



MASSACHUSETTS
FRESH

Grant Report



Authors

This report was prepared by Massachusetts Farm to School, a contracted partner of the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The report draws on information provided by DESE and provided by grantees through their final grant reports. For more information about the data presented in this report, please contact us at info@massfarmtoschool.org.



Introduction

The Massachusetts Farming Reinforces Education and Student Health (FRESH) Grant is a statewide farm to school grant program launched in 2023. Farm to school encompasses a wide range of activities designed to bring local or regionally sourced foods into school meals, provide experiential education for students such as gardening, farm visits and culinary classes, advance food literacy, and integrate food and agriculture into the classroom curriculum.

The FRESH Grant is administered by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), in partnership with the MA Department of Early Education and Care. This program provides funds for both K-12 and early education and care providers that participate in the federally funded National School Lunch Program or Child and Adult Care Feeding Program.

\$1 million for a pilot farm to school grant program was allocated by the Massachusetts legislature in December 2021, utilizing federal American Rescue Plan Act funds. These funds supported the inaugural FRESH grantees in 2023. The Massachusetts Legislature allocated additional funding for the 2024 FRESH Grant program in the FY24 Massachusetts state budget. In each round of funding, applicants were able to propose projects that spanned the fiscal year. For this reason, the report indicates how much of their total award was received in each fiscal year for those projects that did span two fiscal years.

Farm to school is a proven strategy to both increase access to nourishing, local foods for all students while also contributing to local economic development. Farm to school programs strengthen the connections communities have with local food producers and increase experiential learning opportunities for students. These activities support an approach to learning that utilizes food, agriculture, and nutrition as a lens for teaching a wide range of subjects.

Through a contracted partnership with the non-profit Massachusetts Farm to School, grantees can access ongoing professional development to support the successful implementation of their farm to school projects and plan for project sustainability.

Behind the facts and figures represented in this report are stories from communities across Massachusetts where new school gardens are growing, where students are trying and enjoying healthy, local foods for the first time, and where farmers are developing new markets for their products. In the following pages, we aim to capture highlights from each of the 2023 and 2024 grantees and share their inspiring efforts.



Major Grantee Activities

- ➔ **Purchasing kitchen equipment** to support additional processing, preparation, and storage of local and regional foods.
- ➔ **Installing indoor and outdoor school gardens** to enable students to grow their own food and provide engaging experiential learning opportunities.
- ➔ **Training school nutrition staff** in local food procurement, preparation, and promotion.
- ➔ **Supporting educators** to integrate food, agriculture and nutrition based curriculum in their classroom
- ➔ **Delivering experiential education** designed to enhance student engagement and build knowledge and skills related to food, agriculture, and nutrition.
- ➔ **Developing partnerships** with community-based organizations to expand opportunities for students and families.





2023

MA FRESH Grant Report



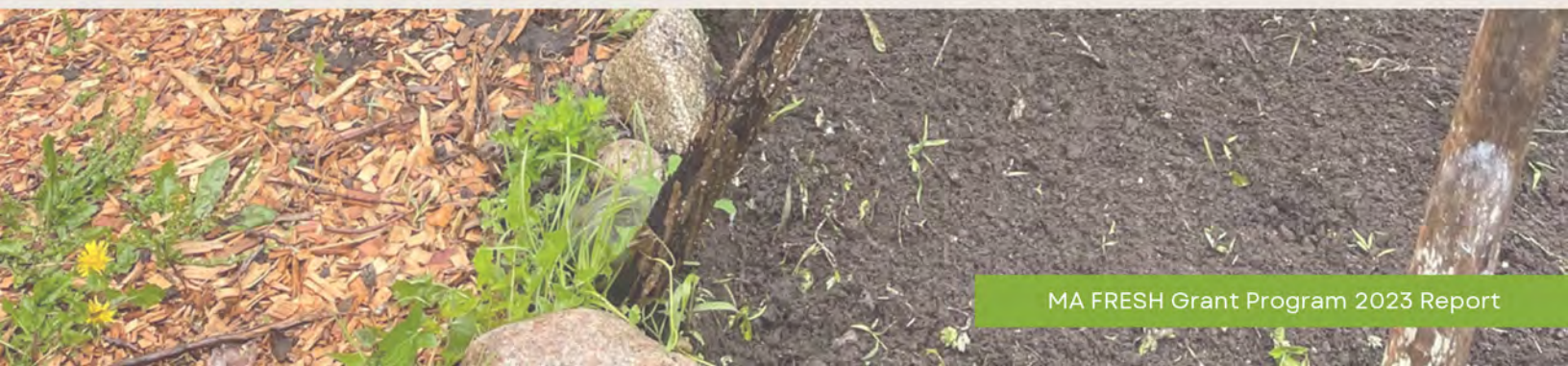
**OFFICE FOR FOOD AND
NUTRITION PROGRAMS**
Fueling the Commonwealth



Grant Tracks

Grants were awarded to applicants in the following categories. Start up/Expansion grants ranged from \$5,000-\$25,000 and Significant Investment grants ranged from \$25,000-\$50,000.

1. K-12 Start Up or Expansion
2. Early Education Start Up or Expansion
3. K-12 or Early Education Significant Investment



Grant Requests & Awards

In 2023, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released the first call for applications for the grant program. DESE received 59 applications with requests of over \$1.6 million. Sixteen projects received funding totaling nearly \$500,000.

The recipients of the inaugural MA FRESH grant come from communities across Massachusetts and include five early education programs and eleven K-12 programs.

