



VERMONT FARM TO SCHOOL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

FISCAL YEAR 2022 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

FEBRUARY 2023



Program History

The Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Program was created in 2006 with the passage by the Vermont legislature of the Roza McLaughlin Farm to School Act.

The intent of the program is to, “execute, administer, and award local grants for the purpose of helping Vermont schools develop farm-to-school programs that will sustain relationships with local farmers and producers, enrich the educational experience of students, improve the health of Vermont children, and enhance Vermont’s agricultural economy” (6 V.S.A. § 4721).

Over the past sixteen years of the grants program, tens of thousands of children have been impacted by this program, both in K-12 settings and in early childhood education settings. The program has developed and adapted over time to continue meeting the needs of grantees and applicants around on the “3 C’s” of farm to school and early childhood.

The “3 C’s” of Farm to School and Early Childhood:

Classroom: Bringing farm to school and early childhood into the classroom curriculum provides a real-life context for learning across all disciplines—science, math, art, language arts, foreign languages, and more.

Cafeteria & Kitchen: Serving nutritious and local foods in school and early childhood meal programs can support student health and strengthen the local agricultural economy.

Community: Robust farm to school and early childhood programs engage the community including family engagement, community dinners, service learning, fundraisers, harvest festivals and farm field trips.

Looking Ahead to Fiscal Year 2023

In 2022, Governor Phil Scott and the Vermont State Legislature made a historic investment in child nutrition, academic enrichment, and supporting local agriculture by increasing the Farm to School and Early Childhood Program annual budget from \$190,000 to \$500,000.

In FY2023, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFAM) is administering this funding through three distinct grant opportunities:

1. **Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant** – awarded in January 2023
 - As of January 2023, \$142,000 has been awarded to 14 schools and early childhood educators for the Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant, which is twice the number of grants awarded last year through the Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant!
 - Even still, 24 organizations applied for this funding with a total request of \$333,000, which demonstrates continued unmet need.
2. **Community Supported Agriculture Grant** – to be awarded in March 2023
 - VAAFAM anticipates awarding \$50,000 in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) mini-grants to up to 60 after school and early childcare programs.
3. **Vision Grant** – to be awarded in April 2023
 - VAAFAM anticipates awarding \$150,000 to support several innovative and high-impact projects across the state.

Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Network

Farm to School and Early Childhood in Vermont is a statewide movement supported by a broad network with many crucial key players and facilitators, including food service professionals, educators, farmers, non-profits, government, and more.

VAAFAM’s role in the network currently covers following subject areas:

- **Administering Grants** to schools, early childcare providers, and non-profits to support farm to school and early childhood programming.
- **Coordinating Technical Assistance** to help VAAFAM Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant grantees achieve their goals.
- **Partnering and Implementing Federally Funded Projects** to address emerging issues and opportunities.

Key Partnerships in FY 2022

Focus on Farm to Early Childhood Education

The Farm to Early Childhood movement has deepened over the past several years. VAAFAM grant programs have adapted to better meet the needs of early childhood applicants, such as the inception of the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) grant in FY21 for early childhood and afterschool programs. In addition, VAAFAM partners with Shelburne Farms, Hunger Free Vermont, the Agency of Human Services, the Agency of Education, and others in leading the Vermont Farm to Early Childhood (FTEC) Coalition. A core value of the coalition is to integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into the everyday work of FTEC.

Local Purchasing Incentive Support

VAAFAM received a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2020 to help Vermont schools improve their ability to track and report their local food purchases. This grant provided critical support to the State's new Local Purchasing Incentive Grant program, which is managed by the Agency of Education, by helping address issues of equity, and reducing the overall burden on schools. The outcomes of the USDA grant were released in FY2022 and are housed on the VT FEED website, and include a local food tracker and calculator, a list of Vermont Local Foods, information on the Local Food Definition, and more.

