



Mountain Village School

VERMONT FARM TO SCHOOL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

FISCAL YEAR 2024 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

FEBRUARY 2025



AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND MARKETS



Thetford Academy



Neck of the Woods



Savage Gardens



Charleston Elementary



White River Valley School



White River Valley School



Mountain Village School

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROGRAM OVERVIEW.....	P. 4
FARM TO SCHOOL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD CAPACITY BUILDING GRANT.....	P. 8
FARM TO SCHOOL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD VISION GRANT.....	P. 10
FARM TO SCHOOL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE GRANT...	P. 12
RELATED EFFORTS.....	P. 14



Program History

The Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Program was created in 2006 with the passage by the Vermont legislature of the Roza McLaughlin Farm to School Act.

The intent of the program is to “execute, administer, and award local grants for the purpose of helping Vermont schools develop farm-to-school programs that will sustain relationships with local farmers and producers, enrich the educational experience of students, improve the health of Vermont children, and enhance Vermont’s agricultural economy” (6 V.S.A. § 4721).

Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant Program Goals:

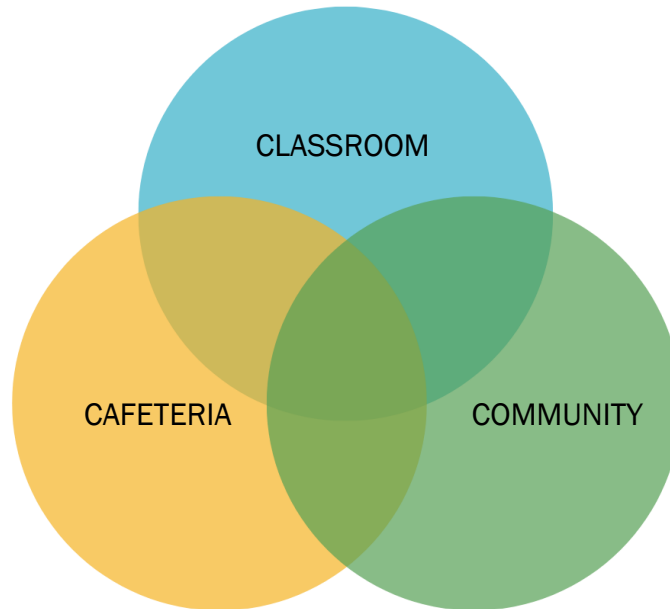
The Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant Program enhances educational experiences for Vermont youth, improves child nutrition, and strengthens the local agricultural economy through the following funding opportunities:

- **Farm to School and Early Childhood Capacity Building Grant:** Developing and sustaining robust farm to school programs
- **Farm to School and Early Childhood Vision Grant:** Amplifying innovative projects that promote youth leadership and community engagement
- **Farm to School and Early Childhood Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Grant:** Promoting child nutrition and community connection

This combination of funding opportunities allows the program to tailor support for the varied needs of the Vermont educational community—from family childcare programs to supervisory unions. A portion of this funding is also provided to Shelburne Farms for their management of Implementation Grants for Vermont schools and early childhood programs that participate in the Northeast Farm to School Institute.

The “3 C’s” of Farm to School and Early Childhood

The Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant Program utilizes the 3 C’s approach to Farm to School and Early Childhood, which connects efforts in the Cafeteria, Classroom, and Community to achieve robust and sustainable farm to school programs.



1. **Cafeteria:** Improving school and early childhood meal programs by sourcing more local, nutritious food and increasing participation in federal child nutrition programs.
2. **Classroom:** Increasing agriculture, nutrition, and food systems education through a variety of interdisciplinary, hands-on approaches to learning.
3. **Community:** Strengthening connections between educational institutions and the Vermont agricultural community.

