

Working Lands Enterprise Initiative

2020 IMPACT REPORT

The Working Lands Enterprise Initiative supports innovative entrepreneurs at the forefront of Vermont's Working Lands economy.



The Working Lands Enterprise Initiative (WLEI) and governing board were created in accordance with Act 142 of 2012 to stimulate economic development in the agricultural and forestry sectors by systematically advancing entrepreneurship, business development, and job creation. Investment in grant funds and matching dollars have been critical to completing projects that preserve and enhance the working landscape.

For the Fiscal Year 2021 grant cycle, the Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) plans to fund Supply Chain Impact Business Grants ranging \$25,000-\$75,000 per award. Decisions for these grants will be made in early 2021.

- Production and Processing in Agriculture** – Enhancing production of value-added agriculture or forest-based products and/or manufacturing efficiencies, transitioning to operation as a new processor or expansion as an existing processor, addressing known bottlenecks along the supply chain, such as meat processing and slaughter capacity.
- Low Grade Wood Equipment** – To produce, screen, weigh, or package, wood fuel (firewood, pellets, or chips) for heating; kiln or flow-through dryers; increase commercial sawmill throughput or efficiency.

2 Image courtesy of Stony Pond Farm.

2012-2020

Program Impact To Date

Funded 241 agriculture and forestry projects	All of Vermont's 14 counties have been impacted	Distributed over \$7M in Working Lands funds	Leveraged over \$11M in matching funds
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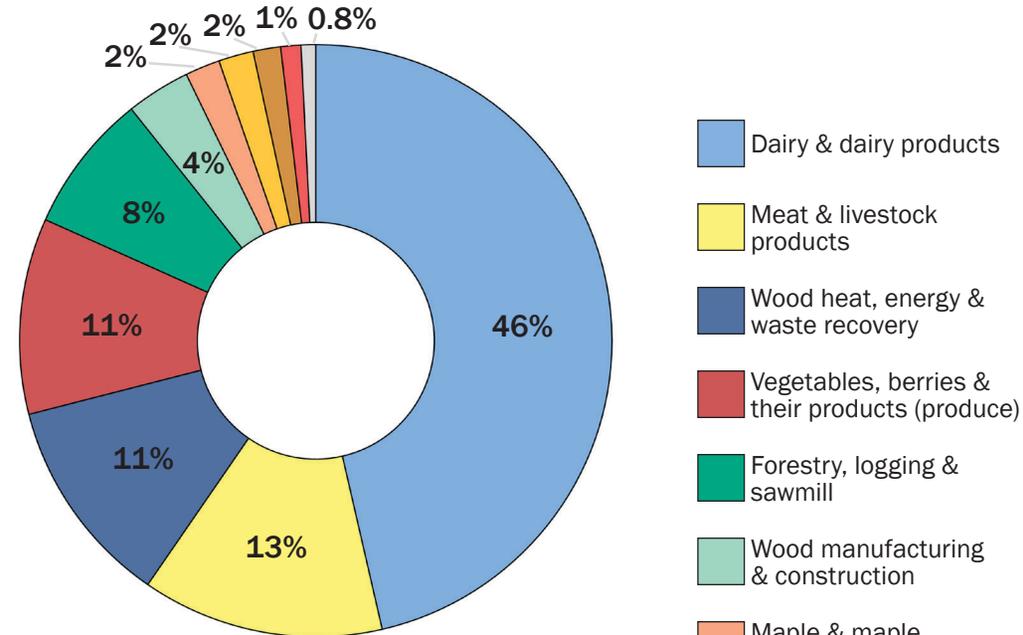
FROM 2012 THROUGH 2018, Working Lands grantees have

Created 524 new jobs	Impacted 19,721 acres of land	Employed 1015 people
Generated \$36,491,506 in additional sales for the Vermont economy		

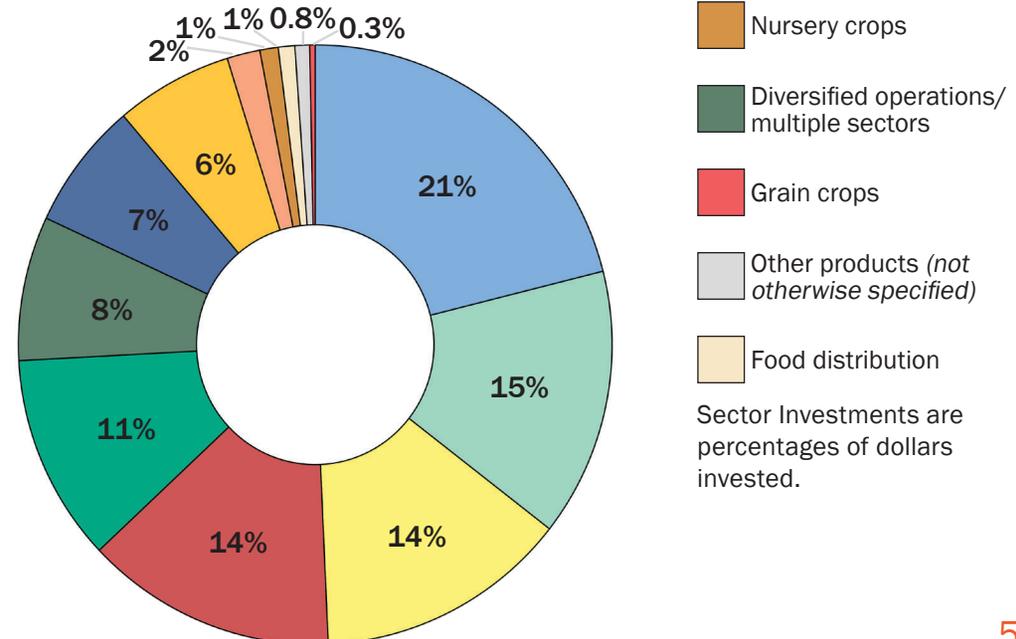


Top image courtesy of Stony Pond Farm. Above image from Adam's Berry Farm/ Citizen Cider co-branding initiative courtesy of Adam's Berry Farm.

Fiscal Year 2020
\$1.5M INVESTED



2012 To Date
OVER \$6M INVESTED



Sector Investments are percentages of dollars invested.

INVESTING IN VERMONT'S FOOD, FOREST AND FARM ECONOMY

Focus areas and funding categories are annually assessed by the WLEB to ensure adequate attention toward the priority issues and needs of the agricultural and forestry industries. Investments are designed to support businesses at critical growth stages. Working Lands Enterprise Fund (WLEF) investments are able to respond to imminent needs, sectors and markets that have potential and/or challenges, including in 2020:

- In 2020, the WLEB reviewed over 180 applications with a total ask of over \$6.8 million.
- The Legislature allocated \$500,000 of dairy-focused funds, allowing the WLEB to support value-added dairy and farm diversification, and increase dairy investments by 7% from 2019.
- The additional allocation of one million dollars provided Market Level Industry Impact investments, adding a mid-tier opportunity with Supply Chain Impact investments, while also continuing the traditional Standard Business grants.
- In June, with an early response to the ongoing urgent needs arising from COVID-19 challenges to Vermont's Working Lands businesses, the Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) awarded 16 businesses and one service provider over \$250,000 in COVID-19 Response Business Development Grants within the sectors of agriculture and forestry, prior to Federal COVID-19 Relief Funds dollars arriving to Vermont.
- The Vermont State Legislature appropriated Coronavirus Relief Funds to the WLEF via two bills. H.966 for Agriculture and Working Lands Assistance was signed by Governor Scott in July. \$2.5 million was appropriated to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, then routed to the WLEF for agricultural, food and forest, and wood product industries. The \$1 million H.961 went directly to WLEF, and the board opted a path for dollars directly to Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets' greater Vermont COVID-19 Agriculture Assistance Program, to ensure swift relief to businesses for past economic harm.

