

## Vermont Foodbank's 2023 Capacity Fund Recipients, Summary

### **Brandon Area Food Shelf, Addison and Rutland Counties**

#### *Extending Community Meals Beyond the Weekly Lunch*

The Brandon Food Shelf and Senior Center serves the towns of Brandon, Forestdale, Sudbury, Leicester, Goshen, and East Middlebury. They serve 100+ free lunches weekly, as well as a monthly brunch. For those who can't make it to the center, they home-deliver meals.

This grant will allow them to send clients home with extra food, many of whom are elders and food insecure.

### **Center for Sustainable Systems, Washington County**

#### *Learning through Service*

The Center for Sustainable Systems applied for a grant for their "Food, Farm, and Society" project, a summer program in which high school students earn academic credit while growing food for the school cafeteria, the Montpelier Food Pantry, and the elementary school Backpack Program. This program seeks to "engage these young adults with their food system...strengthen the local economy by creating future producers, and more importantly educated consumers. By making direct connections with community food shelves, a vulnerable part of our community will be a natural recipient of the service learning experienced by the students." (Center for Sustainable Systems Application)

This grant funding will allow the Farm, Food, and Society project to pay students a stipend for their work growing food, which in turn allows students from low income families to participate, a major equity goal of the program. Increased participation also increases capacity and food provided to the community.

### **RUMC-Companions in Wholeness, Rutland County**

#### *Wrap-around Services for the Rutland Community*

Companions In Wholeness serves hot breakfast four days a week, as well as to-go lunches, a food pantry, clothes, blankets, and sleeping bags to food and housing insecure members of the Rutland Community. In addition to providing for immediate needs, the center also partners with other organizations to connect guests with important resources such as Homeless Prevention, Turning Point Center, and 3SquaresVT. Companions In Wholeness says their overarching goal is to "create an inviting atmosphere, provide food, listen to our guests, give them a helping hand, and let them know we are here for them and we care."

With the emergency hotel program coming to an end this summer, Companions In Wholeness is bracing for drastically increased need among the people they serve. This grant funding will allow them to pay their Director and Coordinator to do the urgent work of networking and bringing in more agencies and services to assist their guests, while continuing to provide an average of 312 meals per day, along with all their other current services.

## **Food Connects, Statewide**

### *Creating Healthy Eaters for Life*

“Food Connects’ Mission is to cultivate healthy food and farm connections in cafeterias, classrooms, and communities.” (Food Connects Application) In the 2021-2022 school year, their Food Hub sourced food from 61 Vermont farms and delivered it to 60 schools throughout the state. Their Farm To School program works directly with school food service directors to support them with accessing and utilizing local foods in their school meals, along with integrating agricultural and gastronomic literacy into school curriculums.

The initiative being funded is to create a new position of Farm to School Cafeteria Specialist. Food Service Directors consistently tell Food Connects their greatest challenge with local food is getting students to eat it. The Farm to School Cafeteria Specialist would share resources and curriculum with schools, supporting their efforts to introduce students to potentially unfamiliar vegetables, educate them about seasonal eating and nutrition, and send them home with kid-friendly recipes to share with their families.

## **Heineberg Community Senior Center, Chittenden County**

### *Expanding Senior Nutrition for the Neighborhood*

“The Heineberg Community Senior Center, established in 1971, is an independent community-based nonprofit serving more than 600 participants per year. [Their] mission is to promote the social, physical, and emotional wellbeing of community members 50+.” (Heineberg Community Center Application) They offer classes, activities, and food distributions to area seniors at no cost.

This grant funding will allow them to expand their offerings to include nutritious, local hot meals four days a week, increasing food access in a vulnerable population as well as supporting social wellbeing and introducing new guests to their other programming.

## **Maquam Bay of Missisquoi, Franklin County**

### *Increasing Food Access, Strengthening Community*

The Maquam Bay of Missisquoi, a band of the Abenaki Nation, has been distributing food to the Franklin County community for over 17 years. They have seen a steady increase in need, last year serving nearly 5000 individuals. In addition to the food pantry, the Tribal Office offers health and wellness support classes and domestic violence counseling. The food pantry serves the entire community, regardless of tribal affiliation, including homeless families residing in a nearby motel. Currently the largest distributor of food assistance in Franklin County, they are only able to operate for limited hours three days a week.

