



# Working Lands Enterprise Fund: Investment for Transformative Impact

**The Vermont Working Lands Coalition urges the legislature to appropriate \$3 million to the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative in the FY'26 Budget.**

## **Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) Mission:**

The Vermont WLEB unites state, non-profit and private sector leadership to invest in creative economic development in Vermont's working landscape by making essential, catalytic investments in critical leverage points of the Vermont farm and forest economy, from individual enterprises to industry sectors.

## **Act 142 – the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative**

The Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Investment Bill was passed by the legislature in 2012 and signed by Gov. Shumlin as Act 142. The bill created the Working Landscape Enterprise Fund and the Working Lands Enterprise Board, which oversees the Fund (Working Lands Enterprise Initiative). The initiative stimulates economic development in Vermont's agriculture and forest products sectors by systematically advancing entrepreneurship, business development, and job creation.

## **Investment Areas**

Grants directly support **working lands businesses** with strategic investments that influence their value chain, create jobs, boost sales, support worker wellbeing, adapt to climate change, increase production, and preserve or increase working lands acreage.

**Service provider** grants for technical assistance to support Vermont working lands businesses as they grow, pivot, and adapt to the ever-changing marketplace, or prepare for new capital investment or an intergenerational transfer.

**Producer association** and **trade show assistance** grants for support with technical assistance, marketing, research, development, and for promoting products at out-of-state trade shows.

*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 economy.*

## The Working Lands Enterprise Fund:

- Creates **jobs** in working lands enterprises
- Keeps **young entrepreneurs** in Vermont
- Builds **new markets** for value-added products
- Increases **capacity** for in-state production
- Leverages **more investment** for growing enterprises

## The Working Lands Enterprise Initiative Gets Results!

### In twelve years, WLEB has:

- Funded **555** agriculture and forestry projects
- Distributed over **\$18.8** million in WLEF funding
- Leveraged **\$30.9** million in matching funds
- Benefited all **14** Vermont counties!

### In 2024 alone, WLEB:

- Received over **\$16** million in requests from **345** applicants
- Awarded over **\$3** million to **65** grantees
- Leveraged **\$6.3** million in matching funds
- Benefited all **14** Vermont counties



### Working Lands Coalition Partners:

Cabot Creamery Cooperative | Center for an Agricultural Economy | The Intervale | NOFA Vermont | Preservation Trust of Vermont | Shelburne Farms | Vermont Association of Conservation Districts | Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies | Vermont Community Loan Fund | Vermont Council on Rural Development | Vermont Farm Bureau | Vermont Land Trust | Vermont Natural Resources Council | Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund and Farm to Plate | Vermont Woodlands Association | The Woodstock Foundation