K-12 Awardees

Boston Public Schools
Bridge Boston Charter School
Fitchburg Public Schools
Gloucester Public Schools
Medway Public Schools
Northampton Public Schools
Provincetown School District
RFK Alliance/Dr. Franklin Perkins School
(Lancaster)
Shaloh School Oholei Torah (Boston)
Somerville Public Schools
Springfield Public Schools

Early Education Awardees

Assonet Daycare (Freetown)
Guild of St Agnes of Worcester
MetroNorth YMCA
Rainbow Child Development (Worcester)
South Shore YMCA



2023 Program Highlights

60% of grantees reported that implementation of their grant proposal changed the way they prepared & served meals

10 grantees collaborated with partner organizations

66% of grantees experienced an increase in meal participation

6,000+ students impacted across Massachusetts

63% of grantees created or expanded school gardens



Assonet Daycare

“Why is the groundhog eating our peas?” - Vivian V., Preschooler



Highlight #1

Construct raised bed garden.



Highlight #2

Build greenhouse.



Highlight #3

Strengthen students' connections to agriculture.

Overview

Assonet Daycare's project includes building a new school garden and greenhouse and sponsoring two field trips to an area farm. Students start seeds in their classrooms and are now regularly tending to the plants as part of their day. They are learning about the life cycle, observing how plants grow, and sharing in the excitement of growing strong and healthy plants.

Funds Received:
\$5,250.00



Students Impacted
45



School Garden &
Greenhouse Built

Boston Public Schools

Highlight #1

Establish a hydroponic growing system for two high schools.

Highlight #2

Integrate hydroponics into the curriculum.

Highlight #3

Incorporate student-grown produce into the school meal program.

Overview

Boston Public Schools, in partnership with Green City Growers, a Boston-based company that partners with schools and businesses to transform underutilized spaces into biodiverse food production landscapes, is bringing hydroponic lettuce towers to English and Charlestown High Schools. This pilot project, "Lights, Water, Lettuce!" introduces student-grown lettuce to the salad bar and provides professional development for teachers to support integration of the hydroponic system into their curriculum.

Funds Received:
\$50,000

(FY23: \$12,300; FY24: \$37,700)



Students Impacted

1443



Community Partner
Green City Growers



School Garden Built

Bridge Boston Charter School

"Is this where the salad in the cafeteria comes from? It feels kinda fun but kinda weird at the same time to know where your food comes from. My favorite plants that I saw in the garden today were eggplants and peppers."

-Calvin A., 2nd Grade



Highlight #1

Install outdoor garden lab & classroom.



Highlight #2

Implement hands-on STEM curriculum in the garden.



Highlight #3

Increase student, family, & staff engagement in the garden.

Overview

Bridge Boston Charter School is using their grant to fund the transformation of a vacant lot into the Jennifer Daly Outdoor Laboratory and Classroom, a garden named after the school's founder. The school will now host nine cedar raised beds, plants and soil, galvanized steel trellising, a drip irrigation system, and fixture options for an outdoor classroom. Bridge Boston is working with Green City Growers to care for and maintain the garden. The outdoor classroom curriculum incorporates MA STEM standards, language arts, math, social studies, art, and social-emotional learning.

Funds Received:
\$50,000 (FY23: \$45,688; FY24: \$4,312)



Students Impacted

355



Community Partner
Green City Growers



School Garden Built

Fitchburg Public Schools

"We are thrilled to have this amazing opportunity to introduce students at Reingold to the importance of gardening and giving them the building blocks to create gardens of their own at home".

-Justin Sparks, Principal, Reingold Elementary



Highlight #1

Build indoor hydroponic gardens & outdoor raised bed gardens.



Highlight #2

Provide farm to school professional development to teachers in all grades.



Highlight #3

Host a Fall Harvest Day for entire school community.

Overview

Reingold Elementary School is piloting an integrated STEAM curriculum, indoor grow tower, and garden expansion through the MA FRESH grant. In partnership with the community-based organization, Growing Places, Reingold Elementary is providing professional development to teachers in all grades and installing indoor grow towers and an outdoor community garden on site.

Funds Received:
\$23,856 (FY23: \$23,356; FY24: \$500)



Students Impacted

600



Community Partner
Growing Places



School Garden Built

Gloucester Public Schools

“It’s great to see the kids’ ability to track the food from the seed they planted, the harvest they collected, and the food they eat. The inclusion of families and our school community [is so important]. For the connection to be made with their homes and what they eat is important to the families in feeling like they can feed their children too.”

- Jodie Parisi, West Parish Elementary, 1st grade



Highlight #1

Pilot high school mentorship program.



Highlight #2

Increase Harvest of the Month taste testing.



Highlight #3

Purchase additional kitchen tools in support of Harvest of the Month.

Overview

Gloucester Public Schools, in partnership with Backyard Growers, a community-based garden organization is piloting a high school mentoring program. Mentors serve as ambassadors for Gloucester’s Farm to School program, make age-appropriate promotional signage to engage younger students, assist with garden lessons, prepare and serve samples of local vegetables, and engage with students as a resource for extra information and support. MA FRESH funding is enabling Gloucester Food Services to purchase new kitchen tools to use in the Harvest of the Month program.

**Funds Received:
\$10,000**



Students Impacted

1275



Community Partner
Backyard Growers

“I love this program and am so happy to have met and worked with this amazing team. I can’t wait for others to be able to experience this internship.”

-- Emalee J., 12th grade,
Gloucester High School
Mentor

Guild of St. Agnes of Worcester

“Mealtime is when you see a lot of smiling faces. It makes me so happy to know that the children can have two healthy meals, and a snack everyday at school. I like to know that they have a full belly before they go home. We are very thankful for the food program.”