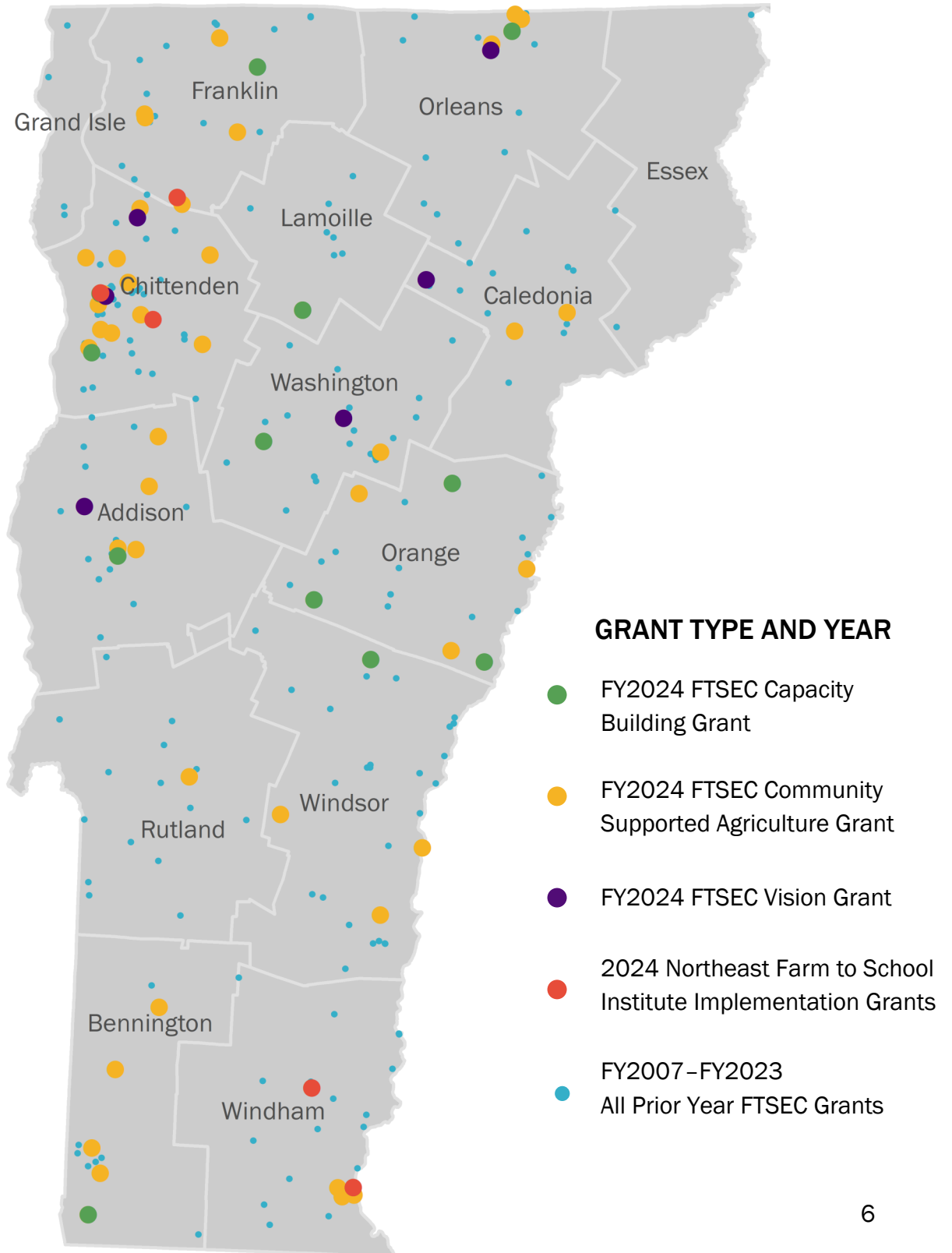
Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Network

Farm to School and Early Childhood is supported by a broad network with many key players and facilitators, including food service professionals, educators, farmers, distributors, food hubs, non-profits, government, and more.

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets’ (VAAFMM) role in the network currently covers:

- **Administering Grants** to schools, early childcare providers, and non-profits to support farm to school and early childhood programming.
- **Coordinating Technical Assistance** to help VAAFMM Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant recipients achieve their goals.
- **Implementing Federally Funded Projects**, in partnership with the network, to address emerging issues and opportunities.

