



# VERMONT EVERYONE EATS TOOLKIT

Key findings & lessons  
learned from the  
implementation of a  
COVID-19 pandemic  
relief program



## Acknowledgements

In July 2022, Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) surveyed Vermont Everyone Eats (VEE) Task Force members and Hub Managers for suggestions on how to use Vermont Community Foundation (VCF) grant funds that VEE had received in 2020. The challenge focused on how to carry forward the work, innovation, and lasting impacts of VEE beyond the pandemic emergency period. This toolkit was one suggestion, and thanks to extensive documentation, surveys, data reports, and impact studies completed while VEE was operational, SEVCA ultimately oversaw its completion.

For resources, materials, and content used to compile this report, thanks go to Steve Geller, Kevin Brennan, Kathleen Devlin (SEVCA Executive Directors); Gary Holloway (ACCD); Jean Myung Hamilton, Amanda Witman, Chris Meyer (VEE); Kelsea Burch, Deb Holman (SEVCA); Anne Massie and Dr. Sarah Heiss (UVM); JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc.; Elizabeth Schuster and Michelle Klieger (Agricultural Economists); and Stephanie Bonin (Strategy Consultant).

And, of course, gratitude to the Task Force members, Hub Managers, restaurant owners, farmers, meal recipients, and hundreds of volunteers who worked tirelessly for two years and eight months to keep the program running, and who spoke so passionately about their experiences with Vermont Everyone Eats.

Photos: VEE/SEVCA



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# Foreword

by SEVCA Former Executive Director Steve Geller



## Colleagues & Friends,

When the first wave of COVID-19 crashed upon our shores in the spring of 2020, it marooned people in their homes, assisted living facilities, and other institutions; flooded hospitals and shelters; and decimated businesses, services, and communities. Among those experiencing the worst effects of the pandemic were food-insecure individuals who couldn't find, prepare, or afford adequate nutritious food to feed themselves and their families; restaurant owners and employees who lost or were at risk of losing their livelihoods; and farmers and their workers who were losing large segments of their markets to sell their products to. The financial crisis for many of these enterprises also threatened the economic vitality of their communities and left swaths of empty storefronts and ghost towns throughout Vermont.

Some of the first boots on the ground in response to this crisis were essential service providers and grassroots organizations who helped survivors cope with its immediate effects and recover from its longer-term impacts. Seeing how this disaster was affecting their communities, great minds in these groups and businesses around the state (most notably restaurants and farmers themselves) started thinking alike and came up with the common idea of creating a multifaceted program that could help all of those constituents simultaneously by paying local restaurants to buy food from Vermont farmers to prepare meals for food-insecure residents.



It was an innovative mix of hunger relief, small business support, and community economic development, and one of its most unique and effective features was its emphasis on the concept that “everyone eats.” A mass crisis of this scale potentially disrupted everyone’s life, and therefore it was critical to offer assistance to anyone who determined their need for themselves without bureaucratic barriers and stigmatizing eligibility tests based on arbitrary income thresholds and labels.

The initial originators of this approach that evolved into Vermont Everyone Eats (VEE) spanned a wide range of communities and diverse organizations, including:

- Southern Windham County (Downtown Brattleboro Alliance, coiner of the “EE” name)
- Chester/Springfield (Chester Helping Hands, Springfield Family Center)
- Hardwick (Center for an Agricultural Economy)
- Vergennes (Bar Antidote, Boys & Girls Club)
- Chittenden County (Skinny Pancake Restaurant/ ShiftMeals)
- Central Vermont (ShiftMeals, Capstone Community Action)
- Rutland (Vermont Farmers Food Center)



They formed partnerships and used their own and other local funds, massive amounts of volunteer time, and donated resources to get these initiatives off the ground. They worked to secure additional funding, resources, and support to ensure their continuation and expand them to all who needed them. Other early adopters joined the VEE network soon after its formation, and the result was 14 regional Hubs and a statewide voucher program that in combination covered every corner of Vermont.

Very soon it became clear that the scope of the problem throughout the state was too large for local groups to fully address, no matter how effective they were individually. But then the passage of the CARES Act by Congress, with COVID-19 relief and recovery funding, provided the opportunity for federal support of large-scale, innovative, and comprehensive approaches to effectively meet the complex challenges posed by the pandemic.

The local groups teamed up with regional and statewide organizations and agencies—particularly those focused on food/nutrition insecurity and poverty—to form a statewide task force to develop the VEE program and secure CARES Act funding for it. The Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) was named the state grant recipient. ACCD subsequently contracted with SEVCA, which had been designated by the VEE Task Force to serve as the statewide program administrator.

SEVCA's role in VEE was optimized as its planning and development department engaged with the Windham County project and advocated for SEVCA to help it succeed and expand. I, as SEVCA's executive director, had the good fortune, judgment, and commitment to be in the right (virtual) rooms at the right time to be able to offer our 55-year grant management and operational experience to administer a large statewide program. The proposal was accepted, and SEVCA and the other key partners successfully appealed to the Legislature for a \$5 million grant. At the time it seemed like a huge sum that would be difficult to spend fully since the CARES Act funds had to be spent by the end of 2020, only four months away.

Of course, the reality turned out very differently: The CARES Act spending deadline was extended multiple times, another COVID-19 relief grant was passed, and most significantly, the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) stepped in to reimburse all the initial CARES Act funds expended and continue funding VEE via repeated extensions for another two and a half years, through March 2023.





VEE ended up being successful beyond everyone’s wildest dreams. As noted from the data later in this report, VEE operated **7 times longer** than its initial expectation, received **over 7 times more funding**, and provided **13 times more meals** to food-insecure participants, with an average of **over 3 times more** of the ingredients coming from Vermont farms than originally required. Perhaps most notably, although it was too difficult to set specific targets, approximately **400 full-time jobs** were preserved among the **320+ restaurants** and **270+ farms** that participated.

None of these successful outcomes came easily. The program was complex and required a unique mix of creativity, passion, dedication, and teamwork from a wide diversity of stakeholders at the local, regional, and state levels. It’s what made VEE an incredible program, and I feel enormously privileged and proud to have had the opportunity to contribute to its success and positive impact on the lives of the Vermonters who received the meals, the restaurants and farms that were able to stay in business, the workers whose jobs were preserved, and the local communities whose economic vitality was saved.

We all hope the need for disaster-relief programs like VEE won’t arise too soon or too often, but when it does, as we all know it will at some time and to some degree, **we hope this Toolkit will help establish similarly effective programs to help the residents of other communities, regions, and states cope with the resulting hardships, get back on their feet, and move forward with their lives.**

Dedicated to meet people’s needs and help them thrive,



Steve Geller  
SEVCA Former Executive Director





# What is Vermont Everyone Eats?

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the U.S. in early 2020, community-minded Vermonters created an emergency relief program that would help keep their neighbors fed and local restaurants and farms running until the federal government's COVID-19 disaster declaration ended over two and a half years later. How did they do it? Where did they find the funds? What was the impact? And could this model be a valuable template for future initiatives?

## What is Vermont Everyone Eats?

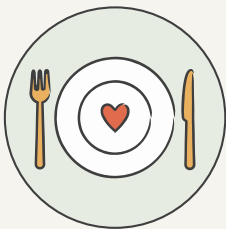
The Vermont Everyone Eats program ([VEE](#)), funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency ([FEMA](#)) with supplemental funds from the [Vermont State Legislature](#), was created to address acute food security challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The VEE program paid local restaurants to prepare nutritious meals and required them to source at least 10 percent of their ingredients from local farms and food providers. This innovative program thus provided **free, healthy prepared meals for Vermonters while also providing a stabilizing source of income for Vermont restaurants and revenue for local farmers and food producers**. The first VEE meals were distributed on August 1, 2020, and weekly distribution continued until the program closed on March 31, 2023.