-Juliet Unah, Preschool Educator



Highlight #1

Build new state-of-the-art kitchen.



Overview

The Guild of St. Agnes' is utilizing the MA FRESH grant funds to install a commercial kitchen including much needed sinks, refrigerators, freezer, dishwasher, and work tables at the University Collaborative Early Education and Center. This equipment enables staff to prepare and serve fresh, nourishing meals on site to the 177 children in 7 preschool and 3 infant/toddler classrooms. Students at this center reflect the general population the Guild of St. Agnes serves, largely children from low income households or those who are in the Department of Children and Families system.

**Funds Received:
\$24,663**



Students Impacted
177



Meals Served Daily
456



“I am so very thankful that I am able to prepare and provide nutritious meals for the children each day. Seeing the children’s excitement when the food is brought to the classrooms puts a smile on my face.”

- Joyce Horan, Food Service

Medway Public Schools

"My favorite part of the school year was our field trip to the Medway Farm."

- 4th Grade Student



Highlight #1

Construct elementary school garden.



Highlight #2

Increase ability to prepare nutritious scratch-cooked meals.



Highlight #3

Increase students' knowledge about local food systems.

Overview

In partnership with Medway Community Farm, Medway Public Schools is expanding their farm to school program through creation of an on-site elementary school garden at the Burke-Memorial Elementary School. They are providing professional development for the school's cafeteria staff, and food systems education for students including regular visits and project based learning at the community farm.

Funds Received:
\$19,840



Students Impacted

500



Community Partner

Medway Community Farm



School Garden Built

MetroNorth YMCA

“I can’t wait to cook what we grow with the kids.”
Rosa R., Director of Social Responsibility

“I can’t wait to grow food in our new garden!”
Chloe G., 9 years old

✓ **Highlight #1**
Construct 5 new raised garden beds.

✓ **Highlight #2**
Increase family engagement opportunities.

Overview

With MA FRESH funding, the Demakes Family YMCA is relocating their raised bed gardens to a higher visibility location where they can reach new youth and their families and integrate the garden with the early care and after school curriculum. Working with UMass Extension Nutrition educators, students and families are receiving lessons around how food choices impact growth and development, cooking lessons, and more.

Funds Received:
\$6,200



Students Impacted
324

Students are very excited to use the new garden space! Having close access to plants, including edible fruits and vegetables, allows our students to understand the growing process and better connect nutrition information that we provide during meals to what they see outside.

-Molly Courson



School Garden Built

Northampton Public Schools

✓ Highlight #1

Provide agriculture education to all K-5 students.

✓ Highlight #2

Increase local food served in cafeteria.

✓ Highlight #3

Increase community engagement.

Overview

Northampton Public Schools is expanding their Freshampton food service program to include a comprehensive, experiential food system education program called Fresh Kids. MA FRESH grant funds are being used to hire a Farm to School classroom educator from School Sprouts Educational Gardens who will work with Grow Food Northampton to provide field trips to their community farm. As part of Fresh Kids, Grow Food Northampton is also launching a new youth mentoring program for middle and high school students focused on organic farming.

Funds Received:
\$45,530 (FY23: \$9,366; FY24: \$36,164)



Students Impacted
2614



Community Partners
School Sprouts
Grow Food Northampton



Increased local procurement
25% --> 40%

Provincetown School District

They are always asking me, 'Do we get to go to the gardens today?' They love this so much!"

-Rebecca Yeaw Provincetown IB Schools Pre-School Teacher



Highlight #1

Establish a cafeteria composting program.



Highlight #2

Expand the "Farmer in the School" program.



Highlight #3

Purchase garden and clamming equipment.

Overview

Provincetown Public Schools is utilizing MA FRESH funding to implement, "Let's Grow," a project centered around the school garden and Sustainable CAPE's Farmer in the School program. This program expands education, awareness and exposure to the Cape's farm and fishing community through field trips, garden lessons, and food production for the cafeteria.

Funds Received:
\$9,740



Students Impacted
100



Community Partner
Sustainable Cape
Nauset Garden Club



School Garden Built

Rainbow Child Development Center

✓ Highlight #1

Provide hands-on garden lessons for preschoolers.

✓ Highlight #2

Integrate nutrition lessons into the classroom.

✓ Highlight #3

Offer family cooking classes to increase engagement.

Overview

Rainbow Child Development is utilizing their MA FRESH funds to implement a comprehensive Farm to School program for their preschool students, families, and staff. Their program, in partnership with the Regional Environmental Council (REC) and UMass Nutrition Education, provides cooking lessons, hands-on garden lessons, taste tests, and field trips to the REC farm & farmers' market. MA FRESH is supporting professional development for preschool teachers, so they can expand much-needed after school programming and increase their familiarity with preschool-age appropriate farm to school education.

Funds Received:
\$16,925 (FY23: \$8,963; FY24: \$7,962)



Students Impacted
500



Community Partner
Regional Environmental Council



School Garden Built

RFK Alliance/Dr. Franklin Perkins School

“This grant has been transformative in educating students and staff about farming, hydroponic growing and gardening to grow your own food, and the benefit of local farms.”

-Danielle Sprague



Highlight #1

Increase size & number of garden beds.



Highlight #2

Establish a farmer speaker event series.



Highlight #3

Purchase new kitchen equipment to support preparing more local produce.

Overview

The Dr. Franklin Perkins School, a year-round day and residential, co-educational special education school, is transforming their outdoor gardens into outdoor classrooms and work spaces and adding indoor grow towers to facilitate winter production. These investments support the food service department to increase the use of fresh fruits and vegetables. Students will actively participate in growing food (some of which will be used for their meals), thus expanding the project-based learning opportunities and increasing the social-emotional benefits of hands-on outdoor education.

