



PROJECT SHOWCASE 2014

RHODE ISLAND LOCAL AGRICULTURE & SEAFOOD ACT GRANTS PROGRAM



Dear Reader,

I am pleased to present the 2014 showcase for projects funded under the Rhode Island Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA). Co-managed by the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and the Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC), the LASA program provides grants to support innovation and growth in Rhode Island's local food sector. This booklet demonstrates the many ways that the LASA funding can bear fruit, expanding and diversifying locally produced and harvested food and bolstering new and expanded businesses across the state. Through support of these efforts, we are strengthening Rhode Island's economy.

The LASA program would not be possible without our many dedicated partners in state government, philanthropy, and the private sector. We owe great thanks to Governor Lincoln Chafee and the Rhode Island legislators who worked closely with DEM to establish and fund this program. We thank our visionary partners at the Henry P. Kendall Foundation, the van Beuren Charitable Foundation, and the Rhode Island Foundation for matching the funding from the State and working with us to develop and implement the LASA program. We extend grateful appreciation to the members of the LASA Grants Advisory Committee for lending their expertise and time to make this program a success. We also salute the many local food businesses who participated in the 2014 grants round.

The DEM is committed to a sustainable future for Rhode Island that includes a strong and vibrant local food economy built on our agriculture, aquaculture, and seafood sectors. With that commitment, we are pleased and proud to showcase these exceptional projects and awardees. We also look forward to continuing the unique public-private partnership with the RI Food Policy Council, who were instrumental in getting the LASA program off the ground. Our work with them and other partners has made the first year of the LASA program a true success. Onward and upward!

Janet Coit

*Director, Rhode Island Department
of Environmental Management*





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Rhode Island Local Agriculture & Seafood Act Grants Program 2014

Overview

The Local Agriculture and Seafood Act Grants Program was established by the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) of 2012, with the explicit goal of supporting the growth, development, and marketing of local food and seafood in Rhode Island. Launched in 2014, the LASA Grants Program was co-administered in partnership between the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's Division of Agriculture and the Rhode Island Food Policy Council, through an application process open to farmers, fishermen/women, nonprofit organizations, and producer groups based in Rhode Island. This unprecedented public-private partnership was made possible by \$100,000 in funding from the State of Rhode Island, and an additional \$110,000 in private funds from the van Beuren Charitable Foundation, the Henry P. Kendall Foundation, and the Rhode Island Foundation.

RI Department of Environmental Management Director Janet Coit assembled a diverse LASA Grants Program Advisory Committee, with representation across the food system, including agriculture, aquaculture, and seafood. The 2014 LASA Grants Program received 92 applications, with grant requests totaling \$1,474,822. The strong response underscores the need for a sustainable funding stream that will continue to support and strengthen the growing and vibrant local food system in Rhode Island.

Members of the 2014 LASA Grants Program Advisory Committee included:

Ken Ayars *Committee Chair*
*RI Department of Environmental
Management, Division of Agriculture*
Rhode Island Food Policy Council

Tess Brown-Lavoie
Sidewalk Ends Farm
Rhode Island Food Policy Council

Sheila Brush
Grow Smart Rhode Island
Rhode Island Food Policy Council

David Dadekian
Eat Drink RI
Rhode Island Food Policy Council

Max Greene
Conservation Law Foundation

Phil Larson
Jamestown Aquaculture Movement

Mike McGiveney
Rhode Island Shellfishermen's Association

Jules Opton-Himmel
Walrus and Carpenter Oysters LLC

Kenneth F. Payne
Rhode Island Agricultural Partnership
Rhode Island Food Policy Council

Nessa Richman
Brightseed Strategies



Adam Yorks

Little Compton

Awarded: \$8,089

Small/Beginning Farmer:
Capital Improvement

PROJECT:

Root Zone Heating System

Adam Yorks grew up in the farming and fishing community of Little Compton and his family has owned their seven acre parcel of land for over 20 years. The farm has transitioned from an equestrian-activity farm to a more agriculturally based farm in an effort to bolster ties with the community and improve the local ecological and culinary landscape. The ultimate plan is to become a small-scale, pesticide-free, non-GMO vegetable farm.