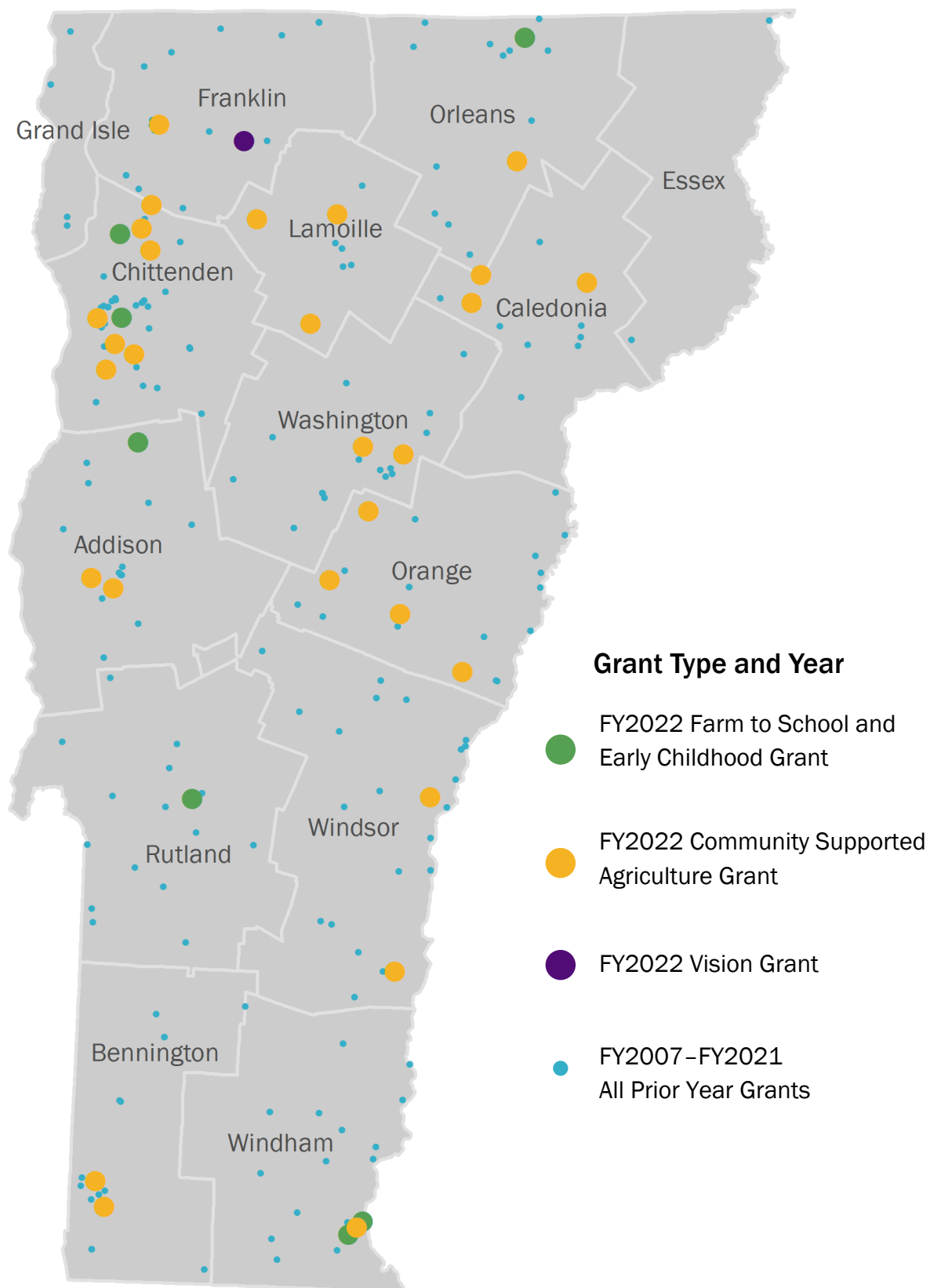
USDA Local Foods For Schools Cooperative Agreement

VAAFAM received a USDA award in FY23 to support school food authorities (SFA’s) in purchasing local food from Vermont’s network of non-profit food hubs. Vermont’s non-profit food hubs work collaboratively to aggregate locally grown and produced products from Vermont producers and distribute those products throughout the state and region. This opportunity will help the food hubs both strengthen existing relationships and foster new ones with Vermont schools who have yet to utilize food hubs.

Farm to School Institute Support

Four Vermont school teams who attended VT FEED's Northeast Farm to School Institute received support from VAAFAM in 2022. Each received an assigned coach to attend the three-day summer immersion with their teams and provide on-going support throughout the following school year.

