



Connecting all Vermonters with healthy, local food.

August 2014



Since 2012, our Food and Farm Initiative has awarded more than \$800,000 in grants to help more Vermont kids and families access healthy, local food. In the second year of our five-year effort to connect our thriving local food movement with the fight against hunger, the collaborative work of our Food and Farm Initiatives grantees is well underway, and we're excited to share examples of stronger programs and partnerships making an impact across the state.

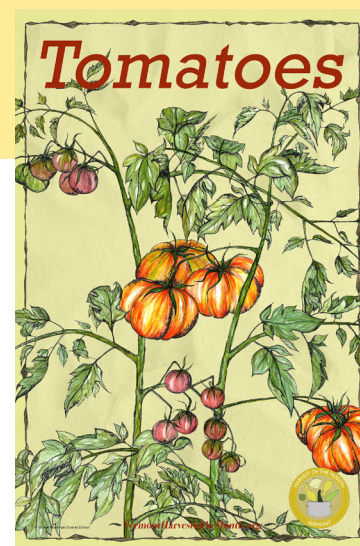
What our grantees are doing

The collaborative work of our grantees is well underway, and we're excited to share examples of increased programming and strengthened partnerships making an impact across the state.

~ With support from local farm-to-school organizations around the state, the **Center for an Agricultural Economy** distributed samples of lightly-processed Vermont vegetables to over 150 schools this spring. The Center is now taking orders for the fall on the veggies the schools preferred most: broccoli, beets, carrots, and potatoes. Next steps include financial and production modeling to support farmers, distributors, and schools in joining this market on an ongoing basis.

~ Four new Equitable Food Buying Clubs have started at schools and preschools in the Rutland and Newport areas, based on the model developed by **Food Connects** in Windham County last fall which helps families access affordable, fresh, local food.

~With the leadership of the **Upper Valley Farm to School Network** (now a part of Vital Communities), Vermont's farm-to-school community has developed a "Growth Chart" to serve as a planning tool for schools as well as a statewide data collection and assessment tool. **Hunger Free Vermont**, which



More than half of Vermont's schools have pledged to participate in the Harvest of the Month Campaign. August's harvest is tomatoes!

initially planned a separate assessment, partnered on this tool which includes school meal program accessibility, participation, and quality as part of its gauge of farm-to-school programming.

~ **Vermont FEED**, a partnership of NOFA-VT and Shelburne Farms, hosted its Farm to School Institute in June. Twelve school teams developed in-depth Farm-to-School Action Plans so they can implement school gardens, improve school meal participation, and increase local food in cafeterias.

~ The **Vermont Farm to Plate Network's** Food Atlas has been updated with analysis of the USDA's recent agricultural census, including charts showing increased but slowing purchasing through direct markets like CSAs and farmers' markets and increased employment in the food and farming sector. The Food Atlas continues to be an important resource for those working on these issues.



We were happy to have many of you join us at Shelburne Farms in June to hear about this work directly. For those of you who weren't able to come, our summer intern, Middlebury College student Ben Harris, made a video of the speaking program featuring a panel of our grantees discussing their work on the ground. You can watch it online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzTDWYAu-5c

What our grantees are saying

This summer, we asked an independent consultant to talk with each of the Initiative's grantees to find out what they were learning and how we could improve. The results affirmed that the Foundation is connecting and mobilizing Vermont in new ways:

"Without the Vermont Community Foundation, there was no coordinated effort. [The Food and Farm Initiative] brought together two big challenges - food security and sustainable agriculture. [There's a] lot of value in combining these issues and [that] allows on-the-ground players to come up with more innovative and lasting changes."

"Being a part of a larger statewide effort - one that has duration and commitment to this issue - is really great. And being part of a network of grantees working toward this commitment...has significant value."

"The Food and Farm Initiative is making a difference for our organization - it has accelerated and expanded our work, aligned partners in the field to work in a more coordinated fashion, and raised the visibility of this work in Vermont."

Read a summary of the report at
www.vermontcf.org/FFIGrantAssessment



Students at Monkton Central School enjoy local veggies with their lunch.

We also heard some frustrations from our grantees about the volume of work associated with developing and implementing collaborative projects, and that we could provide additional clarity and support for program implementation and administration. As a result, we are adjusting our grantmaking calendar, streamlining the application requirements, and investigating what additional resources we can provide to support the implementation of multi-organization, collaborative projects. We are currently planning for a small round of mostly “bridge” grants this fall followed by larger grants in spring 2015. This will begin the switch to an 18-month cycle that provides increased time to implement and evaluate statewide, systemic projects and reduces the administrative burden on grantees so they can spend more time connecting healthy food with hungry people.

Moving forward



Overall, we're learning that effecting change in a complex field requires us to listen intently and to help others step back from their day-to-day work to consider how their efforts connect with the bigger picture. In the next year, we'll expand our focus to support endeavors to get more affordable, local foods into wholesale markets, moving beyond schools to reach more members of our community. And we'll be looking for additional ways to support the cultural changes needed for all Vermonters to recognize Vermont's food as their own.

We'll provide you with additional updates on the collective success of our Food and Farm Initiative later this year as well as the opportunity to support specific projects that are particularly compelling to you. Additional gifts to the Local Food and Farms Fund are always welcome - and are what has allowed Vermont's leading nonprofits to partner in new ways and connect more Vermonters with healthy, local foods.



On a personal note, my husband and I are preparing to welcome another little boy into our family. For much of August and September, the Food and Farm Initiative will be left in the capable hands of Special Projects Advisor Carolyn Fox Weir, who you may remember as the lead author on last summer's Local Food for Healthy Communities report.

Thank you again for your interest in and commitment to building a local food system that nourishes Vermonters at all income levels while supporting our farmers, our lands, and our communities.

All the best,
Janet McLaughlin
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The Vermont Community Foundation

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www.vermontcf.org/localfood