

VERMONT FARM & FOREST VIABILITY PROGRAM

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

2025

ANNUAL

REPORT





LETTER TO THE VERMONT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Dear Members of the General Assembly,

We are proud to present you with the Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report for the Farm & Forest Viability Program and the Rural Economic Development Initiative. These programs, run by the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board with the ongoing support of this body, have been able to provide over 1100 farmers and forest-based businesses with high-quality, outcome-driven business assistance over the past 23 years.

The businesses and community groups you see featured in this report are making huge contributions to a vibrant, thriving rural economy. They are growing food for local schools, milling local timber to build ADA accessible trails, winning national awards for farmstead cheeses, stewarding land, attracting young people to the state, and keeping dollars circulating locally.

In FY25, the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program worked hard to support these entrepreneurs as they navigated an uncertain economy, two years of flooding followed by a drought, and rising costs of doing business. Despite these challenges, we've seen significant successes with participants, including young farm families accessing land, working lands businesses increasing profitability and long-term sustainability. Through our Rural Economic Development Initiative, we supported small communities to increase rural childcare availability, expand local meat and maple processing, and rehabilitate libraries and community centers.

Our deepest thanks to the Vermont Legislature for your ongoing support for these programs. Stable, consistent state funding has allowed the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program and the Rural Economic Development Initiative to thrive as statewide and national models of effective, collaborative community-based economic development. We hope the stories and data in this report demonstrate the many ways that communities are taking care of each other and supporting a thriving Vermont.



HILLSIDE FARM
Albany

ANSON TEBBETS
Secretary of Agriculture,
Food, and Markets



DANIELLE FITZKO
Commissioner of Forests,
Parks, and Recreation



GUS SEELIG
Vermont Housing & Conservation
Board Executive Director



**STARGRAZER FARM &
LIBERTY ORCHARD**
Brookfield



VON TRAPP FARMSTEAD
Waitsfield

2025 IMPACT AT A GLANCE

BUSINESS VITALITY

110 farm, food, and forest enterprises developed long-term plans while building skills in financial management and business planning. Clients increased their sales by an average of \$52,000 and 82% added jobs.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We provided grant-writing and technical assistance services to 61 rural municipalities and working lands businesses, resulting in nearly \$12.2 M accessed so far to advance their projects.

GRANT-MAKING FOR RESILIENCE

50 grants, totaling over \$840,000 and leveraging over \$3.2M, were awarded to farm, food, and forest producers to increase local food access, adapt to climate change, and meet clean water goals.

FARMLAND ACCESS & SUCCESSION

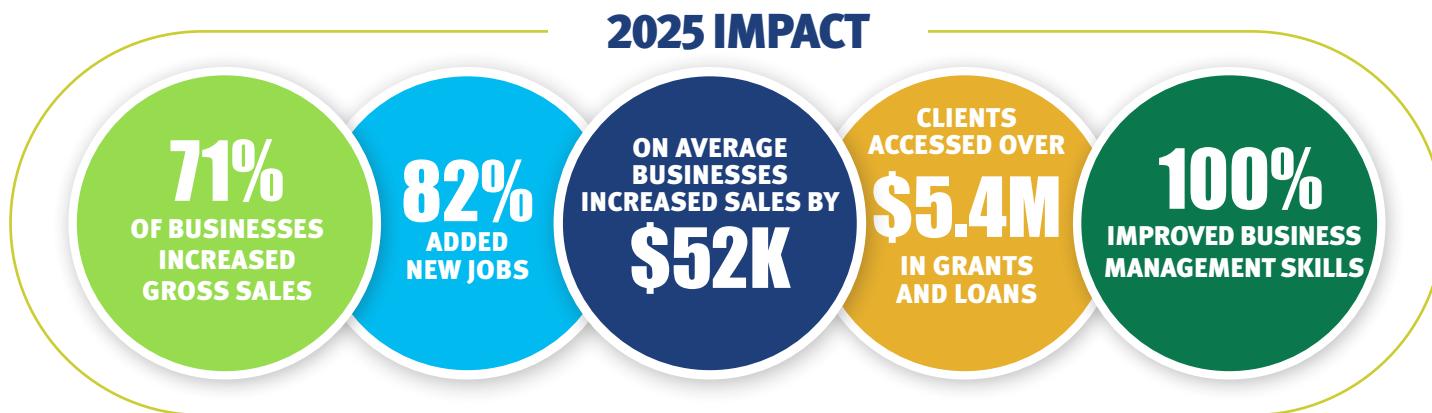
78% of farm transfer planning clients reported that their business will continue because of participating in the Farm & Forest Viability Program.

