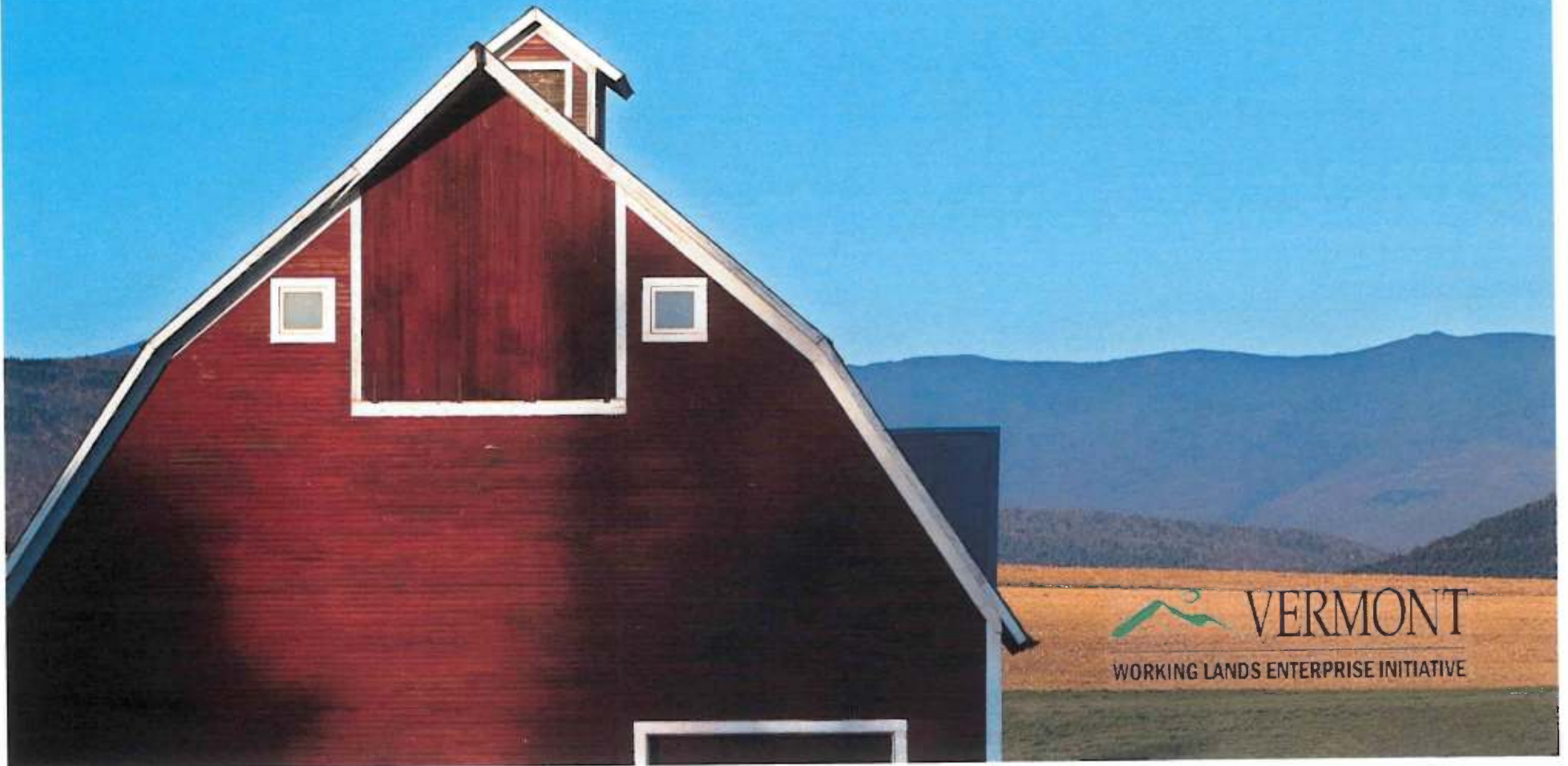


WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE ANNUAL REPORT: FISCAL YEAR 2015



 VERMONT
WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE

Dear Vermonter,

Once again this year, we have the privilege to report on the success of the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative, as created in Act 142 by the legislature in 2012. The first three and a half years of this program have focused on building a strong foundation and putting the infrastructure in place to make essential, catalytic investments in critical leverage points of the Vermont farm and forest economy. We are just now starting to see the substantial impacts of our first two years of grant-making. Based upon completed grantee projects to date, with state investment of \$1.36 million, performance measures reported: **106 jobs created and an increase of over \$11 million in gross income**. Projecting that the remainder of our grantees will realize similar results, the total \$3 million investment to date will correspond to 230 new jobs and over \$25 million in increased gross income, demonstrating reasons to invest!

2016 marks the beginning of a new stage of development for the Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB). In 2015, the Legislature merged the Vermont Agriculture and Forest Products Development Board into the WLEB, expanding the number of members from 15 to 20, and adding a policy development role to the WLEB's statutory charge. As a partnership between the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, we are honored to lead the Initiative down this new and exciting path, along with the dedicated non-profit and private sector Board members who lend their expertise, insight, and passion to this critical Initiative.

