

Virginia USDA Farm to School Grant Awards

2013

Rappahannock County Public Schools

Washington, Virginia

Grant Type: Planning; \$44,480

Three regional rural school districts in Virginia—Page, Orange, and Rappahannock Schools—are applying for a cluster planning grant to build upon each of our isolated successes in using local foods, educating children through school gardens, and connecting with local producers. Our initial steps in planning this tri-county project are to identify and collaborate with local farmers, local distributors, food service staff, county extension staff and community stakeholders who are interested in planning and implementing a farm to school program. It is essential to create strong relationships in order to develop a long-term farm to school program in which procurement, delivery, and distribution of local products is entrenched in the cafeteria kitchens. Our overall goals are to develop partnerships with neighboring districts and stakeholders in the supply chain to increase consumption of local products and to increase sustainable agriculture and nutrition education efforts in each district. To achieve these goals we will identify our current infrastructures and expand within our counties, gather data on local food procurement, and educate the school communities and cafeteria staff about the value of buying, eating, and cooking with local products. All of these components are essential as we move into our implementation phase in the 2014 school year.

Richmond City Public Schools

Richmond, Virginia

Grant Type: Planning; \$45,000

Richmond Public Schools (RPS) will utilize funding to expand our current farm to school efforts beyond the annual celebration of farm to school week. The project covers four objectives that will address: school nutrition staff readiness through education and training utilizing FTS best practices program offerings, and salad bar training from GIANT/ MARTINS, a leading retail grocer in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia; a district- wide needs assessment to determine capacity for farm to school activities/ identifying existing and potential resources; building a network of contacts to help source local food purchases; collection of data for data base; and, recruitment of local stakeholders and partners from the RPS Garden Task Force to serve as planning committee members in the development of a Farm to School Action and Sustainability Plan using trained facilitators for "Compression Planning using Storyboards." The project has the support of a wide variety of champions including: the City of Richmond, Field of Dreams Farm, Shalom Farms, GIANTI MARTINS and Healthy Hearts Plus.

2014

Chesapeake Public Schools

Chesapeake, Virginia

Grant Type: Planning; \$33,750

Chesapeake Public Schools has partnered with Five Points Community Farm Market in an effort to incorporate more fresh locally grown foods into our menus. Chesapeake Public Schools already has many necessary resources in place to begin planning a farm to school program. This farm to school project will be accomplished by establishing a stakeholder advisory group; developing a sustainable procurement method; increasing access to fresh local produce; hosting a symposium to communicate our efforts; offering multiple educational opportunities; gaining community support; and developing a farm to school implementation plan. The Chesapeake Farm to School planning project will have nutritional, educational, and economic impacts on students, employees, families, and the community.

Sustain Floyd Foundation

Floyd, Virginia

Grant Type: Support Service; \$98,389

A combination of project activities will expand the existing network and programs to all schools in Floyd County, Virginia, and develop and implement promotional campaigns in support of farm to school initiatives while creating a model for rural communities that face particular challenges in food procurement and experiential food- based education. At the end of the project period, all county schools will be integrated into the system to increase local food purchases, a central storage facility and a hydroponic winter growing system will be in place, and a functioning, replicable model will be operating for all programs. Partnerships will be formed with neighboring county buying partners looking to expand the model regionally.

2015

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Richmond, Virginia

Grant Type: Conference and Event – State; \$20,750

Virginia has embraced the farm to school effort since 2007 when Virginia's General Assembly passed a House Joint Resolution requesting that partner organizations work towards advancing farm to school initiatives in the Commonwealth. Through marketing and education, including organizing Virginia's Farm to School Week each November, successful strides have been made to help connect fresh, healthful food from local farms to schools. This grant provides the opportunity to increase substantially the number of school systems incorporating "Virginia Grown" products into school menus while at the same time encouraging reliable, ongoing markets to support Virginia's agricultural economy. Conference educational programs will feature procurement training, capacity building, supply chain distribution, food safety, school gardens, and nutrition education. Most importantly, this conference will provide a venue to showcase, network, and inspire. The conference seeks to provide a centralized voice in the Commonwealth that will create a more vibrant and sustainable farm to school program in Virginia.