CLIMATE CHANGE & FLOOD RECOVERY

After extreme weather patterns including devastating floods in 2023-2024 and severe drought in 2025, we supported businesses in assessing climate-resilient crop-plans, accessing emergency funding, and moving operations away from flood-prone areas.

FARM & FOREST BUSINESS VITALITY

Farm and forest-based businesses are vital to our state's economy. The food system and forest products industry together create over \$12 billion in economic output annually. Most of these businesses are small to mid-scale and are working in their communities to steward land. The Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program works to strengthen these businesses for the long term by providing in-depth, individualized business assistance that helps to strengthen the local food and forest economy. In 2025, the businesses we worked with **improved profitability, diversified their operations, advanced their management skills, reduced stress on farm managers, and made key changes to adapt to climate and extreme weather.**



Successfully implementing business and transfer plans is key, and the Farm & Forest Viability Program provides small grants to recent participants to ensure that they can undertake critical projects. In 2025, we made **27 grants** to recent program participants **totaling \$198,109** that will lead to increased local food sales, improved efficiency, and adaptation to changing climate and market conditions.

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

The VT Farm & Forest Viability Program is a network of organizations using a shared program model to deliver in-depth business assistance. Partners include the Center for an Agricultural Economy, The Intervale Center, Land for Good, NOFA-VT, and UVM Extension.

In 2025, the Viability Program also supported beginning farmers, land access, and other business assistance provided by the Healthy Roots Collaborative, Food Connects, the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, Northeast Forests, and the Vermont Land Trust.

FOOTE BROOK FARM Johnson

Tony and Joie Lehouillier of Foote Brook Farm in Johnson have built a strong community following since starting their farm in 1997. After severe flooding in 2023 and again in 2024, they turned to the Viability Program for recovery support. Working with NOFA-VT advisors, they planned for long-term climate resilience, refined their costs of production, and strengthened their financial planning.



“Participating in this program has given us more confidence that we can get through the struggle of recovering from a devastating flood. We have more peace of mind and a feeling that there are folks who care that care about our Vermont farms. We now have some solid measuring tools and feel more in control of our business.”

~ Tony and Joie Lehouillier
Foote Brook Farm

VERMONT HEAVY TIMBER Huntington

Vermont Heavy Timber enrolled in the Farm & Forest Viability Program to strengthen its specialized timber-framing business. With support from advisor Chris Lindgren, the company secured a \$50,000 WLEB grant that will fund a new drying shed—key infrastructure for growth. In their second year of the program, owner Miles Jenness continues to work on a partnership and employee-ownership transition, positioning the business for long-term stability, shared value, and deeper community impact.



ROCKBOTTOM FARM Strafford

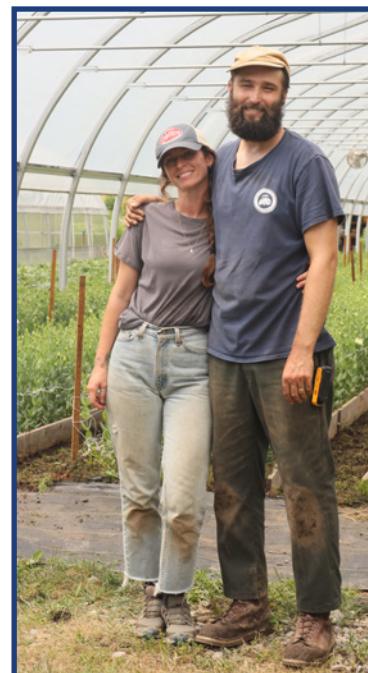
Earl Ransom and Amy Huyffer of Rockbottom Dairy and Strafford Organic Creamery have spent decades building their dairy business, launching a creamery, and sustaining a strong grass-based operation. Now, the family is working on a long-term plan to transfer the business to their son, Jackson, with the help of Mike Ghia of Land For Good. Together, they're working through legal steps and efficiency improvements to ensure a smooth, successful transition to the next generation.



