



## Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

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VERMONT FARM & FOREST  
VIABILITY PROGRAM



2017 Annual Report

Dear Members of the General Assembly:

The Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program and its network of providers looks back over 2017 having supported over 150 working lands businesses. In our 15th year, the Viability Program continues to fund and oversee a statewide network of organizations and consultants that provides in-depth, high-quality business advising and several grant programs for farmers.

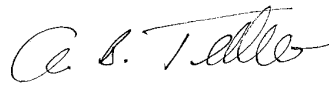
The Viability Program results in increased business acumen in our working lands sectors and improved business management skills in areas including sales and marketing, record-keeping and accounting, and planning investments. We see many opportunities to expand our business assistance services, advance efforts in forestland succession services for landowner families, and continue to prioritize assistance to farmers improving soils and addressing water quality concerns.

The Viability Program's cohort of 2017 businesses face stiff challenges from sustained low conventional dairy prices, no opportunities to enter the organic milk market, limited markets for low-grade wood, and increasing competition for many diversified livestock and vegetable operations. Navigating both changing markets and the need to comply with new regulations make investment in high quality and creative business advising programs for agriculture and forestry more critical than ever.

VHCB is supporting farmers working to improve their soils and address water quality concerns through business planning services, grants, and land conservation investments. With funding from the State of Vermont Capital Construction and Bonding Act, in 2017 we awarded \$410,000 in grants to support water quality improvements on 14 farms that leveraged nearly \$3 million (a 7:1 ratio) and have another round of awards to make this spring. We also made over \$625,000 in Dairy Improvement Grants to 25 farms, which leveraged an additional \$2.6 million (4:1), much of which serves as match for Vermont's RCPP grant for Lake Champlain. Thank you for your support.



Gustave Seelig, Executive Director  
Vermont Housing & Conservation Board



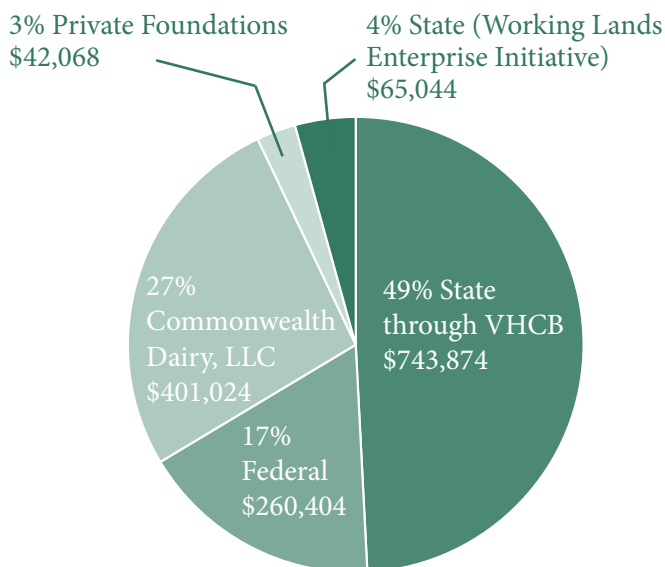
Secretary Anson Tebbetts  
Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

## Our Budget

In FY17, the Viability Program operated on just over \$1.5 million, with nearly half coming from federal and private funding sources.

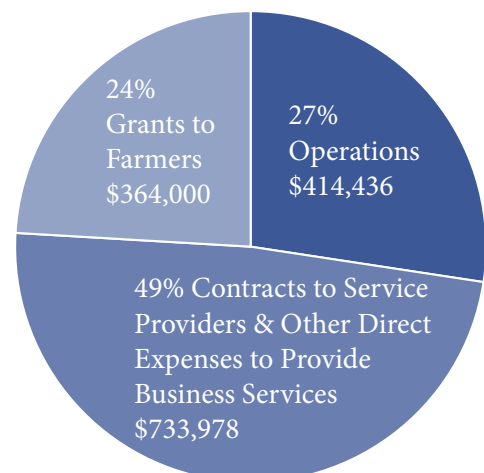
### Sources

Total: \$1,512,414



### Uses

Total: \$1,512,414







Viability Program service providers & staff, left to right: Jen Miller, Sam Smith, Daniel Keeney, Mark Cannella, Lori Shaw, Rose Wilson, Ela Chapin, Liz Gleason, Ian Hartman, John Ryan, Mike Ghia, and Tony Kitsos

## *Our Mission*

*To enhance the economic viability of Vermont's farm, food and forest products enterprises.*

## *Services Provided in 2017*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 51 farms received business or transfer planning services   | 21 family forestland owners and estate attorneys |
| 40 farms received a second year of services                | attended 2 succession planning workshops         |
| 54 farms received shorter-term planning assistance         | 8 forestland-owning families received one-on-one |
| 9 food businesses received one-on-one technical assistance | succession planning assistance                   |
| 9 forest products businesses received one-on-one           | 25 farms received Dairy Improvement Grants       |
| technical assistance                                       | 14 farms received Water Quality Grants           |
| 58 loggers attended 2 business management workshops        |  |