Working Lands investments help increase production, create jobs, and propel innovation for industries crucial to Vermont's economic success. The charts on page 5 represent the industry sectors where WLEI has made investments since its inception, for business grantees.

The Working Lands Enterprise Board's **Service Provider Investment Strategy** is a two-pronged approach, funding partners who meet critical, long-term system needs via contracts and funding regional groups or pilot programs via grants.

The WLEB's Service Provider Investment Strategy is found in its entirety in Appendix A of the WLEB Organizational Plan.* The Service Provider Strategy Committee explored ways to broaden funding by continuing the contract pilot of 2018, and in late 2019, the Board heard directly from Working Lands subject matter experts on topics to inform the 2020 and 2021 Service Provider funding strategy.

Grant Focus in Fiscal Year 2021

- Market development, marketing plans, and sales
- Business and financial planning
- Business responses to COVID-19
- Enterprise transitions for next generation business owners and post succession
- Access to capital
- Manufacturing efficiencies, process flow
- Business research and development

Contracts Focus in Fiscal Year 2021

- Business Coaching across the Stages of Development
- Enterprise Transitions, Succession Planning, Next Generation Business Owners and Post-Succession
- Workforce Development – forming an interconnected set of solutions to meet employment needs, designed for personal and professional skills development processes
- COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience: Supply Chain – Improving Adaptability within Markets, broader solutions for VT/regional supply chain impacts e.g., distribution and aggregation bottlenecks
- COVID-19 Recovery: Emerging Market Development Needs - e-commerce, home delivery, curbside pick-up, block chain(traceability), and farmer/forest products to market apps



To complement WLEB Business investments, Service Provider investments are the other primary target of funding priorities for the WLEB. Service Provider organizations offer either direct or indirect services to support the development of Vermont-based working lands businesses through technical or business assistance support.

Service Provider Impact Snapshot

\$1.93M

Invested between 2013 and 2019

1,832

Businesses served between 2015 and 2017

12,789

Hours of technical assistance between 2015 and 2017

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance service providers offer a range of support services to owners/operators of working lands businesses: from agronomic and production best practice research, to food safety planning, engineering and permitting support, accounting and bookkeeping services, grant writing, animal health and nutrition consultations, water quality and nutrient management assessments, and equipment optimization support.

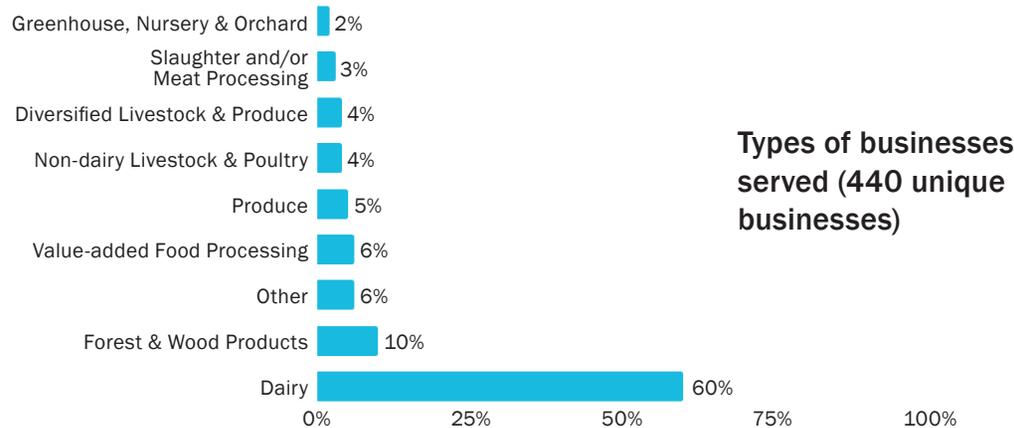
Business Assistance

Business assistance service providers work with the owners/operators of working lands to: businesses to build business plans, business and financial planning, identify and secure appropriate capital, assess capital expenditures and equipment needs, plan for business succession, research, market development, and strengthen their personnel and project management skills.

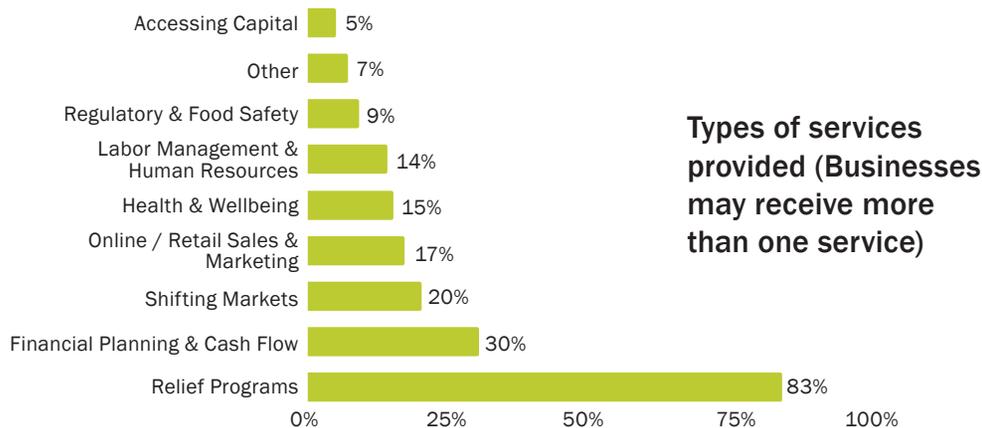


VERMONT HOUSING & CONSERVATION BOARD

FY20 WLEF COVID-19 RESPONSE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANTEE



In late March, the Vermont Farm and Forest Viability Program at VHCB launched a COVID Response and Recovery Business Coaching Program to help working lands businesses navigate the impacts of the pandemic. Supported with an initial \$50,000 Working Lands Enterprise Initiative grant and sustained through \$192,000 in Federal CARES Act funding allocated by the State Legislature, the program has provided more than 520 clients with free business coaching, matching them with consultants and Viability Program service providers. In partnership with Farm First and the Vermont Agricultural Mediation Program, the program also supported stress management, mental health, and mediation services for working lands businesses statewide.



UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT EXTENSION

FY19 WLEF SERVICE PROVIDER GRANTEE

In 2019, University of Vermont's Extension program was funded \$19,943 for 'Growing ourVTwoods.org: New online resources to support Vermont's forest economy'. Impacting all 14 counties in Vermont, this project leverages resources to highlight and strengthen VT's forest economy. Building on the successful, collaborative foundation of ourVTwoods.org, a VT-based portal for information about healthy forests, this project is convening a diverse group of partners to:

1. Identify opportunities for full integration of forest value chain aspects into the website;
2. Develop a five-part podcast series communicating the value of forestry and the wood products sector;
3. create a user-friendly online library of webinars where foresters can earn professional Continuing Educational Units (CEU).

UVM Extension is the lead organization on this project, managed by Katherine Forrer, Urban and Community Forestry Outreach Specialist. Part of UVM Extension's mission is to bring research-based educational programs and practical information to Vermonters. This project will foster partnerships with other UVM Departments, integrating student service learning and internship opportunities around the podcasts.

Although COVID-19 has significantly impacted their ability to develop the podcast, adjustments to an online environment prevail. To date, these funds have enabled 118 licensed foresters to create an account to access the webinar library in order to earn the required CEUs for VT forester licensing renewal, thus maintaining forester employment. 598 continuing education credits for Vermont licensed foresters have been earned via the library, and 1,160,130 acres are under improved management.

These innovative online tools meet several critical leverage points of the forest economy including workforce development, connecting different sectors along the value chain (from landowners to consumers), and greater public awareness about the value of forestry and wood products industry to VT's rural economy.

 **NON-DAIRY LIVESTOCK & MEAT**

Sweet Pickins Farm | \$20,000 *Small state inspected poultry processing facility*

 **DAIRY**

Butterworks Farm | \$20,000
Product diversification, marketing

Fat Sheep Farm & Cabins | \$16,025
Sheep's milk dairy products, agritourism

Fun Yum Farm | \$14,752
Infrastructure improvements

Ice House Farm | \$24,250
Goat dairy expansion

Joneslan Farm | \$150,000 *Transition from cow dairy to goat dairy farm*

Kingdom Creamery of VT | \$143,954
HAACP certification, increase staff

Lambert Farm | \$14,000
Installation of Lely Grazeway

Livewater Farm and Dairy | \$15,000
Retail stand, product development

Pinello Farm | \$20,900
Partial cost of no-till seed drill

Stony Pond Farm | \$65,000
Creamery for production/distribution

Wayward Goose Farm | \$19,910
Upgrades to farm store

 **COMPOST**

Sunrise Organic Farm | \$20,000
On-farm compost facility

 **NURSERY CROPS**

Morey Hill Farm | \$19,400 *Installation of subterranean cool-storage facility*

 **AGRICULTURE BUSINESS ASSISTANCE**

Northeastern Organic Farming Association of Vermont | \$19,999
Marketing skills for farmer's markets

Vermont Grass Farmers Association | \$16,190 *Marketing Vermont pasture-raised beef to Vermont restaurants*

 **SPECIALTY FOODS**

Artesano | \$24,943
Increase value-added product capacity

Equinox Food Brokers | \$75,000
Expansion to represent VT businesses

 **GRAIN**

Thornhill Farm | \$15,000
Improving grain drying & storage capacity

 **PRODUCE**

Adam's Berry Farm | \$36,713
Organic blueberry production expansion

Honey Field Farm | \$20,000
Barn renovation into wash-pack facility

Old Road Farm | \$18,000
Delivery van to expand distribution

Sweetland Farm | \$24,500 *Farm stand upgrade & on-farm commercial kitchen*

Vine Ripe Greenhouse Construction | \$10,000 *Business expansion for hoophouse construction assistance*

Walden Heights Nursery & Orchard | \$5,505 *Atmospheric controlled cool storage*

 **PRIMARY FORESTRY: SAWMILL**

DCI, Inc. | \$75,000
Resaw to scale-up sawmill production

 **SECONDARY FORESTRY: FIREWOOD**

Rick's Firewood | \$150,000 *Scale up production capacity & raw material storage*

 **WOOD MANUFACTURING**

Sawyer Made | \$24,000
Completion of facility upgrade

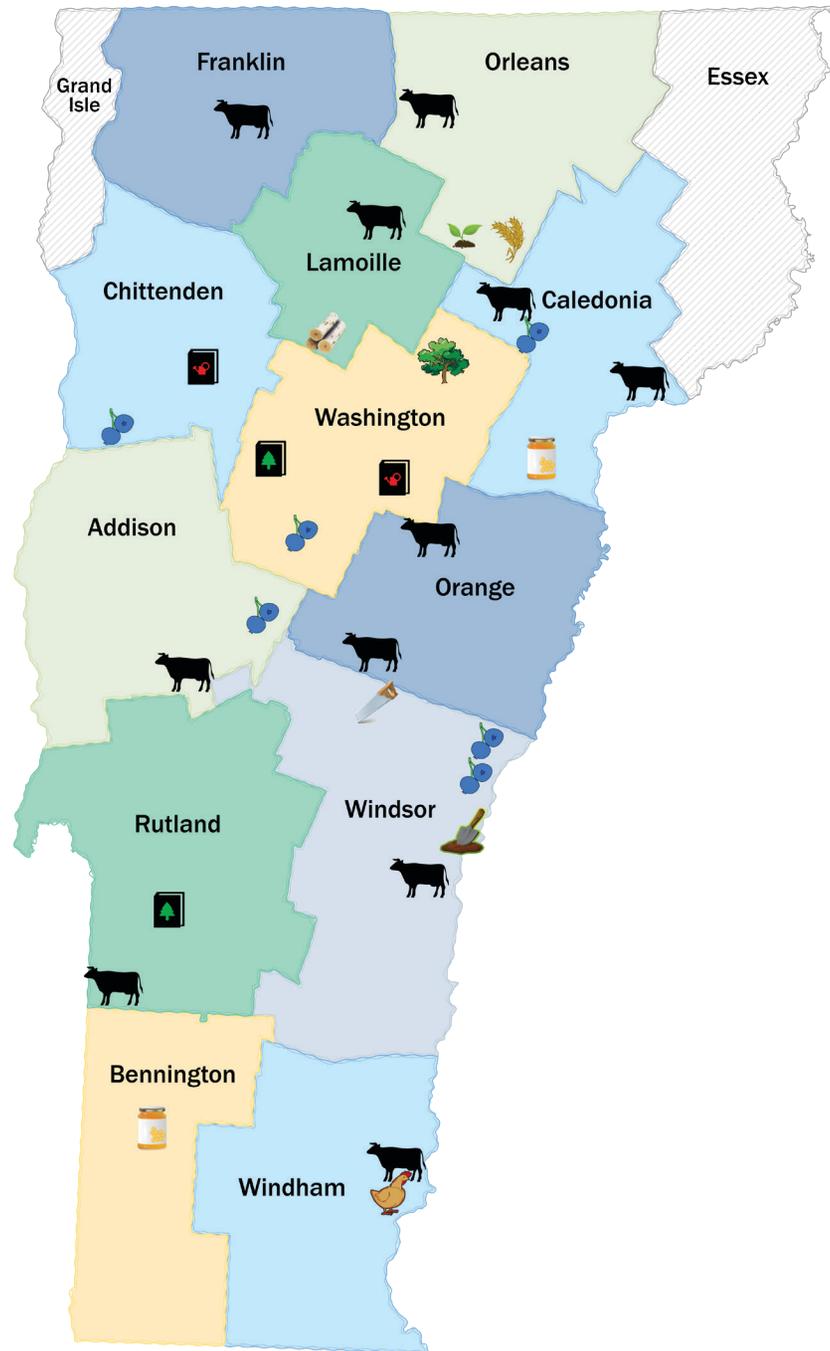
 **FORESTRY BUSINESS ASSISTANCE**

The Vermont Forest Business School | \$24,999 (contract) *Logging and sawmill mobile apps*

The Vermont Forest Business School | \$20,000 *Forest-based business owner professional development*

VT LEAP | \$24,999 *Website upgrades for logger certifications*

RECIPIENTS OF GRANTS & CONTRACTS



Map Sources: VAAFM and VCGI

OLD ROAD FARM GRANVILLE | ADDISON COUNTY

\$18,000 FY20 STANDARD BUSINESS GRANT to purchase a delivery vehicle for market expansion.