**VAAFM Farm to School and Early Childhood Program
Grant Recipients 2007-2022**



PROGRAM IMPACT 2007-2022

201 **\$1,635,269**

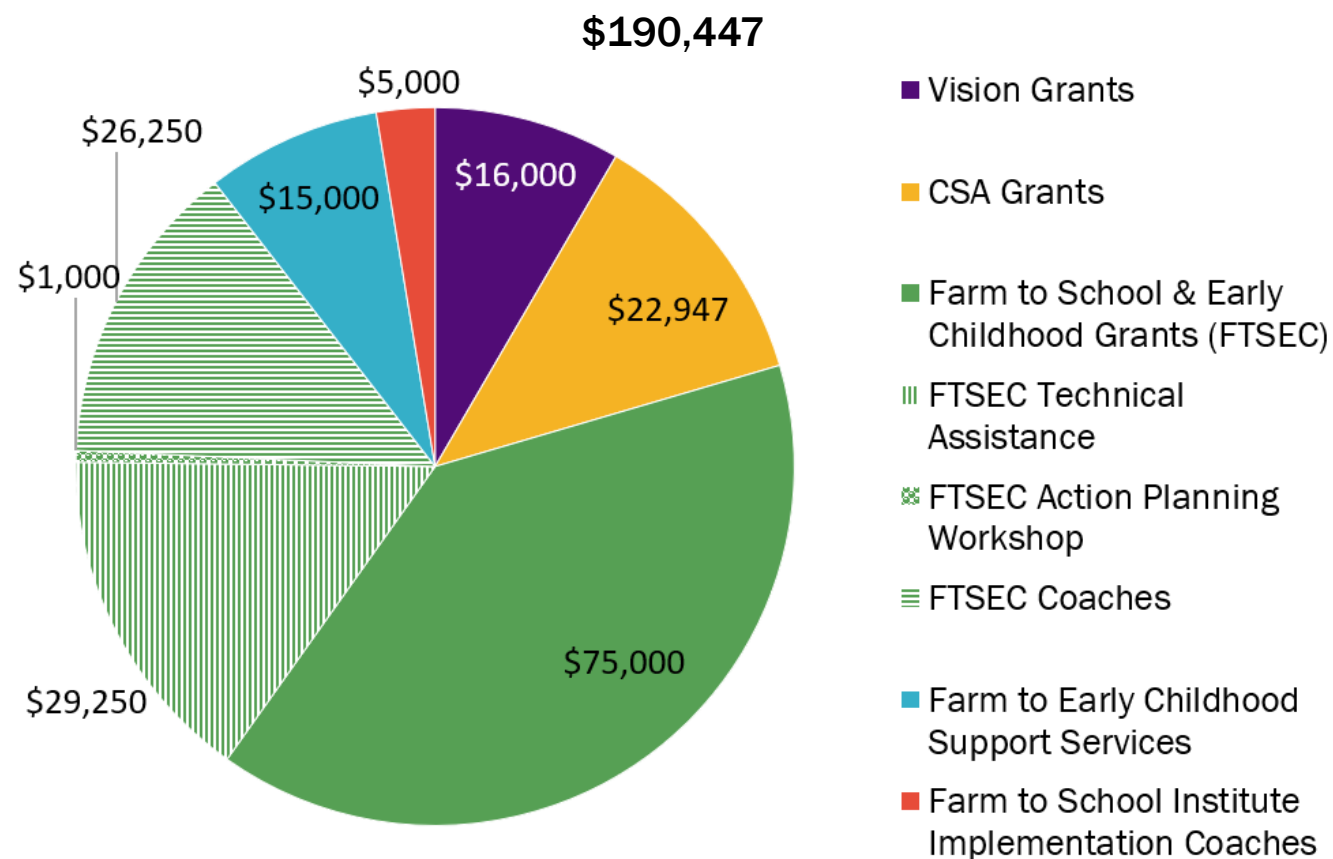
Grants Awarded	Total Amount Awarded
117	191
Early Childcare Educators Impacted	Schools Impacted
57,077	
Children and Students Impacted	

FISCAL YEAR 2022 IMPACTS

36 **\$113,947**

Grants Awarded	Total Amount Awarded
39	4
Early Childcare Educators Impacted	Schools Impacted
2,167	
Children and Students Impacted	

FISCAL YEAR 2022 EXPENSES



Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant

The Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant (FTSEC) is the program's flagship funding opportunity. In addition to their financial award, grantees receive a suite of technical assistance. This combination of money, mentorship and expertise supports the development of holistic and sustainable programs.