## *Our Network of Service Providers*





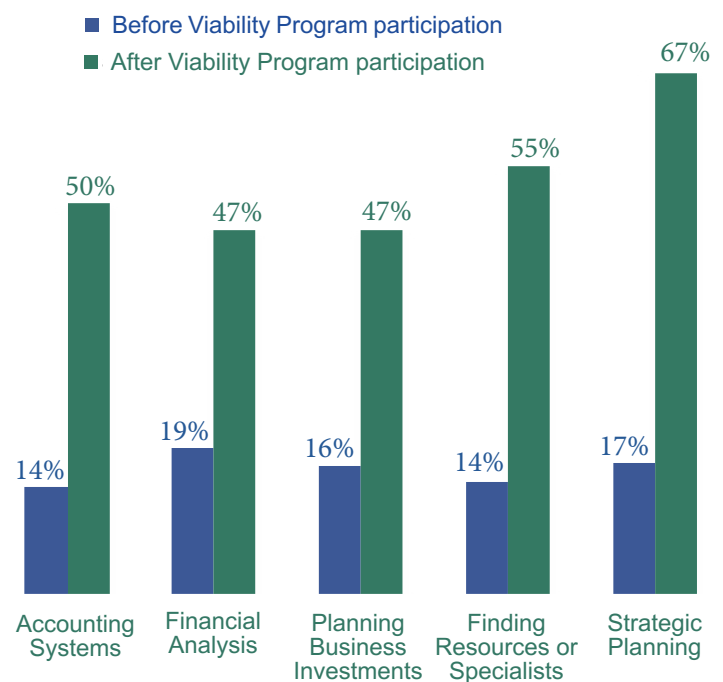
# Farm Viability

*Tony Kitsos, left, is a Viability adviser with University of Vermont Extension. Kitsos worked with Bob Lesnikowski, right, who owns and operates Vermont Cranberry Company in Fletcher with his wife, Suzanne. Tony and Bob worked together to assess the efficiency of different enterprises within the the business, from dried fruit to juice; to develop plans for infrastructure improvements; and plan for long-term growth.*

In 2017, 91 farms received business advising services, including 51 new enrollees listed on the centerfold map. This cohort of farms includes conventional and organic dairy, maple, produce and livestock operations as well as value-added producers. Farmers report improved satisfaction with work-life balance after program participation as well as advancement in a variety of business skills. Our business advising often complements VHCB's farmland conservation investments to assist farmers accessing land for the first time, as well as farmers looking at options for retirement and transitioning operations to new ownership.

2017 was a difficult year for farmers in our state and the challenges continue in 2018. Conventional milk prices remain low, dairies planning to transition to organic need to wait several years, and vegetable and diversified farmers

## Percent of farmers who report high skills in:



## 2017 Viability Program Participants (91) Represent:

*\$19.6 million in sales*

*266 jobs*

*7,400 acres in production*

report a saturation in direct markets. Over the past five years, farmers have seen on average a 10% increase in gross income and a 62% increase in net income in the year following their participation and the completion of a business or transfer plan. In 2017, for the first time in the 15-year history of the program, this trend shifted, as participating farmers on average saw a decrease in both gross and net income in the face of increasing market challenges. Now more than ever there is a need for Viability business assistance.





*We gained a realistic view of what it actually means to run a farm business and the steps we need to take next in order to guarantee our success going forward.*

— Kelsey Chandler & Phelan O'Connor  
Pigasus Meats, South Hero

Kelsey Chandler and Phelan O'Connor started Pigasus Meats on rented land in 2013. The Viability Program connected them with business advisers at the Intervale Center who assisted them in refining their business plan and analyzing costs of production on their rented farm. Business adviser Sam Smith supported the farmers as they purchased and re-established their business on a conserved property in South Hero. "Sam is an incredible mentor and adviser," says O'Connor. "He presents questions in an easy to understand way and digs into the details of a plan." After working with the Viability Program, O'Connor says, "we have a much more solid idea of how to run our business in a way that allows us to be financially stable, pay down debt that we will acquire, and balance our life."

*Now we are more clear about what direction we want to take our farm business and what steps we need to take to make it happen.*

— Jessie & Greg Witscher  
Understory Farm, Sudbury



**Supporting Food System Businesses**

Photo: Food Connects

The Viability Program provides business, financial, and strategic planning to food system businesses. This includes local food hubs, such as Windham County's Food Connects. Through the Viability Program, Food Connects was able to work with business consultants to refine staff roles, plan for a merger and expansion, develop strong partnerships with other local food hubs, and create a business plan for their farm-to-school educational programs.

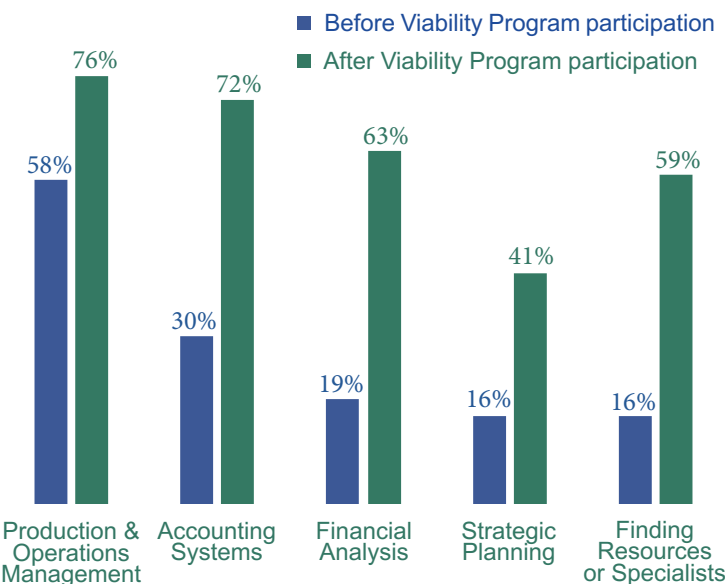


# Forest Viability

*Everett Thurston owns and operates Thurston Forestry, a timber harvesting business based in North Clarendon. Thurston hopes to develop his business on his current, old equipment, then upgrade to newer machines. He has worked extensively with UVM adviser Chris Lindgren on improving his record-keeping systems, understanding employment issues, and strategizing around new machine investments. With independent consultant Steve Bick, he has worked on better understanding his costs on a per job basis.*