Appalachian Sustainable Development

Abingdon, Virginia

Grant Type: Support Service; \$99,179

This project will leverage Appalachian Sustainable Development's infrastructure and expertise in market and farmer development and its relationships with schools to increase the flow of local produce into three local school systems in southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee. This project will lay the foundation for a region- wide network of school systems that will increase the ability to engage regional farmers. At the end of this project, school systems will be able to rely on consistent, Good Agriculture Practices certified supply from regional farmers and will be able to place orders online and receive timely deliveries. Farmers will have gained access to these markets and will be engaged in annual planning to ensure their ability to consistently fill school system demand. Elementary and middle school children and their parents will have had repeated exposure to fresh healthy foods and nutrition information in ways that encourage them to try new things and seek out healthier food.

Pulaski County Public Schools

Pulaski, Virginia

Grant Type: Planning; \$43,415

Pulaski County Public Schools has been sowing the seeds for a farm to school initiative for over a year. The project will help this eight- school district move from vision to practice, benefiting 4,450 students in a rural area of southwestern Virginia. Pulaski County is located in central Appalachia, part of a region called the New River Valley, so- named after the New, a federally designated American Heritage River. Agriculture and natural resources play an important role in Pulaski's heritage, yet numerous socio- economic factors have led families away from healthy foods. The farm to school plan will help promote health and wellness throughout the county and the region.

2016

City Schoolyard Garden

Charlottesville, Virginia

Grant Type: Support Service; \$99,620

City Schoolyard Garden will build capacity in the Charlottesville school system to serve healthier and local food, both as snacks and as part of the regular menu. Food will be sourced from local growers and provided to all elementary school students, integrated into classroom lessons, and grown in school gardens. The project will train school kitchen staff, provide support for sourcing local products, and develop resources to share lessons learned to other school districts.

Loudoun County Public Schools

Ashburn, Virginia

Grant Type: Planning; \$44,961

Loudoun County Public Schools will conduct a pilot program targeting students in five elementary schools. The goals of the project are to provide education opportunities that increase awareness of the benefits of fresh foods and to form new partnerships with local farmers to increase locally grown produce on school menus.

2017

Virginia Department of Education

Richmond, Virginia

Grant Type: Support Service; \$99,825

The Virginia Department of Education in collaboration with local, regional, and statewide partner organizations will identify, engage, and support farm to school initiatives statewide. The goals of the project include the development of regional farm to school networks, procurement trainings, and programs to capitalize on the unique regions and agricultural products in the state.

2018

Giles County Public Schools/County of Giles

Pearisburg, Virginia

Grant Type: Implementation; \$53,212

Giles County Public Schools will expand the Giles County Agricultural Laboratory Farm by installing two high tunnels to extend the growing season. The Ag Lab Farm provides meat and vegetables to six school cafeterias in the district and will increase the amount and variety of fruits and vegetables served.

The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind

Staunton, Virginia

Grant Type: Implementation; \$76,359

The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind (VSDB) will develop students' ability to make connections between the natural world, their community, and themselves. Their program goals are to (1) increase student access to local foods, (2) advance educational opportunities, and (3) improve classroom concepts through agricultural innovation. Staff will accomplish this goal through their 3-acre education farm which includes, one acre of production, a riparian buffer, a raised bed garden, a small greenhouse/workspace, a sensory garden, and a youth garden business.

2019

Fairfax County Public Schools

Falls Church, Virginia

Grant Type: Planning; \$49,997

Fairfax County Public Schools' (FCPS) Office of Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) will create a comprehensive 5-year Farm to School Action Plan that will reach all 190,000 FCPS students and play an integral role in the educational experience of students for years to come. The Action Plan will encompass vision and goals, procurement strategy, distribution and processing, staff training, and will be a collaborative effort between FNS, FCPS departments, community partners, agricultural producers, and supply chain entities. The program will also feature collaboration between FNS and FCPS' Hollin Meadows Elementary, a Title I school with a 12-year proven commitment to outdoor garden spaces as a pillar of a thriving school community, to develop and pilot structures for greater synergy between classroom learning, growing spaces, and the school cafeteria that will be made available to all schools within FCPS.

Virginia Foundation for Agriculture, innovation and Rural Sustainability

Richmond, Virginia

Grant Type: Implementation; \$86,000

The Virginia Foundation for Agriculture, Innovation and Rural Sustainability is a non-profit offering Lulus Local Food, a cloud-based e-commerce solution designed to simplify online sales for farms, farmers markets and food hubs. Lulus provides solutions for common procurement, logistical and sales issues faced by farmers and end-users. Schools purchasing local food face barriers including procurement, inventory and available quantities, seasonality, and timely delivery. With slight modifications, Lulus can offer a solution to these issues. Procurement from farms will be simplified for schools, enabling nutrition directors to easily offer local foods to students. Farm to school can become a reality for schools across the nation.

2020

Augusta Health Community Health Foundation

Fishersville, Virginia

Grant Type: Implementation; \$100,000

Augusta Health and Waynesboro City Public Schools will expand the Get Fresh nutrition education initiative in an effort to reduce food insecurity, increase student access to local produce, and improve the immediate and long-term health of the community. Activities include expanding the curriculum to a third elementary school and utilizing a mobile café for food insecure students during the summer and school closings.

Local Environmental Agriculture Project

Roanoke, Virginia

Grant Type: Planning; \$48,839

Local Environmental Agriculture Project will collaborate with Virginia Cooperative Extension and Roanoke City Public Schools (RCPS) to plan the Roanoke Farm to School program. The planning process will ensure that the Farm to School development and growth is appropriate, targeted, integrated, and sustainable. The goals for the first year include the following: (1) strengthen partnerships with RCPS and wholesale farmers, (2) expand farm to school

educational programming, (3) hold farmer information sessions and focus groups, (4) host a RCPS personnel symposium to recruit new partners and gather feedback on program development, (5) implement a Farm to School pilot at 1-4 schools in spring 2021, and (6) create and refine the Farm to School Action Plan. The long-term vision for Roanoke Farm to School includes nutrition and agriculture education in all schools and at least 10 percent annual local procurement.

Project Grows, Inc.

Staunton, Virginia

Grant Type: Implementation; \$100,000

Project GROWS: Connecting Schools to Local Food is a multi-pronged farm-to-school initiative that includes agricultural education programming, such as in-school food tastings, curriculum integration of local food concepts, experiential learning in school garden and farming contexts. The project will also expand local food procurement strategies for schools, such as local food supplier meet and greets and the publication of a best practices training manual for regional farmer training.

Virginia Department of Education

Richmond, Virginia

Grant Type: State Agency; \$99,987

The Virginia Department of Education will convene a Farm to School Leadership Team to develop and implement a five-year strategic plan. Key activities in the first two years will focus on developing regional networks to connect school nutrition personnel to farmers for local procurement; providing toolkits for Virginia Cooperative Extension agents to use with farmers; farm tours and toolkits for school personnel; agriculture education for school-aged children; a statewide Farm to School Conference; and evaluation efforts. The plan will also include strategies for sustainability beyond the two-year project period. Key partners include the Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom.

2021

Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD)

Bristol, Virginia

Grant Type: Implementation; \$98,952

In collaboration with several partners, ASD will expand the current school gardens programming to create a regional Farm-to-School Coalition including digital training materials to provide agriculture education, a replicable model to establish and maintain sustainable gardening programs, access to a network of stakeholders for support and expertise, an aggregation and distribution service to save with bulk supplies purchases, and access to the local food supply chain for procurement. This project will provide low income rural children with fresh healthy food, the skills to grow, and the community support needed for a widespread culture change.

Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District

Williamsburg, Virginia

Grant Type: Implementation; \$92,583

The Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District and key partner Williamsburg Community Growers (WCG) will engage with local high school students to provide experiential agricultural education opportunities at the WCG teaching farm. Students will be involved in all aspects of vegetable production, including soil preparation, planting, and harvesting. Students will also have the opportunity to learn important agribusiness skills as they engage with customers at the Williamsburg Community Growers' farm stand. A portion of the produce grown by students at the teaching farm will also be incorporated into school lunches at each high school to help increase the availability of fresh, locally grown produce. Students who participate in these "seed to stand" opportunities will gain experience with local food systems and better understand the many values of consuming locally grown produce.

Cultivate Charlottesville

Charlottesville, Virginia

Grant Type: Implementation; \$50,000

Cultivate Charlottesville's Prioritizing Food Equity: Youth Voice and Choice in Farm-to-School program brings together public and private partnerships to build equitable access to healthy school meals and vibrant local farm connections. This program centers youth leadership in design and implementation of a five-year plan aimed at doubling local, fresh, from scratch food in Charlottesville City School meals. Prioritizing Food Equity catalyzes five inter-related strategies: Fresh, Scratch, Local; Equity Through Access; Youth Voice & Choice; Youth Nutrition Education; Capacity for School Staff & Equipment. Cultivate engages with youth and community to build a healthy and just food system. Founded on the belief that working together to grow gardens, share food and power, and advocate for equitable systems—cultivates a healthy community for all. The overall purpose is to increase student engagement, education, and leadership to impact the food systems that impact their lives.