This grant is intended to help Vermont-based early childhood providers and Vermont schools build and strengthen farm to school or farm to early childhood programs. Each grantee establishes a project team made up of diverse stakeholders within the organization and local community to build program sustainability. The grant is designed to support programs that are integrated throughout the classroom, the cafeteria, and the community – the 3 C's of Farm to School and Early Childhood.

The Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant provides a combination of financial support and technical assistance to help schools and early care providers develop robust farm to school programs that:

1. Increase the use of local foods
2. Help teachers, administrators, and staff promote healthy eating habits
3. Strengthen connections between schools/early childhood education providers and the Vermont agricultural community
4. Increase the number of Vermont children participating in child nutrition programs



Image courtesy of Dummerston School

Fiscal Year 2022 Grant Highlights

25 applications received

7 grants awarded

\$273,500 requested

\$75,000 awarded

\$10,700 average award

Fiscal Year 2022 Grantees

1. Greater Rutland County Supervisory Union: Middletown Springs Elementary School and Wells Village School – Rutland County – \$10,000
2. Lisa Duncan/Little Angel's Childcare – Orleans County – \$10,000
3. Milton Family Community Center – Chittenden County – \$10,000
4. Sheila Quenneville – Chittenden County – \$10,000
5. The Willowell Foundation – Addison County – \$15,000
6. Windham Southeast Supervisory Union: Dummerston School – Windham County – \$10,000
7. Winston Prouty Center For Child and Family Development – Windham County – \$10,000

Technical Assistance and Coaching

The technical assistance component of the grant includes a grant coach as well as customizable trainings in four key areas of farm to school and early childhood: local purchasing, meal programs, curriculum and school gardens. These services, including the coach, are provided at no cost to grantees. Each of the four technical assistance trainings are customized based on the needs and goals of individual grantees.

Coaching

Each grantee is assigned a grant coach who works with them throughout the duration of the grant. Coaches are experts from within the Vermont farm to school and farm to early childhood community. Through site visits, email communication, and phone calls, coaches provide direct support in the following areas:

- Creating a farm to school and early childhood action plan and timeline
- Completing the Farm to School and Early Childhood Rubric
- Helping develop a project budget
- Connecting and coordinating with technical assistance service providers
- Growing relationships between the organization and the local community to enhance project success
- Consulting on topics such as organizing farm visits, classroom activities, curriculum development, and connecting organizations with the greater farming community

Technical Assistance Partners

- Local Procurement Training – Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)
- Meal Program Viability – Hunger Free Vermont
- Curriculum Professional Development – Shelburne Farms
- School Gardens – Vermont Garden Network



Images courtesy of Dummerston School

Community Supported Agriculture Grant

The Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Grant helps early childhood education providers and after school programs access more Vermont grown and produced food. The CSA grant subsidizes the cost of CSA or farm shares for early childhood education providers and afterschool programs. This grant program launched in FY21, and FY22 was the second year it was offered.

Fiscal Year 2022 Grant Highlights

38 applications received	\$31,239 requested	\$810 avg award
28 awarded	\$22,947 awarded	\$29,996 farm revenue (includes grantee match)

Fiscal Year 2022 Grantees

1. Parent Child Center – Addison County – \$956
2. Bennington Early Childhood Center, Inc. – Bennington County – \$1,000
3. Lamoille North Supervisory Union: Cambridge Afterschool Program – Lamoille County – \$1,000
4. Central Vermont Supervisory Union – Washington County – \$960
5. Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity – Chittenden County – \$912
6. Family Center of Washington County – Washington County – \$1,000
7. Four Seasons of Early Learning: Greensboro Community CCC – Orleans County – \$768
8. Janelle Anderson – Washington County – \$1,000
9. Jennifer Brown – Lamoille County – \$720
10. Leanne Judkins – Caledonia County – \$960
Mary Johnson Children's Center \$800
11. Lund Family Center – Chittenden County – \$960
12. Mary Johnson Children's Center – Addison County – \$800
13. Milton Family Community Center – Chittenden County – \$700
14. Mountain Village School – Lamoille County – \$1,000
15. Old School of South Burlington, Inc. – Chittenden County – \$224
16. ONE Arts, Inc. – Chittenden County – \$800
17. Orange County Parent Child Center, Inc. – Orange County – \$800
18. Karen A Illsley dba Pitter Patter Playhouse – Orange County – \$1,000
19. Plum Tree School – Windsor County – \$596
20. Robyn McElwain Home Daycare – Franklin County – \$741
21. Saint Paul's Catholic School – Orleans County – \$960
22. Erica Ward dba Spring Ahead Childcare LLC – Chittenden County – \$646
23. Springfield Area Parent Child Center – Windsor County – \$640
24. Stay & Play Daycare Center – Caledonia County – \$632
25. Sunrise Family Resource Center – Bennington County – \$1,000
26. Tammie Hazlett – Orange County – \$372
27. The Garland School – Windham County – \$800
28. The Schoolhouse Learning Center – Chittenden County – \$1,000