In 2017, nine forest products businesses received one-on-one business advising through the Viability Program. These included loggers, mills, a design/build business, a maple producer, and small manufacturers. Most of these businesses worked with UVM Extension's Forest Business Program, our primary partner in the forest products sector, which has assisted 24 Viability Program clients in the past three years. Those businesses report significant increases in satisfaction with their business management abilities.

*Percent of business owners who report high skills in:*



## ***Participants Report:***

*15% higher gross income*

*2% more FTEs*

*9% increase in payroll*

***in the year following the program***

*I definitely feel more empowered now.*

— Everett Thurston  
Thurston Forestry,  
North Clarendon





*The Viability Program has helped us see into the future and see how we are going to plan our growth.*

—Tony Fletcher, Co-Owner  
Green Mountain Grain & Barrel, Richmond

Green Mountain Grain & Barrel is a new cooperage run by three Vermont military veterans. The business started when Tony Fletcher and his two business partners, Mac Brioch and Josh Waterhouse, were approached by a local distiller to pilot a Vermont oak whiskey barrel. Two years after this experiment, most major Vermont distillers have tested their barrels, which are made entirely from Vermont white oak. To grow the business and meet demand, Green Mountain Grain & Barrel worked with Viability Program business adviser Chris Lindgren to improve manufacturing process efficiency, shop layout, and long-term financial planning. According to Fletcher, “Chris helped us identify bottlenecks in our manufacturing process so we can improve and invest in those areas.”



## Forestland Ownership Succession Planning

*The Abelson family owns 450 acres of contiguous forested parcels on the Sudbury-Hubardton line. They have owned their land for over 100 years, and Don Abelson calls the land “the heart of the family.” Don and his brother are dedicated to keeping it “undeveloped, together, and in the family.” The assistance from their advisers is helping the family communicate goals between the generations, understand the steps they need to move forward, and ultimately, keep the land in their family as a healthy, intact piece of Vermont forest.*

Intact, healthy forests support the forest economy, sustain wildlife habitat, and provide clean water. According to the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, & Recreation, one of the primary strategies to maintain forest integrity is to provide succession planning to private owners of forestland. Since 2015, the Viability

Program has been making succession planning services available to owners of large forestland tracts. In 2017, with funding from the Viability Program, the Vermont Woodlands Association provided nine families with access to succession advisers and a lawyer.

# 2017 New Viability Program Participants & Grantees

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## Farms

- \* 1. Adam's Berry Farm, Charlotte
- 2. Aires Hill Farm, Berkshire
- 3. Artisan Meats of Vermont, Montpelier
- 4. Babette's Table, Waitsfield
- \* 5. Berry Creek Farm, Westfield
- 6. Buck Mountain Maple, Fairfax
- \* 7. Butterworks Farm, Westfield
- \* 8. Cabot Smith Farm, Cabot
- 9. Clemmons Family Farm, Charlotte
- 10. Fat Toad Farm, Brookfield
- 11. Flatlander Farm, Starksboro
- 12. Four Girls Dairy, Fairfax
- \* 13. Full Belly Farm, Monkton
- 14. Good Heart Farmstead, Worcester
- 15. Happy Cow Farm, Newport Center
- 16. Hillcrest Farms, Randolph
- 17. Hillside Farm, Glover
- 18. Howmars Farm, Franklin
- \* 19. Jockey Street Dairy, Pawlet
- 20. Joe's Kitchen, Montpelier
- \* 21. Lakeside Farm, South Hero
- \* 22. Lambert Farm, Washington
- 23. Liz Dick Farm, South Ryegate
- 24. Messier Farm, Randolph
- 25. Miskell's Premium Organics, Charlotte
- \* 26. New Venture Farm, Morgan
- 27. Nichols Fodder Farm, Charlotte
- 28. Otter Meadow Farm, Florence
- 29. Paquin Family Farm, Cabot
- \* 30. Pine Island Community Farm, Colchester
- \* 31. Pink Boot Farm, Wells
- 32. Rainville Farm, Franklin
- 33. Rebop Farm, Brattleboro
- 34. Rolling Bale Farm, Shoreham
- 35. Shamrock Farms, Northfield
- \* 36. Silloway Maple, Randolph
- 37. Slopeside Syrup, Richmond
- \* 38. Southwind Farm, Pawlet
- 39. Stannard Farm, Stannard
- 40. Strafford Organic Creamery, Strafford
- 41. Sweet Farm, Fairfield
- \* 42. Thibault Farm, Colchester
- \* 43. Tiffany Brothers Partnership, Enosburg Falls
- 44. Trudeau Farm, Newport
- \* 45. Vermont Heritage Elk, Fairfax
- 46. Von Trapp Farmstead, Waitsfield
- 47. Waite Farm, Pawlet
- 48. Walnut Hill Farm, Pawlet
- 49. Whitney Family Farm, Greensboro
- 50. Windfall Acres, Highgate
- \* 51. Woodlawn Farm, Pawlet