Funds Received:
\$50,694 (FY23: \$38,544; FY24: \$12,150)



Students Impacted

145



School Garden Built

Shaloh School Oholei Torah

✓ Highlight #1

Implement educational activities in the garden.

✓ Highlight #2

Purchase & install an indoor “Micro-Farm.”

✓ Highlight #3

Purchase kitchen equipment to increase fresh, local meal production.

Overview

Shaloh House is using MA FRESH funds to install an indoor “Micro-Farm” to provide fresh produce in the winter months. The school is building cold frames for their existing outdoor garden beds to extend the growing season and provide expanded opportunities for experiential learning. They are also adding kitchen equipment to meet the growing demand for the Kosher and Halal meals the school prepares each day, now at 800 daily meals.

Funds Received:
\$50,000 (FY23: \$33,337; FY24: \$16,663)



Students Impacted

100



Community Partner
Green City Growers



School Garden Built

Somerville Public Schools

“Students who had never been to a farm and/or did not know that Somerville had an urban farm were able to do hands-on learning in a way that was authentic and memorable.”

-Maureen Quigley, Environmental Science Teacher, Somerville High School



Highlight #1

Provide student field trips to urban farm.



Highlight #2

Expand school gardens & curriculum.



Highlight #3

Introduce new recipes to students through taste tests.

Overview

Students are receiving hands-on lessons in school gardens and taking field trips to Groundwork Somerville's South Street Farm. MA FRESH funds are being used to solidify classroom-cafeteria & garden connections. School nutrition staff are developing more culturally relevant menu offerings celebrating the diversity of Somerville Public Schools' population, and addressing district policies and practices to best support wellness and food access.

Funds Received:
\$32,000



Students Impacted
230



Community Partner
Groundwork Somerville



School Garden Built

South Shore YMCA

"I had the opportunity to help teach the program during the professional development training and was excited to see how many teachers were genuinely interested in doing more farm to school work with their classes. I can't wait to see where they go from here."

Jill Zielinski, South Shore YMCA Natural Science Center, Pre-K, age 4 students



Highlight #1

Provide Farm to School professional development for all teachers.



Highlight #2

Provide gardening supplies for all preschool teachers.



Highlight #3

Develop Farm to School curriculum for all classes.

Overview

The South Shore YMCA is hosting a professional development training for 87 early education professionals, helping them feel comfortable in the garden and supporting them to bring farm-to-school lessons into their classrooms. On-site education takes place at all of the South Shore YMCA early education locations and they are doing a remarkable job layering state and federal funding to further support the physical growing spaces and implementation of farm to school programming.

Funds Received:
\$7,803



"The students now see their teachers as participants sharing in the work of growing and harvesting vegetables."

-John Galluzzo



2024

MA FRESH Grant Report





Grant Tracks

The MA FRESH Grant awarded programs in four categories broken out for education programs running Child and Adult Care Food Programs (CACFP) and K-12 school districts running National School Lunch Programs (NSLP). Applicants received between \$3,000 and \$50,000 in one of the following funding categories:

1. New K-12 Farm to School Initiative
2. New Farm to Early Education Initiative
3. Expanding K-12 Farm to School Initiative
4. Expanding Farm to Early Education Initiative



Grant Requests & Awards

In 2024, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) continued allocating funds through the MA FRESH farm to school grant program. DESE received 87 applications with requests of over \$2.6 million. Twenty three projects received funding totaling nearly \$400,000.

The recipients of the 2024 MA FRESH grant come from communities across Massachusetts and include nine early education programs and fourteen K-12 programs.

K-12 Awardees

- Codman Academy (Boston)
- Community Charter School of Cambridge
- Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School
- Greenfield Public Schools
- Haverhill Public Schools
- Holyoke Public Schools
- Lenox Public Schools
- Mashpee Public Schools
- Medway Public Schools
- Norfolk County Agricultural High School
- Prospect Hill Academy (Somerville)
- Salem Public Schools
- Webster Public Schools
- Westford Public Schools

Early Education Awardees

- ABCD Head Start & Children's Service (Boston)
- Boys & Girls Club of Metro South
- Community Action Pioneer Valley
- Ellis Early Learning (Boston)
- Holyoke Chicopee Head Start
- MetroWest YMCA
- Mystic Valley YMCA
- PACE Head Start (New Bedford)
- Waltham Boys & Girls Club



2024 Program Highlights

57% of grantees reported that implementation of their grant proposal changed the way they prepared & served meals

12 grantees collaborated with partner organizations

19% of grantees experienced an increase in meal participation

27,000+ students impacted across Massachusetts

71% of grantees created or expanded school gardens



ABCD Head Start & Children's Services

Highlight #1

Provided food service staff training focused on culturally diverse meals, taste tests, and scratch cooking.

Highlight #2

Produced bilingual materials including culturally relevant family meals featuring garden produce.

Highlight #3

Purchased new kitchen equipment to enable more scratch cooking.

Overview

ABCD Head Start & Children's Services is building a new garden, investing in professional development for food service staff, and purchasing equipment to increase access to fresh produce for children and their families. The new garden will allow teachers to enhance their curriculum, access green space in an urban environment, and teach children about gardening and nutrition. Food service staff are increasing their knowledge and ability to prepare unprocessed food from the garden and are holding taste testing events for teachers, children, and families.

