



Charleston Elementary

VERMONT FARM TO SCHOOL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

FISCAL YEAR 2023 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

FEBRUARY 2024



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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 seventeen years of the grants program, tens of thousands of children have been reached by this grant program, both in K-12 settings and in early childhood education settings. As a result of these investments, students are eating fresh, nourishing local food, agriculture and food education are integrated into school curriculum, and students and families are building connections with local farmers.

Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Network

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

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFMM) 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 VAAFMM Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant recipients achieve their goals.
- **Implementing Federally Funded Projects**, in partnership with the network, to address emerging issues and opportunities.



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

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant Programs utilize the 3 C’s approach to Farm to School and Early Childhood, which connects efforts in the Cafeteria, Classroom, and Community to achieve robust and sustainable farm to school programs.



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.

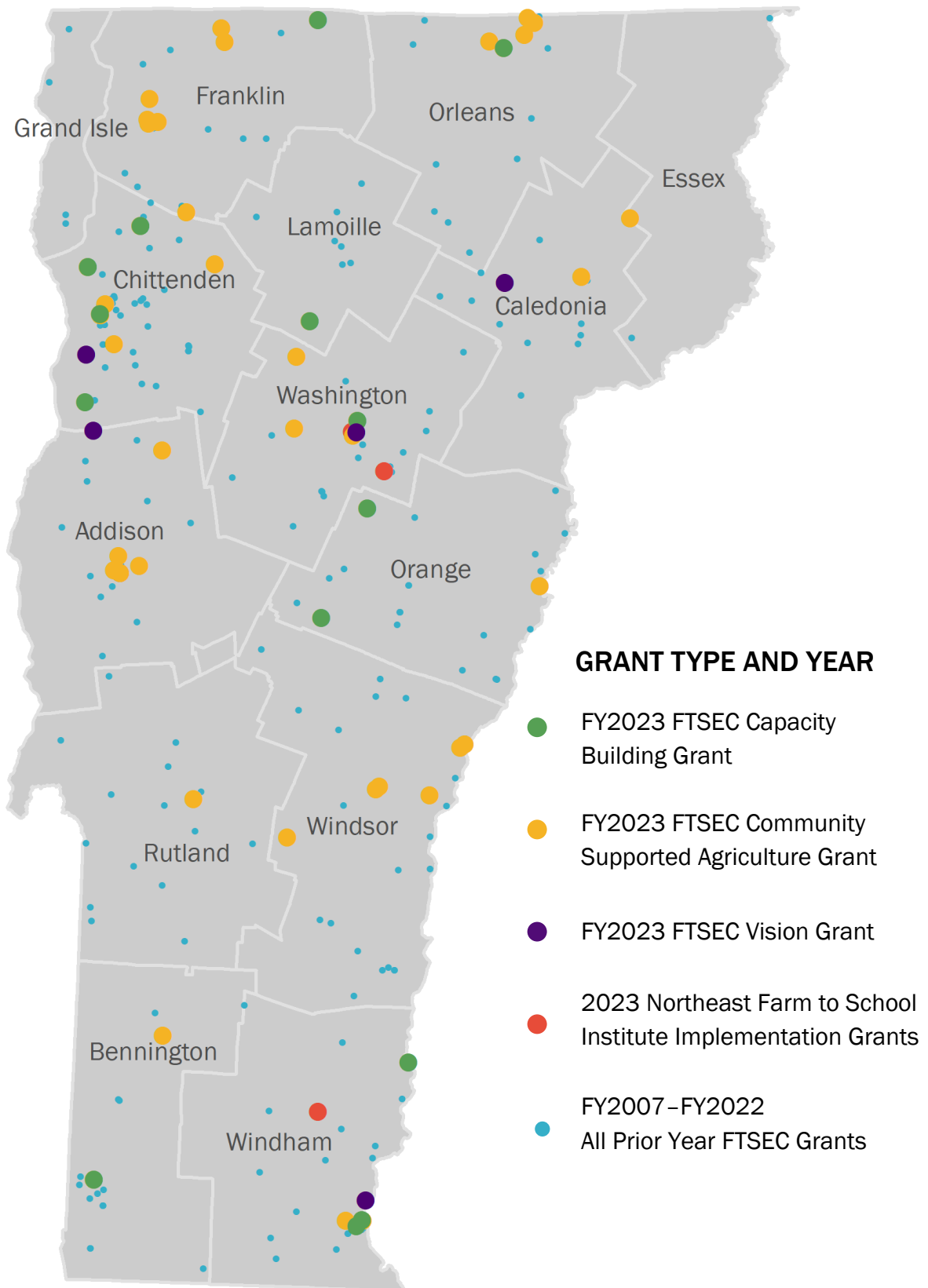
Cafeteria & Kitchen: Serving nutritious and local foods in school and early childhood meal programs can support student health and strengthen the local agricultural economy.