## Food Businesses

- 52. All Souls Tortilleria, Warren
- 53. Deep Root Organic Cooperative, Johnson
- 54. Food Connects, Brattleboro
- 55. Green Mountain Farm to School, Newport
- 56. Kingdom Compost, Lyndonville
- 57. Northshire Grows, Manchester
- 58. Rutland Area Food & Farm Link, Rutland
- 59. Vermont Bean Crafters, Warren
- 60. Vermont Compost Company, Montpelier

## Forest Products Enterprises

- 61. Brookside Timber Harvesting, Westminster
- 62. Doyon Maple, Beecher Falls
- 63. Green Mountain Grain & Barrel, Richmond
- 64. GreenWood Resources, Waterbury
- 65. Keith Michelson Designer/Builder, Bradford
- 66. LSF Forest Products, Cambridge
- 67. Meadowdale Farm & Forest Products, Putney
- 68. Thurston Forestry, North Clarendon
- 69. Vermont Wooden Blocks, Bennington

## Forest Landowners

- \* 70. Abelson Family, Sudbury
- 71. Bingaman Family, Corinth
- 72. Brown Family, Goshen
- 73. Gagnon Family, Pittsford
- 74. Giard Family, Bridport
- 75. Morse Family, Chateaugay
- 76. Starr Family, North Troy
- 77. Wade Family, Washington

## Dairy Improvement Grantees

- \* 78. Aires Hill Farm, Enosburg Falls
- \* 79. Baldwin Farms, Monkton
- 80. Ber-Lane Farms, Enosburg
- 81. Chalker Farm, Vergennes
- 82. Clifford Farm, Starksboro
- 83. Domina Farms, Franklin
- 84. East View Farm, Brunswick
- 85. Gosliga Farm, Addison
- 86. Hall & Breen Farm, Orwell
- 87. Hill View Farm, Danville
- 88. Holyoke Farm, St. Albans
- \* 89. Island Acres Farm, South Hero
- 90. Lakeside Farm, South Hero
- \* 91. North Williston Cattle Co., Williston
- \* 92. O'Donnell Farm, Westfield
- 93. Plouffe Family Farm, Bridport
- 94. Pothier Family Farm, Newport Center
- 95. Royers Family Farm, Orleans
- 96. Tamarlane Farm, Lyndonville
- \* 97. Thibault Farm, Colchester
- 98. Tip Top Tanner Farm, Lyndonville
- \* 99. Top Notch Holsteins, Holland
- \* 100. Vern-Mont Farm, Vernon
- \* 101. Vosburg Farm, Swanton
- \* 102. Windfall Acres, Highgate