ADVANCING FARMLAND ACCESS & TRANSFER

One of the main challenges facing new farmers is access to affordable farmland. We know that around 40% of Vermont's farms are owned by retirement-age farmers, and of those, most do not have identified successors. Supporting farm succession, transfer planning, and land access is a major priority for our program. Since the program's start, about a third of participants have engaged in planning for an eventual farm transfer. In FY25, almost 80% of transfer planning participants reported that the farm will continue to operate.

With support from the program, June Farm accessed new farmland in Charlotte and Dodd Farm transferred their dairy to the next generation.



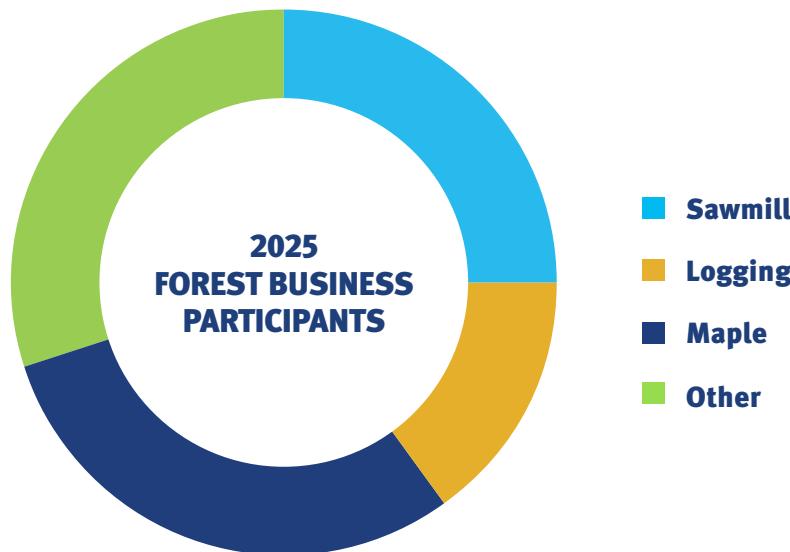
JUNE FARM Charlotte

June Farm, a flower farm originally in Burlington's flood-impacted Intervale, enrolled in the Farm & Forest Viability Program to navigate land access challenges and relocate their farm to a 60-acre conserved property in Charlotte. With support from advisor Sam Smith, the farmers refined their business plan, created 2025 projections and budgets, and worked through the complexities of moving and scaling their operation. The program's guidance strengthened their transition and positioned the farm for long-term stability on conserved land.

STRENGTHENING THE FOREST ECONOMY

Vermont's forests are crucial for our quality of life, wildlife habitat, water quality and stormwater management, and climate adaptation and mitigation. The Farm & Forest Viability Program offers two forest economy initiatives. For forest-based businesses including small sawmills, loggers, woodworkers, and timber framers, we provide individualized business coaching to create business plans, increase management skills, and support sustainably scaled harvesting.

We also offer long-term succession planning for forest landowners. Over the past three years, in a collaborative project with the Vermont Woodlands Association, Vermont Coverts, the Vermont Environmental Mediation Center, Vermont Natural Resources Council, and Redstart Forestry we reached over 186 forest landowners with land transfer education that aims to reduce forest fragmentation.



BEST WOOD CUSTOM SAWING Putney

Through the Farm & Forest Viability Program, Jon Williams and Mariah Perkins worked with UVM Extension advisors Chris Lindgren and Sally Burke to plan the expansion of their sawmill, Best Wood Custom Sawing. They received a grant from the program to help implement their business plan, which enabled construction of a year-round millwork shop and supported Mariah's transition from part-time to full-time work as the business grows.