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.



VAAFM FARM TO SCHOOL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD (FTSEC) PROGRAM GRANT RECIPIENTS 2007-2023



PROGRAM IMPACT 2007-2023

266 \$1,996,776

Grants Awarded

Total Amount Awarded

143 140

Early Childcare Educators Reached

Schools Reached

106,749

Children and Students Reached

FISCAL YEAR 2023 IMPACTS*

65 \$361,507

Grants Awarded

Total Amount Awarded

90 32

Early Childcare Educators Reached

Schools Reached

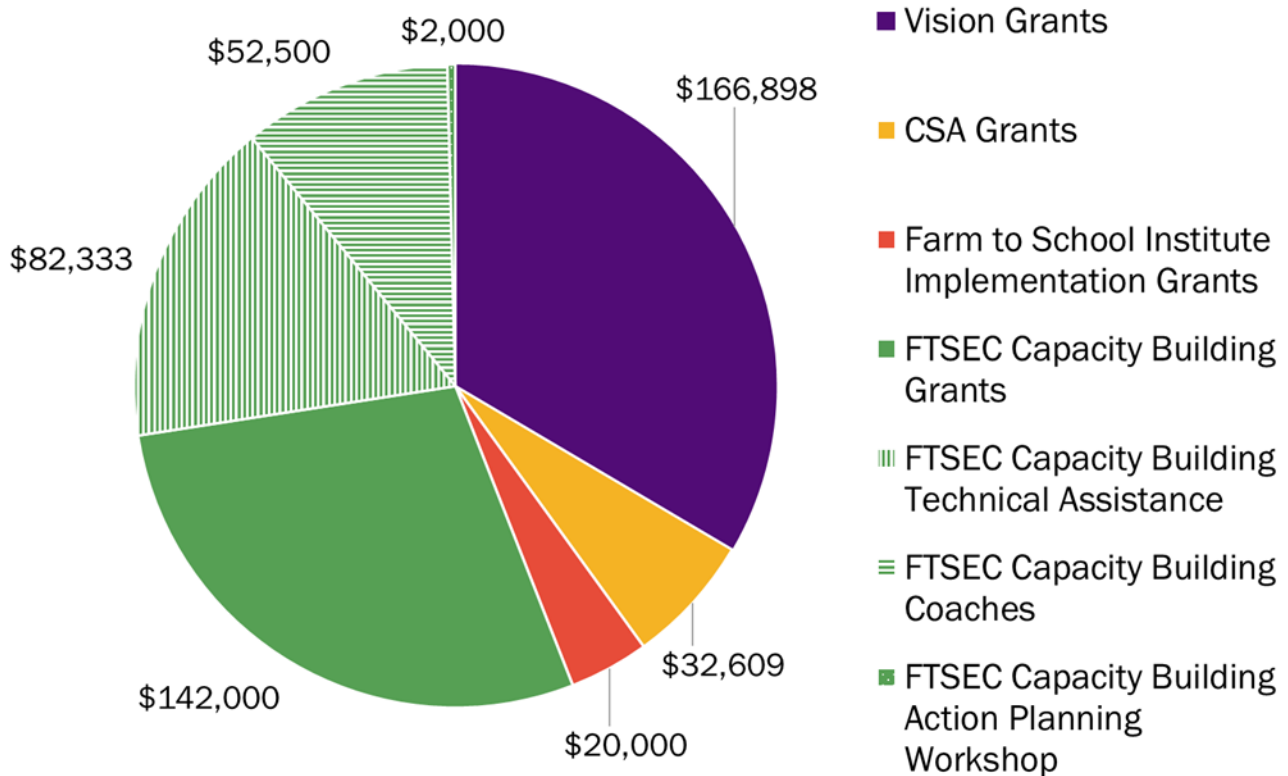
49,672

Children and Students Reached

*includes Northeast Farm to School Institute Implementation Subawards managed by Shelburne Farms