**VAAFM FARM TO SCHOOL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD (FTSEC) PROGRAM
GRANT RECIPIENTS 2007-2024**



FISCAL YEAR 2024 IMPACTS*

73 \$370,946

Grants Awarded Total Amount Awarded

50 14

Early Childcare Programs Funded School Districts Funded

8,697

Children and Students Engaged

PROGRAM IMPACT 2007-2024

339 \$2,367,722

Grants Awarded Total Amount Awarded

160 158

Early Childcare Programs Funded Schools and School Districts Funded

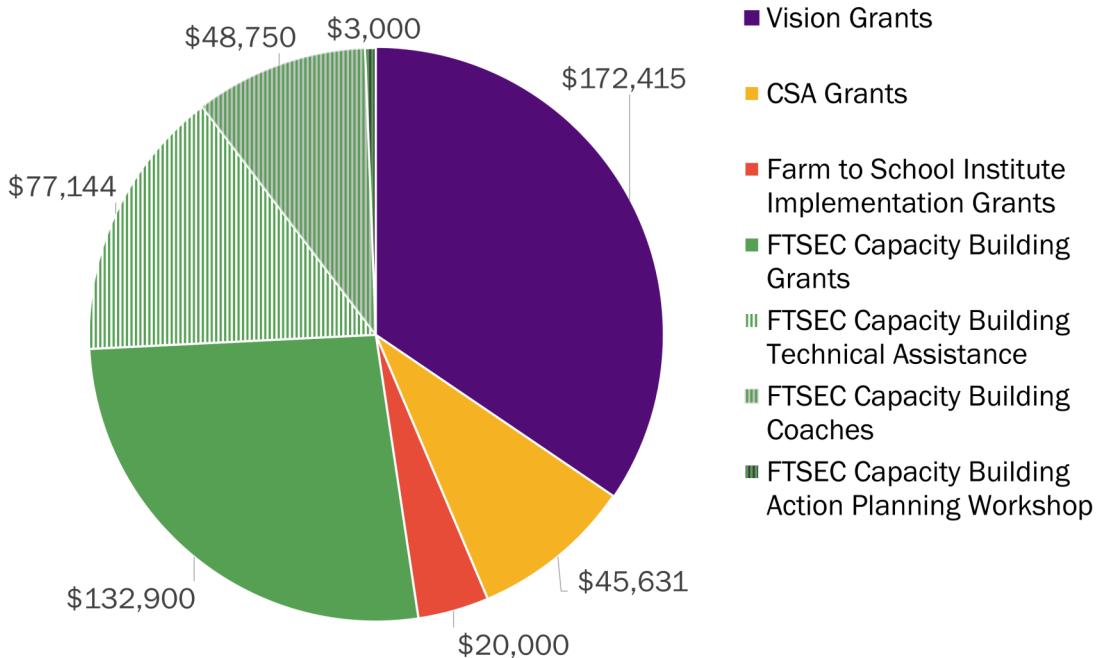
115,446

Children and Students Engaged

*includes Northeast Farm to School Institute Implementation Subawards managed by Shelburne Farms

FISCAL YEAR 2024 EXPENSES

\$499,840



Capacity Building Grant

Developing and sustaining robust farm to school programs

The Farm to School and Early Childhood Capacity Building Grant is the program's flagship funding opportunity. In addition to their financial award, grantees receive a suite of technical assistance. This combination of funding, mentorship, and expertise supports the development of holistic and sustainable programs.

This grant is intended to help Vermont-based early childhood providers and schools build and strengthen farm to school or farm to early childhood programs. Each grantee establishes a project team composed of diverse stakeholders within the organization and local community to ensure program sustainability. The grant is designed to support programs that are integrated throughout the classroom, cafeteria, and community—the 3 C's of Farm to School and Early Childhood.