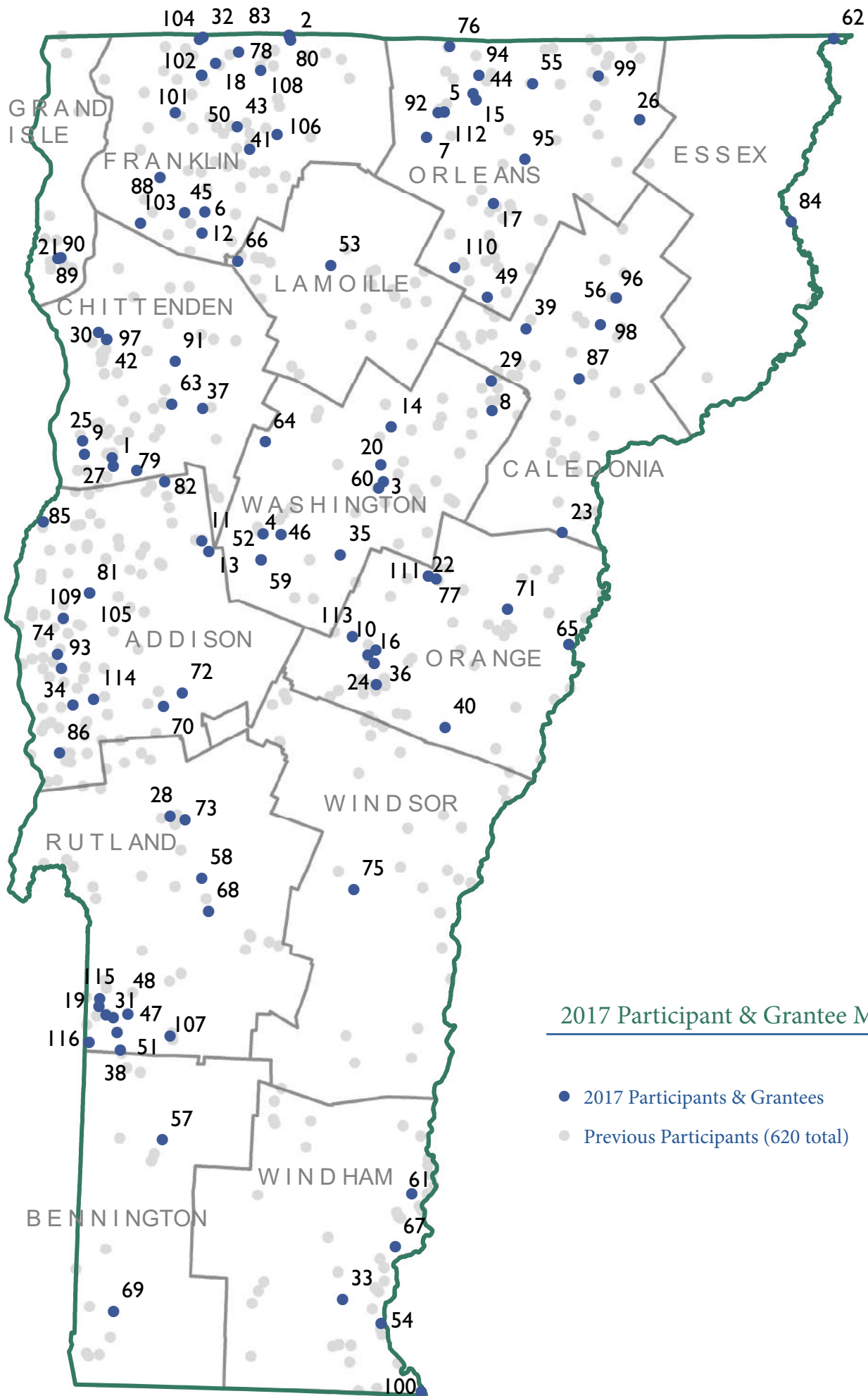
## Water Quality Grantees

- \* 103. Bedrock Farm, St. Albans
- \* 104. Bouchard Family Dairy, Franklin
- 105. Chalker Farm, Vergennes
- \* 106. Dalestead Farm and Maple, Enosburg Falls
- \* 107. Dorset Peak Jerseys, Danby
- \* 108. Green Dream Farm, Enosburg Falls
- \* 109. Harrison's Homegrown, Addison
- 110. Jones Farm, Craftsbury
- \* 111. Lambert Farm, Washington
- \* 112. O'Donnell Farm, Westfield
- \* 113. Poulin and Daughters Family Farm, Brookfield
- \* 114. Standard Milk, Cornwall
- \* 115. Stonebroke Farm, West Pawlet
- 116. Wayward Goose Farm, West Pawlet

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\* *Conserved*







# Dairy Improvement Grants

Karie Atherton milks 190 cows at Aires Hill Farm, a 7th generation farm located in Berkshire, VT. She received Dairy Improvement grant funds to purchase and install a cow activity & milk monitoring system, for identifying the early onset of cow mastitis. This allows a farmer to reduce reliance on antibiotics and hormones and keep milk from sick cows out of a farm's bulk tank. This project will have positive impacts on cow health, and will also increase the farm's efficiency by allowing Karie to focus her time on the cows that need proactive treatment.

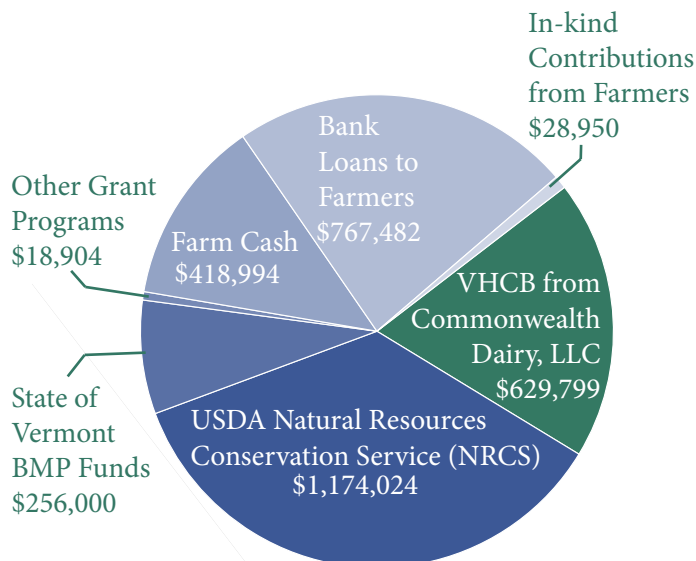
The Dairy Improvement Grant program was initiated in 2014 with funding from Commonwealth Dairy, LLC, in Brattleboro. Grants are awarded to improve farm viability and increase the quality and volume of milk produced in Vermont. Grants are available on a competitive basis to members of the St. Albans Co-op and Dairy Farmers of America, where Commonwealth Dairy, LLC, sources milk. Projects have resulted in numerous positive outcomes for farmers, including improvements in employee safety and welfare, labor efficiency, animal welfare, sales growth, and environmental stewardship.