FISCAL YEAR 2023 EXPENSES

\$498,340



Farm to School and Early Childhood Capacity Building Grant

The Farm to School and Early Childhood Capacity Building Grant 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 Capacity Building 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

Fiscal Year 2023 Grantees

1. Bennington: Bennington Early Childhood Center - \$7,000
2. Chittenden: Charlotte Children's Center—\$7,000
3. Chittenden: Milton Family Community Center—\$7,000
4. Chittenden: ONE Arts Inc - \$7,000
5. Franklin: Enosburg Falls Middle High School—\$15,000
6. Lamoille: Mountain Village School—\$10,000
7. Orange: Echo Valley School District—\$10,000
8. Orange: Brookfield Elementary School—\$7,000
9. Orleans: Charleston Elementary School—\$10,000
10. Washington: Turtle Island Children's Center—\$7,000
11. Windham: Central Elementary School—\$10,000
12. Windham: Academy School—\$15,000
13. Windham: Winston Prouty Center For Child and Family Development—\$15,000
14. Windsor/Orange: VAYEC/Early Childhood Professional Network \$15,000



Fiscal Year 2023 Grant Highlights

24 applications received

14 grants awarded

\$333,000 requested

\$142,000 awarded

\$10,100 average award

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 offerings are customized based on the needs and goals of individual grantees.

Technical Assistance Providers

- 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

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:

- Completing the VT FEED Rubric to assess farm to school integration in the grantee organization
- Creating a VT FEED Action Plan to build a timeline for achieving short and long term goals
- Helping develop a project budget that aligns with the team's Action Plan
- 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



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.

Vision Grant applicants were asked to propose projects that address contemporary issues impacting communities, agriculture, health and Vermont youth. Examples of these issues include, but are not limited to:

- Climate Change
- COVID-19
- Food Insecurity
- Food Sovereignty
- Health and Nutrition
- Racial and Social Equity

Fiscal Year 2023 Grant Highlights

13 applications received

5 grants awarded

\$577,068 requested

\$166,898 awarded

\$33,380 average award



Fiscal Year 2023 Grantees

Lake Champlain Sustainable Agriculture Education Program

Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition

\$27,714 to launch a new program, Lake Champlain Sustainable Agriculture Education Program to promote agricultural education through high school internships, mentoring, on-farm activities, and in-school training and workshops.

FEAST Farm Program

City of Montpelier Parks and Trees Department

\$42,684 to engage intergenerational volunteers, school groups, high school members of the Montpelier Youth Conservation Corps (MYCC), and summer camp participants in the City of Montpelier's Community FEAST Farm. The farm is a not-for-profit, city-run farm to grow food for Montpelier residents experiencing food insecurity.

Leveraging Harvest of the Month to Address Childhood Nutrition and Create Healthy Communities

Food Connects

\$49,500 to coordinate the creation, marketing and distribution of Vermont Harvest of the Month's (HOM) materials; incorporate and reignite "tried and true" HOM activities and dissemination vehicles; employ new ideas that incorporate student voice and leadership; invite continuous input of practitioner expertise and facilitate the exchange of this knowledge; and evaluate the transferability and scalability of these initiatives.

Youth-Led Farm to School Summit and Local Procurement Pilot in Early Childhood Programs

Shelburne Farms

\$19,500 to host a youth-led Leadership Summit for ages 14-18 to foster awareness and leadership in the Farm to School movement and launch early childhood local food procurement pilot projects to Funding to test and evaluate processes that improve local procurement of food and/or meal services in early childhood settings.

Upper Valley Super Compost Project: Sharon Elementary School

Tiny Seed Project, Inc.

\$27,500 to launch the Upper Valley Super Compost Project (UVSCP), which will build true composting facilities at participating schools across five supervisory unions in the White River Valley (Central Vermont) using a replicable, participatory, youth-centered model. The first phase of this project is the first complete compost build at Sharon Elementary School, which will serve as a demonstration site for other schools in the UVSCP.

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 offers an entry point to engage with the Farm to School and Early Childhood Program because it is a simple, small grant, that is well suited to family based childcare or smaller afterschool programs with only 1-2 staff.

