



# LEAP Annual Report | 2014



LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGRICULTURE  
PROJECT, INC (LEAP)

[www.leapforlocalfood.org](http://www.leapforlocalfood.org)

## Message from Maureen McNamara Best

LEAP has had a tremendous year in 2014 thanks to the support from our amazing community of farmers and food producers, market customers, volunteers, grantors and local businesses, organizations, and government agencies. 2014 was a year of growth and change for LEAP as we transitioned from being volunteer-run to having a full time Executive Director and a more formal organizational structure. LEAP has also been busy building our organizational capacity with an AmeriCorps VISTA member (thanks Brittany!).

As LEAP grows as an organization, we are better able to take on new projects. Thanks to significant grant funding in 2014, LEAP will bring two longstanding program dreams to reality: The LEAP Mobile Market and the LEAP Community Kitchen.

The LEAP Mobile Market, first piloted in summer 2013, received operational funding from the United Way of Roanoke Valley through the Healthy Start initiative. The Mobile Market will allow LEAP to expand our market offerings to new neighborhoods throughout the city and bring fresh, healthy and local food to folks across Roanoke.

For years, there has been talk of having a community kitchen in Roanoke to help strengthen the local food system and increase local food production. In 2014, LEAP made real headway to get the program off the ground. The LEAP Community Kitchen will provide certified commercial kitchen space and business support to small-scale local food businesses. With grant funding from the Roanoke Women's Foundation and the USDA Local Food Promotion Program, the Kitchen will be operational in 2015.

Thanks for reading,



Maureen McNamara Best

LEAP Executive Director



## LEAP's Mission

LEAP's mission is to nurture healthy communities and resilient local food systems. We are working to grow demand for, access to and production of healthy local food. LEAP programs include LEAP Community Markets (West End and Grandin Village) and our SNAP Double Value Program. In 2015, LEAP will launch two new and exciting programs: the LEAP Mobile Market and the LEAP Community Kitchen!

At the LEAP Community Markets, local means that every product originated within 100 miles of the market, with two exceptions for items that can't be sourced within 100 miles: locally roasted coffee and seafood from the coast of Virginia and North Carolina, sold by a local vendor. LEAP believes that by re-localizing our food system, we are creating more environmentally, economically, and culturally sustainable communities. LEAP works to support all aspects of local food systems in order to create healthy communities that can respond and adapt to meet community needs.



## LEAP Community Markets

LEAP operates two community markets in Roanoke. The West End Community Market is open year-round (Tuesday 3pm-6pm) and the Grandin Village Community Market is open seasonally from late April through October (Saturday 8am-noon). The Markets are all about community—local farmers and customers come together around food to share recipes, buy delicious eats, and build lasting relationships. In Grandin Village, the market is a community gathering place throughout the summer where neighbors meet up to shop and visit with friends. Many of our market customers then visit other businesses in the Grandin Village, supporting other local businesses and extending the community



far beyond the market. In the West End, the market is becoming a stronger community gathering place every day and the only source of fresh local food in the neighborhood. The West End Community Market would not exist without the support from The West End Center for Youth and Freedom First Credit Union—thanks for your continued support and partnership! We are so happy to have a permanent, covered pavilion to call home year-round—if you haven't checked out the new West End digs, come on by any Tuesday from 3-6.

LEAP vendors are the heart of the community markets. By buying from local vendors, we bring the freshest and most delicious products to our customers and boost the local economy. We work with over 20 vendors directly, and over 80 vendors total including those who sell to the local food aggregators who sell at LEAP markets.





## SNAP Double Value Program

In order to help make healthy food more affordable, LEAP accepts and doubles SNAP-EBT benefits (food stamps) at all our markets. LEAP also works with the Virginia Cooperative Extension Family Nutrition Program to provide low-cost and simple cooking demonstrations at our markets that feature in-season ingredients! With up to \$20 doubled per market, the SNAP Double Value Program makes a huge difference in the grocery budgets of our participants. In the words of one SNAP participant, “It's helped my entire family eat better and for that I am very grateful.”



## LEAP Mobile Market

LEAP will launch a Mobile Market in Spring 2015 (think ice cream truck but stocked with fresh and local produce!) that will travel to neighborhoods throughout the City of Roanoke. Remember the farm trucks that used to come into cities and towns to sell produce? We are trying to bring that model back to Roanoke! In 2015, the Mobile Market will make weekly stops in SE and NW Roanoke where there is currently limited access to fresh produce. The LEAP Mobile Market will work closely with the Healthy Start Collaborative which brings together various organizations to better serve the health and nutrition needs of children, families and our community.