This report contains encouraging quantitative data reflecting economic development, as well as stories that demonstrate the impact this program has on the cultures, communities, and quality of life across Vermont's Working Landscape. I am encouraged by the stories captured in these pages, and urge you to visit our website at workinglands.vermont.gov to keep informed on this important Initiative.

Sincerely,

Secretary of Agriculture, Chuck Ross
Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, Jolinda LaClair, Chair
Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Community Development, Lucy Leriche
Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation, Michael Snyder



Mission

The mission of the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Initiative is to strengthen and grow the economies, cultures, and communities of Vermont's working landscape. The Working Lands Enterprise Board achieves this by making essential, catalytic investments in critical leverage points of the Vermont farm and forest economy, and facilitating policy development to optimize the agricultural and forest use of Vermont lands.

Vision

Vermont prospers and its unique sense of place thrives in large part because of intelligent investment in the people and enterprises that comprise its farm, food, and forest based systems. Strong community engagement and support for the farm and forest sectors leads to enhanced quality of life for Vermont citizens and working lands business owners.

Key Strategies

1. Access to Capital: Ability of an enterprise to secure adequate capital to meet the financing needs for its current growth and scale.
2. Technical Assistance: Availability of services to develop business plans, identify risk management strategies, and implement financial management systems, as well as provide topic, product, and process expertise.
3. Workforce Development: Access to training and education that allows Vermonters who want to work in the working lands sector – and by extension, the employers they choose – to be at a world-class level.
4. Smart Policy: Rules and statutes that optimize the agricultural and forest use of Vermont lands, while protecting human, environmental and animal health.
5. Value Chain and Sector Collaboration: Relationships between different actors along the chain, as well as across industry sectors, that strengthen the system as a whole.
6. Public Awareness: Communities' understanding of and support for the businesses and organizations that contribute to our working landscape.

SINCE WLEB'S AUTHORIZATION IN 2012...

112
agriculture
& forestry
projects funded

Distributed over
\$3 million
in Working Lands
funds

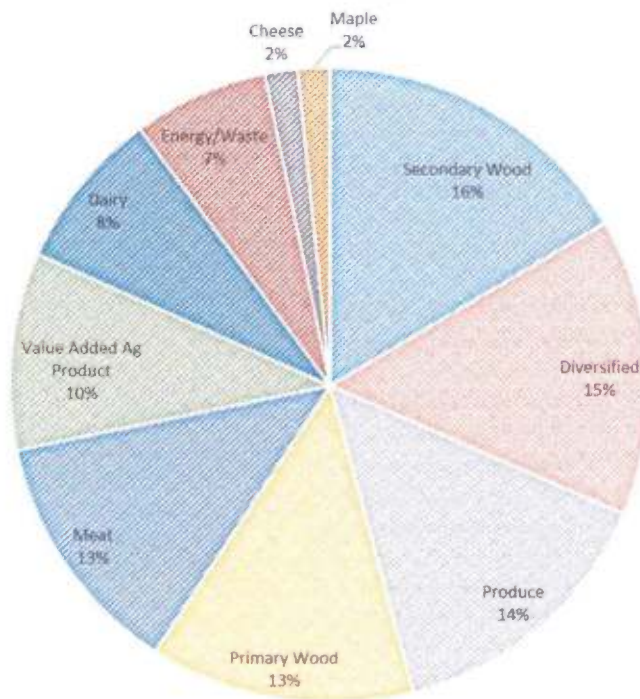
Leveraged
\$4.9 million
in matching funds

All
14 counties
impacted

These investments are increasing production, creating jobs, propelling innovation, and supporting Vermont's working landscape.

Projects are considered based on their positive impacts on statewide goals, including those in the **Farm to Plate Strategic Plan**.

SECTOR INVESTMENTS TO DATE



- **FY '13:** Invested over \$1 million into 36 projects leveraging an additional \$1.3 million in matching funds.
Total Applicants: 387 Funds Requested: \$12 million
- **FY '14:** Invested \$1.1 million dollars into 40 projects leveraging an additional \$1.8 million in matching funds.
Total Applicants: 129 Funds Requested: \$5 million
- **FY '15:** Invested over \$1 million into 36 projects, leveraging an additional \$1.8 million in matching funds.
Total Applicants: 132 Funds Requested: \$4 million
- **FY '16:** This Fiscal Year, the Board has approximately \$550,000 to invest into agriculture and forestry projects.
Total Applicants: 114 Funds Requested: \$3.3 million
We are currently mid-grant cycle and will announce project recipients in May 2016.

In FY '13, the inaugural year of this new and much anticipated grant program, the WLEB received a tremendous number of applications and dollar requests. Since that first year, applicants have self-selected to be of exceptional quality and the program has remained highly competitive.