Focusing on Early Childhood Education

This grant was developed in response to strong interest among early childhood educators and after school programs for a grant program that was right-sized for smaller staff and teams. This grant is designed to be a straightforward, reimbursement-based grant that demands less grant administration for small teams, which is especially important for home-based early educators with only one or two staff. And yet, even with a smaller grant (average \$810), the impact has been profound.

Early childhood educators are forging new relationships with local farms through this grant program, and many are lasting beyond the grant period. For example, Laura Butler, a home-based early childhood educator in Milton, became a CSA member of Blue Heron Farm in 2021 after receiving a FY21 CSA Grant. Laura organized a group of her Milton neighbors to join the CSA, too, so Blue Heron Farm's Christine Bourque could make weekly deliveries from Grand Isle to right across the street from Laura's home. "I was surprised how easy it was to build the relationship," says Laura of accessing the CSA. "Christine is all about building relationships, and as a care provider, that is what I do, too." As former CSA grantee, Laura continues to purchase from Blue Heron Farm.

The CSA grant, which some might call a mini-grant or a micro-grant, can also serve as an on-ramp to larger Farm to School and Early Childhood funding opportunities, such as the Farm to School and Early Childhood (FTSEC) grant.



Images courtesy of Sarah Webb for the Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Network

Vision Grant

The purpose of this grant is to support innovative and impactful initiatives that engage Vermont youth in addressing and learning about issues related to food, agriculture or related fields. The intent of the Vision Grant is to support innovative and impactful ideas in farm to school and early childhood programming that can be scaled and replicated.

This program was launched in Fiscal Year 2021, with the understanding that farm to school and early childhood is expansive and can look very different in different contexts. It defines a variety of efforts aimed at educating and engaging children and young adults on the connections that exist between agriculture, nutrition, community and health. Grantees offer “outside the box” responses to contemporary issues in the farm to school and early childhood landscape.

In FY2022, applicants were asked to propose projects that address contemporary issues impacting communities, agriculture, health and Vermont youth. Examples of these issues include:

- Climate change
- COVID-19
- Food insecurity
- Food Sovereignty
- Health and Nutrition
- Racial and social equity

Fiscal Year 2022 Grant Highlights

7 applications received

1 grant awarded

\$91,000 requested

\$16,000 awarded

Big Vision For 2023

In FY2021 and FY2022, one grant was awarded each fiscal year. With an increased program budget in FY2023, VAAFM is allocating \$150,000 to this grant program to support several innovative and high-impact projects across the state.



Image courtesy of Green Mountain Girls Farm

Fiscal Year 2022 Grantee: Fairfield Community Center Association Project: Fairfield Community Food Access and Sovereignty Project Budget: \$16,000

This two-year project (ending May 2024) aims to build an equitable food system to provide Fairfield's students, farmworkers, and low-income households a chance to learn together. This will be done through education, hands-on modeling, access to garden sites and Fairfield School Outdoor Classrooms high tunnel, engagement with the local library, and participation in community harvests and celebrations.

This spring, 2023, the grantee is gearing up to connect elementary school students and migrant farm workers through the Huertas gardening project. Huertas is a community-based food security project that enables Latino/a migrant farmworkers and families living on Vermont's dairies to access culturally familiar and local foods through cultivating kitchen gardens.



After school students displaying their carrot harvest at the Fairfield Community Center in Fall 2022. Image courtesy of Fairfield Community Center



AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS

The Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program is supported by a collaborative network of public and private organizations.

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VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

VERMONT FEED

SHELBURNE FARMS

NORTHEAST ORGANIC FARMING
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VERMONT GARDEN NETWORK

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Front cover image courtesy of Green Mountain Girls Farm

Back cover image courtesy of Footprint Farm