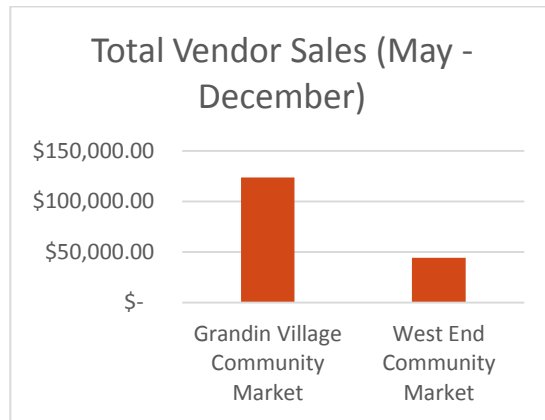
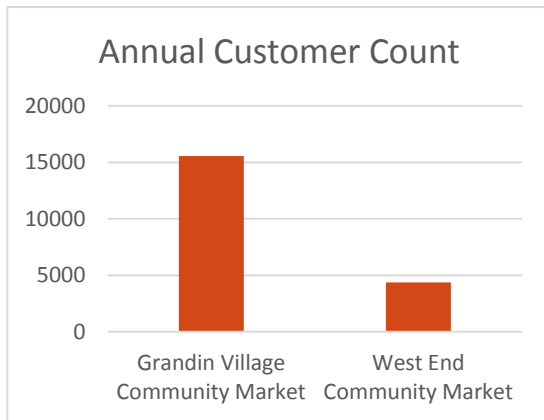
## LEAP Community Kitchen

Building infrastructure isn't always the most exciting job, but we are happy that at least building food infrastructure will be tasty! The LEAP Community Kitchen (target opening date Fall 2015) is an 800 square foot commercial kitchen in the West End neighborhood that will help food entrepreneurs start up or expand their food-based businesses. In addition to being a food business incubator, the LEAP Community Kitchen will also be a space for community programming like cooking, nutrition and canning classes. LEAP is deep into planning the Kitchen thanks to a grant from the USDA Local Food Promotion Program. LEAP has secured funding from the Roanoke Women's Foundation of the Foundation for Roanoke Valley that will cover initial construction costs. We are still looking for funding to cover remaining kitchen equipment needs and program management.



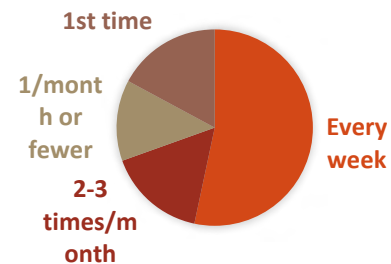
## Program Impacts

**LEAP Community Market Program.** LEAP Markets continue to build community and support local food. In 2014, we created new systems to collect market data and evaluate the impact of our markets.

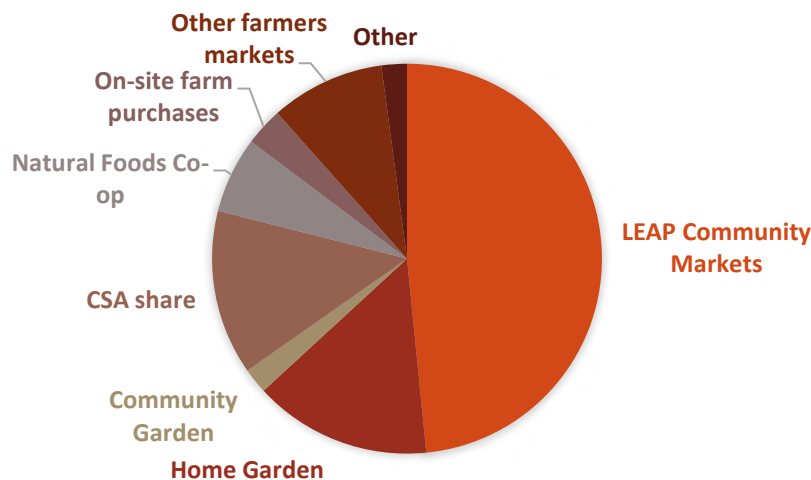


During the 2014 market season, LEAP staff and volunteers conducted 'dot surveys' at the markets to collect feedback about the markets and to learn more about our incredible customer base. We learned that most of our customers visit the market regularly, and we still have a regular influx of new customers. Our customers get most of their local food from farmers markets (mostly from LEAP Community Markets, and some from other farmers markets), and many of them also rely on a home garden for local produce.

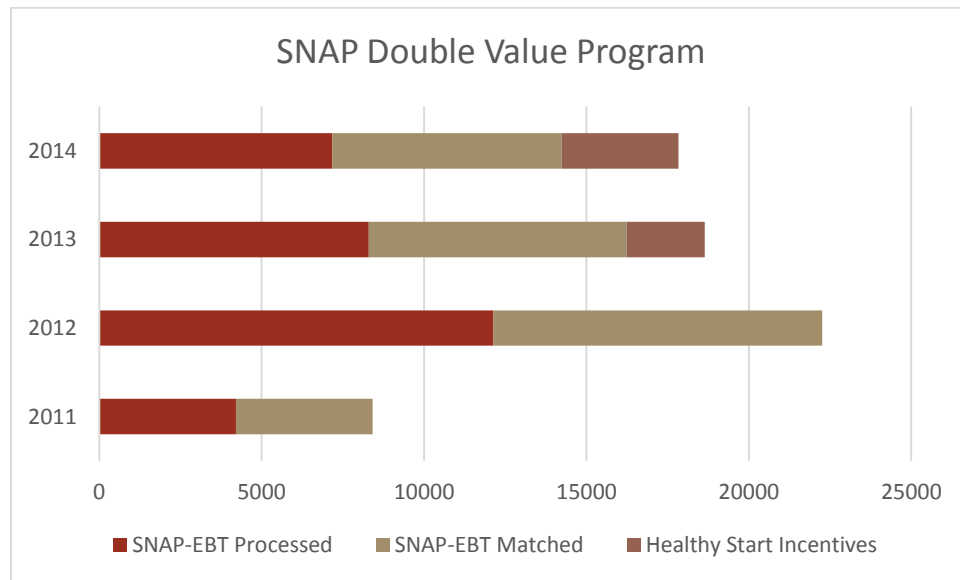
### HOW OFTEN DO YOU SHOP AT THE MARKET?



### THIS SUMMER, WHAT WILL BE YOUR PRIMARY SOURCE OF LOCAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS?



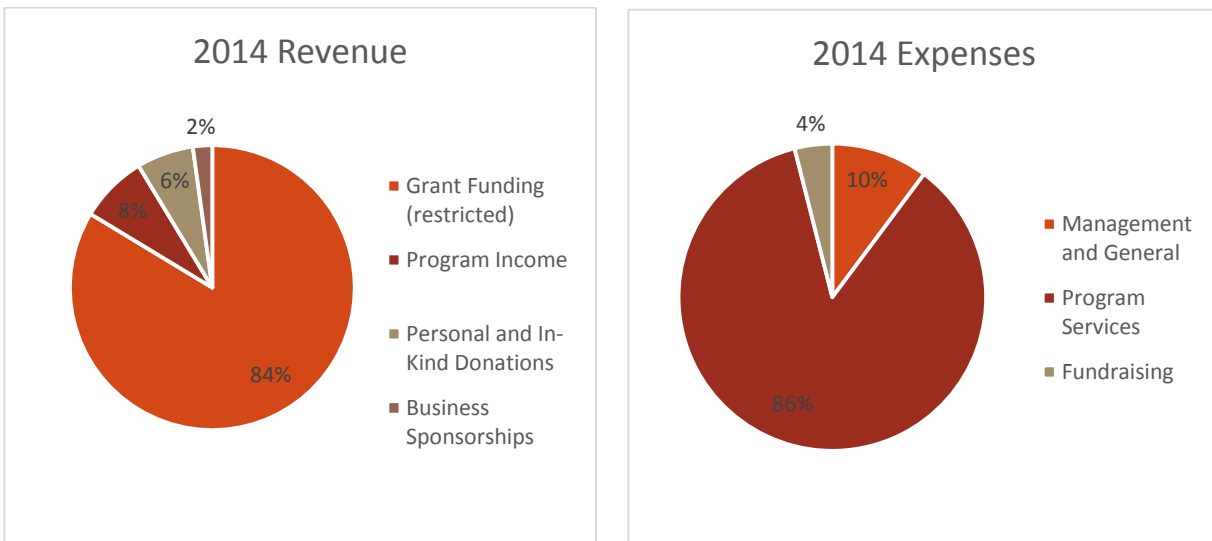
**SNAP Double Value Program.** The SNAP Double Value Program and other market incentives for low-income customers continue to grow. Since 2011, LEAP has matched SNAP-EBT benefits at the markets, and since 2013 has had a limit of \$20 matched per market for each customer. In addition to the SNAP Double Value Program, LEAP also works with TAP Head Start Centers and Virginia Cooperative Extension Family Nutrition Program to provide incentives for market customers. In 2014, TAP Head Start parents were given an additional \$3,600 in incentives to purchase fresh, local and healthy food. The SNAP Double and incentive programs help make healthy and local food more affordable and provide market vendors with additional sales/income.