This grant funding will allow them to respond to increased needs and community members’ stated preference for more accessible hours. They hope to increase their hours of operation by two hours each day, as well as offer delivery to homebound elders. In addition to expanded hours, they hope to offer more fresh produce, in line with their mission to “promote a strong, healthy, and united community.” (Maquam Bay Application)

## **Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Caledonia County**

### *Mutual Aid in the Northeast Kingdom*

Neighbors Helping Neighbors is a community run food shelf located in the Rural Edge Mountain View subsidized housing development. Founded in 2009, the food shelf operates one day a month and is entirely volunteer run by residents of Mountain View. In 2013 they added a community garden, both to provide fresh vegetables for the food shelf and give residents a healthy, social outdoor activity. The garden has proven very popular, and they now seek to expand.

This grant funding will allow them to increase their garden size, acquire more tools and seeds, build raised beds, and fencing to keep animals out. In addition, they plan to buy a commercial refrigerator to store their harvest so it can be available to the community throughout the month.

## **NOFA-VT, Statewide**

### *Expanding Access to Community Food Security*

“The Northeast Organic Farming association of Vermont is a statewide, non-profit membership organization promoting organic practices to build an economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially just Vermont food system that benefits all living things. We believe that all Vermonters deserve access to organic, healthy, local food and that farms should be paid a fair price for their food. The NOFA-VT Farm Share Program sits squarely at this intersection of food security and farm viability. This program provides discounted CSA shares for low-income participants while also ensuring that farmers, often financially insecure themselves, receive the full market price for their shares.” (NOFA-VT application)

During the pandemic, demand spiked, and the farm share program grew 270%. As pandemic food assistance expires, and inflation drives up food prices, NOFA-VT anticipates even greater need for financial assistance. Through a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process, it became clear that many people find CSA shares unaffordable, even with 50% cost sharing. To meet this need, NOFA-VT is piloting a sliding scale cost share, offering applicants 25%, 50%, and 75% cost share options. This grant funding will allow them to increase the number of 75% cost shares, thus extending access to people who otherwise could not afford to participate in the program.

## **Onion River Food Shelf, Washington County**

### *Bringing Free Lunch into the Community*

“The Onion River Food Shelf was established in 1988 to provide food and other provisions to families in need in the towns of Marshfield, Plainfield, Cabot, Calais, and East Montpelier. Many of the families in these towns rely on the free school lunch program as an important part of their children’s nutrition: 224 public school students qualify for free/reduced lunch in our service area.” (ORFS application) When school lets out for summer, the closest site for free summer meals is in East Montpelier. ORFS is only open from 10-2 one day a week. These both present barriers to working parents and families with limited transportation.

This grant funding will allow ORFS to pilot a program where they will distribute weekly lunch bags at the town libraries in Marshfield, Plainfield, and Cabot. The libraries are open many hours per week and because they offer children’s programming throughout the summer, many families already visit the library

regularly. Children will be able to access nutritious lunches within their local community for the duration of summer break.

### **Rural Vermont, Statewide**

#### *Building Networks of Mutual Aid Among Farmers*

“Rural Vermont envisions a just and equitable world rooted in reverence for the earth and dignity for all. To move toward that vision, we carry out our mission to organize, educate, and advocate in collaboration with local and global movements to strengthen the social, ecological, and economic health of the agrarian communities that connect us all. Rural Vermont is proud to be in solidarity with our allies around the world in the movement for Food Sovereignty, and contributes to this movement through our local work to protect and elevate community-based, culturally appropriate, and accessible food and resource provision.” (Rural Vermont Application)

Rural Vermont plans to use this funding to expand outreach and support for Vermont farmers, specifically by extending their listening tours to all 14 counties, building relationships, and gathering feedback. In addition, they will be expanding their on-farm slaughter workshops and adapting their citizen advocacy training to include audio and video, thus expanding accessibility.