The above represents both Business and Service Provider investments. Primary Wood refers to products from a log form, while Secondary Wood refers to products from a lumber form. Diversified includes investments whose projects crossed multiple sectors.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES TO DATE

REALIZED₁

106

New Jobs

PROJECTED₂

230

New Jobs

Aggregated Gross Income Increased by:

>\$12 million

Aggregated Gross Income Increases by:

>\$25 million

BUSINESS INVESTMENT ROI₃

For every **\$10,000** invested:

Gross income increases 10x and 1 new job is created

1. This data represents reporting from 52 of 112 grants from FY '13 and FY '14 grantees across all grant categories. 2. This data represents reporting from 50 of 112 grants, totaling \$1.35 million in funds (or 44% of the total funds invested to date) from FY '13 and FY '14 business grantees and VHCB. Projected numbers were calculated by dividing the realized numbers by the percentage of reported funds. 3. This data represents 49 completed projects of the 85 business grants that have been made thus far.

FISCAL YEAR 2015 APPLICATIONS

ENTERPRISE

59 Requests for \$923,404 dollars; funded 20 projects for a total of \$273,843.
Grants issued from \$5,000 to \$20,000

Available to start-up and emerging Working Lands Businesses. Eligible expenses include infrastructure, marketing, market development, working capital, business development and technical assistance to meet a need not already filled by existing programs.

SERVICE PROVIDER

41 Requests for \$1.9 million dollars; funded 10 projects for a total of \$418,796.
Grants issued from \$20,130 to \$100,000

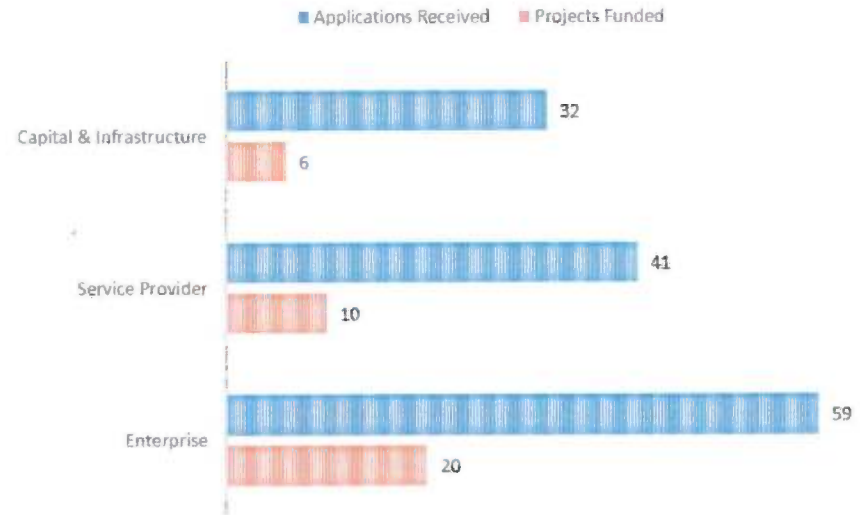
Available to Vermont non-profit organizations, associations, educational institutions, private sector or partnership groups, or other entities that provide technical assistance directly to agricultural and/or forestry & forest products enterprises.

CAPITAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE

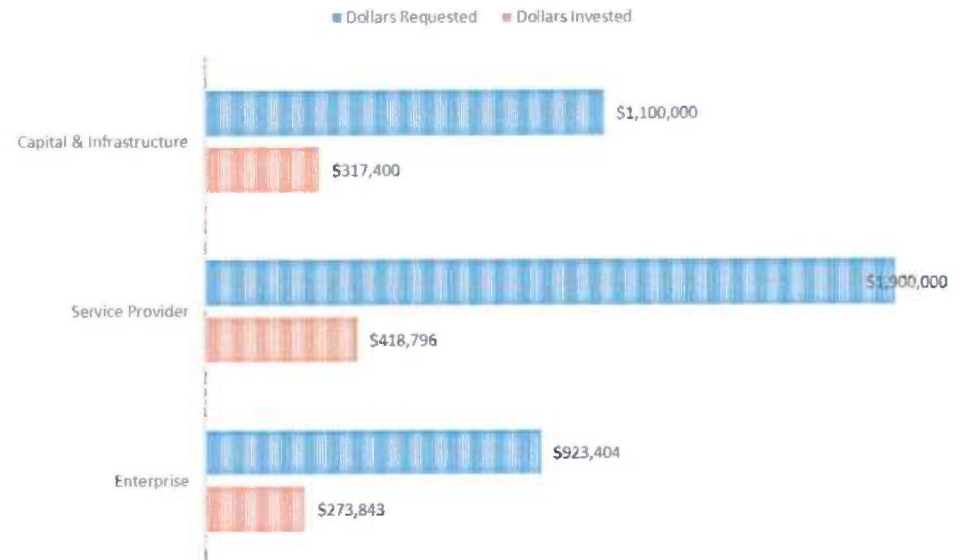
32 Requests for \$1.1 million dollars; funded 6 projects for a total of \$317,400.
Grants issued from \$25,000 to \$75,000

Available to growth-stage or mature Working Lands businesses for capital investments that will have a value chain impact beyond their immediate business or organization. Eligible expenses include specialized personnel, access to land, building and equipment costs, working capital, information technology, and other collaborative ventures that build capacity within the supply chain, open new markets, and/or create a replicable, innovative, new model.