- VEE provided over **3.9 million meals** to food-insecure Vermonters in all 14 counties, averaging 28,485 meals distributed per week.
- Over 320 restaurants earned a total of more than **\$39 million**, allowing these businesses to remain open during the pandemic and to save approximately 400 full-time jobs.
- An average of **36 percent of meal ingredients** were purchased from more than 270 Vermont farmers and food producers, providing these local entities with over \$7.4 million in revenue. This far exceeded VEE's required 10 percent local ingredient minimum.



## Three Pillars of VEE

Vermont Everyone Eats was a unique program that not only addressed food insecurity for Vermonters during a time of heightened uncertainty, but also supported restaurants and local farms and food producers when keeping a small business afloat became even more precarious. These population sectors that benefited from the program became known as the **three pillars of VEE**.



**Restaurants:** The hundreds of Vermont food purveyors that participated in VEE included a range of eateries from food trucks, delis, pizzerias, and cafes to catering businesses and fine dining establishments.



**Farmers & Food Providers:** It is estimated that over 270 farmers and food producers sold goods to VEE restaurants; however, studies suggest that far more participated but were not counted, as many were not aware that their products were being used in VEE meals.



**Meal Recipients:** Thanks to the self-certification process, meal recipients were not limited to those who fell within traditional government eligibility guidelines. Anyone who was experiencing hardship due to the pandemic was welcome to receive VEE meals.

## History and Funding

The Vermont Everyone Eats program was first established in June 2020 as “Restaurants and Farmers Feeding the Hungry” by the [Vermont State Legislature H.966](#), which allocated \$5 million provided by the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ([CARES Act](#)) to the state’s Agency of Commerce and Community Development ([ACCD](#)), who then contracted with Southeastern Vermont Community Action ([SEVCA](#)) to serve as the program administrator for VEE. The first meals were distributed in August 2020.

A statewide VEE Task Force was created, including representatives from state agencies, nonprofit partners, and other interested entities to provide guidance for the program. Beginning in August 2020, community-based VEE Hubs were established to implement and manage the program in each of Vermont’s 14 counties.

From its inception until July 2022, VEE was financed entirely by federal funds. Initially, VEE was set to be funded by the CARES Act through December 2020, first through the \$5 million provided in H.966, then through an additional \$400,000 allocated in late December 2020; however, FEMA later stepped in to reimburse 100 percent of program costs from August 2020 through June 2022. During this period, VEE was extended seven times from its original end date of December 2020 to its final end date of March 2023, with each extension lasting three to six months.

Beginning in July 2022, FEMA’s reimbursement of COVID-19 relief programs decreased to 90 percent, which required SEVCA to secure additional funding to provide the cost share necessary to continue the program. [Vermont State Legislature](#)

[S.11](#), which was signed by Governor Phil Scott on June 8, 2022, provided \$1.3 million in matching funds to cover the remaining 10 percent of VEE program costs and allowed the program to continue through its conclusion on March 31, 2023.

### VEE Funding Summary:

Total Cost of Program:	\$48.8 million
Portion Contributed by State Legislature:	\$1.3 million
Portion Reimbursed by FEMA:	\$47.5 million

## Goals

In the earliest days of the pandemic, restaurants, farmers, and organizations across Vermont independently stepped forward to help feed neighbors experiencing food insecurity. These nascent efforts helped stabilize communities by nourishing Vermonters, alleviating the surging demand on food shelves, providing economic support to restaurants, and spurring the formation of the Vermont Everyone Eats program. When initial funding from state legislators for VEE was secured in June 2020, SEVCA and the new statewide Task Force formalized a list of program goals.

- Provide nutritious meals to specific populations of Vermonters in need of additional food assistance during the pandemic, including: sheltered vulnerable populations, families and individuals with loss of income or difficulty accessing food due to COVID-19, and homebound seniors and families.
- Provide a source of income to restaurants in need, including meaningful employment opportunities for food service workers over the program period.
- Provide Vermont farmers and value-added food producers with an opportunity to increase sales to restaurants participating in the program with a minimum of 10 percent of the value of ingredients used to be purchased from Vermont farms and food producers.
- Provide funding for community hubs to organize and execute planning and coordination of meal preparation, distribution, and the flow of funds to restaurant partners.
- Provide accurate information to VEE meal recipients about existing Vermont food and nutrition resources and how to access them, including: federal nutrition programs (3SquaresVT, WIC, school meals, Meals on Wheels, etc.), local food shelves, and other food distribution options.
- Create a community of practice among community hubs to share best practices and lessons learned in order to evolve the program over time.

## Administration

### FEMA and ACCD

Foundational funding and program administration was a collaboration including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Vermont Emergency Management (VEM), Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS), Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD), Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA), and the VEE Task Force. Once the program was established, FEMA directed its COVID-19 emergency funds to ACCD for disbursement.

### Statewide Task Force

The VEE Task Force included members from a cross section of professionals, representatives from state agencies, and leaders of economic development, restaurant industry, hunger relief, food systems, and community-based organizations. The team considered other Vermont food access, economic development, and agriculture assistance programs to ensure that VEE was supporting and not replicating existing efforts.

### SEVCA

SEVCA was contracted by ACCD to act as the fiscal agent of FEMA and state funds, and to administer VEE with the guidance of the VEE Statewide Task Force. SEVCA drove the program forward from July 2020 until legislative funding ran out and the program closed at the end of March 2023.