Fiscal Year 2024 Grantees

1. **Addison County:** Addison County Parent Child Center (\$7,000)
2. **Bennington County:** Oak Hill Children's Center (\$5,000)
3. **Chittenden County:** Burlington Children's Space (\$7,000)
4. **Chittenden County:** Champlain Valley School District (\$15,000)
5. **Franklin County:** Lindsay Wells (\$5,000)
6. **Lamoille County:** Mountain Village School (\$10,000)
7. **Orange County:** Central Vermont Supervisory Union (\$15,000)
8. **Orange County:** Orange Southwest Supervisory Union (\$7,000)
9. **Orange County:** Thetford Academy (\$15,000)
10. **Orleans County:** O.C. Cares (\$10,000)
11. **Washington County:** Neck of the Woods VT (\$7,000)
12. **Windham County:** Windham Southeast Supervisory Union (\$10,000)
13. **Windsor County:** White River Valley Unified School District (\$19,900)

Fiscal Year 2024 Grant Highlights

17 applications received

13 grants awarded

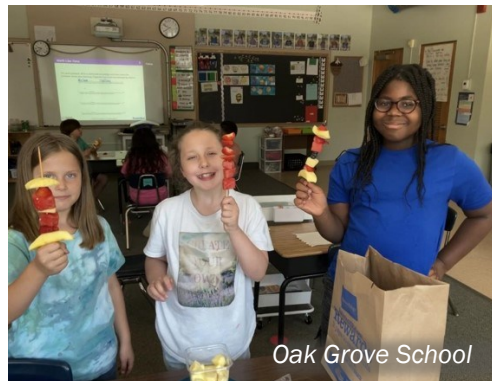
\$176,900 requested

\$132,900 awarded

\$10,200 average award



Oak Grove School



Oak Grove School

Technical Assistance and Coaching

The technical assistance component of the grant includes a grant coach as well as customizable trainings in four key areas of farm to school and early childhood: local purchasing, meal programs, curriculum, and school gardens. These services, have an estimated value of approximately \$10,000 per grantee, and are provided at no cost to grantees. The four technical assistance offerings are customized based on the needs and goals of individual grantees.

Technical Assistance Providers

- **Local Procurement Training** – Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)
- **Meal Program Viability** – Hunger Free Vermont
- **Curriculum Professional Development** – Shelburne Farms
- **School Gardens** – Vermont Garden Network

Coaching

Each grantee is assigned a grant coach who works with them throughout the duration of the grant. Coaches are experts from within the Vermont farm to school and farm to early childhood community. Through site visits, email communication, and phone calls, coaches provide direct support in the following areas:

- Completing the VT FEED Rubric to assess farm to school integration in the grantee organization
- Creating a VT FEED Action Plan to build a timeline for achieving short and long term goals
- Helping develop a project budget that aligns with the team's Action Plan
- Connecting and coordinating with technical assistance service providers
- Growing relationships between the organization and the local community to enhance project success
- Consulting on topics such as organizing farm visits, classroom activities, curriculum development, and connecting organizations with the greater farming community



Vision Grant

Amplifying innovative projects that promote youth leadership and community engagement

The purpose of this grant is to support innovative and impactful initiatives that engage Vermont youth in addressing and learning about issues related to food, agriculture, or related fields. The intent of the Vision Grant is to support innovative and impactful ideas in farm to school and early childhood programming that can be scaled and replicated.

This program was launched in Fiscal Year 2021, with the understanding that farm to school and early childhood is expansive and can look very different in different contexts. It supports a variety of efforts aimed at educating and engaging children and young adults on the connections that exist between agriculture, nutrition, community, and health. Grantees offer “outside-the-box” responses to contemporary issues in the farm to school and early childhood landscape.