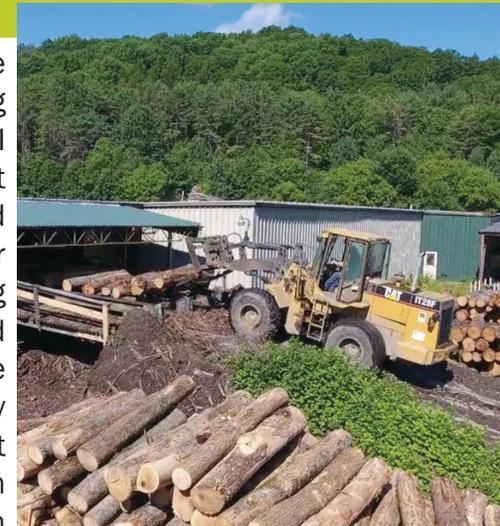
As their farm business continues to grow, this funding will allow the owners to invest in a reliable delivery vehicle to transport produce in a safe and efficient manner. Old Road Farm is one of the main salad greens growers for the Middlebury Co-op, with expected volume increase to additional markets as they transition to a new property purchase through the Vermont Land Trust. Securing additional and larger wholesale/resale accounts require the investment of reliable transportation for vegetable growers. Old Road Farm understands the produce safety and quality impacts of delivering delicate salad greens and other vegetables. Proper transport will keep produce at a temperature that ensures safety and quality from harvest through delivery to their new markets: solid return on investment for this enterprise and in turn, the local VT food economy.



DCI, INC. ROYALTON | WINDSOR COUNTY

\$75,000 FY20 SUPPLY CHAIN IMPACT BUSINESS GRANT for purchase of a sustainable resaw.

DCI is a vertically integrated sustainable wood furniture manufacturer supplying Vermont businesses since 1986. DCI owns and operate one of the few (if not only) FSC Chain of Custody certified sawmills in VT. DCI aims to bolster Vermont's forest economy by doubling sawmill production capacity and expanding their existing mill to house a new state-of-the-art high efficiency Resaw. The benefits to the Vermont forest economy include job creation and increased: demand for VT-grown lumber; work for VT loggers; renewable biofuel creation; sawdust bedding for dairy farms; mulch for landscaping industry; high quality hardwood for wood craftsmen; hardwood chips for Vermont schools to heat their schools; and energy savings for the DCI sawmill.



JONESLAN FARM
HYDE PARK | LAMOILLE COUNTY

\$150,000 FY20 SUPPLY CHAIN IMPACT BUSINESS GRANT to transition a 300-cow dairy to a milking goat dairy.

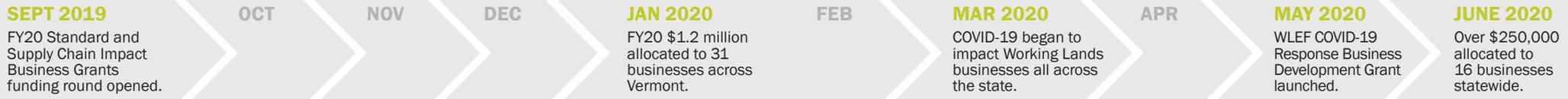
Joneslan Farm, a 147 year old family dairy, is transitioning from cow to goat dairy as a way to preserve commercial dairy farming in a rapidly changing market and environmental climate. While the financial economics of cow dairying have made it difficult to remain viable in Vermont, transitioning to goat dairy with access to a national processor located in Vermont presents an innovative spot on the horizon for these farmers. After collaborating with Vermont Creamery and Vermont Housing and Conservation Board on a business plan, the Jones brothers sold their milking cows, converted the facility to manage goats, and purchased a milking goat herd to intending to sell milk to Vermont Creamery. The farm will purchase an additional 600 head and continue to grow the herd up to 1,500 mature goats. In addition, Joneslan Farm will have up to 500 bucklings per year to supply Vermont Chevron's growing goat meat enterprise. The farm will focus

on genetics and sell breeding stock as a secondary enterprise, working with UVM Extension and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. This project is timely—Vermont Creamery has been seeking Vermont goat milk for years, yet there has been little appetite from established cow dairies to make the financial and mental commitment to transition. Joneslan Farm's experience operating at scale makes it easier to embrace diversification and make the adjustments necessary to transition to a commercial goat dairy.