Funds Received:

23,437 (FY24: \$11,242; FY25: \$12,195)



Program Enrollment

312



Staff Who Received Training

38



School Garden Built

Boys & Girls Club of Metro South

“I had the opportunity to participate in a co-op at a hydroponic farm. I cultivated vegetables, maintained the farm, and engaged with children, educating them on the significance of hydroponics for both their personal nutrition and community. This was the highlight of my senior year.”

- Cora A. (Age 18)

Highlight #1

Hosted events at the Taunton Clubhouse Freight Farm to raise community awareness of and appreciation for local foods.

Highlight #2

Developed tailored Freight Farms curriculum and educational activities for Taunton Clubhouse teens and pre-teens.

Highlight #3

Incorporated produce grown in the Freight Farms into Taunton Clubhouse meal service throughout the academic year.

Overview

The Boys & Girls Club of Metro South has expanded their innovative afterschool food system curricula, launched their third Freight Farm (a hydroponic growing system inside a shipping container), and provided co-ops and internships for high school students. The Taunton Clubhouse after school program supports comprehensive nutrition education programs, youth engagement, community food security, and development.

Funds Received:
\$50,000 (FY24: \$20,000; FY25: \$30,000)



Program Enrollment

2500



Produce Harvested

1500 Lbs



STEM Education Hours

300



School Garden Built

Codman Academy

“Learning about hydroponic systems helped establish STEM concepts among 4th grade students, increasing their critical thinking and teamwork abilities.”

- Beth, 4th Grade Teacher

Highlight #1

Created student business development training via Codman Youth Farmers' Market.

Highlight #2

Developed seminar series with community partners to collaborate, develop, and enhance urban agriculture education.

Highlight #3

Developed new methods for students to provide feedback on meals.

Overview

Codman Academy is building a strong farm to school foundation through local product sourcing, kitchen staff training, and the installation of indoor growing systems via their new Urban Roots initiative. Through this initiative, Codman Academy is teaching urban agriculture curriculum to K-12 students, providing hands-on growing experiences to middle school students, and hosting a Controlled Environment Agriculture Readiness certification program for high school students to improve workforce readiness. When students complete the certification program they will be able to manage indoor growing systems and run the Codman Youth Farmers' Market.

Funds Received:
\$46,322 (FY24: 13,922; FY25: 32,400)



School Enrollment

345



Community Partners

Green City Growers
Holly Hill Farm
Urban Farming Institute
Oasis on Balou



School Garden Built

Community Action Pioneer Valley

“Pairing the nutrition literacy materials with the cooking activities is helping expand the childrens’ knowledge of where food comes from, how it is grown, and prepared.”

- Jenn, Educator

Highlight #1

Increased participation of weekly nibbles snacks offered in classrooms by 50%.

Highlight #2

Provided at least one locally sourced ingredient in snacks weekly.

Highlight #3

Expanded professional development opportunities for staff.

Overview

Community Action Pioneer Valley, Head Start & Early Learning Program is providing professional development for their food service staff and expanding their educational programming to promote food literacy and nutritional education for their students. Their weekly ‘Nibbles Snack Activity’ allows children to experience hands-on learning by preparing, cooking, and eating locally grown foods in the form of a nutritious snack.

**Funds Received:
\$8,550**



Program Enrollment

283



Staff Professional Development

64 hours



“It was such a wonderful experience to attend the interactive workshops and facilitated discussions with other school nutrition professionals from across the state. We were able to establish new professional connections and learn more about the variety of resources available to help us procure and serve more local foods.”

- Rachel, Food Service

Community Charter School of Cambridge

“I found the cooking class very interesting. This course gave me ideas of how to prepare things at home, for example, pasta and tacos. I also liked how we had to work as a group.”

-Isabella, Student

Highlight #1

Took students on field trips to local farms.

Highlight #2

Conducted a cooking class for students using local produce.

Highlight #3

Created a cookbook incorporating culturally significant food and local produce.

Overview

The Community Charter School of Cambridge is using FRESH Grant funding to highlight agricultural education, the use of local produce, and students' cultural culinary traditions. They are partnering with Land's Sake Farm (Weston, MA) to create opportunities for students to learn first hand about farm operations and see how produce is grown and harvested. The school is organizing cooking classes that take place at the Foundry in Cambridge using produce from Land's Sake. Students in these classes share family or cultural dishes they prepare and eat together.

Funds Received:
\$7,620 (FY24: \$3,985; FY25: \$3,635)



School Enrollment

259



Community Partner
Land's Sake Farm

“It was so special seeing the way students joyously embraced the opportunity to learn more about nutrition and food, their reactions (and pride!) tasting their creations, and the amount of the fun they had with each other. Such a wonderful way to end the school year and I am so happy we were able to make this programming available!”

Elizabeth Debraggio
Dir. of Communications and
Development

Ellis Early Learning

"Seeing a plant flower one day and coming back to see a bean or other vegetable on the same plant was so exciting for the children. They grew and tasted such an assortment of vegetables including Swiss chard, purple kohlrabi, chives, scallions, potatoes, and broccoli. It is wonderful for children to learn first-hand where food comes from and how it grows."

Claire McNally, Vice President for Programs

Highlight #1

Provided garden classes to preschool students.

Highlight #2

Classroom teachers incorporated garden lessons into the classroom.

Highlight #3

Grew culturally responsive herbs in the garden to share with families.

Overview

Ellis Early Learning is promoting hands-on learning experiences related to food and nutrition. With help from Green City Growers, they are increasing guided exposure to their garden allowing for more engaged interdisciplinary learning that helps their students prioritize local and sustainable food options. Through this partnership, their students are working with urban agriculture experts in order to better understand where the food they eat comes from.