Vision Grant recipients implement projects that address contemporary issues impacting communities, agriculture, health, and Vermont youth. Examples of these issues include, but are not limited to:

- Climate Change Resilience
- Food Security
- Food Sovereignty
- Health and Nutrition
- Racial and Social Equity
- Agricultural Workforce Development

Fiscal Year 2024 Grant Highlights

12 applications received

6 grants awarded

\$358,835 requested

\$172,415 awarded

\$28,700 average award



Fairfield Community Center Association

Fiscal Year 2024 Grantees

Farm-to-School on Wheels: Bringing Food Education to Vermont's Doorsteps

Viva El Sabor (Addison County)

\$28,000 to develop a mobile classroom and deliver interactive workshops, cooking demonstrations, and hands-on learning experiences for students in Addison and Chittenden counties. This project will empower students to make healthy food choices, cultivate an appreciation for diverse culinary traditions, and become advocates for social and environmental justice.

Racial and Environmental Justice Mentoring Program

Burlington School District—Sustainability Academy (Chittenden County)

\$24,000 to expand the Racial Justice Mentoring Program to focus on environmental and food justice issues. Grantee will provide BIPOC students from both Burlington High School and the Sustainability Academy elementary school the opportunity to connect with BIPOC student mentors and explore food justice and sustainability topics in the Vermont dairy supply chain.

Recipe for Human Connection in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom

Center for an Agricultural Economy (Caledonia County)

\$40,000 to expand the “Recipe for Human Connection” course at Hazen Union School in Hardwick into the summer months. The course involves teaching high school students to glean produce, prepare local food, and connect and serve local community meals. This project cultivates youth leadership, builds trust and connection, and develops skills that will serve youth into adulthood.

Leveraging Farm to School and Local Gleaning Programs to Enhance Food Security in the Northeast Kingdom

Green Mountain Farm to School (Orleans County)

\$21,597 to develop an afterschool community service program that will engage 6th-8th grade students in preparing food for community members experiencing hunger, creating meaningful intergenerational connections in the community. Students will deepen their connection to their local food system, develop an awareness of food security issues, and cultivate a community service and sustainability mindset.

Developing a Sustainable Food Forest at Milton Elementary School

Milton Family Community Center (Chittenden County)

\$18,818 to establish a sustainable food forest in the 8,700 square feet courtyard of the afterschool/summer camp program at Milton Elementary School. The food forest will function as an outdoor classroom, fostering sustainability education and healthy eating habits among students. Reports, photos, and videos will be developed as a result of this project to share insights, lessons learned, and best practices with other communities and organizations interested in implementing similar efforts.

Community Supported Agriculture Grant

Promoting child nutrition and community connection

The Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Grant helps early childhood education providers and after school programs access more local Vermont food. The CSA grant subsidizes the cost of CSA or farm shares for early childhood education providers and afterschool programs. This grant offers an entry point to engage with the Farm to School and Early Childhood Program because it is a simple, small grant, that is well suited to family childcare homes or smaller afterschool programs with only 1-2 staff.