## For Grantees, Finished Projects Have Resulted in:

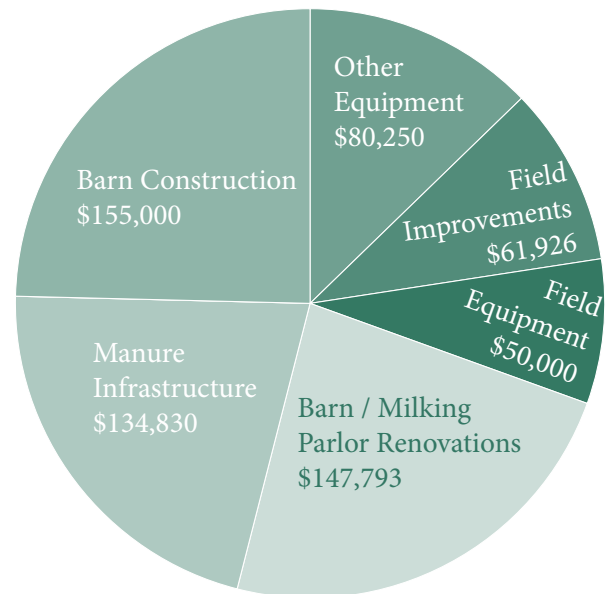
- 5.2% more milk shipped
- 2.4% more milk per cow
- 0.6% more gross income

## Total funding for all 2017 projects

\$3,377,324 of VHCB & leveraged funds



## Uses of grant funds in 2017





# 2017 Dairy Improvement Grantees

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*25 farms awarded a total of \$629,799,  
leveraging 4:1 an additional \$2,664,364 in investments.*

**Karie Atherton, Aires Hill Farm, Berkshire**  
*\$40,000 to buy a cow activity & milk monitoring system*

**Matt Baldwin, Baldwin Farms, Hinesburg**  
*\$40,000 to build a winter outdoor feeding area to comply with organic rules*

**John & Heather Brigham, Holyoke Farm, St. Albans**  
*\$40,000 to build a waste storage pond & stacking slab*

**Eric Clifford, Clifford Farm, Starksboro**  
*\$25,000 to purchase a no-till grain drill*

**Paul Couture, Ber-Lane Farms, Berkshire**  
*\$40,000 to construct a silo to bring feed into the barn*

**Roseanne Domina, Domina Farms, Franklin**  
*\$30,871 to outfit a milkhouse to be able to milk cows at home farm*

**Jeff Dunklee, Vern-Mont Farm, Vernon**  
*\$33,844 to expand a barn for high milk producing cows*

**Wayne & Nancy Fiske, Windfall Acres, Highgate**  
*\$8,150 to upgrade milking units*

**Grace Gosliga, Gosliga Farm, Addison**  
*\$25,000 to purchase a no-till seeder*

**Jennifer Hall, Hall & Breen Farm, Orwell**  
*\$8,000 to renovate barn feed alleys*

**Brian & Cindy Kayhart, Chalker Farm, Vergennes**  
*\$3,000 to resurface a barn floor*

**Jill Maxham, Lakeside Farm, South Hero**  
*\$13,500 to purchase a round bale feeder, upgrade bulk tank, and empty and repair the manure pit*

**Aaron & Chantale Nadeau, Top Notch Holsteins, Holland**  
*\$14,000 to upgrade manure management & ventilation*

**Karen & Patrick O'Donnell, O'Donnell Farm, Westfield**  
*\$21,500 to construct a new manure storage facility*

**Eric Paris, Tamarlane Farm, Lyndonville**  
*\$20,000 to build a covered feeding area*

**Henry & Allison Pearl, Hill View Farm, Danville**  
*\$40,000 to support a pasture rehabilitation and organic transition*

**Paul & Becky Plouffe, Plouffe Family Farm, Bridport**  
*\$20,250 to replace a bulk tank*

**Denise Pothier, Pothier Farm, Newport Center**  
*\$21,926 to establish a pasture management and grazing system*

**Steve & Kelly Robinson, Island Acres Farm, South Hero**  
*\$7,330 to upgrade manure handling infrastructure*

**Denis & Lori Royer, Royers Family Farm, Orleans**  
*\$20,000 to improve manure storage systems*

**Nathan & Darcy Smart, East View Farm, Brunswick**  
*\$35,000 to build a heifer facility*

**Brandon Tanner, Tip Top Tanner Farm, Lyndonville**  
*\$40,000 to build a covered barnyard to capture runoff and improve water quality*

**Robert & Normand Thibault, Thibault Farm, Colchester**  
*\$40,000 for a wastewater & manure storage system*

**Mark Vosburg, Vosburg Farm, St. Albans**  
*\$22,428 to purchase a new bulk tank and renovate the milk house*

**Lorenzo Whitcomb, North Williston Cattle Company, Williston**  
*\$20,000 to purchase storage tanks allowing the farm to grow and store their own soy*



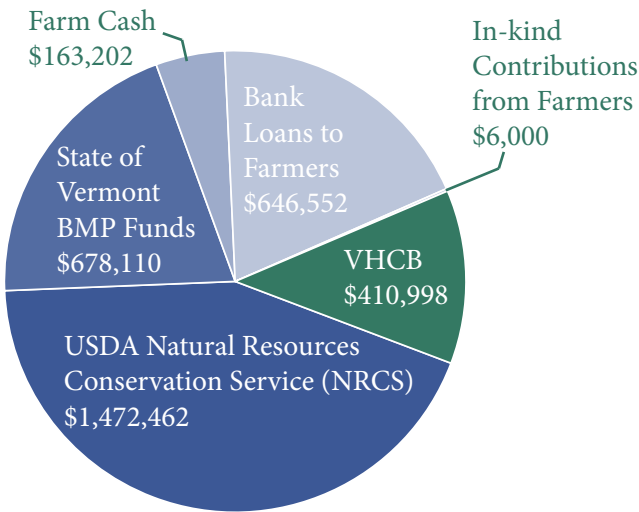
Brian and Cindy Kayhart operate a 30-cow dairy and raise 75 head of beef cattle at Chalker Farm in Vergennes, VT. They received an \$11,829 Water Quality Grant to help them implement a rotational grazing plan designed in partnership with staff at UVM Extension and partially funded by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The long-term investment will convert cropland along the river back into sod, thereby reducing erosion and soil compaction. The project will have positive impacts on soil health, cattle health, and farm profitability.