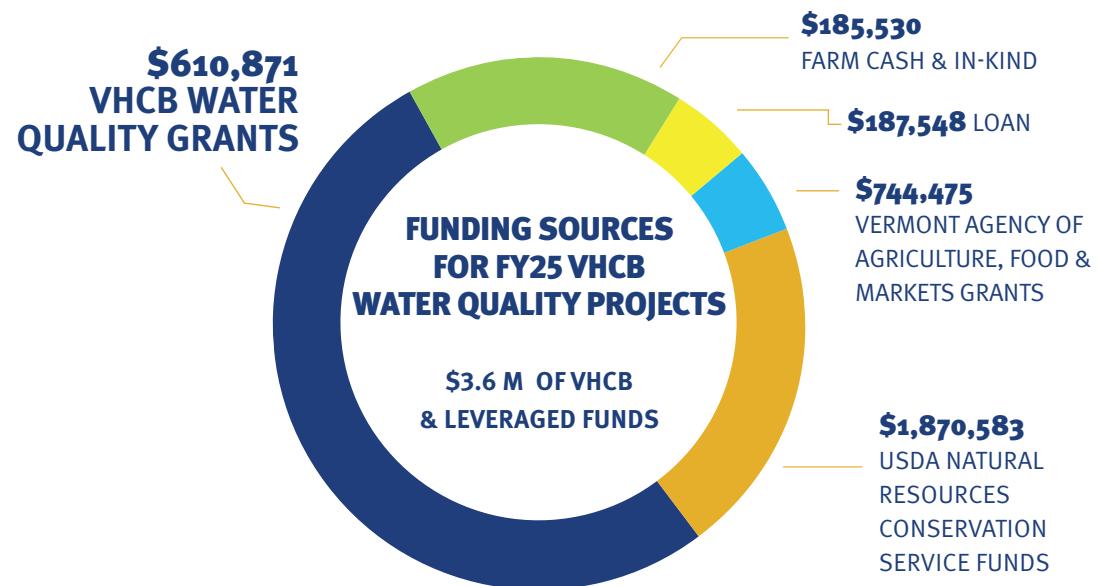
GRASS CATTLE COMPANY Charlotte

Steve Schubart, a first-generation farmer in Charlotte, rotationally grazes Black Angus/Wagyu cattle on his 161-acre farm and leased land. After participating in business planning with the Farm & Forest Viability Program, Steve kept up his commitment to protecting soil and water and secured a Water Quality Grant in 2024 with VAAFM Best Management Practices co-funding. With it, he built a hoop-covered concrete pad for a bedded pack system to house animals in the winter. This project improves an area that was vulnerable to runoff and will allow future nutrient recycling through composted manure.



INVESTING IN ON-FARM WATER QUALITY

The Farm & Forest Viability Program provides water quality improvement grants to farm businesses through the State of Vermont's Clean Water Budget. These grants complement investments by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFM). This funding results in decreased runoff and better soil health, improved production and herd health, increased on-farm safety, and long-term viability of farm businesses. In 2025, this program made \$610,871 in awards to 16 businesses and leveraged an additional \$2.9 million of other funding sources. Since 2017, the program has awarded over \$5.4 million in Water Quality Grants.



COMMUNITY GARDENS FOR LOCAL FOOD AND RESILIENCE

Everyone deserves access to food and nature. The Farm & Forest Viability Program is partnering with the Land Access & Opportunity Board and VHCB's affordable housing program to make grants to community and collective gardens to enhance local food access and strengthen connections with land. In 2025, we made seven grants to organizations with a focus on historically underserved communities, which will support 17 existing gardens and 5 new gardens. These projects will create agricultural education for youth, reinvigorate outdoor spaces for community members to gather and grow food for each other, and provide free food for underserved communities.

Cathedral Square Corp. – Expansion of the existing Whitcomb Woods Garden to include new raised garden beds.

Champlain Housing Trust – Supplies and materials for sustained support of 14 existing community gardens.

Conscious Homestead – Support for the 2025 season of the Flying Fish Gardening Collective and their free food shares.

Downstreet Housing & Community Development – Development of a new community garden at Johnson Community's shared green space.

Richard Kemp Center – Creation of a new garden in Burlington's Old North End to provide garden and food production programming for Black youth.

Vermont Community Garden Network – Staffing and support for garden programming at The Family Room in Burlington and statewide affordable housing sites.