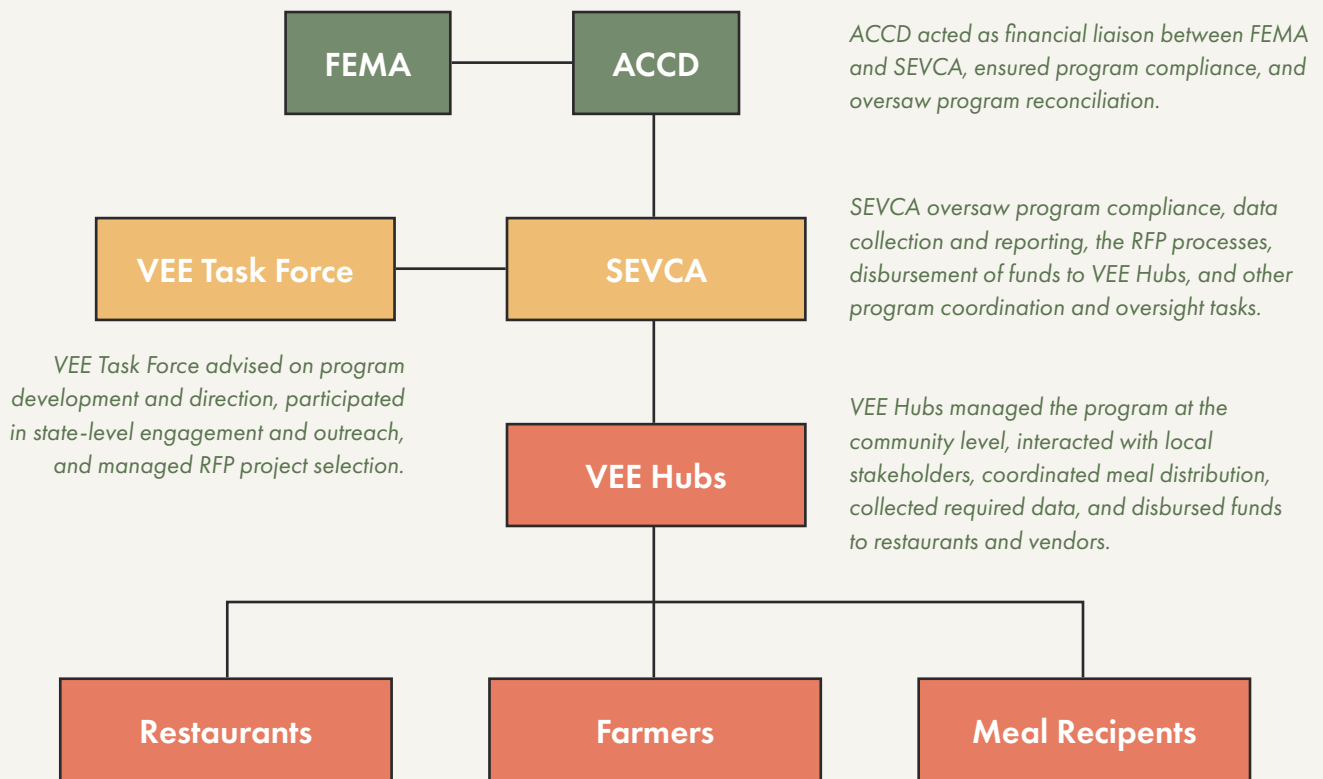
### VEE Hubs

Through an RFP process, the VEE Task Force recruited community organizations across the state to provide administrative and fiscal oversight of VEE in their area. These bases of operations were called “Hubs.” In most cases, an established community nonprofit organization was chosen, and a current director or staff member assumed the role of VEE Hub Manager.

Hub Managers submitted an invoice to SEVCA to request grant advances up to three weeks at a time. At the end of each week, they provided program data to SEVCA including: percent of local ingredients purchased by each participating restaurant; total participating households; total participating individuals; and total participants 65 and older. Management of VEE Hubs continued through the submission of a final reconciliation report after VEE ended on March 31, 2023.



### VEE Administration Chart:



## Community of Practice

A community of practice is made up of a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, and/or an interest in a topic, and who come together to share strategies, information, and support to further both individual and group goals. The VEE Hubs were intentionally created as a community of practice, and Hub Managers developed strong, collaborative relationships through their weekly meetings. They traded strategies for working with their restaurants and distribution partners, provided valuable insights into the program challenges and successes, and shared information about important economic development resources in their communities, including a better understanding of the state’s definition of “local” products and how restaurants could improve supply chain practices to increase purchases of ingredients produced by Vermont farms and food producers. As the program began to ramp down in early 2023, they discussed strategies for how to support the continuing needs in their local communities and statewide.

## VEE Partners

An extensive list of partnering agencies and organizations came together to lend their expertise and influence to help shape, guide, and support VEE from the program's beginning through its closure. Several were integral to the launch of the program, while others provided ongoing support with advice about statewide processes, fundraising, and organization.

### State Agencies and Departments

- Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets
- Agency of Commerce and Community Development
- Agency of Human Services
- Department of Disability, Aging and Independent Living
- Department of Public Safety
- Emergency Management: State Emergency Operations Center

### Nonprofit Organizations

- Southeastern Vermont Community Action\*
- Bi-State Primary Care Association
- Capstone Community Action
- Downtown Brattleboro Alliance
- Hunger Free Vermont
- Vermont Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- Vermont Community Foundation
- Vermont Foodbank
- Vermont Fresh Network
- Vermont Independent Restaurants
- Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund: VT Farm to Plate Network

### Other Partners

- ShiftMeals
- Localvore Inc.

\*statewide program administrator

## Research & Methodologies

Several months after VEE launched and was running successfully, SEVCA and the VEE Task Force initiated a variety of studies to examine the program model and its value, outcomes, impacts, and feasibility for continuation. These ranged from collecting photos of meal distributions and quotations from participants to contracting a research institute and two agricultural economists to complete qualitative impact reports. A SEVCA project manager designed and implemented surveys of restaurants, farmers, meal recipients, and distribution centers and completed quantitative and qualitative analyses of the survey data. A community development strategist completed a feasibility study and presented a road map for carrying forward VEE's best practices. The findings provided insights into how VEE's successes can serve as a resource for the development of similar permanent programs in Vermont and beyond. (See [Resources](#) for full reports.)



Testimonials



Survey Data



Case Studies



Resources



# Program Elements

Once VEE was established and funded, the network of local participants who kept the program consistently operational included the Hub Managers (community organizations), meal providers (local restaurants and farmers), distribution partners (distribution centers and delivery networks, usually involving volunteers), and meal recipients (residents impacted by COVID).

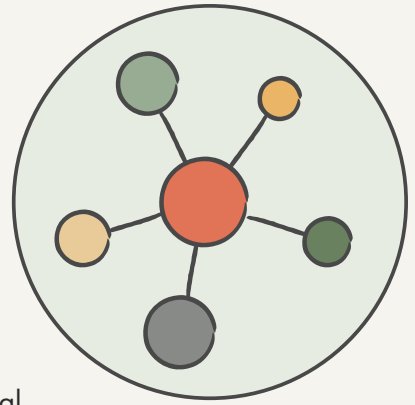
## VEE Hubs

Each Hub served as a resource for organizations, agencies, and caring neighbors seeking to meet the increasing need for food assistance in their region.

Hub Managers enlisted local restaurants, farmers, and food providers to participate, and they were instrumental in connecting restaurants with food producers who had not otherwise worked together. Hubs also signed on volunteers to support day-to-day operations and hand out meals at distribution sites.

Distribution centers included food shelves, homeless shelters, low-income housing units, youth and senior centers, schools and childcare centers, mental health clinics, veterans organizations, new Americans group centers, mutual aid organizations delivering to elders and shut-ins, drive-through and walk-up lines, and other central locations in Vermont communities.

One of the Hubs, Localvore, functioned a bit differently than the others. This Hub was represented by an online app that meal recipients could use to request a meal at any participating restaurant in the state; they would then pick up their meal at the designated restaurant rather than visiting a Hub distribution site.



For more information, see:

[Vermont Everyone Eats Formative Evaluation, p.6.](#)

Hub Name	County/COUNTIES Served	Hub Partner Organizations
Charter House/The Giving Fridge	Addison	<a href="#">Charter House Coalition</a> , <a href="#">Giving Fridge</a>
Vergennes Boys & Girls Club/Bar Antidote	Addison	<a href="#">Vergennes Boys &amp; Girls Club</a> , <a href="#">Bar Antidote</a>
Bennington	Bennington	<a href="#">The Collaborative</a> / <a href="#">The Shires</a>
Northeast Kingdom Community Action (NEKCA)	Caledonia, Essex, Orleans	<a href="#">Northeast Kingdom Community Action</a>
Upper Valley Everyone Eats (UVEE)	Caledonia, Essex, Orange, Windsor	<a href="#">Vital Communities</a>
Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE)	Caledonia, Orleans	<a href="#">Center for an Agricultural Economy</a>
Green Mountain Farm to School (GMFTS)/RuralEdge	Caledonia, Orleans	<a href="#">Green Mountain Farm to School</a> , <a href="#">RuralEdge</a>
Everyone Eats of Chittenden/Franklin/Grand Isle (CFG)	Chittenden, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, Orange, Washington	<a href="#">Intervale Center</a> , <a href="#">ShiftMeals</a> , <a href="#">Healthy Roots Collaborative</a>
Everyone Eats of Central Vermont	Lamoille, Washington, Orange	<a href="#">Capstone Community Action</a> , <a href="#">ShiftMeals</a>
Rutland Area/Vermont Farmers Food Center	Rutland	<a href="#">Vermont Farmers Food Center</a>
Brattleboro Everyone Eats	Windham	<a href="#">Downtown Brattleboro Alliance</a>
Wilmington Works	Windham	<a href="#">Wilmington Works</a>
Chester/Springfield	Windham, Windsor	<a href="#">Springfield Family Center, Inc.</a> , <a href="#">Chester Helping Hands</a>
Localvore	Statewide	<a href="#">Localvore</a>



**14 Community Hubs**  
serving all 14 Vermont Counties.



## Hub Case Study: Vermont Farmers Food Center, Rutland

*By Emma Hileman, program director*

In July of 2020, just four months into the COVID-19 pandemic, two sons of a Vermont Farmers Food Center (VFFC) board member started volunteering to make meals out of our commercial kitchen at VFFC. Using donated food and a small budget, their goal was to feed as many people as they possibly could. They continued to do this every week for a few weeks with inspiration from their mother, another dedicated member of our organization.