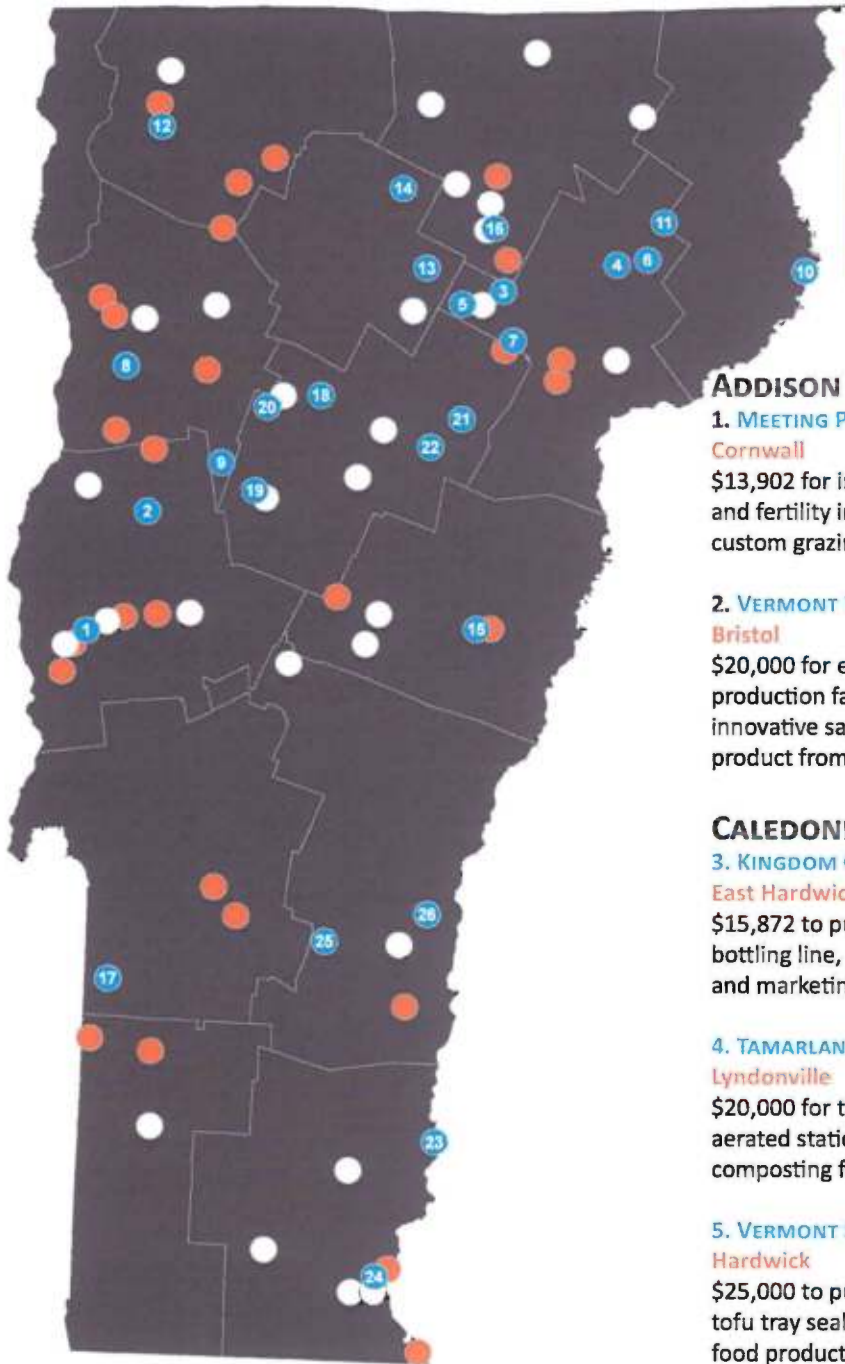
2015 APPLICATIONS



2015 INVESTMENTS



BUSINESS GRANTEES TO DATE



- 2015 Business Grantees
- 2014 Business Grantees
- 2013 Business Grantees

ADDISON COUNTY

1. MEETING PLACE PASTURES
Cornwall
\$13,902 for infrastructure, forage, and fertility improvements to provide custom grazing services

2. VERMONT TREE GOODS
Bristol
\$20,000 for equipment in a new production facility that utilizes an innovative sawmill design to create product from salvage/cull grade logs

3. KINGDOM CREAMERY OF VT
East Hardwick
\$15,872 to purchase a fluid milk bottling line, and improve packaging and marketing collateral