Fiscal Year 2024 Grantees

1. **Addison County:** Addison County Parent Child Center
2. **Addison County:** Molly Leach
3. **Addison County:** Quarry Hill School
4. **Addison County:** Starksboro Cooperative Preschool
5. **Addison County:** The Willowell Foundation
6. **Bennington County:** Arlington Area Childcare
7. **Bennington County:** Bennington Early Childhood Center
8. **Bennington County:** Northshire Day School
9. **Bennington County:** Oak Hill Children's Center
10. **Bennington County:** Sunrise Family Resource Center
11. **Caledonia County:** ABC and LOL LLC
12. **Caledonia County:** Wendy Gadapee
13. **Chittenden County:** Burlington Children's Space
14. **Chittenden County:** Laura Butler
15. **Chittenden County:** Honeycomb Kids, LLC
16. **Chittenden County:** Lake Champlain Waldorf School
17. **Chittenden County:** Ohavi Zedek Synagogue, Full Circle Preschool
18. **Chittenden County:** Old School of South Burlington, Inc.
19. **Chittenden County:** ONE Arts Community Schools
20. **Chittenden County:** Pitter Patter Child Care
21. **Chittenden County:** Poker Hill School
22. **Chittenden County:** Reach for the Stars Childcare & Preschool
23. **Chittenden County:** Sensations in Learning, A Next Generation School
24. **Chittenden County:** Stepping Stones Children's Center, Inc
25. **Chittenden County:** The Schoolhouse Learning Center
26. **Franklin County:** Fairfield Community Center Association
27. **Franklin County:** Lynn Roberts
28. **Franklin County:** Mary Cushing
29. **Franklin County:** Nancy Lavigne
30. **Franklin County:** Tina L Lothian
31. **Lamoille County:** Mountain Village School
32. **Orange County:** CVSU Afterschool Program
33. **Orange County:** Karen A Illsley dba Pitter Patter Playhouse
34. **Orange County:** Tammie Hazlett
35. **Orange County:** Valley Cooperative Preschool Children's Center
36. **Orleans County:** Anitra Tester
37. **Orleans County:** Lisa Duncan/Little Angel's Childcare
38. **Orleans County:** Lisa Gratton
39. **Orleans County:** North Country Supervisory Union
40. **Rutland County:** Rutland County Parent Child Center
41. **Washington County:** Janelle Anderson
42. **Windham County:** Happy Hands: A School For Little People
43. **Windham County:** Hilltop Montessori School, Inc
44. **Windham County:** The Garland School
45. **Windham County:** West Bee Nursery School
46. **Windham County:** Winston Prouty Center for Child and Family Development
47. **Windsor County:** Perkinsville Preschool and Childcare LLC
48. **Windsor County:** The Plymouth Schoolhouse
49. **Windsor County:** Windsor Early Childhood Education Center

Fiscal Year 2024 Grant Highlights

52 applications received	\$48,151 requested	\$931 average award
49 grants awarded	\$45,631 awarded	\$61,242 farm revenue (includes grantee match)

New Farm Partnerships Across the State

Since the inception of the CSA grant in 2021, several grantees have forged relationships with CSA farms that last year over year, connecting local educators, children, and families with nearby farms. This grant has reached nearly every corner of the state in the past four years.

“We love the experience of going to the farm stand and picking strawberries and green beans, buying harvested produce. We make new recipes and share with our families. We have families interested in gardening and providing for their families, and new connections to buy locally.” - Lisa Duncan received a CSA grant in FY24 for her family child care home program in Derby, VT.

2024 CSA Grant Farm Partners

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. 1000 Stone Farm | 17. Intervale Community Farm |
| 2. Apgar Farm | 18. Joe's Brook Farm |
| 3. Berry Creek Farm | 19. Long Winter Farm |
| 4. Blue Heron Farm | 20. Makeshift Farm |
| 5. Bread & Butter Farm | 21. Maple Wind Farm |
| 6. Catamount Farm CSA | 22. Mighty Food Farm |
| 7. Clear Brook Farm | 23. Milkweed Farm |
| 8. Crossroad Farm | 24. Monument Farms |
| 9. Deep Meadow Farm | 25. Pete's Greens |
| 10. Dog River Farm | 26. River Berry Farm |
| 11. Elmer Farm | 27. Root 5 Farm |
| 12. Evening Song Farm | 28. Small Axe Farm |
| 13. Fiddlers Green Farm | 29. Walker Farm |
| 14. Footprint Farm | 30. Wild Carrot Farm |
| 15. Hill Top Farm | 31. Yoder Farm |
| 16. Hudak Farm and Greenhouse | |



Image courtesy of Joe's Brook Farm

Wendy Gadappee, a family childcare home provider in Caledonia County, purchased a CSA from Joe's Brook Farm in 2024 with support from the CSA Grant Program.

Related Programs and Initiatives

The following programs and initiatives complement the annual appropriation from the Vermont State Legislature that is the primary focus of this report. These initiatives outlined in this section have been supported by other state, federal, and/or private funding.

Farm to Institution Market Development Grant

Since 2011, VAAFM has managed a \$30,000 annual appropriation from the Vermont State Legislature for Local Food Market Development grants for wholesale and institutional market development. To minimize overlap between this grant and other Agency business development grants, VAAFM further specified this grant to focus on institutional market development. In 2024, a \$30,000 grant was awarded to Farm to Institution New England to partner with the Vermont Department of Corrections (DOC) to increase the DOC's procurement of local Vermont food.