**Funds Received:
\$25,000**



Program Enrollment

188



Community Partner

Green City Growers



School Garden Built

Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School

“I think its important that we use our growing space on campus to give back to both our cafeteria and all the communities we come from. Being able to harvest, wash, pack, and eat the food we’ve grown, using tools & facilities that make it safer, makes me more confident as a grower.”

-Ava, 11th Grade Horticulture Student

Highlight #1

Now feature at least 1 campus grown food and 1 locally grown food in school meals each week.

Highlight #2

Students trained in standard food safety protocols.

Highlight #3

Installed outdoor walk-in cooler for produce.

Overview

Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School is developing a robust food safety program by expanding their cooling space, building a vegetable-washing station, training staff and students, and more. These investments have allowed them to achieve the needed certification to safely serve their produce in the school cafeteria. Essex Tech students now have access to the freshest possible food and have become more involved in their local food system as food-literate citizens and eaters in their own communities.

Funds Received: \$50,000



District Enrollment

1300



On-Site Produce Harvested

1500+ lbs.



Produce Varieties Grown

42+



School Garden Built

Greenfield Public Schools

“I really didn’t think I’d like Fish Tacos with Peach Salsa because I don’t like fish but I’m glad I tried it because it’s really good!”

-2nd Grader

Highlight #1

Hosted taste tests at 3 elementary schools each month.

Highlight #2

Shared food security & literacy resources with elementary students & families.

Highlight #3

Coordinated farm field trips for elementary school students.

Overview

Greenfield Public Schools is collaborating with a local non-profit, Just Roots, to launch a new farm to school initiative in their elementary schools. All elementary students are participating in monthly taste tests of local foods following the Harvest of the Month program. Additionally, all third grade students will visit Just Roots, Greenfield’s Community Farm for a curriculum-aligned Fall field trip along with two additional food literacy lessons during the 2024-2025 school year.

Funds Received:
\$13,514.16 (FY24: \$3,017; FY25: \$10,497.16)



District Enrollment

1619



Community Partner

Just Roots

“I didn’t know you could eat mint. I thought that was just for gum and toothpaste!”

-2nd Grader in response to trying June’s Strawberry Mint Salad taste test

Haverhill Public Schools: Bartlett School & Assessment Center

“As a job coach, I’m able to work with our students on various job skills and life skills utilizing the hydroponic farm. Our students are learning about... creating a sustainable food source for our community. Having a working farm at our school helps us prepare our students with the tools they need to be successful in the future.”

-Amy H., Teacher

Highlight #1

New hydroponic garden integrated into curriculum for students with autism.

Highlight #2

Provided experiential learning to students via hydroponic garden.

Highlight #3

Students have increased understanding of the importance of fresh, local food in their diets.

Overview

The hydroponic garden project for the Bartlett School and Assessment Center, within Haverhill Public Schools, is increasing healthy eating habits among its students by growing a variety of nutrient-rich vegetables and herbs to integrate into their school food program. Grant funding is being used to provide students with hands-on participation in the garden’s setup and maintenance. Students learn about plant growth, nutrition, and sustainability, fostering an appreciation for fresh produce. Their project offers a sensory-rich environment for students in this alternative learning community, encouraging healthy eating habits and empowering students to make informed food choices for a balanced diet.

Funds Received:

\$49,940 (FY24: \$21,790; FY25: \$28,150)



Program Enrollment

47



Community Partner

Chris’ Farm Stand



School Garden Built

Holyoke Chicopee Head Start

"Is it ready to pick yet? I just want to take it home and show my mom."
-Program Participant

Highlight #1

Provided professional development for early education teachers.

Highlight #2

Grew culturally relevant crops in the garden.

Highlight #3

Hosted community farmers' markets at program sites.

Overview

Holyoke Chicopee Head Start is expanding the use of existing gardens at two of their program sites to integrate gardening and healthy foods into year-round use within the school curriculum. With support from Mass Audubon, the schools are receiving professional development and resources to bolster nutrition and gardening education for students and promote family and community engagement. Increased garden use is allowing for more food to be integrated into school meals and a larger diversity of culturally relevant crops to be grown and shared with the community.

Funds Received:
\$30,379 (FY24: \$18,645; FY25: \$11,734)



Program Enrollment

559



Community Partner
Mass Audubon



School Garden Built

Holyoke Public Schools

"I like nature stuff, and you like nature stuff, and I just feel really connected to nature when we plant stuff!"

-1st Grade Student

Highlight #1

Built a new school garden, and installed additional beds at existing gardens.

Highlight #2

Established taste tests within a classroom setting.

Highlight #3

Built 3 wheelchair accessible raised beds at Morgan Elementary.

Overview

Holyoke Public Schools is building new gardens and expanding pre-existing gardens at their six elementary schools. With help from FoodCorps Service Members, students are participating in the growing process, increasing their food literacy and sense of belonging in the school community, and developing their willingness to try new things. Funds are also being used to launch a classroom taste test program so students can try the food they are growing in the garden and give feedback on their preferences.

Funds Received:
\$23,479



District Enrollment
4850



Community Partner
FoodCorps



School Garden Built

Lenox Public Schools

"My class was thrilled to plant a variety of seeds and the students are eager to watch the seedlings grow."

- Karen Noyes, 3rd Grade Teacher

Highlight #1

Installed two hydroponic farms.

Highlight #2

Developed curriculum for incorporating hydroponics into classroom lessons.

Highlight #3

Made a taste test plan for future lettuce harvested in the cafeteria.