### **Senior Solutions (Council on Aging SE VT), Bennington and Windham Counties**

#### *Bringing Resources to Geographically Isolated Seniors*

Senior Solutions’ mission is to “promote the dignity and well-being of older adults” believing that “every person should be able to age in the place of their choice with the support they need.” Their Nutrition & Wellness division coordinates 200,000 home-delivered and community meals annually at more than 20 meal sites, as well as connecting seniors to local farm produce, wellness activities, and assistance applying for 3SquaresVT and fuel assistance.

Last year, Senior Solutions started the Deerfield Valley 100% initiative to reach homebound seniors in the geographically isolated and historically underserved Deerfield Valley. This grant funding will allow them to address food access barriers identified in the pilot year, such as providing transportation to congregate meal sites, supplying home-delivered medically-tailored meals to those who need them, sponsoring a Health & Benefits Fair, and expanding access to their free senior CSA program.

### **SHARES Corporation, Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans Counties**

#### *Expanded Access to Critical Resources in the Northeast Kingdom*

SHARES Corporation is a nonprofit serving the Northeast Kingdom, operating a food shelf in Lyndonville. In addition to food, they provide homeless community members with clothing, hygiene items, and other daily essentials, as well as connecting people to other social services. Like many small food shelves, they are only open for limited hours.

They seek to expand their hours to allow more people, especially those who work during the day, to access their services. They also plan to expand their food distribution to include drop-off locations in each of the counties they serve, to better serve a geographically isolated region.

**Springfield Family Center, Windsor County***Combating Hunger and Stigma Within the School System*

Springfield Family Center has been providing food to the Springfield, North Springfield, and Baltimore communities since 1971. They seek to expand their services to include pop-up food pantries within local schools in their district. While Springfield students have access to free nutritious meals while at school, a gap exists for many students when they leave the building. Springfield lacks a backpack program for students to take home. Springfield Family Center seeks to fill that gap with in-school food pantries. This will support the nutritional needs of growing children, allow them the autonomy to choose their own foods to take home, and reduces the stigma associated with accessing supplemental food resources.

**St. Brigid's Kitchen, Windham County***Growing to Meet Increased Need in Brattleboro, VT*

St. Brigid's Kitchen & Pantry serves hot meals and distributes pantry boxes four days a week in downtown Brattleboro. Due to the combined effects of inflation, high food prices, the end of federal pandemic support, and the housing crisis, St Brigid's has seen a dramatic increase in the number of people in need of food. To respond to this increased demand, St Brigid's needs to expand. In addition, they have opened their doors to the Afghan community, who needed space to cook halal food for the Farmers Market and who hope to start cooking meals for the St Brigid's community as well. This grant will allow St. Brigid's Kitchen to hire an inventory manager as well as continue to support the unique needs of our Afghan neighbors.

**Twin Valley Senior Center, Washington County***Increasing Kitchen Capacity to Meeting Continually Increasing Need*

The Twin Valley Senior Center serves the towns of Cabot, Calais, East Montpelier, Marshfield, Plainfield, and Woodbury with a mission to facilitate the social, emotional, and physical wellbeing of independent senior citizens. They provide a social gathering space, sponsor health and wellness programs, serve congregate meals, and deliver Meals on Wheels to the homebound. Meals on Wheels is a critical lifeline for many people it serves, providing not just food but a regular wellness check. Currently Twin Valley Senior Center serves 180 meals per week. This grant will allow them to upgrade their aging refrigerator with a new commercial fridge, increasing the amount of meals they can safely store for transport as the need continues to grow within the region.

**White Pine Association, Orange County***The Garden at the Heart of the Community*

The White Pine Association seeks to gather the citizens of the Koas Traditional Band of the Abenaki Nation, restore their sense of identity as a people, and revive their traditional culture. One of their ongoing projects is the Abenaki Tribal Garden, where they plant traditional vegetables, herbs, and ceremonial plants. The garden brings together elders and youth, who are reviving traditional foodways together, and providing produce for the entire tribe. They are now actively seeking to acquire adequate land to develop the garden into a commercial enterprise to provide economic security to participating citizens in a way that uplifts their heritage. While they search for land, this grant will allow them to begin purchasing equipment for their current and future gardens, as well as begin paying the youth who work in the current garden as they develop the skills to take on an expanded commercial project in the future.