Harry and Charlie DiPrinzio were the first to hear about VEE, and they brought it to the attention of our small staff. With a deep understanding of the need for VEE in our community, yet with limited capacity to take on such a big program within our organization, there was both excitement and hesitation to become a VEE Hub. But with Harry's dedication and significant support from our handful of staff, he stepped up to the plate to both start and run the program, while Charlie returned to college. VFFC officially began serving VEE meals in August of 2020 on our campus in the heart of Downtown Rutland.

VFFC was founded in 2012 to serve as a permanent location for our winter farmers' market and to host community food access programs and producers who utilized our food-based infrastructure to scale their businesses. VFFC also operated a local food-as-medicine program in the summertime, provided farm-based educational programs for school-age children at our urban greenhouse, and established an online local purchasing market for our farmers and producers when COVID-19 first hit and indoor farmers' markets were temporarily shut down. VFFC continued to run all of these programs while we got VEE up and running at the same time that we were executing significant campus renovation and expansion plans.

Needless to say, it was the busiest time our organization had ever seen in its eight years of existence, but we hit the ground running with VEE, working with up to 15 restaurants in just the first six months as word spread. Like many lessons learned through the pandemic, we came together to address community needs and leveraged existing networks and collaborations that helped us build resilience together in the face of unprecedented uncertainty.

For the rest of 2020 and 2021, things grew rapidly at our hub. We ran VEE at full capacity, increased our number of restaurants, partnered with as many as 20 different



local organizations to distribute food, continued the biweekly drive-through at our campus, and created alternative drive-through locations. VFFC also expanded its online market to include a wholesale purchasing program. It is a valuable testament to just how important access to local food is to the health and security of communities and the strength and stability of local economies.

In early 2022, while all of our programs were running as normal and the community need for prepared meals was increasing tenfold with the influx of people experiencing homelessness in our county, our organization was shut down overnight by the Department of Environmental Conservation when a safety issue was exposed at our expansion project. During the most stressful time of the organization's history we pivoted as a team and shifted to a much smaller facility, but we managed to continue VEE without skipping a beat. We knew that we couldn't put a pause on such an important program for our community, and again we found resilience in the face of challenges—a theme that 2020 taught us all!

Without the VEE program, VFFC would not have seen the demand and expansion of our programs in such a short timeframe. Enduring out of necessity to serve the community in time of need, our programs continued to flourish despite the significant unexpected hurdle of the environmental clean-up on our campus.

This program has provided so much shared benefit to our community. We wholeheartedly see the critical impact the continuation of this program could provide for our food hubs, our farmers, our restaurants, our organization partners, and, most importantly, our community. We hope our story can show just how much this program has meant to a small but mighty nonprofit like VFFC working at the nexus of community food resilience.

[Read more VEE Hub stories.](#)

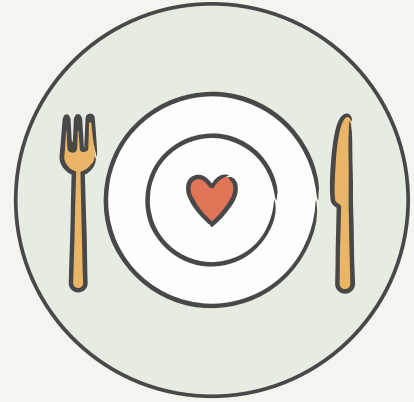


*top image: (left to right)  
Vermont Farmers Food Center  
staff Melinda Hardt, Wayne  
Morrissey, Heidi Lynch, Grace  
Davy, Emma Hileman, Tracy  
Weatherhogg, and Stephen  
Abatiell.*

## Restaurants

When the pandemic hit in March 2020, restaurants were mandated by the governor to shut their doors or pivot to an exclusively take-out model. It was a moment of a new need for restaurants, and it was alarming for the industry. Throughout the pandemic, restaurants struggled with ongoing challenges such as illness-related closures, staffing shortages, rising costs, and the sustained effect of lost revenue in the early weeks of the pandemic. (Bonin, 2023, p. 4)

Restaurants received \$10 per meal from VEE and were required to source at least 10 percent of ingredients from local farmers and food producers. During the program, over 320 restaurants participated, and as a result of new or strengthened relationships with local ingredient providers, they ultimately purchased over 36 percent of their ingredients from local sources, far surpassing the baseline VEE requirement.



### Restaurant Survey:

- **89%** said they retained jobs and **64%** added or expanded jobs.
- **17%** said their restaurant would have permanently closed without VEE.
- **96%** said participation led to improvements in staff morale.
- **95%** said VEE built or strengthened their relationships with local farmers/food producers.
- Approximately **400 full-time restaurant jobs** were saved.

For more information, see:

[Vermont Everyone Eats Formative Evaluation, p.17.](#)

A [survey administered by SEVCA](#) in May 2021 found that VEE had a positive, stabilizing impact on restaurant employment during this uncertain time. More than one in six said that their restaurant would have permanently closed had they not participated in VEE. Many described the social benefits that came with participation such as improved staff morale and opportunities to develop relationships with community organizations, calling VEE a “lifeline” that provided stable revenue during a turbulent time.



## **Restaurant Case Study:** **Mamma Tamara & Famiglia, Wallingford**

In April 2021, SEVCA interviewed VEE restaurant owner, Tamara Musto. When she moved to Vermont several years earlier, Tamara wanted to start a business to pursue her passion for cooking, especially preparing food from her native Italy. With the help of [BROC Community Action](#), she began a catering business, traveling to local farmers markets and selling homemade Italian food. Her business came to an abrupt halt when the COVID-19 pandemic began and markets closed. She was not sure if her business could survive.

BROC invited her to participate in VEE. She started with the program in August 2020, preparing 100 meals a week and receiving the standard \$10 per meal reimbursement. Through this process, she reached new customers who praised her food. She received an offer to move into a prominent location in downtown Wallingford, a storefront that had been vacant for three years. She fulfilled her dream of establishing her own restaurant, [Mamma Tamara & Famiglia](#), and even won a local award as best Italian restaurant. As a VEE restaurant, Mamma Tamara's served 200 meals per week.





## Restaurant Testimonials

*“I think VEE really saved our town, not to be too dramatic. So many restaurants closed during the pandemic nationwide and very few closed in Brattleboro.”*

- Leda Scheintaub,  
Dosa Kitchen, Brattleboro

*“In the past, I avoided using local farm markets or food providers, thinking they would be much more costly than going through a food distributor for my products. I found in most cases I could purchase locally at a [lower] cost.”*

- Laura Sage,  
Delightfully Delicious, Brattleboro

*“This program was a total lifesaver for our business. It provided a steady demand and kept my employees working. We are all locals, most of us grew up here, and it meant a lot to us to be able to feed our friends and families.”*

- Coridon Bratton,  
A Vermont Table, Brattleboro

*“I’m hoping that this entire process gets turned into a business school case study for their nonprofit curriculum, because the level of commitment at every level, the level of problem solving . . . should be encapsulated not just for the internal memory for those of us right here in Vermont.”*

- Mel Hall, Global Village Cuisine,  
White River Junction

## Farmers and Food Producers

As pandemic restrictions were imposed, farmers and food producers selling to restaurants, school lunch programs, and closed-down markets saw their revenue drop deeply.