The Water Quality Grants, funded by the State of Vermont’s Capital Construction and Bonding Act, help farmers make water quality related capital improvements to on-farm infrastructure. As of January 2018, the Viability Program has awarded \$410,998. Grantees are located across the state, including in the high priority south lake portion of Lake Champlain, St. Albans Bay, and Missisquoi Bay watersheds. Anticipated outcomes include improvements in compliance with the Required Agricultural Practices, soil health, environmental stewardship, labor efficiency, sales, animal welfare, energy efficiency, job creation, and employee safety. Grantees include one medium farm, seven certified small farm, and six small farm operations.

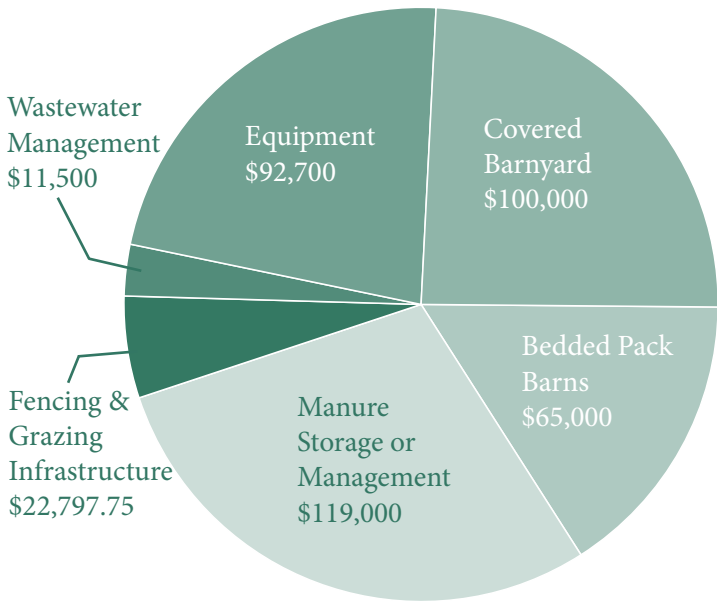
**14 Farms Awarded \$410,998**

Leveraging 7:1  
An additional \$2.96 million investment  
&  
Impacting 7,000 acres

*Total funding for all projects*



*Uses of grant funds*





## Dorset Peak Jerseys Danby



*Credit: Jessie Smith*

Caleb and Jessie Smith run Dorset Peak Jerseys in Danby. They milk 65 cows and sell milk to AgriMark and at their farm-stand. Water Quality Grant funds will support a project also funded by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets to build a freestall barn and covered barnyard for heifers and milk cows, year round manure storage, and associated pumping and transfer facilities. The project will improve manure collection and storage for the farmstead and will keep precipitation out of the waste stream. Housing animals in a freestall barn will also allow full mechanization of the feeding and cleaning of the new building, making the farm operation much more efficient. This farm is located in the Otter Creek subwatershed of Lake Champlain.

**Greg Bouchard, Bouchard Family Dairy, Franklin**  
\$40,000 for a dragline manure application system

**Laurie & Dan Brooks, Wayward Goose Farm, West Pawlet**  
\$40,000 to build a covered barnyard & manure storage facility

**Melanie & Patrick Harrison, Harrison's Homegrown, Addison**  
\$25,000 for a new heifer barn to reduce runoff

**Richard Hulett, Stonebroke Farm, West Pawlet**  
\$40,000 to build a bedded pack barn with a leachate collection system

**Matt & Jennifer Hull, Dalestead Farm and Maple, Enosburg Falls**  
\$40,000 for a waste storage facility & manure management equipment

**James & Nicole Jones, Jones Farm, Craftsbury**  
\$39,469 to build heifer manure storage & exclusion fencing

**Brian & Cindy Kayhart, Chalker Farm, Vergennes**  
\$11,829 to create a rotational grazing system

**Jennifer & Jesse Lambert, Lambert Farm, Washington**  
\$10,000 to renovate milkhouse wastewater system

**Ramsay & Caroline Mellish, Standard Milk, Cornwall**  
\$35,000 to renovate manure management system

**Karen & Patrick O'Donnell, O'Donnell Farm, Westfield**  
\$14,200 to purchase manure injection equipment

**Justin & Angeline Poulin, Poulin and Daughters Family Farm, Brookfield**  
\$10,500 to build two manure storage facilities

**Caleb & Jessie Smith, Dorset Peak Jerseys, Danby**  
\$40,000 to build a covered barnyard & freestall barn

**Ron Sweet, Bedrock Farm, St. Albans**  
\$25,000 to build wastewater & manure storage system

**Annie & Chris Wagner, Green Dream Farm, Enosburg Falls**  
\$40,000 for a covered barnyard to reduce runoff



Credit: Kane Architecture

*The iconic yellow barn on Route 15 in Hardwick is the centerpiece of a redevelopment project to create a showcase for local businesses in the Northeast Kingdom. REDI is supporting the Town of Hardwick and local partners to study the project's feasibility and apply for federal funding to implement the project.*

In 2017, the Legislature created the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) “to promote and facilitate community economic development in the small towns and rural areas of the state and increase access to federal and other funding for such efforts.” To date, Viability staff have supported 6 projects to identify grant funding opportunities available and contracted for technical assistance in preparing grant applications. REDI is intended to complement, not replace, the assistance Regional Development Corporations and Regional Planning Commissions already provide. Our team has collaborated with these partners to identify projects.