## **Abenaki Helping Abenaki, Essex, Caledonia, Chittenden, and Orleans Counties**

### *Expanding Access to Traditional Foods*

Abenaki Helping Abenaki is a project of the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki People. Their mission is to “preserve the culture, community awareness, charitable endeavors and outreach of the Nulhegan Band” (From AHA application). Their Food Security Initiative serves 1,500 citizens of the tribe, mostly in the Northeast Kingdom. To supply their people with culturally relevant traditional foods, AHA has partnered with 65 growers around the state of Vermont to produce indigenous squash, bean, and corn varieties, which are then distributed to tribal members. Due to geographical isolation and transportation barriers experienced by many tribal members, AHA is seeking to expand its food delivery options. They are exploring the feasibility of drop shipping shelf stable items, such as beans and corn, to more distant members, as well as expanding delivery routes. Their main limitation is staffing, as they currently have only one paid staff member. This grant funding will allow them to hire a part-time Assistant Food Security Manager, thus expanding their capacity for ongoing research and increased delivery.

## **BROC Community Action, Rutland and Bennington Counties**

### *Responding to Emerging Needs*

The mission of BROC Community Action is “providing hope, opportunity, and a path out of crisis or poverty so our neighbors and community thrive” (from BROC application). The BROC Community Food shelf works primarily with houseless community members in Rutland and Bennington Counties, as well as New Americans working with the United States Committee on Refugees and Immigrants. Currently they serve around 100 families per day. They have identified two major access needs they seek to address with this grant funding. First, to meet the needs of their refugee clientele, they seek to add an extra hour of dedicated shopping time at the food shelf, during which a staff member would be available for one on one shopping assistance and translation services. They will also develop new signs and graphics in several languages. Secondly, to address the needs of a growing houseless population, they plan to increase outreach so as to better understand this community’s needs, and increase availability of frequently requested non-food items that directly affect access to food (such as can openers for people with no kitchens).

## **Brooks Memorial Library, Windham County**

### *Sharing Access to Means of Food Production*

The mission of Brooks Memorial Library is to connect people and resources to inspire, inform, and empower our diverse community. This grant will support their tool library, an innovative program that makes gardening tools and kitchen equipment available at no cost to library members. This increases access to tools necessary to partially address one’s own food security, saving money and addressing equity issues within the community. The tool library includes food preservation equipment out of reach to many people, such as dehydrators and pressure canners, allowing home gardeners and community gardeners to preserve their harvest for the winter months.

In addition to purchasing more tools and expanding the hours they are available, the library plans to use some of this funding to complete a Food & Farm System Assessment that will “provide a roadmap for the community to grow more resilient by better understanding the unique strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to our food/farm system” (from Brooks Memorial Library application). This

assessment is in partnership with the Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Planning Department, and the Sustainability Coordinator, and is being implemented by students studying food policy at Vermont Law.

### **Circle, Washington County**

#### *Practical Upgrades to Increase Food Security*

Circle is a feminist organization dedicated to ending gender-based violence and creating safer communities. In addition to a variety of prevention programming, they run a shelter for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Currently they house 12 women and children, who all share one regular sized fridge. This grant funding will allow them to purchase a commercial sized fridge and freezer for their shelter residents to use. With increased fridge space, they will be able to provide more fresh local produce for communal use. Additionally, more storage space will be available to each individual family, allowing them to cook more food at home instead of eating out, saving money and increasing food security & nutrition.

### **Conscious Homestead, Chittenden**

#### *Building Relationship with Land in Downtown Winooski*

“Conscious Homestead is an urban homestead and wholeness retreat for Black and Brown folks... committed to co-creating a space that is rooted in healing ancestral connection to the land.” (from Conscious Homestead application). The Flying Fish Fellowship program at Conscious Homestead pays BIPOC participants to learn about Afro-Indigenous land and food ways over four months with a team of mentors. They explore methods of growing, preparing, and sharing food. The program offers free seedlings, culinary herbs, produce, eggs, prepared foods, and ferments to fellows, volunteers, and community members, reaching 100 families in need of fresh food, medicine, and community support.