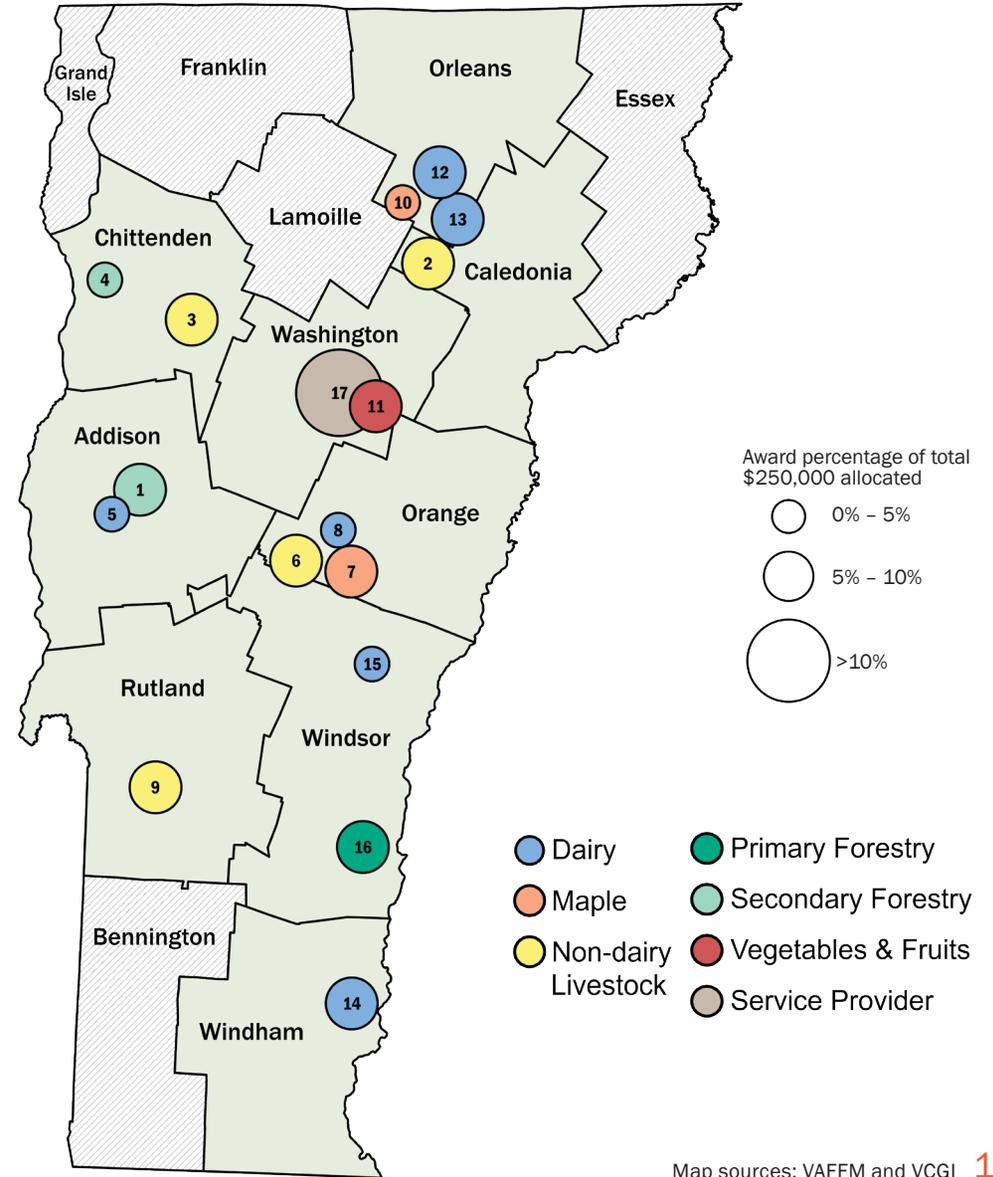
In May of 2020, the WLEB nimbly strategized unexpended FY20 funds for rapid assembly of a COVID-19 Response Business Development Grant.

In June, over \$250,000 was awarded for addressing urgent business needs as a result of the pandemic—prior to any COVID-19 Relief federal dollars arriving to Vermont.



- 1** **Maple Landmark, Inc.** | \$12,807 for production improvements for efficiency and flexibility
- 2** **Snug Valley Farm** | \$25,000 to increase home delivery and product distribution capabilities
- 3** **Maple Wind Farm** | \$20,000 to expand their poultry processing capacity by increasing processing plant equipment
- 4** **Vermont Farm Table** | \$10,000 for expanding the local supply chain and collaborations with local forestry operations
- 5** **Champlain Valley Creamery** | \$5,300 for product line expansion & developing marketing strategies
- 6** **The Royal Butcher, LLC** | \$20,000 for investments into equipment that will increase production and capacity
- 7** **Silloway Maple** | \$16,000 for expanding their online markets and increasing their capacity for on-site agrotourism
- 8** **Fat Toad Farm** | \$11,438 to increase online sales and website traffic
- 9** **Squier Family Farm, LLC** | \$14,739 to convert an old milking barn to a self-serve farmstand
- 10** **Stannard Farm** | \$9,589 for upgrading machinery and purchasing personal protective equipment for employees
- 11** **Tamarack Hollow Farm** | \$15,823 to increase production of baby greens, supplied to wholesale markets
- 12** **Cate Hill Orchard** | \$14,190 to assist in their transition to a year-round sheep dairy and increase skyr production
- 13** **Cellars at Jasper Hill*** | \$25,000 for the purchase of equipment for exact weight cheese wedge production
- 14** **Parish Hill Creamery*** | \$21,175 for the purchase of new equipment and assistance with updating their website and market plan
- 15** **Thistle Hill Farm, LLC** | \$5,000 for the purchase of cryovac machine to increase online direct-to-consumer sales, and upgrades to their online purchasing interface
- 16** **Sheehan and Sons Lumber** | \$25,000 to expand pallet production line
- 17** **Vermont Housing & Conservation Board** | \$50,000 for Statewide COVID response and recovery business coaching to working lands businesses

COVID-19 Response Business Development Grant Recipients



*Grantees supported in part by Dairy Business Innovation Center funds.

JULY 2020

Governor Scott signed H.961 and H.966 into law.

AUG 2020

Vermont's COVID-19 Agriculture Assistance Program (VCAAP) launched.