4. TAMARLANE FARM
Lyndonville
\$20,000 for the installation of an aerated static pile system for the composting facility

5. VERMONT SOY
Hardwick
\$25,000 to purchase an automated tofu tray sealing unit to ensure a safer food product

2015 BUSINESS GRANTEES

ENTERPRISE AND CAPITAL & INFRASTRUCTURE

6. VERMONT TABLE COMPANY
East Burke
\$8,922 for an Epilog Laser Engraving Machine to bring engraving in-house

7. WALDEN HEIGHTS NURSERY & ORCHARD
Walden
\$12,600 for a pasteurizer to expand production and distribution of cider and juices

CHITTENDEN COUNTY

8. BREAD & BUTTER FARM
Shelburne
\$7,250 to build a washpack and processing kitchen for vegetable production, on farm events, and educational programs

9. MAPLE WIND FARM
Richmond
\$67,400 for upgrades including a blast chiller for poultry, increased freezer capacity, processing equipment, and for a small retail building for their agri-tourism operation

ESSEX COUNTY
10. PEASLEE'S VERMONT POTATOES
Guildhall
\$20,000 for facility upgrades to achieve Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification

11. TIMBER GARDENS
East Haven
\$20,000 to purchase a firewood processor to substantially grow the firewood portion of the business

FRANKLIN COUNTY

12. SCOTT MAGNAN'S CUSTOM SERVICE
St. Albans
\$25,000 to upgrade a John Deere planter, and purchase a Vertical tillage tank-mounted manure injector that would improve soil health in the region

LAMOILLE COUNTY

13. SANDIWOOD FARM
Wolcott
\$9,950 to build a production greenhouse designed for events that will enhance the farm's agritourism business

14. TORRANI STUDIO CRAFT
Eden Mills
\$5,000 for machinery to expand its cookware product line

ORANGE COUNTY

15. SHIRE BEEF
Vershire
\$7,100 to purchase a compost tea brewing set and a skid-based pickup truck transportable sprayer to increase soil biological activity and retained carbon

ORLEANS COUNTY

16. THE VERMONT HAY COMPANY
Greensboro
\$10,000 for working capital and a used trailer to expand production of Easter basket grass

RUTLAND COUNTY

17. LAUGHING CHILD FARM

Pawlet

\$20,000 for a sweet potato curing and storage facility to cure, store, and wash organic sweet potatoes

WASHINGTON COUNTY

18. OGELBY WOODWORKS

Waterbury

\$5,000 for equipment to open an independent shop

19. PLOUGHGATE CREAMERY

Fayston

\$20,000 for renovations to begin dairy operations

20. VERMONT GREENWOOD RESOURCES

Waterbury

\$75,000 to add chipping capacity and to develop a pulpwood concentration yard to capture additional value from harvested wood products

21. VERMONT WILDWOODS

Marshfield

\$20,000 for creation of the first ever commercial wood spalting chamber

22. WINTERWOOD TIMBERFRAMES

East Montpelier

\$75,000 for infrastructure upgrades for a bioregional wood building-material product line: two dehumidifying kilns, a three phase power grid, an outdoor wood-waste burning boiler system and signage

WINDHAM COUNTY

23. HARLOW'S FARMSTEAD

Westminster

\$50,000 for the purchase of a vacuum cooler, upgrading loading docks, creation of additional storage, and additional ice making capacity to improve shipping and storage

24. WILD CARROT FARM

Brattleboro

\$12,375 for a production and sales facility to meet the growing needs of a modern horse-powered farm

WINDSOR COUNTY

25. GREEN MOUNTAIN SUGARHOUSE

Ludlow

\$15,872 to build a remote sap and pump house

26. WINDGATE FARM

West Windsor

\$10,000 to build facilities to develop a beef finishing program

2015 SERVICE PROVIDER GRANTEES

STATEWIDE IMPACT

CHAMPLAIN VALLEY FARMER COALITION

\$33,219 to start a pilot program working with farmers to develop and carry out Crop Management Implementation Plans

COLD HOLLOW CAREER CENTER

\$53,244 to build operator capacity for utilizing cut-to-length (CTL) harvesting systems in Vermont's northern forest by purchasing simulator systems and delivering hands-on training to students around Vermont

INTERVALE CENTER

\$20,130 to develop and implement workshops and technical assistance for farmers seeking land to lease or purchase

NORTHEAST ORGANIC FARMING ASSOCIATION (NOFA) OF VERMONT

\$38,361 for collaboration that will grow new farmers in Vermont by expanding two agricultural workforce development programs

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT EXTENSION

\$40,593 for development of commercial elderberry production, including an enterprise feasibility analysis, a grower coop feasibility assessment, and on-farm training workshops

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT EXTENSION CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

\$21,049 to help new Americans establish market presence with a comprehensive market survey, farmer-buyer meetings, marketing education, and educational resources for buyers and farmers

VERMONT HOUSING & CONSERVATION BOARD

\$100,000 to strengthen the business acumen of forest sector entrepreneurs by engagement in business development workshops, and in-depth, one-on-one business advising and coaching

VERMONT MAPLE SUGAR MAKERS' ASSOCIATION

\$22,500 for marketing assistance for Vermont sugar makers, including workshops, webinars, and one-on-one technical assistance to enhance marketing to modern consumers