This funding will allow Conscious Homestead to provide stipends to eight fellowship participants this year, as well as paying their staff for increased hours spent coordinating the fellowship program and distributing produce.

### **Committee on Temporary Shelter, Chittenden County**

#### *A Long Term Solution to Homelessness*

The Committee on Temporary Shelter provides emergency shelter, services, and housing to those who are experiencing homelessness or marginal housing. They believe in housing as a human right, and that temporary shelter does not solve the problem of homelessness. In addition to their emergency overnight shelter, they offer transitional and permanent housing for formerly homeless individuals. One of their locations, The Wilson, houses twenty-two residents in single rooms with a shared kitchen and bathrooms. The Wilson was built in 1815 and once housed a hotel and later a boarding house. COTS seeks to update the kitchen and add laundry facilities. An updated kitchen will allow more residents to cook together, building community around sharing meals.

### **Post Oil Solutions/Edible Brattleboro, Windham County**

#### *Creating Opportunities for Community Resilience*

The mission of Edible Brattleboro is to enhance food security and improve the resilience, wellness, and environmental health of the Brattleboro community. They support this mission by transforming public and private landscapes into edible, help-yourself gardens, growing, preparing, and preserving food, distributing fresh produce donated by local gardeners and farmers at a free seasonal farm stand, and providing related educational experiences.

This funding will allow them to move forward with a mini food forest project on a vacant lot in West Brattleboro. “A well-designed food forest resembles a balanced, natural ecosystem and serves to support biodiversity and improve environmental health and resilience” (from EB application). The food forest will be available 24/7 to the community, both for harvesting fruits, nuts, and produce, and also for simply communing with nature. Additional funding will allow their webmaster to update their website to be more interactive, including a map to identify what produce is ready for harvesting at each of their garden sites.

### **Fairfield Community Center Association, Franklin County**

#### *Meeting a Growing Need in Franklin County*

The Fairfield Community Center, located in East Fairfield, offers a weekly food shelf, congregate meals, home deliveries, and a “Full Tummies” program to feed kids on school breaks. All these programs have seen enormous growth in recent years. With the help of UVM’s Bridges for Health Program, Fairfield Community Center has been delivering weekly food boxes to local migrant farmworker families, a previously underserved population. With the loss of Everyone Eats funding in early 2023, FCCA had to stop home delivering ready-to-eat meals. With this grant funding they plan to increase paid staff hours and resume home meal delivery, as well as expand the food shelf’s hours of operation, and further expand the “Full Tummies” program.

### **Family Center of Washington County, Washington County**

#### *Learning through Direct Participation*

The Family Center of Washington County’s mission is to build resourceful families and healthy children to create a strong community. They offer a wide array of services, including infant through preschool childcare, playgroups, parent education and outreach, as well as case management and home visiting for families at risk of homelessness. They are currently working with 48 families in the motel housing program. As part of their home visiting program, they offer prepared meals. This funding will allow the family center to expand this program to include cooking classes for interested families. Parents will help prepare meals for distribution in the family center’s commercial kitchen, while their children are offered developmentally appropriate activities in the childcare center. Parents gain cooking and nutritional education, as well as job skills. The meals can transition to easy-to-prepare meal kits as families move out of motels and into housing with access to cooking facilities. The family center aims to provide families with the amount of support and connection that matches their interests and ability to participate in a space that is welcoming, safe, and familiar.



## **Green Mountain Farm to School, Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans Counties**

### *Weaving together Food and Community in the NEK*

The mission of Green Mountain Farm-to-School is to strengthen local food systems in Vermont by promoting positive economic relationships, education, and access between schools, farms, and communities. This funding will go towards hiring a full-time Food Access and Logistics Coordinator, whose duties will include coordinating GMFTS's free summer meal program, which served over 4000 meals last summer, and working with the Farm-to-School manager to begin an afterschool pilot program teaching students to prepare meals with local ingredients that will then be shared with local senior meals programs.