State Partnership Brings Fresh and Local Milk to Correctional Facilities

VAAFM received \$15,000 from the Vermont Dairy Promotion Council to help the DOC's transition from powdered milk to fresh, local milk in all state facilities. VAAFM provided DOC with funding to purchase refrigerators so that all six state prisons could begin serving fresh, local milk. This full transition to local and regional milk marks the completion of a multi-year, multi-phase project that started at Chittenden County Regional Corrections Facility in 2019. DOC kitchens and cafeterias are now spending approximately \$188,000 annually in local and regional milk, which represents a new market for Vermont dairy producers.

A Guide for Dairy Farm Summer Camp: Connecting Cows, Children, and Community in Vermont

VAAFM received \$20,000 from the Vermont Dairy Promotion Council to create resources to help dairy farms develop or expand summer educational programming. VAAFM contracted with Shelburne Farms to conduct research and outreach to dairy farms that host summer camps from June 2024-December 2024. The guide covers an assessment of applicable regulations, pre-packed curriculum, budget templates, marketing resources, and more. The guide and a recorded training will be available soon on VAAFM's website.

Vermont Dairy Industry Leadership Development and Career Exploration

VAAFM received \$15,000 from the Vermont Dairy Promotion Council to develop and host educational programming for Vermont high school students focused on career opportunities in the Vermont dairy industry. VAAFM awarded these funds to University of Vermont Extension 4-H to offer a dairy career tour for high school students, send a delegation of Vermont 4-H participants to the National 4-H Dairy Conference in Wisconsin, and implement an individualized learning program for high school students with skills and interests in dairy, agriculture, and food systems.

USDA Local Food for Schools Program

In September 2022, VAAFM received a \$333,763 Local Food for Schools (LFS) cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to purchase local and regional food and distribute it to Vermont schools. With this USDA grant, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture launched an opportunity for Vermont schools to receive free local food, delivered by a local food hub and funded by the USDA.

From September 2023 to June 2024, each School Food Authority (SFA) in Vermont was assigned a nearby food hub and allocated a budget for local food purchases from that food hub. The amount of funding allocated to each SFA was based on enrollment data from the Agency of Education. The SFA's assigned food hub made available the allocated amount as credit in the SFA's account with the food hub, which could be used to purchase local food.

Through this federally-funded project, every SFA in Vermont received free local food. This project was made possible by VAAFM partnering with four non-profit food hubs to facilitate getting free local food to schools. Each of the food hubs expanded their capacity to serve their local farm partners through this program. New school customers were developed, which will support the ongoing viability of the farms that the food hubs serve.

Local Food For Schools (LFS) Program Highlights

September 2023—June 2024

Project Period

\$333,706 USDA funding spent on local food for schools

4 food hub partners collaborated to reach all SFAs statewide

All 69 SFAs received free local food from their local food hub

98% of food service directors surveyed had a positive experience working with their local food hub

\$1,000 to \$13,400 LFS funds allocated to each SFA, based on enrollment

65% of SFAs continued working with their local food hub after LFS funds expired

Additional Funding in 2025

In January 2025, VAAFM received an additional \$1,222,076 grant by the USDA for Local Food for Schools and Child Care: \$944,226 of this funding will provide local food to K-12 schools, and the remaining \$277,850 will be used to provide local food to early childhood programs. VAAFM is currently engaging with partners at the Agency of Education to determine the most efficient and effective methods to run the Local Food for Schools and Childcare Program in 2025.

The Farm to School and Early Childhood Program is supported by a collaborative network of public and private organizations.

Agency Program Staff

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Key Partners

VERMONT AGENCY OF EDUCATION
VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
VERMONT FEED
SHELBURNE FARMS
NORTHEAST ORGANIC FARMING
ASSOCIATION OF VERMONT
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