Since the inception of the CSA grant in 2021, several grantees have forged relationships with CSA farms that last year over year, connecting local educators, children, and families with nearby farms.

Fiscal Year 2023 Grant Highlights

45 applications received

\$34,269 requested

\$776 average award

42 grants awarded

\$32,609 awarded

\$43,615 paid to farms
(includes grantee match)

Fiscal Year 2023 Grantees

1. Addison: Parent Child Center
2. Addison: Bridge School Preschool
3. Addison: Otter Creek Child Center, Inc.
4. Addison: Quarry Hill School
5. Addison: Starksboro Cooperative Preschool, Inc.
6. Bennington: Bennington Early Childhood Center
7. Bennington: Northshire Day School
8. Caledonia: Field Farm and Forest, Inc.
9. Caledonia: Kingdom East Unified Union School District
10. Chittenden: Milton Family Community Center
11. Chittenden: Ohavi Zedek Synagogue
12. Chittenden: ONE Arts Inc
13. Chittenden: Poker Hill School
14. Chittenden: The Schoolhouse Learning Center
15. Chittenden: Stepping Stones Children's Center, Inc
16. Franklin: Lynn Roberts
17. Franklin: Mary Cushing
18. Franklin: Maple Tree Childcare
19. Franklin: Nancy Lavigne
20. Franklin: Robyn McElwain Home Daycare
21. Franklin: Tina L Lothian
22. Franklin: Vickie Gratton
23. Lamoille: Mountain Village School
24. Orange: Valley Cooperative Preschool Inc
25. Orleans: Anitra's Daycare - Anitra Tester
26. Orleans: Little Angels Childcare - Lisa Duncan
27. Orleans: The Bee's Knees - Lisa Gratton
28. Orleans: Louise Bouffard
29. Orleans: North Country Supervisory Union
30. Rutland: Rutland County Parent Child Center
31. Washington: Eugenie Randall
32. Washington: Kelley Hackett
33. Washington: Montpelier Children's House Inc.
34. Washington: Turtle Island Children's Center
35. Windham: Boys & Girls Club of Brattleboro
36. Windham: West Bee Nursery School
37. Windsor: Child Care Center in Norwich
38. Windsor: Family Place Inc.
39. Windsor: Plum Tree School
40. Windsor: The Plymouth Schoolhouse
41. Windsor: First Congregational Church, Woodstock, VT /DBA Woodstock Christian Childcare
42. Windsor: Woodstock Nursery School

USDA Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets received Local Food for Schools (LFS) grant funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to purchase local and regional food and distribute it to Vermont schools. With this one-time USDA grant, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture launched an opportunity for Vermont schools to get free local food, delivered by a local food hub, and paid for by USDA.

Each School Food Authority (SFA) in Vermont was assigned a nearby food hub and allocated a budget for local food purchases from that food hub. The amount of funding allocated to each SFA was based on enrollment data from the Agency of Education. The SFA's assigned food hub made available the allocated amount as credit in the SFA's account with the food hub, which could be used to purchase local food.

So far, over half of Vermont's SFAs have received free local food from this program and 117 local producers have benefitted, of which 58 meet the USDA definition for socially disadvantaged producers. A final update on this project will be included in the FY24 legislative report. This one-time USDA opportunity complements the annual appropriation from the Vermont State Legislature that is the primary focus of this report.

Food Hub Locations



Local Food For Schools (LFS) Program Highlights

September 2023—June 2024

Project Period

\$333,763 USDA grant funding awarded to Vermont

All 69 SFAs matched with a nearby food hub and received an allocation of LFS funding

\$1,000 to \$13,400 LFS funds allocated to each SFA, based on enrollment

4 food hub partners collaborated to reach all SFAs statewide

Food Hub Partners:

1. Vermont Farmers Food Center (Rutland and Bennington Counties)
2. ACORN Food Hub (Addison County)
3. Green Mountain Farm Direct (Northern/Central Vermont)
4. Food Connects (Southern/Central Vermont)

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

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Key Partners

VERMONT AGENCY OF EDUCATION

VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

VERMONT FEED

SHELBURNE FARMS

NORTHEAST ORGANIC FARMING
ASSOCIATION OF VERMONT

HUNGER FREE VERMONT

VERMONT GARDEN NETWORK

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Mountain Village School