## **Hardwick Area Food Pantry, Orleans, Caledonia, Lamoille, and Washington Counties**

### *Building Logistic Infrastructure*

"The HAFP is a multi-site food share pantry that is committed to innovating and collaborating as a key partner in building a resilient local community in the Greater Hardwick area through improving quality food access for all. Our mission is to increase food independence, better health, and well-being through shared food, knowledge, and experience."

Capacity grant funding will facilitate the development of an employee/volunteer handbook. HAFP has gone through tremendous growth since the beginning of the pandemic, they now seek to work with a consultant to help build an employee/volunteer handbook, which will create much more structure and clarity, assisting their team to do their jobs more effectively and providing day-to-day guidance based on existing law and HAFP goals and guiding principles.

Additionally, HAFP will use grant funding to purchase database software designed specifically for food pantries, which will streamline their inventory across three sites, saving staff time.

## **Just Basics Inc., Washington County**

### *Physical Space to Facilitate Community Connections*

Just basics Inc. operates a food pantry in Montpelier, as well as coordinating free summer meals for area youth. Their mission is to "confront cycles of injustice by providing programs that increase awareness and access to basic resources needed for a resilient and vibrant community." They now seek to expand beyond their emergency relief support by incorporating food justice events and programs to empower vulnerable people with resources to foster their personal growth and upward mobility. To this end, they plan to use grant funding to open a dedicated community resource center, where anyone interested can come learn about available resources and programs that are happening in the local area.

They hope that this visible downtown location will allow for greater participation and connections throughout the community, creating a space where discussions, education, and laughter can bring people together who may not other ways meet in their daily lives. The space will offer cooking and food education classes, as well as hosting Reach Up and 3Squares representatives for signup and Q&A sessions. Just Basics hopes to bring in local organizations and individuals to lead community empowerment workshops and respond directly to stated needs and interests of the community.

### **Milk with Dignity Standards Council, Statewide**

#### *Protecting Vermont's Most Vulnerable Workers*

“Milk with Dignity addresses the root causes of food insecurity in the immigrant farmworker community by raising wages, ensuring adequate time off, improving communication with employers, and increasing job security. The Program has transformed working and living conditions for hundreds of workers on the 40+ Participating Farms across Vermont and New York State. These farms receive a premium payment on their milk, and, in turn, agree to honor workers’ basic human rights, including a living wage, safe housing and worksites, paid sick time, a guaranteed rest day, and more.” (MDSC application)

Milk with Dignity Standards Council runs a 24/7 fully bilingual support line that provides mediation, interpretation, resources, and emergency support to farmers and farm workers. This grant funding will allow MDSC to hire an additional support line investigator for these vital calls, allowing senior staff members to focus energy on increasing long-term capacity and streamlining current organizational systems.

### **Neighbors in Action, Caledonia, Lamoille, Orleans, and Washington Counties**

#### *Combining Strategies for Increased Access*

Neighbors in Action’s mission is to “serve food insecure community members, offer socially enriching programs, and advance opportunities to increase self-sufficiency in the communities of the Northeast Kingdom and Washington County while deploying the neighbors-helping-neighbors volunteer model to instill hope and leave an enduring impact” (Neighbors in Action Application). They currently operate two food pantries, one in Cabot and one in Lyndonville. The two pantries operate slightly differently, with Cabot offering bimonthly drive-up service with prepacked boxes, and Lyndonville offering weekly in-person shopping as well as an eat-in lunch. Both systems have their advantages. Cabot distributes far more boxes, partly because people can pick up extra boxes to distribute to neighbors in need, many of whom may lack transportation, and partly because the drive-up model bypasses some of the stigma associated with food bank patronage. The in-person shopping facilitates easier produce and perishable distribution, however, and the on-site lunches provide a much-needed community-building space.

Neighbors in Action will use this grant funding to build on what works at each site. They plan to offer drive-up box service on alternate weeks in Lyndonville while adding in-person shopping and lunches in Cabot. This will give residents in both areas access to the best of both worlds. Funding will go towards increased staff time, refrigeration capacity at the Cabot site, and other associated practical upgrades.