Working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service High Tunnel Initiative Program, Yorks received funding to build a high tunnel on his farm. High tunnels (also called “hoop houses”) are semi-circle shaped, plastic enclosed greenhouses that extend the growing season during colder months, increasing farm productivity. LASA funding will allow Yorks to build an efficient and environmentally friendly root zone heating system in his high tunnel (like a radiant floor heating system in homes). The root zone heating system will raise soil temperatures in the high tunnel and optimize seed germination, provide an environment for early start spring crops and create a space for a longer late fall and early winter harvest.

Root zone heating systems rely on buried pipes circulating warm water through raised planting beds, heating them all uniformly from below. The LASA funding will also allow Yorks to build a root zone heating system operated by a biomass boiler that can burn wood pellets, fuel corn or other non-petroleum based fuels.



Before



After

IN HIS OWN WORDS: “Our belief is that responsible food production is a worthwhile and important pursuit. In the colder months, fresh greens and vegetables are often from thousands of miles away, not quite “fresh” and sometimes grown using poor agricultural practices. In other words, far from the responsible, local and nutrient-rich sustenance Rhode Islanders deserve. This project sets an example that Rhode Islanders don’t have to compromise their values or their environment while accessing healthy, locally-grown produce in the wintertime.”

— Adam Yorks

Brown Family Seafood

West Kingston

Awarded: \$16,000

Organization:
Program/Marketing Materials

PROJECT:
Increase Local Seafood Purchases

Brown Family Seafood (BFS) is owned and operated by Christopher Brown, along with his sons, Christopher Junior and Sam. Chris Brown, Senior has been the captain of a small inshore trawler for 35 years. BFS has established a loyal customer base that values traceable, high-quality RI-caught seafood sold at a fair price.

BFS is using their LASA funding to improve their seafood distribution and processing operations so that more seafood from RI boats – and more of the dollars spent purchasing those local products – will stay within our state. By moving into a small processing facility and using the right combination of equipment and marketing tools, BFS will reduce the natural resources used in sorting, trucking, boxing and transporting RI seafood out of state while also increasing awareness about the seafood that is on Rhode Island dinner plates.

By detailing the traceability of their product, BFS will help RI customers know more about their local seafood purchases and the story behind the products available to them from local waters. The hope is that customers in markets and restaurants will expect that all seafood purchases will include detailed information about individual fish stocks, the fishers and boats that are harvesting the product, and the distribution practices in place to get that seafood product to customers.



IN HIS OWN WORDS: *“BFS wants to narrow the gap that prevents Rhode Islanders from enjoying the benefits of fish that is safe, legal and sustainably harvested. It is not uncommon for fish that is unloaded in the port of Galilee to be boxed and shipped out of our state for consumption elsewhere. Even worse is the local fish that is unloaded and boxed locally, only to be transported outside of our state and then transported back within our borders to be sold to RI consumers. Our goal is to increase the awareness of RI consumers about the true issues of the local fishing community and to provide complete transparency as part of true consumer satisfaction.”*

— Christopher Brown Jr., Owner

Garden Time

Cranston

Awarded: \$10,000

Organization:
Program Materials

PROJECT:
Herb Garden at ACI

Garden Time's mission is to create garden programs for incarcerated men and women at the RI Adult Correctional Institution (ACI). Garden Time's co-founders, Kate Lacouture and Vera Bowen, have a lengthy gardening resume between them and, since 2010, have created two successful garden programs at RI ACI facilities - one at the Men's Maximum Security Facility and one at the Women's Minimum Security Facility.

Both of these ACI garden programs teach inmates how to grow food, supply the respective ACI kitchens with local fresh fruit and vegetables throughout the growing season and, in partnership with the RI Department of Corrections, offer inmates a rare space in which to experience life and beauty within the prison walls. The programs also give inmates the chance to learn about environmental stewardship and what it takes to live a healthy life, including how to participate in the RI local food system.