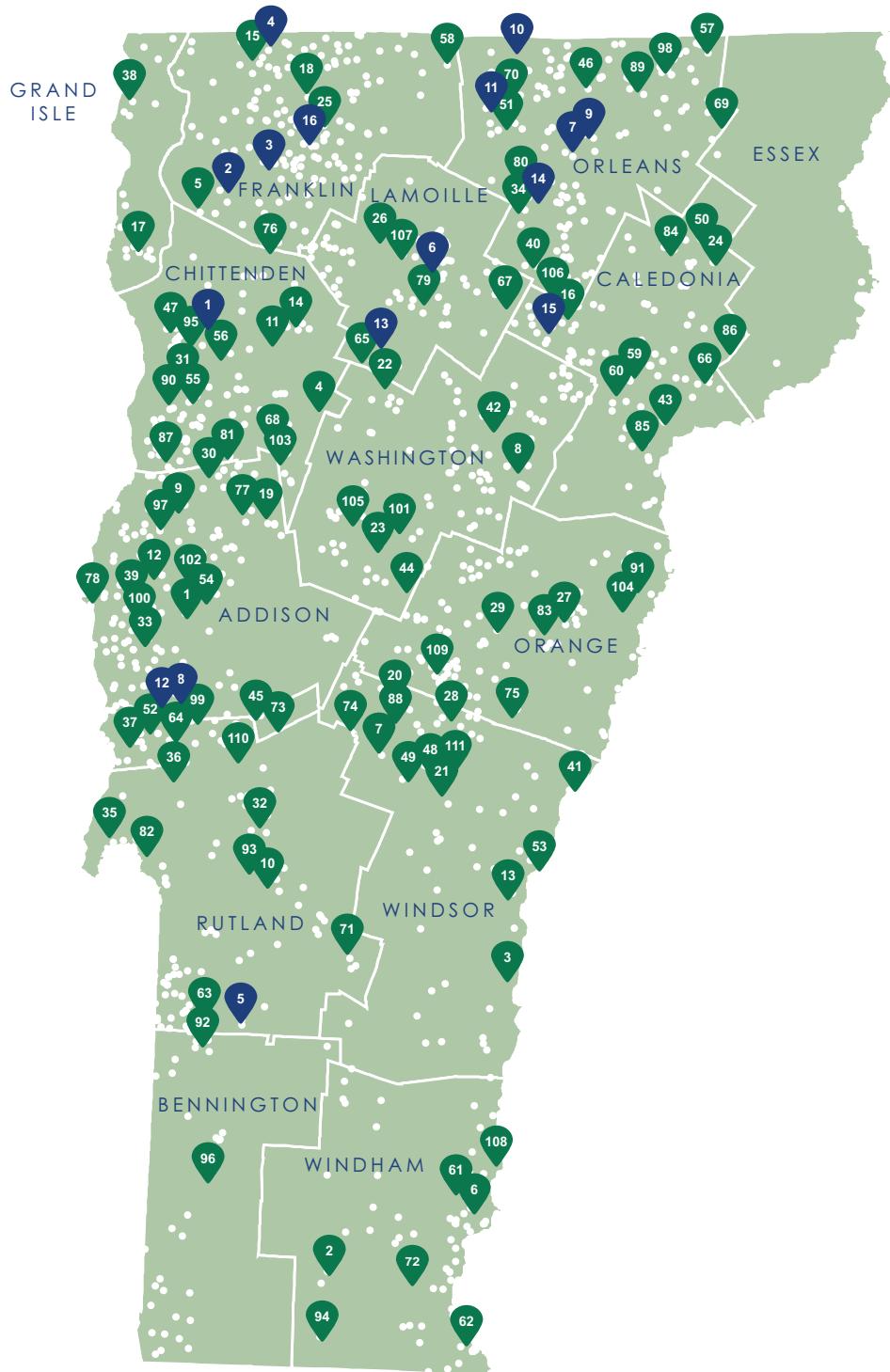
Windham & Windsor Housing Trust – Expansion of community gardens to three additional affordable housing communities.