As a key component of the VEE program was the requirement that participating restaurants source at least 10 percent of ingredients locally, restaurant managers were compelled to build and/or strengthen relationships with local farmers and food providers to meet VEE's requirement. As a result, the amount of local products that restaurants purchased increased dramatically. Many farmers and food producers who do not typically sell products to restaurants gave it a try. Thanks to the success of the program, a large number of local ingredient providers anticipated that business relationships with restaurants that were made through VEE would continue after the program ended.

The majority of farmers and food providers who responded to a survey administered by SEVCA said the positive impacts on their business included increased revenue, greater visibility of their businesses, and the ability to keep staff who might otherwise have been laid off due to the pandemic. Some farmers who benefited from the VEE program said they would like to grow these new collaborations with the restaurant market through product targeting, a listing of restaurants interested in purchasing local ingredients, and the development of a digital marketplace to sell products to restaurants.



### Farmer and Food Producer Survey:

- **93%** said VEE provided their business with opportunities to build or strengthen relationships with VEE restaurants.
- **83%** said they expected to continue selling to VEE restaurants after the program ended.
- **60%** said the revenue generated from VEE was important to their business.
- **50%** said VEE increased the visibility of their business in their community.

For more information, see:

[SEVCA Vermont Everyone Eats Farmer and Food Producer Survey Report.](#)



## Farmer and Food Producer Testimonials

*“I felt the program was a win-win for people struggling for healthy meals and farmers needing to get products out.”*

- VEE farmer

*“Fantastic program helping so many parts of our food economy.”*

- VEE farmer

*“We really appreciate that committing to using local food was a part of this program—not just for us, but for all restaurants and our neighbors eating their food.”*

- VEE farmer

*“It did help push restaurants to be flexible in ways that are necessary for a relationship with small local food producers to work. And I appreciate that. It didn’t solve all of our problems, but it certainly helped to make a number of new restaurants be more flexible.”*

- VEE farmer

## Meal Recipients

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of Vermonters experiencing food insecurity increased from one in ten to **one in three** ([Hunger Free Vermont](#)) due to job loss, interruptions in supply chains and rising food costs, and limited access to school nutrition programs when schools and daycares closed.



VEE was able to create a strong brand that was free of the stigma often associated with food security campaigns. That, coupled with the program's unique self-certification process and non-traditional distribution model, connected many more food-insecure Vermonters with the resources they needed. VEE meal recipients who participated in a SEVCA survey overwhelmingly reported mental, emotional, and physical health benefits due to the program, with most saying that the program made them feel supported and cared for when they were feeling isolated, stressed, or reluctant to seek assistance.

As Stephanie Bonin wrote in a report for SEVCA, *A Future Where Everyone Eats*, "The power of reciprocity was essential in removing the stigma of a food distribution program. Knowing that restaurants prepared the meals created a universality of experience, and knowing that the meals were helping to keep restaurants open and support local farmers gave a community that had never accessed help before, or did not identify with needing help, an invitation to join. Everyone was a part of it: both helping and receiving." (Bonin, 2023, p. 7)



### Meal Recipient Survey:

- **97%** said the program strengthened their sense of community.
- **97%** said the program made them feel supported and/or cared for.
- **90%** said it was important that the program offered prepared meals for those unable to shop, cook, or meet family dietary needs.
- **78%** said it was important that the program did not require an application.
- **92%** said they intend to purchase meals from VEE restaurants in the future.

For more information, see:

[SEVCA Vermont Everyone Eats Meal Participant Survey Report.](#)



## Meal Recipient Testimonials

*“It made us feel more comfortable that there was no application so we didn’t have to make it known we needed a little help.”*

- VEE meal recipient

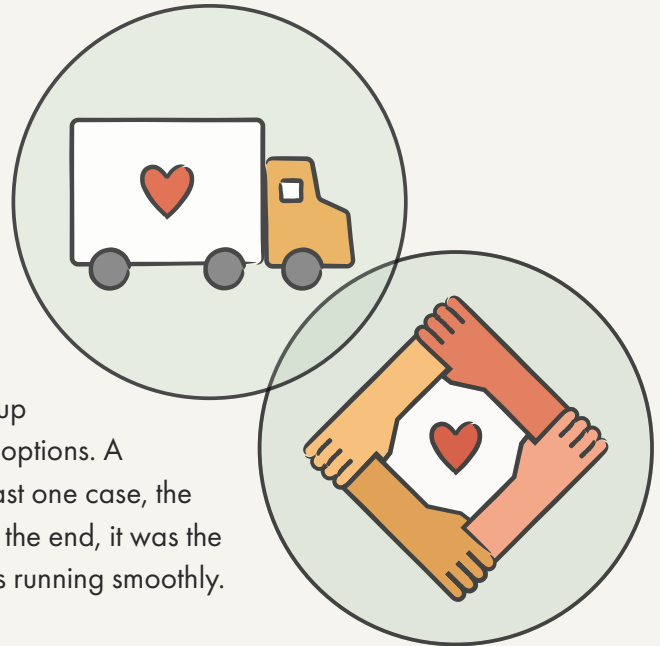
*“I am a single parent of three young children and decided to access this resource for the first time today. I was apprehensive about getting full meals for each of my kids, as they are younger and sometimes don’t finish their dinner, and I know the meals often run out. I opted for a meal for each of us and was so thankful I did! Every one of my children wanted second helpings and as a parent I was delighted to see them eating so well! I am truly thankful to be part of such a loving, compassionate community filled with organizations such as yours that do so much for all of us here in Windham County!”*

- VEE meal recipient



## Distribution Centers and Volunteers

Each Hub managed distribution differently, but most relied on the generosity of volunteers to get meals into recipients' hands each week. Some Hubs set up one or more centralized distribution sites for in-person pickup, while others relied on mutual aid organizations to pick up meals in bulk for delivery to clients. Many offered both options. A few Hubs had the resources to hire drivers, and in at least one case, the Hub Manager delivered meals to individuals herself. In the end, it was the hundreds of volunteers who kept the distribution systems running smoothly.





## Distribution Center Case Study: Downtown Brattleboro Alliance, Brattleboro

By Amanda Witman, Brattleboro VEE administrative coordinator/restaurant liaison

Between August 2020 and June 2021, we offered a large drive-up/walk-up meal pickup site in a parking lot in downtown Brattleboro Mondays through Thursdays. Restaurant meals, chilled and packed in insulated boxes, were picked up at restaurants by our contracted driver and dropped at a central location for distribution.



Volunteers setting up at the Brattleboro distribution site, October 2020.

Meal recipients were encouraged to pick up meals for other households, especially for friends and neighbors who could not pick up meals for themselves. COVID-19 safety was a huge priority, and masks were required at the site. Meal recipients drove up, were greeted by a volunteer, and were asked to fill out a form (self-certification; demographic information; number and types of meals requested), which the volunteer then shuttled to the volunteer crew. When the recipient's car reached the front of the line, volunteers brought meals to the car and put them in the trunk or the back passenger seat of the car. Meals were first-come, first-served, and the lines were often long. Any meals left at the end of the day were immediately distributed to local food shelves.

At the same location, local food shelves, soup kitchens, and mutual aid organizations picked up pre-ordered meals in bulk to distribute directly to their clients.

In June 2021, when the COVID-19 threat appeared to be receding and we were directed by VEE to ramp down distribution, we made the difficult decision to close the drive-up/walk-up distribution site and focus our distributions through organizations. We felt that going through established organizations would be the best way to reach the most food-insecure recipients.

Unfortunately, the Brattleboro Area Mutual Aid (BAMA) group, which had been a huge help in distributing meals directly to those in need, dissolved at that time due to a decline in available volunteers consistent with the end of lockdown and subsequent gradual reopening of workplaces. However, three partner organizations stepped up to develop smaller walk-up distribution sites to meet this need. From July 2021 through the end of the program, meals were distributed primarily through a dozen or so community organizations.