Garden Time's LASA-funded project enables Lacouture and Bowen to start a third ACI garden - an herb garden at the Moran Men's Medium Security Facility. The herb garden, located just outside the kitchen, will help improve meals for the 1200 inmates of the facility, while also teaching life skills to inmates. The Moran garden project directly addresses a gap in Garden Time's educational gardening programs at the other two facilities - the ability to teach inmates whose sentences are long enough to get the garden training and experience they need, but short enough that they can take those skills with them to the job market once they are released.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS: *“After years of growing food for the kitchens at ACI, we consider our gardens an unseen but important piece of Rhode Island’s local food network. At Garden Time, inmates are offered the chance to make a positive impact both within their facilities and in the larger community, sometimes for the first time in their lives. Many of our students have never given much thought to sustainable agriculture, but once they start growing and tasting their own food, they become passionate organic farmers, planning the gardens they will grow once they are released.”*

—Kate Lacouture & Vera Bowen, Co-Founders

Jamestown Oyster Company

Jamestown

Awarded: \$5,000

Small/Beginning Farmer:
Capital Improvement

PROJECT:

Increase RI Oyster Harvest

Native Rhode Islander Mark Goerner has made a living producing seafood from Narragansett Bay and the surrounding waters for more than 25 years. After fishing offshore for lobster and ground fish for 10 years, Mark started his own coastal lobster-fishing business, which survived until lobster stocks around the bay declined in the early 2000s. Mark then managed an on-the-water oyster growing operation at Salt Water Farms, which became one of the largest aquaculture farms in the state with a yearly production of over a million oysters.

Mark has started his own surface-water oyster farm and is using his LASA funding to expand and regulate his supply of oysters in order to keep Jamestown Oyster Company a viable and growing small business that can serve as a model for other on-the-water oyster farms in Rhode Island. The company has established relationships with local restaurants and wholesalers, and must continuously maintain its level of product to foster and grow those relationships. LASA funding will help in these efforts.

Mark also hopes that Jamestown Oyster Co. can help form processing and marketing cooperatives for small businesses to use together.



IN HIS OWN WORDS: *“Oysters are developing a market presence in RI and have a reputation as a quality product. The cost of doing this kind of aquaculture business is high and the state needs to incubate and help smaller growers to become viable. With the decline of wild stocks (lobster and ground fish), aquaculture is an alternative to replace some of that lost, local seafood production.”*

—Mark Goerner, Owner

Little City Growers Cooperative

Providence

Awarded: \$9,693

Producer Co-op:
Program/Marketing Materials

PROJECT:
Brand Development

Established in 2004, Little City Growers is a Providence-based producer co-op. Little City sells their high-quality, chemical-free produce in three ways: to restaurants, at a shared stand at the Armory Park Farmers Market, and at a Saturday morning farm stand at Cluck! Urban Farm and Garden Supply. As a producer co-op, Little City directly increases the economic viability of small-scale agriculture in RI by helping even the smallest urban farms build profitable businesses through cooperative marketing, shared sales infrastructure and a dedication to outstanding customer service.

The LASA funding provides a way for Little City to grow their customer base and streamline operations, including the creation of a variety of branded marketing materials and invoices, the expansion of web-based records, databases and accounting procedures, and increased promotion of the Saturday morning Cluck! farm stand.

Although Little City has been a profitable co-op for eight seasons, its farmers are aiming for a 25% increase in total sales as a result of LASA-funded marketing efforts. Little City also hopes that the operational changes will lead to increased productivity and efficiency within the co-op management and an expansion in farm membership. The local small grower co-op model helps to increase the prominence of local food in RI while giving members the ability to better manage the inherent risk of farming, the ability to respond uniquely to customers, and the benefits of direct collaboration with other members.



IN HER OWN WORDS: *“Small farms do not always have the quantity, variety and consistency of product to cultivate committed client relationships. Bigger farms don’t always have urban connections or small market savvy. Working together, the farms who form Little City offer a compelling variety of high quality produce and great customer service.”*

—Fay Strongin, Co-Op Member

Organization:
Program/Marketing Materials

PROJECT:
Promotion of Top Neck Clams

Newport Harbor Corporation (NHC) is a well-respected RI hospitality company dedicated in its mission to promote smart, clean conservation practices while also supporting local, sustainable farming practices in its restaurant and catering business. As one of the largest supporters of local foods in RI, NHC restaurants create distinct and unique menu choices based upon what is fresh, in season and available from local and regional farmers and fishers.

In collaboration with the RI Shellfishermen’s Association (RISA), and with the help of LASA funds, NHC launched a marketing campaign to help promote the top neck clam, a locally harvested yet underutilized sea clam. During the 2014 restaurant “high season” (May – October), NHC committed to the purchase of locally sourced top neck clams, crafted creative ways to prepare and serve the clams in their seafood restaurants and helped raise public awareness about them through print advertising, distribution of recipe cards and the creation of a 3-minute webisode, featuring RISA fishers and NHC chefs discussing top neck clams.