VIABILITY CLIENTS & IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS

1. ACORN Food Hub
2. Adams Family Farm
3. Ascutney Harvest
4. Bear Island Forestry
5. Bearded Ladies Goat Farm
6. Best Wood Custom Sawing §
7. Birdsong Farm §
8. Blackbird Organics *
9. Blue House Mushroom
10. Boardman Hill Farm *
11. Bone Mountain Farm
12. Briggs Farm *
13. Cedar Mountain Farm
14. Chamberlin's Farm §
15. Choiniere Family Farm §
16. Clair-A-Den Farm/Kingdom Creamery
17. Crimson Clover Family Farm
18. Dodd Farm
19. Dunham Family Maple *
20. Earthwise Farm & Forest
21. Fable Farm Fermentory *§
22. Fibonacci Acres
23. Field Stone Farm and CSA §
24. Firefly Farm at Burke Hollow §
25. Flack Family Farm §
26. Foote Brook Farm
27. Fort Waite Farm
28. Four Springs Farm
29. Free Verse Farm
30. Full Belly Farm
31. FUNJ Shrooming Company §
32. Gagnon Lumber Inc.
33. Long Cloud Farm
34. Goodridge Lumber Inc.
35. Granite Grains
36. Green & Gold CSA §
37. Hall and Breen Farm §
38. Happy Bird Poultry
39. Harrison's Homegrown
40. Hillside Homestead
41. Honey Field Farm
42. Hoolie Flats
43. Houde Family Farm
44. Howrigan Family Farm
45. Ice House Farm
46. JASA Family Farm *
47. June Farm §
48. La Garagista
49. La Montañuela
50. Langlais Family Tree Farm §
51. Latraverse *§
52. Lazy Dog Farm *
53. Lemax Farm
54. Lincoln Peak Vineyard §
55. Maille Dairy *
56. Mama's Farm
57. Maple Cedar View Farm
58. Mayo's Maple Farm
59. McDonald Farm
60. McDonald Farmstand §
61. Milkweed Farm
62. Miller Farm
63. Moon Flower Farm
64. Mountain Meadows Farm
65. Nebraska Knoll Sugar Farm
66. NEK Grains
67. New Grass Farmstead *
68. New Tradition Farm
69. New Venture Farm *
70. O'Donnell Farm *
71. Papa John's Sugar Shack
72. Rebop Farm
73. Republic of Vermont
74. Robeth Holsteins
75. Rockbottom Farm *
76. Rocky Hill Farm
77. Russell Farm
78. Rusty John Farm *
79. Salvation Farms §
80. Saxton Valley Goat Dairy
81. Sayre Fields and Shrubby
82. Sheldon Farm *
83. Shepherd Moon Farm *
84. Solinsky Farm §
85. Somers Family Farm
86. South Kirby Creamery
87. Sparrowhawk Farm
88. Stitchdown Farm *
89. Sugar House Farm
90. Sustainable Solar Grazing §
91. Sweet Cow Yogurt §
92. Sykes Hollow Land and Livestock
93. Tell a Tale Farm
94. The Corse Farm Dairy *
95. The Simmering Bone
96. The Sole Connection Farm
97. Thornhill Farm §
98. Top Notch Holsteins *
99. Triple K Farm
100. Understory Farm §
101. Union Brook Farm §
102. Valley Clayplain Forest Farm
103. Vermont Heavy Timber §
104. Verse River Logging
105. Von Trapp Farmstead §
106. W.L. Chidsey Farm
107. Waterman Orchards
108. Westminster Wagyu Farms §
109. Wild Earth Farm
110. Woods Market Garden
111. Yeoman Joinery §

VIABILITY WATER QUALITY GRANTS



1. Belter Family Farm Partnership
2. Blackmore Farms
3. Brandon Enterprises LLC *
4. Choiniere Valley Farm
5. Dorset Peak Sheep & Cattle Co.
6. Lanphear Farm
7. Covered Bridge Farm
8. M & L Dairy
9. Mar-Jo Acres
10. McCarthy Farm
11. O'Donnell Farm *
12. Richville Farm *
13. Ryan Percy *
14. Saxton Valley Goat Dairy
15. Snug Valley Farm
16. Stony Pond Farm

● *Viability Program Participants (2025)*

● *Viability Program Grantees (2025)*

○ *Past Viability Program Participants & Grantees (1,000+)a*

§ *received Implementation Grant*

* *conserved*

COMMUNITY RECOVERY & RESILIENCE IN HARDWICK

After back-to-back years of catastrophic flooding, the Town of Hardwick focused on turning recovery into long-term resilience, prioritizing infrastructure protection while preserving a connected, vibrant downtown. With REDI support in 2025, the town successfully accessed \$1.65 million to replace the Village's central pedestrian bridge, increase flood storage capacity in the commercial district and prevent future damage, and support long-term flood mitigation planning for the downtown.



"Staff capacity is among the biggest challenges that we face. The ability to bring in a consultant who has dedicated time, as well as specialized experience and skills, enabled us to access support for important projects that would otherwise have been beyond our reach."

~ Tracy Martin
Town of Hardwick

SALVATION FARMS Morrisville

With REDI support, Salvation Farms secured multiple funding sources, including a \$469,621 Northern Border Regional Commission grant to expand its impact in partnership with the Center for an Agricultural Economy. Together, they will expand processing capacity for surplus produce, strengthening farmer livelihoods and access to local food.



RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

\$1,270,477  **\$35,512,800**

REDI FUNDS SINCE 2017

GRANTS TO COMMUNITIES

Return on Investment: 26:1

The Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) helps Vermont's small communities access complex funding sources to strengthen the working lands sector, support community revitalization, and expand outdoor recreation opportunities. REDI provides grant-writing and technical assistance to towns and organizations with limited staff capacity or experience, enabling communities to pursue investments that build economic and community resilience. Since REDI's inception in 2017, the program has secured \$35.5 million for small communities, with an average grant award of \$338,000. In 2025, REDI assisted 61 communities and working lands businesses. So far, twenty of those have secured \$12.1 million in grants. This includes several towns seeking one-time federal disaster recovery grants, who, with support from REDI, successfully secured \$7.65 million.

In 2025, REDI also engaged in statewide initiatives focused on rural capacity, including disaster recovery and the Vermont Evaluation of Rural Technical Assistance (VERTA). MTAP also enabled a coordinated network of Vermont technical assistance providers to deliver wraparound services to communities in need. VERTA produced a research report, statewide summit, and recommendations to strengthen Vermont's technical assistance system.

FUNDED PROJECTS IN 2025

Canaan – \$449,044 Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) grant for Canaan Naturally Connected to renovate a historic church into an ADA-accessible community center.

Corinth – \$150,000 VT Community Development Program (VCDP) Access Modification Grant to build an ADA-accessible entrance for the historic town hall.

Cornwall – \$100,000 Kendall Foundation grant for cold storage modernization at Sunrise Orchard's, supporting access to local apples for Vermont schools.

Craftsbury – \$1,000,000 NBRC grant for Craftsbury Saplings to develop an expanded childcare facility.

Hardwick – \$1,200,000 Disaster Recovery Community Development Block Grant (CDBG-DR) for the town to restore the Hardwick Confluence floodplain and a **\$250,000 CDBG DR Planning Grant** for flood mitigation.

Hardwick – \$200,000 Downtown Transportation Fund Grant to restore a pedestrian bridge destroyed by flooding.

Lamoille County – \$1,000,000 CDBG-DR Planning Grant for the Lamoille Co. Planning Commission to advance regional flood-mitigation and resiliency.

Lyndonville – \$50,000 USDA Regional Food Business Center grant for Asian Homestyle Cooking LLC to expand with new processing equipment.

Middletown Springs – \$1,293,384 US Dept. of Treasury/ARPA award for the Middletown Springs Public Library to renovate and upgrade infrastructure.

Morrisville – \$3,200,000 CDBG-DR grant to upgrade and restore municipal water infrastructure for flood resilience.

Morrisville – \$469,621 NBRC award for Salvation Farms to establish an expanded surplus crop processing center.

Orange – \$100,000 NBRC grant for Sage Mountain Botanicals to conduct a feasibility study for expanding childcare and outdoor recreation infrastructure.

Norwich – \$100,000 Paul Bruhn Grant to support the renovation of the Norwich Grange Hall into a vibrant multi-generational gathering place focused on food, the arts, and cultural programs.

Orwell – \$197,000 USDA Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) for Stonewood Turkey Farm to expand value-added turkey product sales into 12 new states.

Panton – \$202,738 USDA VAPG for Monti Verdi Salumi / Agricola Farm to expand cured meat production.

Plainfield - \$48,855 USDA Regional Food Business Center grant for Tamarack Hollow Farm to expand radicchio production and improve post-harvest efficiency.

Waitsfield – \$158,876 VT Agriculture Development Grant for 5th Quarter to triple the size of their production and co-packing space and support local farmers.

Waterbury Village – \$2,000,000 CDBG-DR grant to advance the Randall Meadow floodplain mitigation project.