Credit: Empower Pownal

*REDI provides grant writing and other forms of assistance for businesses and municipalities to prepare for and access larger funding opportunities. A local group in Pownal received assistance from REDI to access funding to transform a former Superfund site on the Hoosic River into an outdoor recreation location with trails and parking.*

## Rural Economic Development Projects

**Yellow Barn Project, Hardwick** – *The Town of Hardwick received support to fundraise for the development of a multi-use business incubator and manufacturing facility from several federal sources including a USDA-Rural Development (RD) Rural Business Development Grant.*

**Windham County Solid Waste Management District, Brattleboro and surrounding towns** – *REDI supported an application to the USDA-RD Community Facilities Grant Program to acquire equipment for expanding composting infrastructure to meet Act 148 requirements.*

**Pownal Trails Association & Empower Pownal Recreation task force** – *REDI funds supported a Recreation Trails Program grant application to develop a trail and recreation site on the Hoosic River.*

**Runamok Maple, Cambridge** - *Funding from REDI assisted Runamok with an application to the USDA-RD Value Added Producer Grant to expand the business and move production from Brattleboro to Fairfax.*

**Southern Windsor/Windham and greater Upper Valley Solid Waste Districts** – *REDI supported an application to the USDA-RD Solid Waste Management District grant program to implement Act 148 requirements.*

**Clemmons Family Farm, Charlotte** – *Grant writing support enabled the farm to receive a \$350,000 grant from the nationally competitive ArtPlace America Grant program to establish an arts & cultural center on the farm focused on African American heritage.*





## Food Access & Affordable Housing Initiative

*Residents of Tilden House, a property owned by the Barre Housing Authority, take part in a monthly cooking class supported with grant funds. Residents learned new recipes that incorporated both locally grown and nutritious ingredients. Participating residents then cooked these recipes for Tilden House's monthly community dinner later each month. The pilot program ran for six months in 2017.*

Vermont prides itself as a leader in the local food movement. While locally produced and nutritious foods are considered to be healthier options, they tend to be more expensive and less accessible for the nearly 13% of low-income Vermonters who experience food insecurity. The Food Access & Affordable Housing Initiative is a VHCBC-wide effort started in 2014 that attempts to address this two-tier food system by identifying ways to improve programming collaboration between affordable housing stakeholders and food systems organizations.

In 2017, the initiative funded 5 projects ranging from cooking and exercise classes to gardening and edible landscaping. These projects target barriers to eating well from cost to familiarity with new foods—and ultimately build a sense of community around healthy, local food.



## Gathering Local Stakeholders

*In addition to funding collaborative pilot programming, the initiative has brought together local stakeholders to build connections and discuss collaborative opportunities around food access and affordable housing. Since 2014, we have held conversations with housing and food systems stakeholders in Brattleboro, Rutland, St. Johnsbury, and Bennington.*

## 2017 Pilot Projects Grantees

### Greater Bennington Interfaith Community Services, Bennington

*\$2,400 to support FoodFit, a cooking and exercise program for residents of local housing sites*

### Barre Housing Services, Barre

*\$2,000 for monthly cooking classes at Tilden House*

### Twin Pines Housing, White River Junction & Woodstock

*\$3,713 to build new, and to revitalize existing gardens*

### Addison County Community Trust, Starksboro

*\$5,425 to plant edible food forests at 3 mobile home parks in and around Starksboro*

### Champlain Housing Trust, Colchester

*\$1,450 to build a composting system and purchase garden tools*

**Total Awarded: \$14,988**



*If we had not had the opportunity to work with technical advisers through the Viability Program, I'm not sure we would be in business right now.*

— Rhonda Miller, Molly Brook Farm, Cabot

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## Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program Advisory Board

Alyson Eastman (Chair), Deputy Secretary, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

Bob Baird, Baird Farm

Abbie Corse, The Corse Farm Dairy

Joan Goldstein, Vermont Department of Economic Development

Colleen Goodridge, Goodridge Lumber

Adam Grinold, Brattleboro Economic Development Corporation

Sarah Isham, Vermont Agricultural Credit Corporation/VEDA

Pete Johnson, Pete's Greens

Chuck Ross, University of Vermont Extension

Gus Seelig, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

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## Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

58 East State Street, Montpelier, VT 05602

Ela Chapin, Program Director

Liz Gleason, Program Manager

Ian Hartman, Outreach and Partnerships Coordinator

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[www.vhcb.org/viability](http://www.vhcb.org/viability)

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*This report is made by the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, in collaboration with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, pursuant to 6 V.S.A. § 4710(f)*

Cover above: Norah Lake, owner of Sweetland Farm in Norwich.

Cover below: Everett Thurston, owner of Thurston Forestry in North Clarendon.