Although RI’s 1,700 shellfishers already harvest top neck clams, the prohibitive cost of advertising the clams has limited their widespread use. Combining the extraordinary reach of NHC marketing efforts and a strong push of innovative dishes, NHC hopes to create a fresh buzz around the top neck clam and spark a new source of sustainable revenue for RI’s shellfish industry, while promoting to all Rhode Islanders the availability of another delicious, local food choice.



IN HIS OWN WORDS: *“We feel that the long-term impact of our top neck promotion program would be the growth of locally sourced top neck clam sales industry-wide. Top necks could become the seafood industry’s “next big thing”, or simply the equivalent of the lobster’s cull; a not-so-perfect item that still has value and a valid market to be opened. Our program’s aim is simply to dig the top neck clam out of the sand and show it off.”*

—**Chef Kevin Gaudreau, Director of Culinary Arts**

Red Planet Vegetable Farm

Johnston

Awarded: \$13,480

Small/Beginning Farmer:
Capital Improvement

PROJECT:

Equipment/Green Energy

Matthew Tracy and Catherine Mardosa have been growing produce commercially in the Providence area for over ten years. Red Planet Farm (RPF) started out as a “hyper-local” urban farm model, growing intensively and year-round on multiple plots. Their backyard family garden grew quickly as it tried to meet the demand for local, fresh produce, with their two-family home in Federal Hill housing their nursery, office, washing and packing stations. After expanding to other small plots in three different towns (and 2 states), Red Planet moved all production operations to a 19-acre farmstead in Johnston.

LASA funding will allow RPF to purchase equipment that will help create efficiencies in their operations and free up time that was devoted to hand labor to focus on running the business of the farm. When RPF was smaller, they were able to do everything by hand. They now have over six times the acreage they had in 2006 and have not been able to purchase equipment to match that growth.

The purchase and immediate use of a tractor-mounted chisel plow, a small greenhouse and a mobile solar irrigation pumping system will result in a decrease in labor dollars and time spent on tillage, propagation and irrigation using fossil fuels. RPF hopes to become a model for other small RI farms thinking about ways to strategically reduce labor on a farm, think holistically about a farm’s future business and incorporate green energy into farm operations that might offer the chance to become net producers of energy in the off-season.



IN HIS OWN WORDS: *“Labor is the most expensive part of most any farm budget, and when you are working for yourself, you take a pay cut with every extra dollar worked. When you spend too much time doing fieldwork, you often have little time left for high-level thinking, planning and record keeping. We feel confident that each of these system upgrades will contribute to an increase in the quality and variety of our produce without a higher tax on our bodies, our home life and the natural environment.”*

—Matt Tracy, Farm Manager

RI Mushroom Company

West Kingston

Awarded: \$10,000

Small/Beginning Farmer:
Capital Improvement

PROJECT:

Mushroom Grow House

Bob DiPietro and Michael Hallock started RI Mushroom Company as a pilot project at Sweet Berry Farm in Middletown, which provided space for their new endeavor. The pilot was successful enough to launch the company and in 2013, RI Mushroom Company moved into a warehouse space in West Kingston. They sell 1500 pounds of mushrooms per week – about 45% of those are grown locally in RI. They sell to more than 50 restaurants in RI and at 14 farmers markets in RI and MA.

With their LASA funding, RI Mushroom Company will build a second grow house to increase their percentage of mushrooms grown and sold within the state to 70%. The second grow house will also enable RI Mushroom Company to begin growing specific types of mushrooms that do not grow well with other types, such as maitake, which need their own house. By expanding the number and variety of the mushrooms they grow, RI Mushroom Company will try to meet the rising demand for locally grown, fresh specialty mushrooms in Rhode Island.