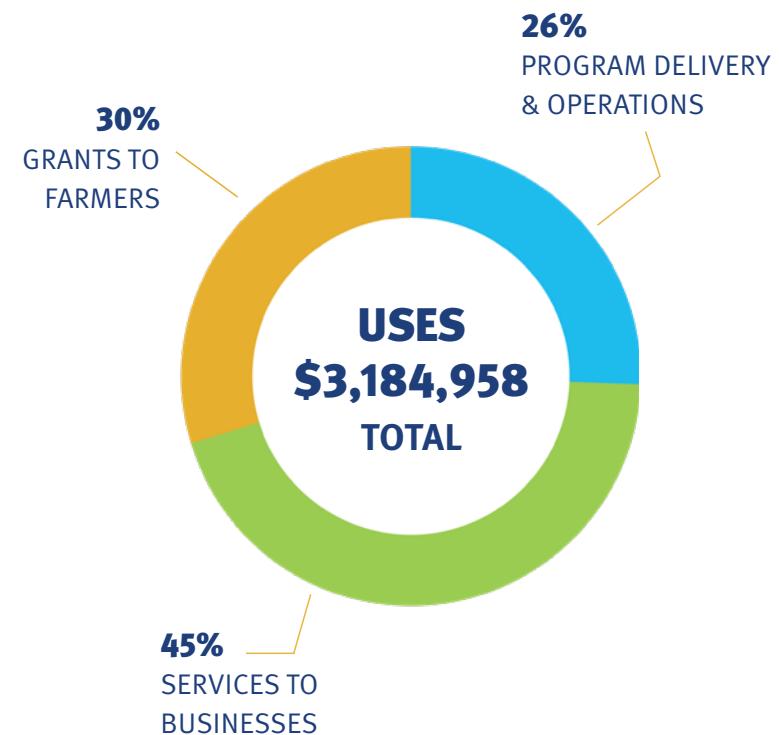
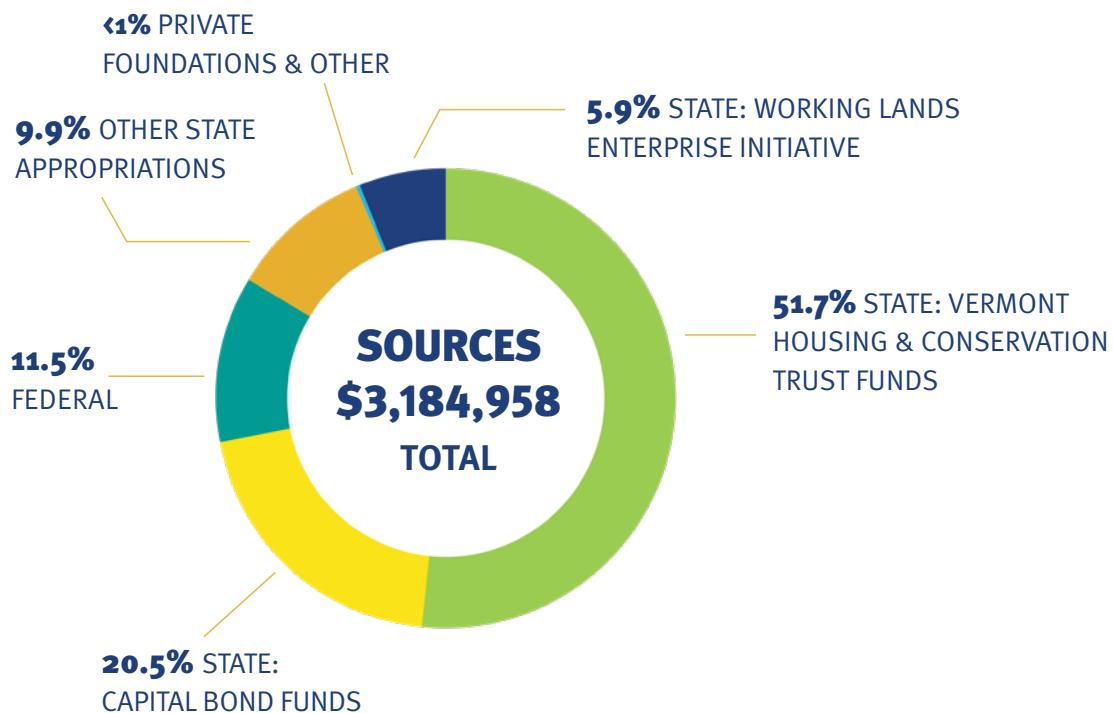
Woodstock – \$63,302 USDA Regional Food Business Center grant for The Mackenzie, Inc. to expand value-added production of premium granulated maple sugar.

FY2025 FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

In FY25, the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program expended \$3.18 million, with 12% coming from federal and private funding sources.

This program is funded through the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board. In FY25, the Farm & Forest Viability Program also utilized funding from USDA Rural Development's Community Facilities and Rural Business Development Grant programs, the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board, VT Agency of Administration's Municipal Technical Assistance Program, US Small Business Administration, and the United States Forest Service.

This report is produced by the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, in collaboration with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets pursuant to V.S.A. § 4710(f) & 10 V.S.A. § 325m(g).



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