## Distribution Center + Volunteer Testimonials

*“Most of the people are scared, alone, some have children who are home more than usual, and the families are struggling. For them to come in to get their Everyone Eats meals means that someone cares enough to listen to their stories. We listen and show compassion, and always ask if there is anything else we can do to help them. Many just need a caring heart to give a smile and a listening ear.”*

- Angie Paquette, Richford Soup Kitchen, Richford

*“These meals are so crucial for us. We see so many folks who don’t have any way to necessarily cook, and this provides so much for them. We just feel really lucky that we’re a part of this. Without it, we would not be able to offer the same level of support that we currently do.”*

- Hannah Ciracelie, Sharing and Caring Food Pantry,  
White River Junction



# Lessons Learned

With determination, grit, and creativity, VEE organizers and staff grappled with how to help feed Vermonters and support restaurants, farms, and small food producers during an unprecedented nationwide crisis. Knowing that funding for VEE would eventually end, but that hunger and the struggles for restaurateurs and farmers would not, they identified key impacts and aspects of the program they believe should be considered for future similar programs.

# Lessons Learned

- 1** The VEE model has the potential to be a tool to provide ongoing economic support for restaurants.
- 2** VEE demonstrated the positive impact of collaborating across sectors.
- 3** It is important to expand prepared meals distribution beyond existing services for food-insecure Vermonters.
- 4** Introducing elements of reciprocity within the connected VEE ecosystem contributed to the program's success.
- 5** Low barriers to entry helps to destigmatize food assistance programs and reach individuals who otherwise might not seek aid.

# 1. The VEE model has the potential to be a tool to provide ongoing economic support for restaurants.

Many restaurants in Vermont, especially in rural communities and those that depend on seasonal tourism, need support to be viable. In response to a crisis situation, VEE provided a secondary market that created a stabilizing revenue stream. VEE built trusted relationships and connected restaurants to business assistance and support through its hub system. VEE identified critical areas of need for restaurants to access ongoing assistance with marketing, small business management, financing, local purchasing, and general business support. The model was extremely popular among the VEE restaurants, with 99 percent stating that they would participate again in a similar program.

*“Having a guaranteed, consistent revenue is hugely helpful—we’re able to make up sales for a slow weekday . . . Making up for that, we’re able to keep our team busy and keep them working full time. It [VEE meal preparation] is honestly the best time of our week. Knowing the folks that we’re feeding is really rewarding for our entire team. I really hope we can find a way to continue this.”*

- Justin Barrett, Piecemeal Pies,  
White River Junction

*“If we can continue to count on the income we receive from VEE . . . we can remain diligent in our commitment to the safety and health of our employees and our community.”*

- Liz Ehrenberg, The Gleanery, Putney

## 2. VEE demonstrated the positive impact of collaborating across sectors.

VEE created new working relationships between organizations, business, and sectors that had operated separately before the pandemic. The collaboration at the core of VEE resulted in a strong multiplier effect, estimated at 2.6 (meaning that each dollar spent by VEE resulted in an additional \$1.60 in private funds spent in the community). A single VEE dollar simultaneously stimulated restaurant viability, alleviated hunger, and strengthened the local farm supply chain. Total spending of nearly \$49 million on the VEE program potentially spurred as much as \$78 million in additional local spending. (Schuster & Klieger, May 2023)

*“Better interconnectivity and being able to communicate with each other and combine forces across programs— together we are better than trying to do it all ourselves. Rather than every agency trying to provide food, we can share resources.”*

- VEE Hub staffer

*“[VEE] Interviewees described numerous scenarios where new partnerships were formed or existing partnerships were strengthened. For example, one interviewee stated that because of VEE, their organization is now connecting with economic development organizations, agriculture, and businesses—sectors with which they had not previously engaged.”*

- JSI Survey respondent



### 3. It is important to expand prepared meals distribution beyond existing services for food-insecure Vermonters.

Prepared meals are an essential component of the state’s supplemental food services, yet it became clear during VEE that many Vermonters who need this kind of support do not ordinarily receive it because they fall through the eligibility and program gaps of the existing prepared meals programs (e.g., Meals on Wheels, School Meals, etc.). The program also revealed that prepared meals play a critical role in supporting the nutrition and health of people with specific barriers to shopping for and cooking food for themselves. With broader awareness of the importance of supplemental prepared meals, Vermont uncovered an opportunity to develop strategic and systemic improvements. (Bonin, 2023) Of note, 90 percent of meal recipients who participated in the SEVCA survey said it was important that food supplement programs come in the form of prepared meals.

*“These meals are so crucial for us. We see so many folks who don’t have any way to necessarily cook, and this provides so much for them. We just feel really lucky that we’re a part of this, and without it, we would not be able to offer the same level of support that we currently do.”*

- VEE food pantry staff

*“More people than you would think are better fed by having access to prepared food.”*

- VEE meal recipient

## 4. Introducing elements of reciprocity within the connected VEE ecosystem contributed to the program's success.

Another unique aspect of VEE that echoed throughout survey interviews and anecdotally was that the program provided the opportunity to give while receiving. Those who received meals said not only did they feel supported by local businesses, but they also felt good about helping restaurants or bringing meals to their neighbors in need. Restaurants felt good about helping farms, food producers, and meal recipients, and many reported improvements in staff morale. Farmers felt good about contributing ingredients for VEE meals while their visibility in the community grew. A program that fosters community engagement, connection, and well-being attracts a wide cross-section of participants.

*"I like the fact that as I am helped it is also helping small businesses and growers. That is the way my/our tax dollars should be invested."*

- VEE meal recipient

*"I love that the impact goes in many directions, not just to the people eating it. This makes it feel better to receive."*

- VEE meal recipient

## 5. Low barriers to entry helps to destigmatize food assistance programs and reach individuals who otherwise might not seek aid.

SEVCA reported that 33 percent of VEE meal recipients who responded to their survey said they did not intend to access food via other assistance systems when VEE ended. VEE was able to create a strong brand that was free of the stigma often associated with traditional food security programs. In addition, by not requiring an application, which can seem burdensome for many, VEE attracted meal recipients who might otherwise have been reluctant to participate. VEE's unique self-certification process and non-traditional distribution models ensured that many more food-insecure Vermonters were connected with the needed resources.

*“Privacy is very important to me and if I had to fill out an application and tell everyone that I need help, I may not do it even though I am income eligible.”*

- VEE meal recipient

*“The openness and lack of intimidating enrollment procedures have made it easier for people like me...to access resources as needed in difficult times.”*

- VEE meal recipient



VERMONT FARMERS  
FOOD CENTER

VERMONT MAPLE  
SYRUP

4X4

THE ROLLIN' ROOSTER

THE ROLLIN' ROOSTER

83-4124

therollinrooster.com



mont  
305

# What's Next?

Vermont Everyone Eats was a vital relief measure for many Vermonters during the COVID-19 emergency. Since the needs are ongoing, organizers are exploring how the critical lessons learned can be developed into sustainable programming.



In the fall of 2022, when it became clear that federal funding for VEE would soon diminish or end, SEVCA hired a strategy consultant to explore the feasibility of a post-pandemic program using a similar system of prepared meals distribution to support economic development, food security, and local food systems resilience. According to that report:

*“Hunger in Vermont has not been solved, and local food businesses are not universally thriving. Economic stewardship, a legislative priority for the Vermont Chamber of Commerce, states that many businesses that survived the pandemic are deeper in debt and less able to withstand economic turbulence. Inflation, supply chain disruptions, and the rising cost of labor are already wreaking havoc, particularly on our small businesses. All three sectors that are the pillars of VEE have needs that can and need to be met.” (Bonin, 2023)*

When FEMA announced on February 9, 2023 that the COVID-19 disaster declaration period would end on May 11, 2023, VEE leaders recognized that the end of FEMA funding meant the end of Vermont Everyone Eats in its current iteration. With the legislative match allocation dwindling, it was confirmed that the program would end on March 31.

While many Vermont State legislators publicly recognized the valuable contributions and impact of VEE during the pandemic and invited VEE representatives to give testimony before the House Commerce and Economic Development Committee regarding potential ways to extend programming inspired by VEE beyond March 31, the Legislature kept its focus on other initiatives as it faced the abrupt ending of federal pandemic funding simultaneously over multiple sectors.

At the end of March 2023, the VEE Task Force, in partnership with [The Vermont Community Foundation](#) (VCF), funded several local initiative pilot projects to carry forward elements of the VEE model.

- Chester Helping Hands and Springfield Family Center collaborated with Senior Solutions to provide prepared restaurant meals as a supplemental option for Meals on Wheels recipients in areas of Windsor County.
- The Giving Fridge, a Middlebury-based initiative launched in December 2020, continues to distribute donation-funded meals via automated refrigerators and heated food lockers.
- Vermont Farmers Food Center launched Rutland County Eats, a VEE-inspired program that continues to distribute 200 meals per week, funded by an online market selling additional prepared meals to the wider community.

- Localvore explored digitally-based “buy one, give one” and “pay-it-forward”-type meal funding models and provided general technical assistance to VEE Hubs developing local fundraising initiatives.

The VEE momentum has also fueled other initiatives in communities across the state. Some examples:

- Putney Cares was awarded a grant from the United Way of Windham County to work in partnership with Senior Meals (Windham County Area Agencies on Aging) to engage local restaurants to prepare their Meals on Wheels meals.
- Springfield Family Center explored a potential collaboration with NorthStar Health Center in Springfield to provide their clientele with healthy food options prepared by local chefs as an introduction to changing eating habits per physician orders.
- Downtown Brattleboro Alliance (DBA) collaborated with Brattleboro Museum and Art Center (BMAC) to provide over 200 donor-funded meals post-VEE to clients of the Groundworks Collaborative Drop-In Center.
- Skinny Pancake worked with The Genny in Craftsbury/Albany, Pingala Cafe in Burlington, and others to create a community of practice focused on developing ways to continue making free meals available to the community.
- New Moon Catering in Burlington continued to raise funds through their business and received grant funding that allows them to continue offering free meals in partnership with a local cafe.

## **Moving Forward**

During the final months of Vermont Everyone Eats, the Task Force continued to meet regularly to explore the question of whether and how to keep this three-pillar model active in some way beyond the close of VEE as a pandemic recovery program. With input from Agricultural Economists Elizabeth Schuster and Michelle Klieger, Strategy Consultant Stephanie Bonin, and others, significant lessons learned from VEE were considered and various possible applications of those lessons were explored.

There is no question that this program model is effective. In the words of Vermont Emergency Management’s Ben Rose, “VEE caught lightning in a bottle. It’s too good to die.” But funding continues to be a stumbling block. Vermont does not have available state funding among its many pressing priorities to support ongoing programming based on the VEE model. Without one or more sources of non-state funding, it would be very difficult, likely impossible, to run a similar program.

And the biggest challenge of all in qualifying for non-state funding is the very thing that made the VEE so innovative and impactful: its three-pillar model. Traditionally, the bulk of federal funding goes only to programs that fit within a single silo. If all three pillars are not fully incorporated in a program like this one — food security, economic development, and agricultural resilience — the powerful multiplier effect that creates its value significantly diminishes. (Schuster & Klieger, December 2023)

So, without a funded path forward, the Vermont Everyone Eats model was documented and shelved after the last pandemic meals were distributed in late March 2023. The Hubs community of practice disbanded, as did the Task Force, and attention turned to other ongoing priorities.

### **An Unexpected Opportunity**

The memory of this powerful program remained strong, and when a devastating multi-county flooding disaster hit Vermont unexpectedly in July 2023, the State Emergency Operations Center asked the question: Could the Vermont Everyone Eats model be quickly reactivated in a new form to address food insecurity caused by the flooding?

Within a few weeks, the state had authorized funding to launch a new short-term emergency program called Vermont Emergency Eats, with ACCD again designated as the granting agency and SEVCA as the program administrator. This new program was both similar to and different from Vermont Everyone Eats.

It was similar in that it engaged local restaurants to make local meals using local ingredients for community members in need, it relied on VEE Hubs to manage meal production and distribution activities at the community level, it engaged the same local networks of restaurants and community partners that had previously participated in Vermont Everyone Eats, and it paid restaurants \$10/meal.

But it was different in that the program ran for just 90 days, meals were available only to Vermonters in federal disaster-designated areas who met [specific eligibility criteria](#) for flood-based food insecurity, meal components were required to fit a standard program-wide definition, and, recognizing that so many Vermont farms were hit hard by the flooding, the use of local ingredients was not mandated. Still, restaurants were strongly encouraged to use local ingredients, and local ingredient data was tracked. Many of the administrative processes that were previously left up to the hubs were centralized during Vermont Emergency Eats, with standardized forms and processes required for Hub invoicing and data collection. Channels for meal distribution evolved to meet locally specific needs in Hubs where the flooding impact to roads and other factors warranted new methods of meal distribution.



## Significant Impact

Recasting Vermont Everyone Eats as Vermont Emergency Eats provided a unique opportunity to see this model at work under a very different set of circumstances. A [full impact study](#) was conducted on Vermont Emergency Eats as a follow-up to the study that had been done on the Vermont Everyone Eats program. This new study showed that a short-term, targeted application of the Vermont Everyone Eats model resulted in a similarly impressive multiplier effect with robust economic benefits at all levels of the program.

Vermont Emergency Eats distributed over 49,000 meals between August 7 and November 4, 2023. In addition to the \$700,000 invested in the program by the state, there was a multiplier effect of \$1,120,000 recirculated by restaurants and farmers into local spending such as on labor and ingredients, and an additional \$88,000 in private dollars were invested into Vermont-owned farms and restaurants for flood recovery, as well as business infrastructure and equipment. Although the use of local ingredients wasn't mandated, participating restaurants used an average of 25 percent local ingredients in Vermont Emergency Eats meals, passing the benefit of the program along to local farmers and food producers. (Schuster & Klieger, December 2023)

The researchers who conducted the study indicate that “more planning is needed to be ready for repeated and consistent reactivation of the Vermont Emergency Eats program during emergencies impacting food security” while advising “that a plan be established to activate Vermont Emergency Eats in future emergencies where there is a need for restaurant-prepared meals.”

## What Happens Next?

As Kathleen Devlin, SEVCA's Former Interim Executive Director, said, “This extraordinary program has shown us firsthand how well the multiplier effect can work to stretch federal dollars to benefit many more people when a program spans multiple sectors. Addressing food security, economic development, and agricultural resilience with a single federal dollar is unprecedented. We need to see more programs like this.” We hope we will.