RI Mushroom Company's owners will also continue to offer free technical assistance to schools, universities, chefs and individuals around growing and cooking mushrooms, and they look forward to expanding their current partnerships and collaborations with local restaurants in developing recipes featuring RI-grown mushrooms.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS: *“This project will enhance the economic competitiveness of RI-grown agricultural products by increasing RI’s ability to compete in the mushroom market. This will facilitate the success and viability of the state’s agriculture sector by creating a larger specialty mushroom farming community in the state, supporting new products and new sales channels in clearly defined markets.”*

—Bob DiPietro & Michael Hallock, Owners

RI Seafood Collaborative

Providence

Awarded: \$20,000

Organization:
Education/Promotion

PROJECT:
Promotion of RI Seafood

The RI Seafood Collaborative was established in 2011 by the RI General Assembly to support local fishers and small seafood businesses, and to increase awareness and consumption by the public of locally fished species. As part of the legislative LASA allocation to the RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), the RI Seafood Collaborative contracted with RDW Group to develop a marketing campaign around the “RI Seafood” brand label, used to promote seafood locally grown and/or landed in RI. The campaign’s mission is to educate a wide audience about the benefits of buying RI seafood.

The initial step was to choose an effective campaign design and test it with consumers. Focus group testing of four campaign directions took place with industry leaders, fishers, restaurant owners and representatives from the tourism and aquaculture industries.

Once the direction of the campaign had been selected, a complete marketing communications plan was developed. The plan includes suggestions for public relations, direction marketing, and a host of advertising strategies to reach the target audiences. Based on overall response, an effort was made to keep communications and visuals simple, easy-to-understand and filled with real stories of the people involved with the fishing industry. The campaign primarily targets seafood consumers, with a secondary target audience of dealers, retailers, chefs and restaurant owners that may want to use the RI Seafood seal for their businesses.



Sample DRAFT print ads under development

IN HIS OWN WORDS: “A statewide seafood marketing campaign was envisioned as a component of the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act and meant to be complimentary with the LASA grant program. Together these initiatives promote locally caught seafood and a vital part of the RI economy, and build sustainability in the local food system. We are, after all, the Ocean State.”

—Ken Ayars, Chief, RIDEM Division of Agriculture

RI Shellfisherman's Association

Coventry

Awarded: \$7,925

Organization:
Education/Promotion

PROJECT:
Video Production of PSAs

The RI Shellfisherman's Association (RISA) supports, protects and enhances a profitable and sustainable wild fishery in RI. Partnering with other organizations, RISA works to support the RI fleet of shellfishing operations by pursuing sound science, cooperative management and improving water quality.

With their LASA funding, RISA will work with a local video production company to write, edit and digitally videotape 3 versions of a Public Service Announcement (PSA) that highlights commercial shellfishing in the Ocean State. Using a "rake-to-plate" theme, the PSAs will feature small family operations and underscore the importance of the tradition and culture of shellfishing (in particular quahogging) in Rhode Island. Videographers will collect footage by working alongside RISA members on their boats and at the dock. NBC10 news anchor Frank Coletta will provide the voiceover.

The project will directly benefit the approximately 1700 shellfishers in Rhode Island by helping to educate the public about why buying local shellfish from Rhode Island family operations is important. From a local economic perspective, consumers who "buy local" are supporting businesses that are run by Rhode Island families, not large corporate enterprises from out of state or overseas. The videos will also show how buying and consuming locally harvested seafood contributes to better public health and a smaller carbon footprint (shorter distances for seafood to travel).



IN THEIR OWN WORDS: "Rhode Island shellfish are not only a delicious and sustainable option for consumers, they represent a culture and tradition in this state that has been long-standing. Many shellfish consumers may not fully understand where the shellfish they are buying comes from. With more education on the local quahog fleet through short TV announcements, we believe that more people will demand local shellfish, thus triggering dealers, vendors and restaurants to purchase more RI-harvested shellfish, providing an overall nudge to an economically important industry in the state."

—Mike McGiveney, RISA President

Scratch Farm/Small State Seeds Cranston

Awarded: \$9,975

Small/Beginning Farmer:
Capital Improvement

PROJECT:

Expand & Brand RI Seed Business

Katie Miller and Ben Torpey have been managing farms since 2006 and have been co-managers of Scratch Farm at Urban Edge Farm in Cranston since 2012. Scratch Farm is a 2-acre farm that produces more than 100 varieties of vegetables, culinary herbs, berries and cut flowers without the use of chemical pesticides, herbicides, fungicides or fertilizers. Scratch Farm markets primarily through a 100-member CSA and sells to Providence restaurants through the Little City Growers Co-Op.