SEP

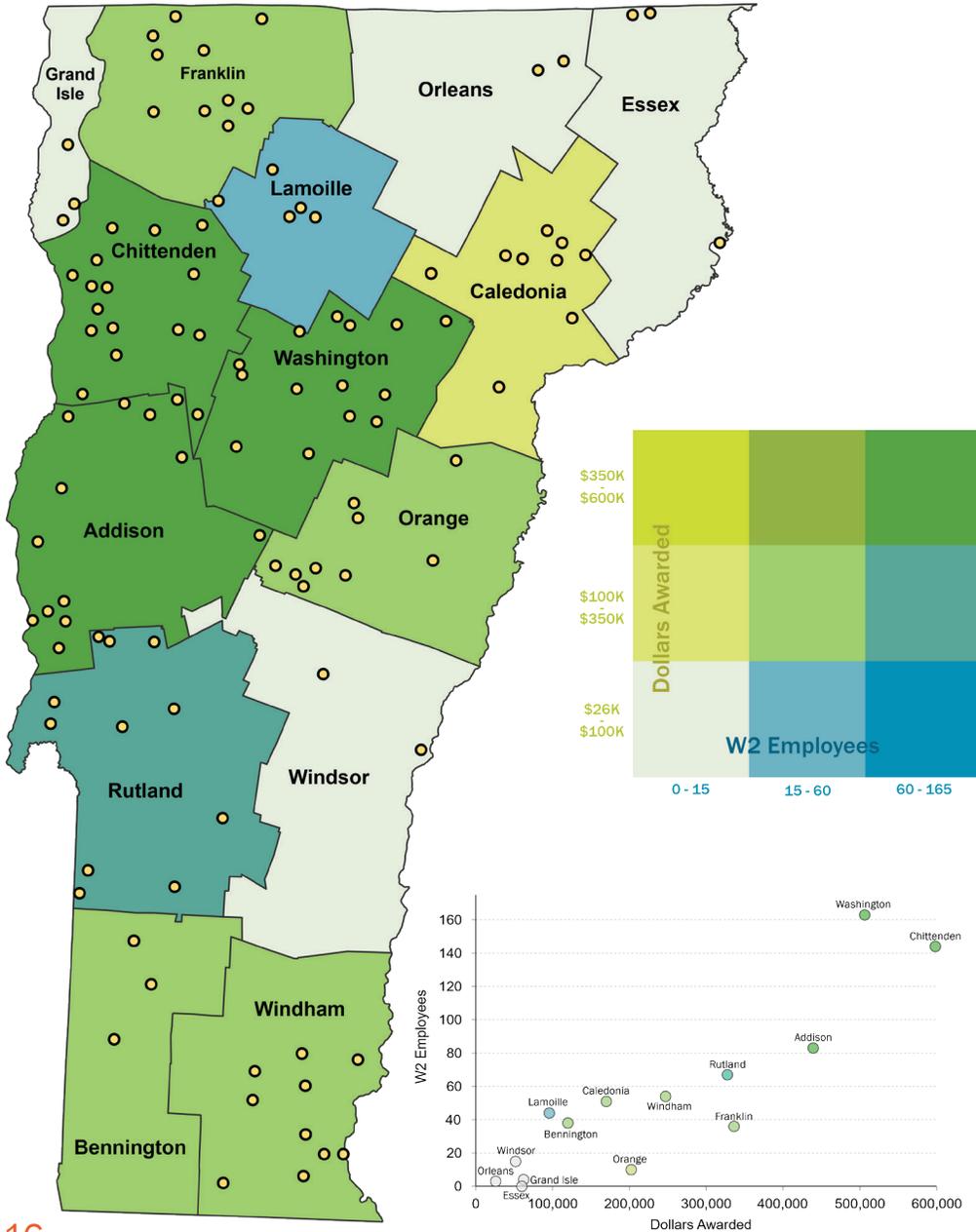
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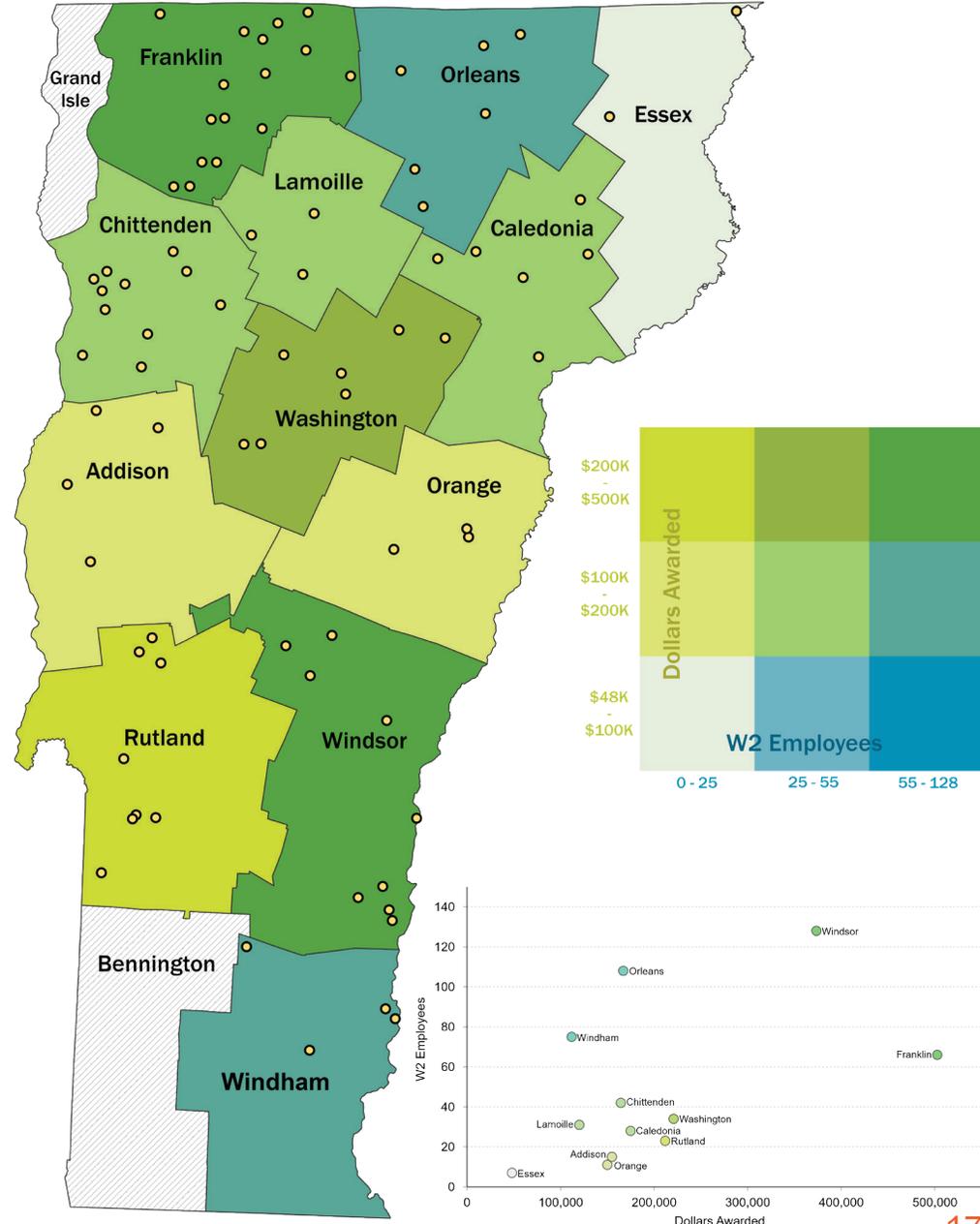
DEC 2020

\$2.39M in federal funds allocated to 79 businesses across the state.

VCAAP H.961 Award Recipients



VCAAP H.966 Award Recipients



Map sources: VAFFM and VCGI

The design of these two bills allowed apt implementation by the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets to deploy the Vermont COVID-19 Agriculture Assistance Program to over 200 businesses statewide. Below are bivariate choropleth maps depicting two variables (W-2 employees and awards granted) concurrently by assigning graduated colors to defined geographic regions in accordance with the relationship between the two variables.

THE ROYAL BUTCHER

BRAINTREE | ORANGE COUNTY

**\$20,000 WLEF COVID-19 RESPONSE
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT**
for meat processing equipment to
increase throughput

COVID-19 resulted in a surge in demand for slaughter and meat processing, across Vermont, regionally and nationally. In operation since 2003, The Royal Butcher has been operating at maximum capacity, needing newer equipment to increase labor productivity and to meet the local demand for its services. A USDA inspected slaughterhouse and meat processor, The Royal Butcher focuses on serving local livestock and dairy farms, with 10 employees who process approximately 30-50 head of cattle, hogs, sheep, and goat per week. This slaughter facility was turning away new accounts prior to COVID-19, with the growth of their existing customers looking for processing services.

The investment in equipment became urgent once the pandemic occurred. With the WLEF grant, The Royal Butcher will be able to address bottlenecks in processing to improve the grinder, portioner, vacuum sealer, and weigh/price labeler. These upgrades will improve throughput by 30 to 40 percent.



Image courtesy of The Royal Butcher.



PARISH HILL CREAMERY

PUTNEY | WINDHAM COUNTY

**\$21,175 WLEF COVID-19 RESPONSE
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT**
for equipment upgrades, digital
marketing, infrastructure planning

Parish Hill Creamery experienced revenue losses of 77 percent from March to May 2020. Rather than closing their doors, the owners saw an opportunity to reimagine their cheese enterprise by swiftly finding ways to navigate the pandemic. With distributor and restaurant sales mostly gone, ramping up direct to consumer sales quickly revealed that upgrading their small walk-in cooler and vacuum sealer was critical. With this grant, Parish Hill Creamery will be able to sustain producing quality product with the infrastructure enhancements, and redesign their website to reach existing and new customers.