*Vermont Emergency Eats was launched in July 2023 as a short-term emergency relief program, distributing over 49,000 meals to flood-impacted Vermonters between August and November 2023.*

*“ VEE not only provided millions of meals to food insecure Vermonters during the pandemic emergency but improved economic resiliency by engaging hundreds of restaurants, farmers, and food producers through a revolutionary and innovative economic and food system approach. VEE demonstrated the power of Vermont’s local food economy through the support and strength of local, regional, and statewide partnerships, by feeding people locally sourced and produced meals while saving businesses and preserving jobs along the way.”*

*- Gary Holloway, Downtown Program Manager,  
Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD)*

*“ VEE did a remarkable job rallying communities of restaurants, eaters, and farmers during the pandemic. But it was not designed to end hunger in the state of Vermont. Hunger, a solvable problem, still exists. While VEE has come to a close, collaborative action continues across Vermont to ensure the dignity of enough nourishing food for all.”*

*- John Sayles, CEO, Vermont Foodbank*

*“ VEE became much more than the sum of its parts. Yes, it provided support to restaurants and farms, as its originating legislation proposed, and provided nearly 4 million meals to struggling Vermonters during the pandemic. But it also built out a broad, statewide community of practice including more than 700 community-based organizations, state agencies, restaurants, and farms, as well as thousands of individuals, all working in support of the idea that we share the responsibility to meet basic needs in our communities.”*

*- Kevin Brennan, Former Executive Director,  
Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA)*

*“ Vermont Everyone Eats was funded by FEMA as an element of the State of Vermont’s emergency feeding response to COVID-19. Even when there is not a federally-declared disaster event, Vermonters going to bed hungry is always an emergency. Isn’t it ironic that we, as a whole community, can provide good hot meals to hungry neighbors during a global pandemic, but not after the pandemic ends?”*

*- Ben Rose, Recovery and Mitigation Section Chief,  
Vermont Emergency Management (VEM)*

*“ The Vermont Everyone Eats program reinforced what those of us working in the anti-hunger space have been saying for quite some time: Means testing people facing the shockingly everyday emergency of hunger and food insecurity is antithetical to building community and to the experience of participating in community with dignity and belonging.”*

*- Anore Horton, Executive Director, Hunger Free Vermont*

*“ We have always struggled to reconcile the thriving wage needed by our small farmers and our food service workers, with the desire to reach those who are food insecure with healthy, nutritious, and LOCAL food. For the first time, a program did all of those things. But the system of subsidies and investment is not designed to keep this model alive. That is our next step; together we have to work to realign funding to keep small farms viable, pay food service employees well, and make sure everyone eats.”*

*- Sarah Waring, State Director VT/NH Rural Development,  
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)*



# Resources

Want to learn more? SEVCA and VEE stakeholders engaged staff and outside researchers to conduct interviews, surveys, analyses, and impact studies to document the history of the program, explore potential long-term applications of lessons learned, and provide a guide for development of future programming based on the VEE model.

## Surveys & Evaluations

- [Vermont Everyone Eats Formative Evaluation: Community Hub and Restaurant Experience](#), JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc., 2021
- [Vermont Everyone Eats Restaurant Survey Report](#), SEVCA, 2021
- [Vermont Everyone Eats Farmer and Food Producer Survey Report](#), SEVCA, 2021
- [Vermont Everyone Eats Meal Participant Survey Report](#), SEVCA, 2021
- [Resilience Lessons Learned in Vermont's Food System during COVID-19: A Case Study of Vermont Everyone Eats, an Innovative Pop-Up Food Security Program](#), Anne J. Massie & Dr. Sarah Heiss, March 2022
- [Building Relationships and Resilience: Local Food Systems in Vermont and New England During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond](#), Claire Whitehouse, May 2022
- [A Future Where Everyone Eats: Lessons and Opportunities from a Successful Pandemic Relief Program](#), Stephanie Bonin, May 2023

## Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

- [RFP for VT Restaurants Supporting Emergency Feeding RFP](#)
  - [VEE Hub Application Review Template](#)
- [RFP for Researching the Impact of VEE on Vermont's Local Food Economy](#)
- [RFP for Feasibility and Strategic Planning Project](#)
- [RFP for Local Initiatives](#)
  - Local Initiative Report - [Vermont Farmers Food Center](#)
  - Local Initiative Report - [Giving Fridge](#)
  - Local Initiative Report - [Springfield Family Center/Chester Helping Hands](#)
  - Local Initiative Report - [Localvore](#)

## Legislative Summaries & Presentations

- Initial Presentation to Vermont Legislature (House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development), June 17, 2020 ([notes](#))
- [Vermont State Legislature Bill H.966 \(2020\)](#)
- [Vermont State Legislature Bill S.11 \(2022\)](#)
- Update Presentation to Vermont Legislature (House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development), January 31, 2023 ([notes](#)) ([slides](#))

## End-of-Program Report

- [Final Report from SEVCA to ACCD](#), May 11, 2023

## Impact Reports & Presentations

- [Vermont Everyone Eats Economic Analysis: VEE's Dual Investment in the Local Food Economy and Food Security for Vermonters](#), Elizabeth Schuster & Michelle Klieger, May 2023
- Vermont Everyone Eats Impact Presentation, May 2023 ([slides](#))
- [Vermont Emergency Eats: An Economic Analysis of Impact and Lessons Learned](#), Elizabeth Schuster & Michelle Klieger, December 2023
- Vermont Emergency Eats Impact Presentation, December 2023 ([slides](#))

## VEE Documentary

Early in 2022, SEVCA's Kevin Brennan had the inspiration to produce a documentary so that the story of this remarkable effort in Vermont could be shared throughout the U.S. and recorded for future generations. Between March 2022 and March 2023, filmmaker Corey Hendrickson met with dozens of Hub Managers, farmers, restaurant owners and staff, community distribution partners, meal recipients, Task Force members, administrative staff, and others across the state, capturing hundreds of hours of stories on film and weaving that footage into a half-hour documentary. The resulting film, [Ramen Day: The Vermont Everyone Eats Story](#), has won awards in multiple film festivals. It will be shown in theaters across Vermont in 2024 and then made available online for unlimited public viewing.

## VEE Prepared Meals Symposium

The [Vermont Everyone Eats Prepared Meals Virtual Symposium](#), held on September 29, 2022, was an engaging event with a rich variety of informed voices and perspectives joining in conversation about how prepared meals can play a continued role in statewide economic development, food systems resilience, and solutions to food insecurity. The keynote speaker was (then) Vermont Senator Becca Balint, now Vermont U.S. Representative.

- Session I: [Food as Medicine: Mary Woodruff](#), Nutritionist and Health Promotion Specialist, Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living; and [Casey Engels](#), Special Projects & VEE Hub Manager, Capstone Community Action
- Keynote Address: [VT Senator Becca Balint](#)
- Session II: [Is It Revenue or Philanthropy?](#)
- Session III: [Too Good to Die](#)

## For More Information

- Visit [vteveryoneeats.org](http://vteveryoneeats.org) and [vemergencyeats.org](http://vemergencyeats.org)
- Contact SEVCA at [VEE@sevca.org](mailto:VEE@sevca.org) or (802) 722-4575

## Special Thanks

...to everyone who participated in the success of the Vermont Everyone Eats program, including 320+ restaurants, 260+ local farmers and food producers, numerous community partners, countless distribution volunteers, and all those in need who accepted a meal.

...to the **community hubs** who coordinated the distribution of meals in all 14 Vermont counties:

- Boys & Girls Club of Greater Vergennes
- Capstone Community Action
- Center for Agricultural Economy
- Charter House Coalition
- Chester Helping Hands
- Downtown Brattleboro Alliance
- Giving Fridge
- Green Mountain Farm-to-School
- Healthy Roots
- Intervale Center
- Localvore
- Northeast Kingdom Community Action
- RuralEdge
- ShiftMeals
- Shires Housing
- Springfield Family Center
- The Collaborative
- Vermont Farmers Food Center
- Vital Communities
- Wilmington Works

...to the **Vermont Everyone Eats program administrators**:

- Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA)
- Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD)

...to the **state agencies** and **organizations** who steered the Vermont Everyone Eats program:

- Capstone Community Action
- Downtown Brattleboro Alliance
- Hunger Free Vermont
- Southeastern Vermont Community Action
- Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets
- Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development
- Vermont Agency of Human Services
- Vermont Department of Disability, Aging and Independent Living
- Vermont Emergency Management
- Vermont Farm to Plate Network
- Vermont Food Bank
- Vermont Fresh Network
- Vermont Hunger Councils
- Vermont Independent Restaurants
- Vermont State Emergency Operations Center
- Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

...and **extra special thanks** to:

- Vermont Legislature
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Vermont Governor Phil Scott





