



Our mission is to empower and partner with individuals and communities to alleviate the hardships of poverty, provide opportunities to thrive, and eliminate root causes of poverty in southeastern Vermont.

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Vermont Everyone Eats Program Has Lasting Economic Impact

Multiplier Effect Stimulated \$78 Million in Additional Local Spending

Westminster, Vt. — Vermont Everyone Eats (VEE), the innovative, statewide, \$49 million pandemic relief program that increased food security, economic stabilization, and agricultural resilience within a single initiative, recently released an economic report showing that the program also stimulated significant lasting economic impact in Vermont. Between August 2020 and March 2023, nearly four million meals were produced by Vermont restaurants and distributed statewide to local meal recipients negatively affected by the pandemic. Meals were made by over 320 Vermont restaurants using ingredients from over 270 Vermont farmers and food producers.

Funded by FEMA and the Vermont Legislature, VEE's dual investment in both food security and the local food economy resulted in a \$78 million increase in local spending by restaurants and farms outside of income received through the program. Research by agricultural economists Elizabeth Schuster and Michelle Klieger showed that VEE income stabilized participating businesses, enabling VEE restaurants and farms to make additional investments in equipment and infrastructure to support the viability of their businesses for years to come.

According to Elizabeth Schuster of Sustainable Economies Consulting, "Vermont Everyone Eats was by definition a full economic development program that also had astounding local food security benefits. This program model is a game changer. It is a paradigm shift that compels us to think about food security and the local food economy in Vermont in new ways."

Participating restaurants were paid \$10 per meal, bringing \$39 million in total revenue to restaurants statewide. VEE restaurants were required to use a minimum of 10% ingredients purchased from Vermont farms and food producers. Actual local purchasing for program meals averaged 36% statewide, which provided more than \$7.4 million in agricultural revenue, primarily to small businesses. Meals were distributed to individuals in need through local community hubs.

"The Vermont Everyone Eats program has had an impressive impact on Vermont restaurants, farmers and food producers, meal recipients, and communities throughout the state. This program required unprecedented cross-sector collaboration and innovation," said Department of Housing and Community Development Commissioner Josh Hanford. "These results show what can be achieved

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when people work together in times of crisis. We hope lessons learned along the way can be leveraged effectively in future initiatives.”

SEVCA, which served as fiscal and administrative agent for VEE, is developing a comprehensive Toolkit that will serve as a resource for future emergency and non-emergency projects related to food security, economic development, and agricultural resilience. The Toolkit will include a documentary produced by Vermont filmmaker Corey Hendrickson for release later in 2023.

“We are committed to ensuring that the lessons learned from this program are preserved and carried forward to inform and benefit future initiatives in Vermont and beyond. SEVCA has gained a tremendous amount of insight and experience through administering the VEE program, and we look forward to applying what we have learned to our local programming while continuing to collaborate with others statewide,” said SEVCA Interim Executive Director Kathleen Devlin.

Those currently in need of food assistance can find information at HungerFreeVT.org and VTFoodbank.org.

The full Vermont Everyone Eats Economic Impact Report can be found at vteveryoneats.org.

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, Vermont Everyone Eats provided nutritious meals to Vermonters in need of food assistance as well as a stabilizing source of income for Vermont restaurants, farmers, and food producers. Vermont Everyone Eats was funded through a contract provided by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development to Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA), made possible by nearly \$49 million in federal FEMA funding supplemented with a \$1.3 million allocation from the state legislature, and advised by a Statewide Task Force including perspectives from restaurants, economic development, and hunger relief advocates.