



Working Lands Enterprise Initiative

House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry

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Vision

Our shared working landscape is the foundation of Vermont's evolving culture, vibrant economies, healthy ecosystems, and sense of place.

Mission

To make strategic investments and develop policy recommendations that support a resilient and sustainable farm, food, and forest economy in Vermont.



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Program Strategies

1. **Strengthen working lands business viability and resiliency by providing access to capital.**
2. Increase working lands business's knowledge, skills, and profitability by investing in an array of business support services.
3. Increase investments and business supports to historically underserved and/or marginalized communities by reducing barriers to submitting successful grant applications.
4. Improve the operating environment for VT's agriculture and forestry businesses by serving as a credible and trusted voice to raise awareness and collaborate with partners about laws, regulations, and policies that impact working lands businesses.

Operational Metrics

- Funds requested/number of applications
- Funds awarded/number of projects awarded
- Dollar amount of matching funds planned/spent
- Total number of acres in active forestry or agricultural use by business grantees
- Total number of people employed by business grantees
- Total annual sales of business grantees
- Average number of hours spent by business grant applicants on completing the application
- Percent of grant recipients who are first-time grantees
- Percent of applications completed by someone other than an owner or employee of applicant organization
- Number of projects within each award size range
- Number of businesses receiving services through WLEI service provider and producer association grants and/or contracts
- Number of service provider organizations funded
- Number of producer associations funded

Metrics can be analyzed by county, sector, grant year, business type/size/length of operation.

Data is collected in the grant application.

Impact of FY25 WLEI Business Enhancement Grantees on the Landscape



1,524

Acres Stewarded



\$12,200,000

Annual Sales Revenue



146

People Employed



76%

First time grantees

Performance Metrics for Business Grants

Overall business satisfaction

- Improved business outlook, Perceived overall positive impact of grant

Income

- Increased gross income, Increased net income

Jobs and labor efficiency

- Jobs added, Improved labor efficiency

Production

- Increased production

Land

- Improved land management, Increased acres in production

Worker wellbeing

- Improved workplace conditions, Improved owner/employee benefits, Improved workforce development, Increased wages

Improved supply chain impact

Improved climate adaptation

Improved engagement, equity, and equality

For each metric, grantees identify whether or not there was an increase and how much the increase was.

For each metric, grantees identify to what extent (1-5 scale) they feel the WLEI grant influenced the outcome and provide a brief description of the grant impact.

Data is collected in the final grant report.

FY 2025 Preliminary Satisfaction Outcomes for Business Grants

57%

Improved overall positive outlook on their business

86%

Satisfied or very satisfied with the outlook on their business after the grant

100%

Satisfied or very satisfied with the impact of the grant on their business

“I feel like I understand my land more deeply. I’m also really excited about the diverse array of crops we have been able to grow and will be able to grow starting next year and beyond. Laying this crucial foundation with the support of this grant has been deeply impactful.”

- FY25 Business Enhancement Grantee

FY 2025 Preliminary Income Outcomes for Business Grants

57%

Increased gross and net income

10%-74%

Range of increase in gross income over the grant period

100%

Income increases related to grant work

“During the grant period (2025-2026) compared to the same period in 2024-2025, we experienced a 13% increase in gross sales, reflecting early impacts of improved efficiency and our ability to better meet customer needs.”

- FY25 Business Enhancement Grantee

FY 2025 Preliminary Labor Outcomes for Business Grants

8

Jobs added

100%

Jobs added were related to grant work

79%

Improved labor efficiency

91%

Labor efficiency improvements were related to grant work

FY 2025 Preliminary Production Outcomes for Business Grants

71%

Increased production

10-24%

Most common increase in production

40%

Increased production by at least 25%

100%

Production increases related to grant work

FY 2025 Preliminary Land Outcomes

21%

Brought new
acres into
production

20

Acres brought into
ag/forestry
production

100%

Acres brought into
production related
to grant work

FY 2025 Preliminary Worker Wellbeing Outcomes

79%

Improved workplace safety and/or conditions

7%

Expanded owner/employee benefits

21%

Implemented workforce development activities

50%

Increased wages

100%

Workplace improvements due to grant

100%

Expanded benefits due to grant

66%

Workforce development activities due to grant

86%

Increased wages due to grant

FY 2025 Climate Adaptation Outcomes

50%

Implemented
climate adaptation
activities

100%

Climate
adaptation
activities related
to grant

We chose to expand our planting and vineyard development on [this property] in direct response to losing product at our other vineyards in the frost event of 2023.

- FY25 Business Enhancement
Grantee



WLEI Program Demand

Fiscal Year	Funds Available	Funds Requested	High Scoring Requests
2026	\$1,000,000	\$6,091,279	\$4,572,904
2025	\$1,000,000	\$5,372,191	\$3,927,948
2024	\$3,150,000	\$16,187,156	\$8,982,700
2023	\$2,000,000	\$10,575,516	N/A
2022	\$5,594,000	\$10,109,747	N/A
2021	\$594,000	\$2,043,716	N/A
2020	\$1,594,000	\$5,015,147	N/A
2019	\$700,000	\$1,178,287	N/A
2018	\$694,000	\$1,902,316	N/A



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Data Notes

- Data is based on **preliminary** analysis of FY25 Business Enhancement Grantees as of May 2026.
- 14/17 grantees are represented (3 have not submitted final report yet).
- Scale for relationship of impact to WLEI grant is 1-5, 1 being 'Not at all' and 5 being 'Completely.' Anything above a 1 is counted as related to WLEI grant.
- Scale for positive outlook on future of business is 1-5, 1 being 'Very unsatisfied' and 5 being 'Very satisfied.'
- Income data is measured through multiple choice questions and therefore cannot be averaged. It is intended to be an estimate because a true pre/post analysis would require significant resources from both WLEI staff and grantees to complete accurately.
- Many grant projects do not show the full scale of impacts at the time of the final report – it can take years for all impacts to come to fruition.