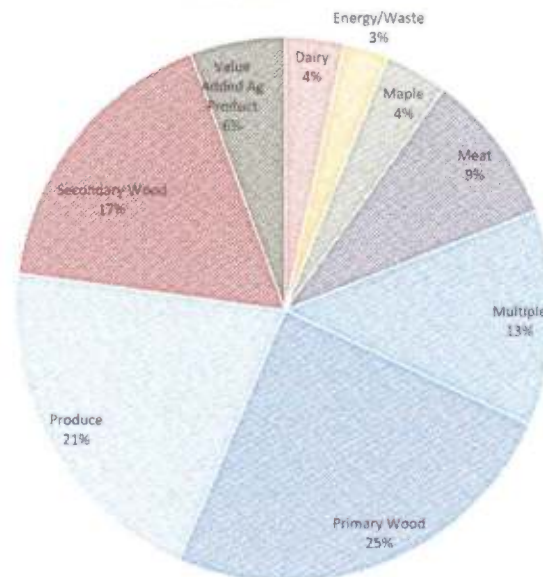
VERMONT STATE COLLEGES AND VERMONT MANUFACTURING EXTENSION CENTER

\$39,700 for innovation engineering technical assistance that provides a concentrated learning experience to improve the global competitiveness of Vermont's manufacturers

VERMONT WOOD MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION

\$50,000 for innovation assistance and workforce development for wood manufacturers to help enhance the industry's competitiveness in the global marketplace

2015 SECTOR INVESTMENTS



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

BIG PICTURE FARM

TOWNSHEND - WINDHAM COUNTY

FY '14: \$20,000 to improve caramel and cheese production facility

Middlebury alums Louisa Conrad and Lucas Farrell launched Big Picture Farm, a small hillside goat dairy and farmstead confectionary, in 2010. They received a Working Lands Grant to expand their caramel and cheese room and invest in climate-controlled, food-safe storage space. These investments have allowed them to increase the shelf life and consistency of their caramel, normalize workflow, and to keep up with the increasing demand. As a result, they have increased peak-season sales and enhanced operational capacity, and can now produce cheese and caramel simultaneously.

Big Picture Farm has seen their net income more than double since 2013. Prior to the grant, the farm employed a smattering of part-time employees for low-skilled work. Now, they employ seven skilled employees year-round, and an additional five employees part-time. Additionally, they have received numerous awards, including several Specialty Food Association Sofi awards – the association’s most prestigious honor.



Conrad and Farrell with some of their herd - Photos courtesy of Big Picture Farm

“We feel so lucky to have been chosen as a recipient. This grant really propelled us forward as a farm and as a business. For the first time, our business is sustainable and secure due to infrastructure improvements made possible by the Working Lands funds.” - Lucas Farrell

3

Additional Full-time Employees



25%

Increased Output



Net Income Increased

300%



VERMONT HOUSING & CONSERVATION BOARD

STATEWIDE IMPACT

FY '13: \$100,000 to expand business assistance to agricultural infrastructure and forestry sectors

FY '14: \$118,337 for business assistance for Vermont's food and forestry enterprises

FY '15: \$100,000 to strengthen the business skills of forest sector entrepreneurs

Since 2013, with WLEB's support, the VT Housing & Conservation Board has expanded its successful Farm Viability Program to meet business development needs in the forestry and forest products sectors. The mission of the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program is to enhance the economic viability of Vermont farm, food and forestry enterprises, by providing working lands businesses with individualized business planning and technical assistance services through a strong network of nonprofit organizations and independent consultants. The Forest Viability Program has seen remarkable outcomes:

Increasing Sales and Creating Jobs:

35

Businesses
Assisted

23%

Average Increased
Sales

10%

Average Increased
Employment

18%

Average Increased
Payroll

Improving Business Skills – Owners and managers of over 35 forestry and forest products businesses improved their business, financial or marketing skills during the first two years of this new program. Reported percentage change:

- Highly skilled in strategic planning increased from 14% before the program to 57% after;
- Highly skilled in planning business investments rose from 17% before the program to 67% after;
- Highly skilled in accounting systems increased from 25% to 75%.

Business owners report similar increases in financial analysis skills, accessing financing, and sales and marketing skills.

Professional Development – In partnership with VT's Logger Education to Advance Professionalism (LEAP) program and UVM Extension, four workshops were held in 2015 with more than 65 loggers on financial management, business ownership structures, cost accounting, and lean manufacturing.

Succession Planning for Forest Landowners – In partnership with the VT Woodlands Association and UVM Extension, workshops and one-on-one assistance are now available for families navigating the challenging process of planning to pass on family forestland intact to the next generation, a key element to addressing forest fragmentation in Vermont.