Overview

Lenox Public Schools is using MA FRESH Grant funds for a new initiative to grow produce and serve it in their school cafeterias. After their first year participating in farm to school activities, they are excited to have obtained two Fork Farms Hydroponic systems, allowing students to be involved in the growing process and to open the door to more food systems conversations.

Funds Received: \$11,010



District Enrollment

740



Lbs of Produce Harvested Monthly

25



"OHHHH that's what that cool white thing is in the cafeteria! Are we going to be able to eat the food we grow?"

- 3rd grader

Mashpee Public Schools

Students saw the life cycle because they made it happen, from starting lettuce seeds indoors, to transplanting seedlings, and harvesting the lettuce. Teaching this way has more impact than reading about it in a book.

-Zach B, Environmental Science Teacher

Highlight #1

Harvested summer produce & distributed to families.

Highlight #2

Reviewed & updated nutrition curriculum.

Highlight #3

Taught sustainable farming practices via monthly garden lessons.

Overview

Mashpee Middle-High School, in collaboration with Barnstable County Coop. Ext. Office of Nutrition Education & Food Safety, Master Gardeners of Cape Cod, and the Health Ministry, is building and sustaining an educational farm. Produce grown on the farm reflects the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students and is integrated into the school cafeteria menu. The farm provides an opportunity for students to learn about food sovereignty and broaden their culinary horizons while elevating both their quality of life and academic achievements.

Funds Received:
\$36,500 (FY24: \$33,400; FY25: \$3,100)



District Enrollment

1453



Community Partners
Barnstable County Coop. Ext.
Master Gardeners of Cape Cod



School Garden Built

Medway Public Schools

“The school farming program has been an incredible learning experience for my students. They not only gained hands-on knowledge about plant biology and ecology, but also developed a sense of responsibility and teamwork.”

- 2nd Grade Teacher

Highlight #1

Provided school garden lessons for Grades 2 & 3.

Highlight #2

Held taste tests with local ingredients.

Highlight #3

Provided food system curriculum for Grades 2-4.

Overview

The Memorial School in Medway Public Schools is taking students on farm field trips, hosting produce tasting events featuring local crops like bok choy, zucchini, and kale, and holding a local food systems poster contest. They are including second to third grade students in programming this year in a school-based farming educational experience in partnership with Medway Community Farm.

**Funds Received:
\$7,000**



District Enrollment
504



Community Partner
Medway Community Farm



“Working in the school garden was so much fun! I got to dig in the dirt and pick fresh vegetables. It was cool to see where our food comes from and eat something I helped grow.”

- Shae, 3rd Grade:

MetroWest YMCA

“As a supervisor, to see an outside party (John Stalker Institute) come in to educate our staff was incredible; they had our team learning crucial information for them to be successful and confident in their roles.”

- Maggie Lynch, Director of Nutrition Services



Highlight #1

Built 8 hoop gardens.



Highlight #2

Engaged students in weekly gardening & harvesting lessons.



Highlight #3

Hosted garden visits for families.

Overview

The MetroWest YMCA is enhancing its commitment to promoting holistic well-being by expanding their garden initiatives, growing produce, and fostering food education within their early learning centers. They are providing hands-on experiences, such as classroom taste tests, gardening lessons, and cooking classes in an effort to educate students and their families about the benefits of locally produced food. Beyond the classroom, they are training staff to prepare meals with unprocessed, local ingredients.

Funds Received:

\$48,927 (FY24: \$28,583; FY25: \$20,344)



Program Enrollment

550



Community Partner

Little Sprout Garden



School Garden Built

Mystic Valley YMCA

“Hydroponics stimulates curiosity and encourages inquiry-based learning. A hydroponic garden provides a living laboratory where children can explore and find answers through observation and experimentation.”

-Wuying Hsiao, Director of Early Learning Center

Highlight #1

Installed hydroponic growing towers to expose youth to fresh & new vegetables.

Highlight #2

Involved high school students in the building of the hydroponic towers.

Highlight #3

Developed programming for preschool students using the hydroponic towers.

Overview

The Mystic Valley YMCA is providing hydroponic garden towers, which have provided real life applications for their child care, preschool, and after school program participants. Many of their participants come from low-income, diverse backgrounds and these towers have enabled them to explore plant life cycles and healthy eating habits by sharing and enjoying the harvest, which is also being used in cooking classes. The garden towers are also used in preschool programs to promote social-emotional development and teach STEAM principles.

Funds Received:
\$8,675



Program Enrollment

426



School Garden Built

Norfolk County Agricultural High School

“We are harvesting so much more than last year! I think we should add compost to the cafeteria this school year to cut down on food waste!”

- Kelsey, 11th Grade

Highlight #1

Increased volume of campus grown food used in cafeteria meals & donated to food pantries.

Highlight #2

Sustainable agriculture curriculum taught to all freshmen.

Highlight #3

Teachers received food safety certification training.

Overview

Norfolk County Agricultural High School is expanding the availability of their Abundance Garden produce to students and the greater community. They are installing a vegetable wash and pack area, and cold storage in their cafeteria, allowing them to fully utilize their garden by ensuring more fresh food gets into the cafeteria.

Funds Received:
\$12,493



School Enrollment
600



School Garden Built

PACE Head Start

"It has been a lift to get the garden grant up and going, but it has been exciting to see how engaged the educators and children are in the work. They are learning so much about growing their own food. I am sure that Mrs. Margaret is inspiring these preschoolers to be future gardeners and farmers!"

-Jill Fox, Head Start Director

Highlight #1

Provided nutrition curriculum for preschoolers, including cooking class and gardening activities.

Highlight #2

Created indoor space for off-season growing of vegetables.