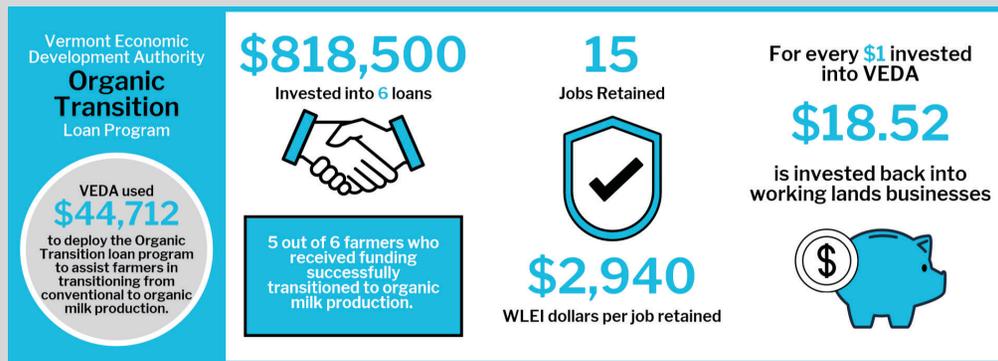
In the several months prior to the onset of COVID-19, this business was in promising conversations with distributors in untapped regions of the US: Midwest, Western and Pacific Northwest. This grant will help to strengthen Parish Hill Creamery's market reach in those regions. The brand update also includes video work, further market plan development, and estimate plans for aging space expansion at the creamery.



Images courtesy of
Parish Hill Creamery.

VERMONT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY ORGANIC TRANSITION LOAN PROGRAM

According to Act 142, the Board has the authority to award grants and other investments, which may include loans underwritten and administered through the Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA). In 2016, WLEB partnered with VEDA to offer Organic Transition Loan Program that provided financial assistance for conventional dairy farmers to transition to organic milk production. The goal of the program was to improve the long-term financial viability of the farms that participated. Shifts in the market for organic milk resulted in ~60% deployment of the \$75,000 grant that VEDA received to support the program. COVID-19 then presented an opportunity for a second-phase project utilizing remaining grants funds to enable VT Housing & Conservation Board to supply business technical assistance to VEDA-funded dairy farms in the midst of the ensuing economic crisis.



Phase I

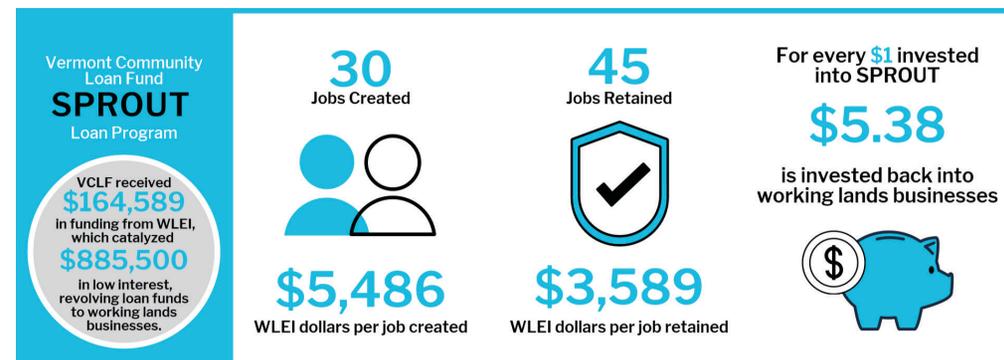
VEDA received \$75,000 in Organic Transition grant funds to assist conventional dairy farmers who transitioned to organic milk production by subsidizing the interest on their loans for up to two years. Six farmers received loan funds, and five of them successfully transitioned to organic milk production. VEDA invested a total of \$818,500 in loans, averaging \$136,417 per loan. For every \$1 of WLEF funds utilized by VEDA, \$18.52 was invested back into businesses across Vermont. The program was extremely helpful as farms took on higher expenses to establish compliance with organic standards prior to receiving a higher organic milk price. The program also featured business technical assistance from the Northeast Organic Farming Association of VT.

Phase II

In June of 2020, remaining Organic Transition Loan Program grant funds of \$30,297.51 were transferred to VHCB's Farm and Forest Viability Program to fund technical assistance, including business coaching and consulting, to VEDA borrowers who either are dairy farmers or were dairy farmers as of Dec. 31, 2019. Seventy-four of VEDA's dairy Borrowers had a total of 82 enrollments in technical assistance, for the months of July, August and September of 2020. Many of these farmers received assistance with successfully preparing grant and loan applications related to the CARES Act and/or with decision making as they adapted to changes in their businesses as a result of the pandemic.

VERMONT COMMUNITY LOAN FUND SPROUT LOAN PROGRAM

Vermont Community Loan Fund's (VCLF) SPROUT program, with support from the WLEF, has been able to support 24 diverse food, farm and forest enterprises, demonstrating high impacts including jobs and sales growth. This program focuses on providing low cost loans to startup businesses traditionally struggling to access capital. Given the demonstrable success of the program, VCLF has been able to secure additional philanthropic support from private sources to continue investing in preserving Vermont's working lands through 2021. These enterprises have retained 45 jobs and project to create 30 for a total of 75 jobs impacted. That equates to \$2,195 WLEF 20 dollars per job created or retained.



TRADE SHOW ASSISTANCE GRANTS

Trade shows are exhibitions at which businesses in a particular industry promote their products and services, enabling an enterprise to find customers to help their business grow. The WLEI funded Trade Show Assistance Grants to provide reimbursement directly to Vermont businesses to attend in-state or out of state trade shows. These grants mitigate financial risks associated with exhibiting at trade shows and provide an excellent opportunity to network with wholesale buyers.

Total Working Lands Enterprise Fund Investments to Date:

>**\$130K**

Value of sales placed at shows



5,765

Total leads generated at shows



>**\$4M**

Anticipated value of leads



72

VT business TSAG recipients

\$200K

Total Working Lands investments



37

Unique trade shows attended

With the 2020 pandemic disrupting in-person events, virtual trade activities are an innovative way for Vermont businesses to meet customers from across the world to showcase their products. As a result of the COVID-19 trade show cancellations, Agency staff piloted a virtual tasting event with over 25 buyer participants in partnership with the Good Food Foundation.

25% of approved applicants had show(s) cancelled prior to intended attendance at an in-person show. The Agency of Agriculture pivoted to support Working Lands businesses through virtual endeavors:

\$5,000

To Vermont Specialty Food Association* to offset virtual trade show registration fees

\$5,000

To sponsor Good Food Foundation's "Vermont's Finest" virtual mercantile

Eight enterprises received coaching before and after connecting with wholesale buyers:

Connections with more than

25

wholesale buyers

Resulted in an expected

\$16,000

in sales in the next 6 to 12 months

*VSFA grant is underway.

PROGRAM DONOR SKI VERMONT

Since 2017, the Vermont Ski Areas Association (VSAA) has funded a variety of Working Lands projects to in-state businesses.