VHCB PARTICIPANT SPOTLIGHT

LABREE LOGGING

DANVILLE - CALEDONIA COUNTY

Over the past year, Karen and Eric LaBree have participated in the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program (VFFVP). Matched with business educator Chris Lindgren of UVM Extension's new Forest Business Program, they developed the first stages of their business plan, key to their business growth and developing new relationships. Through the VFFVP, additional technical assistance providers with specific expertise were connected with the LaBrees to develop logging-specific cost accounting systems, including QuickBooks. Connecting with technical assistance providers has positioned this young business for success.



Karen and Eric LaBree - Photo courtesy VHCB

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

SCREAMIN' RIDGE FARM
MONTPELIER - WASHINGTON COUNTY

FY '13: \$15,000 to Purchase equipment to boost production capability and efficiency
FY '14: \$50,000 for a Collaborative processing facility

Screamin' Ridge Farm is a vertically integrated seed to plate business. They grow vegetables using sustainable practices and use them, with other local agricultural products, to produce the Joe's Kitchen line of value-added products. With their first grant for \$15,000 in FY 13, they rented space for a USDA-inspected commercial kitchen at the Mad River Food Hub. Tremendous growth resulted; they quintupled their output since 2012, from producing 100 gallons a week to a current 520 gallons a week.

Screamin' Ridge built on that success and received a \$50,000 Capital & Infrastructure grant in FY 14 to renovate a building in Montpelier into a collaborative production facility. Working out of the food hub no longer made financial sense at their larger scale. In September 2015 they moved into their brand new facility. *This would never have been possible without the help of WLEB.* The business is now pursuing new accounts and two sub-tenants are benefiting by renting the facility one day a week. With the new facility, additional capacity, and seven part-time employees, Screamin' Ridge Farm is considering adding other product lines to the business.



Joe Buley - Photos courtesy of Screamin' Ridge Farm



Output Increased
500%

2
New Sub-Tenants

3
New Full-Time
Employees



10

"In 2014, we hit capacity for production at the Mad Rover Food Hub. We had outgrown the food hub incubator and no longer realized the financial and production advantages which had been so key to our start up. It was time to move to our own facility with new equipment, an optimized layout, and variable, rather than fixed costs—the Working Lands grant was a major lift in helping us reach these goals." - Joe Buley

UVM EXTENSION STORAGE CROP PROJECT CHRIS CALLAHAN & VERN GRUBINGER STATEWIDE IMPACT

FY '13: \$40,000 to Increase Supply and Quality of "Local" Vegetable Storage

This project installed environmental monitoring equipment to improve storage conditions and the quality of 1,736 tons of winter storage crops at nine farms and two food hubs throughout Vermont. The cumulative market value of these storage crops produced during the 2012-2014 growing seasons was \$3.5 million. Improved storage monitoring led to better control of storage conditions through automated notification to farmers when abnormal conditions were occurring. This allowed for prompt correction of problems such as open doors and failing or inoperative cooling equipment.

Losses of storage crops (shrink) were reduced from ~15% to ~5% of stored volume.

Sixty-six energy efficiency measures were also implemented at five of these farms, saving a total of 54,750 kWh of electricity and \$7,300 annually. The systems deployed have increased the confidence of growers to expand their winter storage of Vermont-grown vegetables, leading to an increased supply of local produce outside of the traditional growing and marketing season. An additional 100 farms will also gain knowledge about vegetable storage through outreach at trade conferences, meetings, website posts, education, outreach materials, and ongoing programming.

Having completed this project, the researchers concluded that no single sensor currently available perfectly fits this application. One of the researchers took it on to create a new device that would improve utility and ease of use. His sensor is currently in the process of commercialization.

11 Businesses Served Shrink Reduced by 66% 1 New Invention



"We are very grateful for the WLEB funding we received to complete this project. We knew it was important work, but the results to the growers turned out to be even more valuable than we anticipated. Thank you." -Chris Callahan



Monitoring System - Photos courtesy of UVM Extension

STANDING COMMITTEES

COORDINATING

Purpose: Board development, annual review of organizational plan, consulting on board documents including meeting agendas, grant applications, and program evaluation.

POLICY

Purpose: Solicit and vet topics for consideration by the Board, working closely with State Agency leaders. The Committee recruits members for ad hoc committees that spearhead policy work by topic area. Research and review process may create position documents for presentation to the legislature and working lands organizations.

GOALS AND EVALUATION

Purpose: Guide development of short and long term goals and objectives for the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative, and guide and provide feedback on the metrics used and analysis conducted to determine program impact.

ACT 142

The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) founded and led the Council on the Future of Vermont which conducted a comprehensive study and found that over 97 percent of Vermonters polled endorsed the value of the working landscape as key to VT's future, which was higher than any other value expressed by the people of Vermont.

"Investing in our Farm and Forest Future," is the action plan of the Vermont Working Landscape Partnership. In 2012, the Partnership successfully promoted the development of the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Fund with the passage of the Working Lands Enterprise Bill - Act 142.

In 2015, new legislation was proposed and passed, merging the Vermont Agriculture and Forest Products Development Board into the WLEB, expanding the number of members from 15 to 20, and adding a policy development role to the WLEB's statutory charge.