Highlight #3

Collaborated with Bristol County Agricultural H.S. to establish internship program.

Overview

PACE Head Start is planting a community garden of fresh fruits and vegetables along with a small orchard. In partnership with Bristol County Agricultural High School, high school interns will work with students to plant and tend to the produce growing in the garden. The garden produce is used to supplement their meal program and is incorporated into culturally relevant recipes and family engagement opportunities.

Funds Received:
\$25,000 (FY24: \$13,900; FY25: \$11,100)



Program Enrollment

230



Garden Produce Harvested

50 lbs.



School Garden Built

Prospect Hill Academy

Highlight #1

Educators received professional development to incorporate food literacy into high school curriculum.

Highlight #2

Students worked with food service to incorporate local foods into meals.

Highlight #3

All 9th graders participated in 3-day visit to The Farm School.

Overview

Prospect Hill Academy is creating a farm to school program focusing on educating students about health, nutrition, and agricultural processes. Prospect Hill's 9th graders are piloting the program, providing them with transformational experiential learning opportunities, including a visit to the Farm School (Athol, MA) connecting them to the land and work that goes into planting, growing, and harvesting fresh produce. They will be sharing what they've learned with the entire school community.

Funds Received:
\$47,810 (FY24: \$23,345; FY25: \$24,465)



School Enrollment
950



Community Partner
The Farm School

I see people, rocks, hay,
trees, grass,
shacks, logs, flowers
water holes, ladders,
bins, art, walls, dogs
playing, tents, dirt, fences
I hear wind, people, birds,
gears, bugs, tapping
noise, walking
-Excerpt from Student Poem

Salem Public Schools

“Our early learners in kindergarten and pre-school were able to have hands-on experiences at New Entry Farm that connected their learning in the classroom and their lunch in the cafeteria to a beautiful local farm. Students went home over the summer and cared for their plants with intense care, even contacting their teachers to give them updates on how they were growing.”

-Erica Flaherty, Salem Public Schools Science Coach

Highlight #1

Conducted plate waste survey & new foods surveys with students.

Highlight #2

Conducted student nutrition knowledge assessments.

Highlight #3

Took 5th Graders on farm field trips.

Overview

Salem Public Schools used their funding to purchase school garden supplies, organize field trips at New Entry Sustainable Farming Project in Beverly, MA, and set up Harvest of the Month taste tests at every school in Salem to increase students' willingness to try new foods. To measure the success, Salem is tracking meal participation numbers. A plate waste study and nutrition knowledge assessment were given at the start of the grant period to serve as a baseline to assess students' knowledge of where their food comes from.

Funds Received:
\$17,050



District Enrollment
3800



Community Partner
New Entry Sustainable
Farming Project



School Garden Built

Waltham Boys & Girls Club

“I’ve watched the kids have a better understanding of where their food comes from. They have developed more of an appreciation for vegetables now that they have seen all stages of life cycles. As a result, I am seeing more kids eating salad greens and other vegetables at mealtime.”

- Nicole McWeeney, Waltham Boys & Girls Club, Arts Coordinator

Highlight #1

Conducted weekly healthy cooking classes.

Highlight #2

Conducted weekly hands-on gardening sessions.

Highlight #3

Hosted produce sampling session at the facility.

Overview

Waltham Boys & Girls Club has implemented a hands-on science program teaching healthy habits, environmental awareness, and teamwork. Participating youth visit Land’s Sake Farm and experience how produce is grown, while building their knowledge of horticulture, food systems, and life cycles. The Club has also built and maintained an on-site garden where students learn about growing produce in an urban environment, and were able to use harvested produce in cooking lessons and taste tests.

**Funds Received:
\$25,000**



Program Enrollment

180



Community Partner

Land’s Sake Farm



School Garden Built

Webster Public Schools

"We love when the students drop off their lettuce harvests to the cafeteria because they are so proud and excited. This is a great way for us to supplement our salads on Fridays with the local lettuce we currently serve."

-Stacey Easterling, Cafeteria Manager

Highlight #1

Coordinated cafeteria taste tests with classroom visits by guest speakers sharing Harvest of the Month resources.

Highlight #2

Recruited educators across departments to encourage farm to school community involvement.

Highlight #3

Collaborated with two working farms to create farm to school partnerships.

Overview

Webster Public Schools are strengthening their farm to school efforts by increasing school community involvement. They have accomplished this by electing educator liaisons to help connect the classroom and the cafeteria through farm to school. Webster has built a multi-purpose school garden benefiting all members of the school community, and now students are actively participating in ways that support their health and awareness of sustainability principles.

Funds Received:
\$16,900 (FY24: \$11,900; FY25: \$5,000)



District Enrollment
1699



Students Engaged in
Garden Based Education
230



School Garden Built

Westford Public Schools

“I loved trying kale and pea shoots. I’m going to ask my mom and dad to get some for our salads at home.”

-Taylor, 2nd Grade

Highlight #1

Transformed a courtyard into an immersive school garden.

Highlight #2

Used the new garden to conduct garden-harvested taste tests within the cafeteria.

Highlight #3

Established a system to measure students' age appropriate food literacy.

Overview

The multi-disciplinary team at Nabnasset School (Grades PK-2) are creating an inviting and highly visible garden-based learning lab for their community. The students are experiencing the wonder of how food is grown, and appreciating its impact on life systems. Through this initiative students have the opportunity to explore gardening, observe living things, and learn in a beautiful and peaceful landscape.

Funds Received:
\$18,990 (FY24: \$16,190; FY25: \$2,800)



District Enrollment

305



Community Partner
Fresh Start Gardens
O'Neil Landscape



School Garden Built