Based on survey responses, the SNAP Double Value Program makes it easier for participants to buy healthy local food and results in healthier eating choices. Almost half of participants said that outside the community market, it was difficult or very difficult for them to purchase quality fresh fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood; every survey respondent reported that it was easier to buy fruits and vegetables because of shopping at the market. We are also seeing behavior change as a result of the program: 78% increased the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables consumed and 82% increased the variety of fresh fruits and vegetables consumed.

## Resources and Financial Management

As you can see, 2014 was a big year for LEAP. We are in the process of transitioning from a volunteer-run organization to having staff to start and expand LEAP programs. LEAP has been fortunate to have a dedicated On-site Market Manager, Tee Reynolds, for the past couple years. In 2014, LEAP was able to add a full-time Executive Director and an AmeriCorps VISTA (thanks Brittany!) to the LEAP team. It takes people and financial resources to grow LEAP programs and to meet community needs around food and food access. LEAP secured significant grant funding in 2014 to help us launch programs in 2015 and beyond. However, we are still working to have a more diverse funding stream. In 2014, we conducted LEAP's first online fundraising campaign. The campaign brought in \$5,300 in donations.



Granting Agency	Amount	Purpose
Roanoke Women's Foundation	\$100,000	Build out the LEAP Community Kitchen
United Way of the Roanoke Valley	\$33,350/year for 3 years	Healthy Start Initiative: LEAP receives funding for Mobile Market operations and market incentives
Foundation for the Roanoke Valley	\$26,420	Purchase and install vinyl enclosures and signage for the West End Community Market
USDA Agricultural Market Service Local Food Promotion Program	\$25,000	Planning for the LEAP Community Kitchen, including architecture and engineering design
Carilion Clinic Community Grant Program	\$10,000	Provide matching funds for the SNAP Double Value Program
Freedom First Credit Union Community Grant Program	\$5,000	Support the LEAP Mobile Market by funding the AmeriCorps VISTA program

In the coming year, we will continue to focus on grant funding to support programs; however, we anticipate that total grant income will be lower in 2015 (high level of construction funding in 2014). A major focus in 2015 will be to increase fundraising and unrestricted funds that will allow LEAP more flexibility to meet community needs and provide funding for sustainable staff salaries.

## LEAP as an Organization

LEAP is a 501c3 non-profit organization. We have a small but very dedicated staff: Tee Reynolds (Market Manager and Market Ambassador), Brittany DeKnight (AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer working on funding and program development), Sam Lev (Market Program Coordinator, started in 2015), and Maureen McNamara Best (Executive Director). All pictured to the right, photograph courtesy of The Roanoke Times.

As a non-profit, LEAP is governed by a Board of Directors made of community members who volunteer their time and talents to support local food. The current Board of Directors includes: Brent Cochran (Board President, pictured), Dave Prosser (Board Treasurer), Pat Young (Board Secretary), Betty Bailey, Susan Clark and Jim Crawford. For more information about LEAP's Board and staff, visit <http://leapforlocalfood.org/about-leap/leap-staff-and-board-members/>.



## Your Donation is More Important than Ever Before

As LEAP builds new programs and grows our organization, we need your support. Your gifts, no matter the amount, are what make LEAP possible. We are a very lean organization, but like any non-profit or business we have to have some program and overhead costs that aren't covered by grants. We need your support to help make up the difference. All donations are tax-deductible.

## Wish List

In addition to financial needs, LEAP is looking for in-kind donations to support our programs. If you have any of these items, please let us know at [development@leapforlocalfood.org](mailto:development@leapforlocalfood.org).

- Vehicle for the LEAP Mobile Market (10 or 12 foot box truck, or an RV)
- Laptop computers
- Computer monitors and other equipment

## LEAPing Forward

2015 will be another big year for LEAP, and we can't wait to get our new programs off the ground.

**Finance:** We expect to increase individual donations and business sponsorships. To diversify our funding stream and to increase awareness of LEAP and local food, we are focusing on a couple new fundraising events.

**Programs:** We will launch the LEAP Mobile Market in May 2015 and plan to break ground on the LEAP Community Kitchen in spring 2015 (to open in fall 2015). We will also launch a fruit and vegetable prescription program in summer 2015 in partnership with Healthy Roanoke Valley and Carilion Clinic.