January 2016 Meeting of the WLEB

"This is an amazing statewide initiative that makes me proud of Vermont. The grant has had a positive impact on our farm's storage and will continue for many years. It will increase our stability, farm income and the ability to expand our seasonal labor."

-Adam Hausmann, Adam's Berry Farm, FY '13 Grant Recipient

AD HOC COMMITTEES

ENTERPRISE FINANCING OPTIONS

Purpose: Explore financing options to leverage the state investment in the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative.

Beginning in August 2013, the committee explored the capital needs and gaps within the agricultural and forestry sectors, as well as opportunities and tools that have the potential to multiply and accelerate the impact of WLEB funding. The Committee engaged business consultants Roberta Harold and then Nancy Wasserman to identify gaps, suggest potential tools, and draft blueprints for select tools. Extensive input was gathered from capital providers financing the State's working lands businesses, service providers delivering technical assistance about access to capital, and entrepreneurs experienced with financing and investment.

A key finding from this research was that most capital providers believe **WLEB is already providing the most needed type of capital** by awarding grants to working land enterprises. Working Lands grants act as "quasi-equity" and can mitigate the risk of capital providers and thereby leverage other investments.

In response to a 2015 request from the Legislature, Nancy Wasserman also explored the potential for a revolving loan fund operated by VAAFAM. It was found that at this time a traditional revolving loan fund is not needed, as there is plenty of low-interest capital in the system. There may, however, be a need to increase knowledge among working lands entrepreneurs regarding who, how, and why to access the financing that exists.

There are additional financing options worthy of consideration that meet WLEB's goals and mandate. Blueprints were drafted for the following tools:

- A recoverable grant program, which has the potential to accept back some or all of the grant funds by offering optional repayment plans, pending success of the working lands business;
- A deferred payment, no-interest loan program, directed primarily to start-up ventures that cannot qualify for Farm Credit's FarmStart program (presumably managed by an established lender and not VAAFAM); and
- A pool of flexible grant funds designed to nimbly provide enterprises with grants that can act as the added equity needed to leverage larger financing packages.

FORESTRY & WOOD PRODUCTS

Purpose: Engage with one of the largest sectors of Vermont's working lands economy and provide support for innovation, economic viability, and workforce and market development.

In 2014, the Board contracted with St. Albans-based Yellow Wood Associates (YWA) to conduct an in-depth analysis of Vermont's forest and wood products industry. Stakeholders from across the entire supply chain participated in forums to better understand the current state of the industry and identify opportunities for future strategic investment or policy change. The analysis document produced will help to establish a strong foundation to increase connectivity throughout the sector, strategic support, and overall economic growth.

In July 2015, YWA presented their final report to the Board identifying key partnerships and value chains. The three main takeaways defined a need for:

- **Increased public awareness of the economic importance of the forest and wood products sector**
- **Value chain network development**
- **Increased consumer demand for Vermont made wood products**

In FY2016, the Committee will launch the implementation phase of the Forest Systems Analysis, capitalizing on the momentum created over the past year.

WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE BOARD 2015

The Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) represents a cross-agency, cross-sector network of partners: Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets; Vermont Forests, Parks & Recreation; Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development; fourteen designated board members from across the value chains of Agriculture and Forestry; and Ex-Officio members from the Vermont Economic Development Authority; Vermont Housing & Conservation Board; and the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund.

Chuck Ross

Secretary, Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food & Markets

Jolinda LaClair, Designee, Chair

Deputy Secretary, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Michael Snyder

Commissoner, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation

Matt Langlais, Designee

Caledonia/Essex County Forester, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation

Lucy Leriche

Deputy Secretary, Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Jared Duval, Designee

Economic Development Director, Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Will Belongia

Executive Director, Vermont Community Loan Fund
Washington County

Megan Camp

Vice President, Shelburne Farms
Chittenden County

Chris Castano

Vice President, Champlain Hardwoods
Chittenden County

Mark Curran

Co-Owner, Black River Produce
Windsor County

Eric DeLuca

Principal, Leverage Point Consulting
Windham County

Ken Gagnon

Owner, Gagnon Lumber
Rutland County

Brian Kemp

Farm Manager, Mountain Meadow Farm
Addison County

Johanna Laggis

Co-Owner, Laggis Brothers Farm
Caledonia County

Bob Lesnikoski

Owner, Vermont Cranberry Company
Franklin County

Gil Livingston

President, Vermont Land Trust
Chittenden County

Emma Marvin

Director of Marketing, Butternut Mountain Farm
Lamoille County

Joseph W. Nelson

Consulting Forester
Addison County

Robin Scheu

Executive Director, Addison County Economic Development Corporation
Addison County

Kathleen Wanner

Executive Director, Vermont Woodlands Association
Rutland County

Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Members

Jo Bradley

CEO, Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA)

Sarah Isham, Designee

Senior Agricultural Loan Officer, Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA)

Ellen Kahler

Executive Director, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (VSJF)

Gus Seelig

Executive Director, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB)

Ela Chapin, Designee

Viability Director, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB)