

RURAL VERMONT 2020 IMPACT REPORT



RURAL VERMONT PROMOTES THE RESURGENCE OF COMMUNITY-SCALE AGRICULTURE THROUGH EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, AND ORGANIZING IN SUPPORT OF VERMONTERS LIVING IN DEEP CONNECTION TO ONE ANOTHER AND TO THE LAND THAT NOURISHES US ALL.

2020 BOARD

(pictured above, starting with back row)

Meredith Niles

Keith Drinkwine

Julie Wolcott

Rachel & Ryan Yoder

John Cleary

Jeannie Bartlett

Chris Wood

Corie Pierce

Meghan Wayland

Cat Buxton

Christine Bourque (not pictured)

Sue Buckholz (not pictured)

Nick Zigelbaum (not pictured)

Silene DeCucies (as of Dec, not pictured)

2020 STAFF

Shelby Girard, Development Director

Caroline Gordan, Legislative Director

Ben Hewitt, Donor Relations Lead (until Nov)

Coco Moseley, Operations Director (until Jun)

Emma Paradis, Operations Director (as of Jun)

Graham Unangst-Rufrnacht, Policy Director

Mollie Wills, Grassroots Organizing Director

Board & staff bios available online

WHERE WE ARE NOW

2020 shook the world, and more plainly exposed all the systemic injustices that our dominant food systems are built upon. Rural Vermont's work toward an equitable and inclusive food web that generates social, economic, and ecologic health feels more urgent and relevant than ever.

To that end, over the last year, we have continued our very locally grounded grassroots organizing, education, and policy advocacy. We have grown solidarity and collective trust, understanding, and power in local, regional, national, and global coalitions, alliances, networks, and movements. We have affirmed our commitment to our core values, to recognizing and addressing structural inequities, and to centering the voices of our constituency and those most impacted and vulnerable. In short, we have been collaboratively contributing to growing our agriCULTURE.

We have also been refining our shared leadership structure, initiating the work to build a long-term Strategic Plan, and deeply engaging in anti-racism work. And we welcomed a new Operations Director!

We couldn't do this work without our dear members and supporters. You are the fuel and force behind this mighty little organization, and we thank you.



ruralvermont.org

POLICY AND ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

COVID RELIEF FOR FARMERS AND FARM WORKERS



- Successfully advocated for \$5M in COVID-19 relief for agricultural and working lands businesses
- Successfully advocated for farmers' markets to be considered essential businesses so they could open
- Amplified Migrant Justice's call for the creation of a \$5M Vermont Immigrant Families COVID Relief Fund

pictured: Rural Vermont Legislative Director Caroline Gordon (bottom left) presenting to the Senate Agriculture Committee



- Surveyed, amplified, and engaged farmers/farmworkers in soil health policy (and offered stipends too)
- Continued work to advance the Universal Recycling Law and support the management of food scraps as a poultry forage and compost component
- Developed a partnership with the Center for Ag & Food Systems at VT Law School to analyze the progress of the Payment for Ecosystem Services & Soil Health Working Group
- Collaboratively launched a statewide Soil Health Policy Network listserv to build connections and research/design policy among soil health stakeholders



GMO LABELING

Became a plaintiff in a federal lawsuit filed by the Center for Food Safety against the USDA for implementing a federal law preempting the 2016 Vermont GMO labeling law

"Rural VT gives a collective, cohesive, and strong voice to a small population of busy hardworking farm folks so that our needs can be heard in the government."
-Mara Hearst, Levy Lamb, E. Dorset



SMALL FARM ACTION DAY

Farmer activists participated in an advocacy training (with RV legend Andrea Stander!) prior to meeting with their legislators at the State House.

photo credit: Grace Oedel



JUST AND EQUITABLE CANNABIS REGULATION

Forged a coalition with NOFA-VT, the Vermont Growers' Association, Justice For All, and Trace VT to advocate for an end to the criminalization of cannabis and a just transition to a tax and regulate system which is agriculturally, economically, and racially equitable, accessible, and reparative.

"I love the RV team! I appreciate RV pushing the conversation/legislation towards more radical solutions. I appreciate how RV embodies a more wholistic approach to community development and the legislative approach." -Jean Hamilton, Plainfield

COMMUNITY & GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING HIGHLIGHTS

"[Rural Vermont] fills a very specific niche in policy innovation that's place-based, yet provides frameworks for other states around the country. I love and value that [Rural Vermont] has a grassroots presence because that's how we're able to much more directly and more deeply impact change." -Mindy Blank, Barre



FARMER STORIES IN HEALTH CARE: AN AUDIO TESTIMONIAL PROJECT FOR THE WORKING LANDS COMMUNITY

In early 2020, Rural Vermont launched a testimonial project to capture the stories of farmers who have struggled with accessing affordable healthcare. Seven farmers shared their experiences, which illuminate how deeply healthcare (or lack thereof) impacts the farming community, and why we believe universal healthcare is so important. Listen to these powerful stories on our website.

"...people have to choose their bodies over their own livelihoods."
- Hilary Martin

"...RV operates with the most humility and least rigidity of any org I know. RV listens actively. RV thinks outside of capitalism. RV is unafraid to tackle scary stuff. RV uplifts art. RV works in coalitions and partnerships."
-Jeannie Bartlett, RV Board Vice Chair



ON-FARM SLAUGHTER AND BUTCHERING WORKSHOPS

with itinerant slaughterer Mary Lake and local farmers and butchers

FARMERS' MARKETS MINI GRANTS

Established a Farmers' Market Relief Fund and distributed \$14,240 to 32 markets across Vermont to support implementation of new COVID protocols



"We are thrilled, thank you. This amount of money to a small organization like ours makes all of the difference."
-Cindy Walcott, Champlain Islands Farmers Market

COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

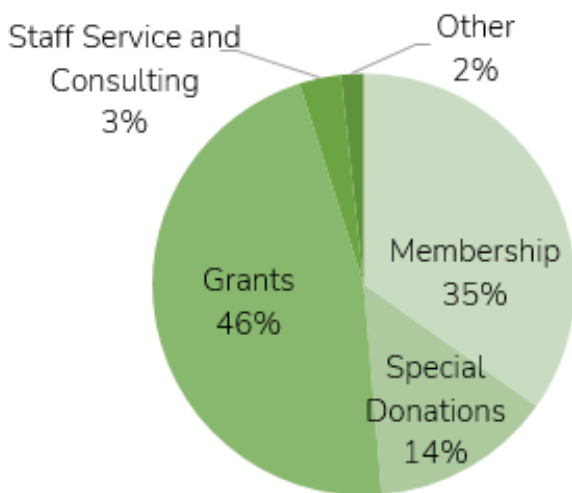
- Furthered our commitment to, and engagement with, local, national, and international networks, coalitions, and movements: Farm to Plate, VT Young Farmers Coalition, National Family Farm Coalition (pictured above), La Via Campesina, and US Food Sovereignty Alliance
- Forged intersectional alliances with diverse groups working to increase the affordability of, and access to, healthcare
- Invested in and engaged youth by becoming a community partner of Regeneration Corps, which offers high school students academic credit, on-farm experiences, and education about the intersections of regenerative agriculture, climate change, and racial justice
- Collaborated with local BIPOC led agricultural and non-agricultural organizations; and prioritized building trust and meaningful relationships

2020 FINANCIAL REPORT

Starting Balance 2020: \$142,655.98
Ending Balance 2020: \$190,316.02

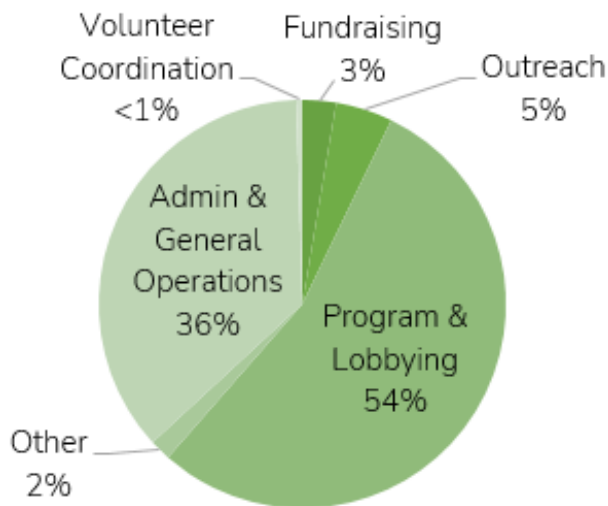
2020 INCOME

Total: \$271,759.41



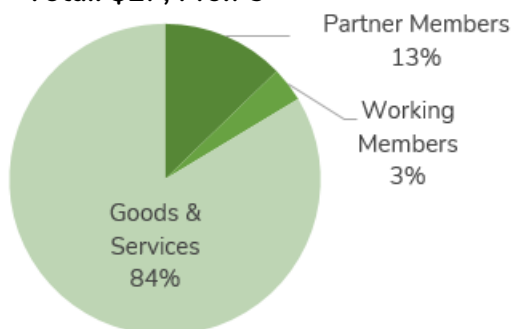
2020 EXPENSES

Total: \$254,250.44



IN-KIND INCOME

Total: \$27,446.75



FISCAL NOTES:

- In addition to the income reported above, Rural Vermont received a PPP loan of \$28,869 that was forgiven in December.
- These numbers are not audited.
- Form 990s available upon request.

JOIN US!

Like all member-based organizations, Rural Vermont's influence and capacity to carry out our work correlates directly to the strength of our membership. We are humbled and happy to report that membership dues and donations made up 49% of our 2020 income.

If Rural Vermont's values and priorities resonate with you, please consider making a donation or becoming a member. Membership dues are \$35/year. We also welcome "Working Members" who opt to give their time instead of cash.

Make your donation today at [ruralvermont.org/donate!](https://ruralvermont.org/donate)



Rural Vermont member Maria Schumann at May Day Rally