The ski industry in Vermont is proud to be a part of the state's working landscape, and is committed to supporting and helping grow the other businesses with which we share that landscape. Over the years, the businesses and projects we've supported with this grant were chosen because of the way they've reflected our own values: commitment to the preservation of Vermont's cultural and historical heritage; stewardship of the land; contributions to the state's economy through job creation and growth; and the pride and appreciation we have from living and working in the Green Mountain State.

—Molly Mahar, Vermont Ski Areas Association president



Winter in its Original State.

The VSAA awarded \$5,505 to Walden Heights Nursery in Walden and \$10,000 to Vine Ripe Greenhouse construction, of Roxbury in Fiscal Year 2020.

This philanthropy is funded through proceeds from Ski Vermont's Fifth Grade Passport program, which helps children get involved in skiing and snowboarding. Last year's Ski Vermont grant was awarded to KJ Pratt Logging and Tree Service, LLC, of Jericho, VT. This \$15,000 grant helped KJ Pratt to acquire a firewood processor, for expanding the low-grade wood division of its business. In 2018, Fairmont Farm in East Montpelier, received \$16,000 to help fund its 'Life on the Farm' Camp for children. In 2017, VSAA awarded \$19,980 to Larson Farm Creamery of Wells to increase their product line of value-added dairy products.



To date, VSAA has donated over

\$65,000

to the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative



WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE BOARD

The Working Lands Enterprise Board represents an agency triumvirate and a cross-sector network of partners: Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets; Vermont Forests, Parks & Recreation; Vermont Agency of Commerce

and Community Development; fourteen designated board members from across the value chains of Agriculture and Forestry; and Ex-Officio members from the Vermont Economic Development Authority, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, and the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund.



ERIC DELUCA | VICE CHAIR
Principal, Leverage Point Consulting
Windham County

WILL BELONGIA
Executive Director,
Vermont Community Loan Fund
Washington County



ANSON TEBBETTS | CHAIR
Secretary, Vermont Agency of Agriculture,
Food & Markets

ALYSON EASTMAN | DESIGNEE
Deputy Secretary, Vermont Agency of
Agriculture, Food & Markets

MICHAEL SNYDER
Commissioner, Vermont Department of
Forests, Parks & Recreation

SAM LINCOLN | DESIGNEE
Deputy Commissioner, Vermont
Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation

MATT LANGLAIS | DESIGNEE
Caledonia/Essex County Forester, Vermont
Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation

TED BRADY
Deputy Secretary, Vermont Agency of
Commerce & Community Development

HILARY DELROSS | DESIGNEE
Senior Economic Development Specialist,
Vermont Agency of Commerce &
Community Development



ALISHA UTTER
Owner, Arbor Farmstead
Grand Isle County

DAVE HUBBARD
Salesman, GMC Hardwoods
Windsor County

CHARLIE HANCOCK
Consulting Forester, Northwoods Forestry
Caledonia County

KATHLEEN WANNER
Executive Director,
Vermont Woodlands Association
Rutland County



MEGAN CAMP
Vice President, Shelburne Farms
Chittenden County

BETH KENNETT
Owner, Liberty Hill Farm
Windsor County

BOB LESNIKOSKI
Owner, Vermont Cranberry Company
Franklin County

SIOBHAN SMITH
Vice President, Vermont Land Trust
Chittenden County



APRIL LEMAY
Owner, April's Maple
Essex County

ANNIE ROWELL
Vermont First Coordinator, Sodexo
Chittenden County

Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Members

CASSANDRA POLHEMUS
Chief Executive Officer,
Vermont Economic Development Authority

SARAH ISHAM | DESIGNEE
Director of Agricultural Lending,
Vermont Agricultural Credit Corporation

ELLEN KAHLER
Executive Director,
Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

GUS SEELIG
Executive Director,
Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

ELA CHAPIN | DESIGNEE
Program Director,
Vermont Farm & Forest Viability



The work of the Board is governance, while appreciating and respecting the continual striving for operational excellence by staff from the Agency of Agriculture Food & Markets and its public-sector partners within the Initiative—ACCD and FPR. Yet, even a governing body needs to get things done and make the best use of the valuable attention of the full Board. WLEB's committees facilitate planning and analysis that support effective and efficient Board decision-making that, in turn, amplifies impact. Often bringing together public, private, and ex officio, non-voting Board members, committees proactively address strategic considerations and opportunities, enabling the Initiative to be both innovative and responsive.

— Eric Deluca, Vice Chair of the Working Lands Enterprise Board

- Coordinating Committee
- Enterprise Financing Options Committee
- Forestry Committee
- Goals & Evaluation Committee
- Policy Committee
- Service Provider Strategy Committee
- **Executive Business Skills Committee highlights:** In 2018, this ad-hoc committee was formed to develop a long-term strategy for forestry and agricultural sectors, specifically attending to improving executive business skills. Partnering with Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund in 2019, the Online Business Development Directory* was designed to match working lands businesses with farm and forest viability services. In 2020, an RFP was developed for new and innovative approaches and tools to reach working lands enterprise businesses.



HONORING JACK LAZOR (1951-2020)

Since the inception of Butterworks Farm in 1976, Jack and Anne Lazor have focused their efforts on organic dairy farming, value added dairy products and more recently, climate smart farming and water quality. From 1979-81, they sold raw milk products. Butterworks has been supplying Vermont and Northeast markets since first receiving its milk handlers license in 1984.



The cow barn built in 1982 originally housed 12 cows and now has capacity for milking 36-38 cows. Butterworks' herd has grown from six Jersey cows to close to 80 head, including mature cows and heifers. There are now five full time and six part time employees between the farm and the dairy plant.

Butterworks yogurt and kefir are distributed by United Natural Foods to the North Atlantic division of Whole Foods. Aggregation and distribution are continued challenges for farm and food producers in Vermont. Butterworks has significantly decreased their delivery trucks on the road and begun to depend on a diversified set of distributors such as Black River Produce, Farm Connex, Farmers to You, Myer's Produce and Pete's Greens CSA on occasion. It should be noted that in times of supply fragility, finding solutions for supply chain strengthening is not a surprising Lazor endeavor.

In 2019, Butterworks Farm received a 2019 Trade Show assistance Grant for \$2,000 to network with new markets at the annual UNFI Table Top show in Ledyard CT. In 2020, the Working Lands Enterprise Board awarded Butterworks Farm with a \$20,000 grant for market research, product development, and educational videos for climate resiliency. In usual fashion, consultants and experienced cheesemakers will assist with the project efforts as we know that collaboration comes easily to the Lazors.

I feel honored to know and have learned from Jack over the years. Here was my last note to Jack: 'Dear Jack: grateful for your wisdom and generosity. Honored and happy for our recent phone call and for the visits to the farm with you, Anne and Christine. Thank you for the adventuresome food conversations over many years! Your commitment to caring for your land and providing an abundance of delicious will not be taken for granted. Sending all my love, xo.'

Tribute adapted from a January 2021 Agriview article by Lynn Ellen Schimoler.



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Cover image courtesy of VAAFM, Bear Roots Farm (front), Rick's Firewood, and VAAFM staff (back).

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