been able to re-brand, launch a regional marketing campaign, and bring on critical staff.



*USDA Value Added Producer Grant to Sweet Rowen Farmstead, W. Glover (\$114,000)*

With REDI's help, Paul Lisai was able to access a \$114,000 USDA VAPG for value-added dairy expansion. Sweet Rowen produces and bottles in a USDA approved farmstead creamery on the farm, producing cream-top whole milk, cheeses and yogurt.

Vermont Housing &



Conservation Board

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