### **Pittsford Foodshelf, Rutland County**

#### *Building Capacity for Connection*

The Pittsford Food Shelf is a local food pantry serving the towns of Pittsford, Florence, Proctor, and Chittenden. Currently, the food shelf does not have a phone or internet access. This grant funding will enable them to purchase a phone and laptop and service for both. This will greatly increase their capacity to reach out to their community, field questions by phone, provide 3SquaresVT assistance and offer recipes and nutrition information to patrons.

### **Putney Foodshelf, Windham County**

#### *Building a Foundation for Sustainable Growth*

The Putney Foodshelf is a food pantry serving the town of Putney since 2008. Like many food providers, Putney Foodshelf has seen the need rise dramatically in the last few years-in this case tripling since 2019. The Food Shelf currently serves approximately 170 households per week.

In response to this rapid expansion, Putney Foodshelf now seeks to do the deep foundational work to allow them to make their larger operation sustainable. They are calling this process “Moving from Scarcity to Sustainability”. This grant will fund additional staff time to do this work. Putney Foodshelf is seeking to look at models of other organizations that have experienced similar growth and learn about navigating change. They plan to create a financial sustainability plan, plan for board succession, and establish a new board governance model. Additionally, they plan to do listening sessions to gather shopper feedback to build a more responsive program and improve the shopper experience. Grant funding will allow for additional staff time for core operations and listening sessions, as well as compensation for community participants.

### **Rutland Community Cupboard, Rutland County**

#### *Expanding Hours to Reach More Community Members*

Rutland Community Cupboard is a food pantry serving the greater Rutland area. They plan to use this grant funding to hire a part-time employee, which will allow them to expand their hours to include two Saturdays a month, as well as dedicated senior hours before opening to the general public every day. With the new expanded hours, they will be the only food pantry in the area with Saturday hours, greatly increasing accessibility for people with time constraints during the week. Senior hours will provide a more comfortable and welcoming shopping experience for elders, especially those with mobility issues or concerns about COVID safety. In addition, having an assistant will allow the executive director time to collaborate with other area providers and expand outreach.

### **SUSU CommUNITY Farm, Windham County**

#### *Investing in BIPOC Food Security*

SUSU CommUNITY Farm’s mission is to “co-create a homemade field of love for the next seven generations through the healing, affirming, and liberation of Black, indigenous, people of color and the allies who ride with us.” They are an Afro-Indigenous farm and land-based healing center located on 37 acres in Newfane, VT. One of their core programs is the Box of Resilience CSA, which is a free CSA share of African diasporic and culturally relevant foods, herbal medicinals, eggs, flowers, and other farm products delivered to 45+ BIPOC families in Windham County during the growing season. In addition to the CSA box, SUSU offers Food as Medicine classes, gardening classes, recipes included with deliveries, and community meals. This grant funding will be used to support food access program staff time, purchase much-needed farm equipment, invest in an irrigation system, and increase physical accessibility for farm visitors and program participants.

## **Village Hydroponics, Chittenden County**

### *Dreaming Big to Stretch the Growing Season*

Village Hydroponics is a project of The People's Farmstand in Burlington. The mission of Village Hydroponics is to "provide underserved community members with local, nutrient-dense, and culturally relevant produce when other farms cannot do so." (from application)

The People's Farmstand currently provides free culturally relevant produce to residents of Burlington, especially New Americans. They collect and glean from a half dozen farms in the Burlington area, as well as grow their own specialty produce at the Digger's Mirth Collective Farm. People's Farmstand specializes in hard-to-find vegetables such as callaloo and molokhia, and they work closely with their patrons to source seeds of varieties from people's home countries. Village Hydroponics has an ambitious plan to grow some of these vegetables in the winter months using an indoor hydroponic system. This would allow them to continue to provide healthy and comforting food throughout Vermont's cold season. This grant funding will support ongoing staff time and early start-up expenses in order to further research the initiative and to compensate the community members driving the work for their time.