

Farm To School & Early Childhood Grants Program




**This Farm
Feeds
Vermont Kids**
The Vermont Farm to School & Early Childhood Network
#thisfarmfeedskids



VERMONT

AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOODS & MARKETS

Heartwood Farm, West Glover

Program Overview

The Farm to School and Early Childhood program was established in 2007. It is funded through an annual allocation from the State's general fund. Through a combination of grants and technical assistance, the program helps Vermont schools and childcare providers achieve a variety of goals related to sourcing local food, expanding ag and nutrition education, and strengthening community connections

Executive Summary

The 2021 grant year was one marked by adaptations. As schools and early childhood providers struggled to respond to the impacts of the pandemic, the VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (AAFM) retooled the farm to school and early childhood program to meet their evolving needs.

AAFM introduced two new grant programs in 2021, the CSA Grant and the Farm to School Vision Grant, both of which saw demand far exceed the available funding. AAFM also partnered with Shelburne Farms to establish a Farm to Early Childhood state-wide coalition. And finally, with funding from a 2020 USDA grant, AAFM provided support to the new Local Purchasing Incentive by helping schools track and report their local food purchases.



Courtesy of Stepping Stones Children's Center

Gen. Fund

\$171,875



Private Donation

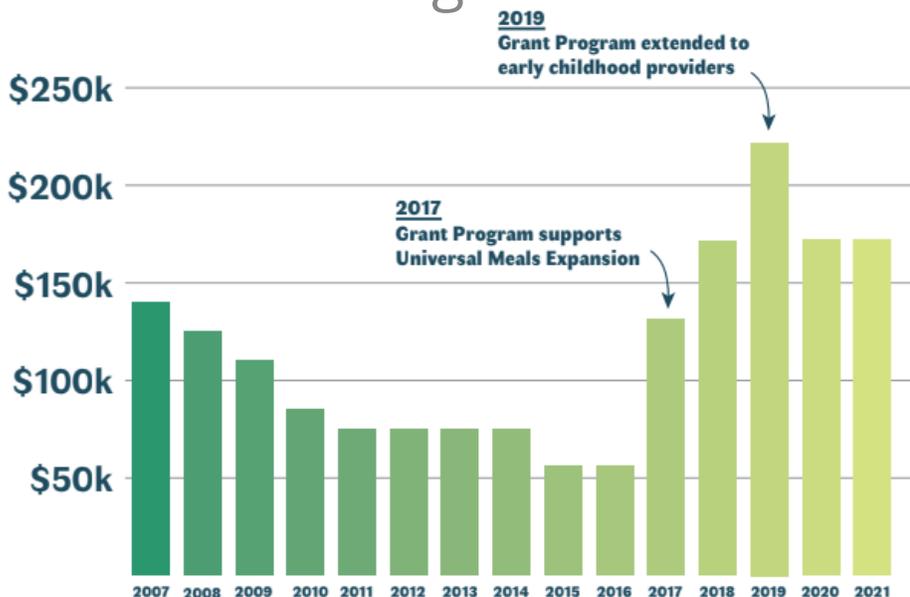
\$20,000

Program Expenses



- 26% FTSEC Grants
- 18% Vision Grant
- 18% FTS Institute Support
- 15% Technical Assistance
- 10% CSA Grants
- 7% ECE Workshops
- 6% Grant Coaches

Annual Funding



In fiscal year 2021, the farm to school and early childhood program provided over \$100,000 in grants to 9 schools and 30 ECEs throughout the state. The remainder of the program funds were awarded to non-profit partners and grant coaches, who provide critical support to grantees through mentorship and technical assistance.

211

Early
Childhood
Education

Providers &

Schools have

received support
from these annual
grant programs



Farm to School & Early Childhood Grant

The FTSEC 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 expert assistance supports the development of holistic and sustainable programs.



Courtesy of Stepping Stones Children's Center

In 2021, AAFM received 14 applications for the FTSEC grant, with a total request of \$145,000. Five applicants were awarded grants, including one supervisory union, one elementary school, and three early childhood education providers. In total, grantees received \$55,000 in grant funds and \$43,000 worth of coaching and technical assistance.

Community Supported Agriculture Grant

The CSA grant subsidizes the cost of CSA or farm shares for early childhood education providers. Thirty grants were awarded in 2021, which benefited over 1,000 children and 23 Vermont farms. The CSA grant replaced AAFM's Infrastructure Grant, which in 2020 received 21 applications

"There were so many parts of our organization that were impacted by this grant. One thing that I am especially excited about is the connection we were able to make with a local farm. This was a contact that I did not have prior to utilizing this grant and it is a connection that I believe will greatly impact both of us as well as ongoing projects surrounding food access and education within our classrooms."

46	Applications
30	Awards
\$33,529	Requested
\$22,412	Awarded
\$750	Avg. Award
\$27,275	Farm Revenue



Farm to School Vision Grant

The intent of the Farm to School Vision Grant is to support innovative and impactful ideas in farm to school programming that can be scaled and/or replicated. Out of ten highly competitive applications, AAFM awarded the 2021 Vision Grant (\$37,800) to South Hero Land Trust.

Project Summary

The focus of South Hero Land Trust's project is to explore the integration of anti-racist education with farm to school and nature-based programs at Folsom Educational and Community Center. Using the lenses of storytelling, art, music, agriculture, food, and land stewardship, students and teachers will engage with the stories and experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in Vermont.



Courtesy of South Hero Land Trust

Additional Initiatives and Support

Farm to Early Childhood

In 2020, AAFM and Shelburne Farms received a grant of \$90,900 to begin the work of building a farm to early childhood coalition in the state. This work is part of a broader effort to provide more support to early educators and Vermont's youngest citizens. Ages 0-5 are critical periods for brain development and exposure to nutritious local food and healthy eating habits at these young ages can have lifelong impacts. That fact is one of the reasons AAFM decided to offer the CSA grant. It's also behind AAFM's financial support for the Farm to Early Childhood Workshop Series.

Local Purchasing Incentive Support

AAFM received a grant from the US Department of Agriculture in 2020 to help Vermont schools improve their ability to track and report their local food purchases. This active grant continues to provide critical support to the State's new Local Purchasing Incentive Grant by helping address issues of equity, and reducing the overall burden on schools.

Farm to School Institute Support

Five Vermont schools who attended VT FEED's Northeast Farm to School Institute received support from AAFM in 2021. Each received a \$5,000 grant after completing the institute, as well as help from a farm to school coach who will support them throughout the year.