Scratch Farm grows a lot of food on a small piece of land. They do this by improving soil health and fertility, by reducing tillage and by breeding RI-adapted seeds. With their LASA funding, Scratch Farm will increase production of Small State Seeds, a seed-breeding project, which will be branded and marketed to RI farmers and gardeners. Katie and Ben also hope to establish Small State Seeds as a marketing hub for small-scale chemical-free seed producers in the state.

No other RI-based vegetable seed company is meeting the needs of farmers and gardeners as seed consumers, or serving as a marketing outlet for farmers interested in augmenting their income by producing seeds for sale. Seeds are value-added agricultural products that require no additional land to produce when incorporated into an annual cash crop rotation. By creating a strong niche market for local seeds and providing RI farmers with a place to sell their local seeds, Small State Seeds hopes to strengthen RI agriculture and the local economy while also creating a model of local farmer cooperation and collaboration.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS: *“As diversified vegetable farmers, we have seen the resilience improve in the crops we save seed from as they are subjected to the specific weather patterns, pests and diseases in RI. As climate change continues to accelerate shifts in weather patterns and local growing conditions, farmers and gardeners need seeds adapted to their specific regions more than ever. Small State Seeds hopes to serve as a collaborative, local solution to a global challenge.”*

—Ben Torpey & Katie Miller, Farm Managers

Sidewalk Ends Farm

Providence

Awarded: \$11,000

Small/Beginning Farmer:
Capital Improvement

PROJECT:

Tractor and Cold Storage

Four women established Sidewalk Ends Farm in 2011 on a vacant lot in the West end of Providence. The farm grows chemical-free vegetables, using bio-intensive growing practices that get maximum yields from minimal space. It is a prime example of small-scale urban entrepreneurship; out of a once-vacant lot, Sidewalk Ends employs 4 young farmers and has seen steady growth of sales through farmers markets, CSAs and the urban collaborative Little City Growers.

In 2014, Sidewalk Ends expanded production and signed a 5-year lease on 2.5 acres of land, while keeping the Providence urban lot as an educational center and community CSA pick-up location. With the acreage expansion, Sidewalk Ends needed a capital investment to scale up and support the larger growing business.

With their LASA funding, Sidewalk Ends will purchase a tractor to help prepare the larger, new acreage. Farm tasks had previously been performed using hand tools – mostly manageable on a small, urban lot, but not an effective use of time on the larger 2.5 acres. LASA funds will also allow the team to build a large, affordable walk-in cold storage unit (using a CoolBot device) to maintain the quality of all product until delivery to customers. The tractor and the CoolBot system will solidify and enhance the commitment the entire Sidewalk Ends team has made to being full-time farmers running an efficient and sustainable business, as well as helping to address food justice issues in Providence.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS: *“In order to continue our work building a stronger food system in the state, we have to build a strong farm. There is a high level of “burn-out” among beginning farmers in New England who encounter challenges in building small businesses that can sustain themselves. We find ourselves at the threshold of that crucial moment in our careers. We are eager to commit to farming in this region, but to do so we can’t be part-time farmers. While we remain solidly in the “small farm” category, we hope to join the ranks of other small-scale farmers who are making this industry sustainable in RI.”*

—Laura Brown-Lavoie, Fay Strongin,
Tess Brown-Lavoie & Sarah Turkus, Owners

Snake Den Farm

Johnston

Awarded: \$16,400

Small/Beginning Farmer:
Capital Improvement

PROJECT:

Equipment for Farmer Co-op

Snake Den Farm is a 150-acre historic farm located in Snake Den Park, a 744-acre State Park in Johnston. In 2013, the Northern RI Conservation District (NRICD) signed a lease with the RI Department of Environmental Management to oversee the farm's management and establish a sustainable farm program by leasing out individual parcels to qualified farmers. This program addresses one of the largest factors limiting the growth and diversity of the Rhode Island agriculture community – access to stable, long-term and affordable land.

As part of the program, Snake Den Farm will act as a resource for its farm tenants, encouraging economic and educational collaboration among the various farm businesses and enterprises that farm on the land. Snake Den will also conduct farmer-focused workshops and demonstrations of good farming practices.

With their LASA funding, Snake Den Farm will invest in initial infrastructure as they work towards becoming fully operational. Purchases will include farm equipment to be used as a shared resource with a clear value to the tenant farmers – a gently used tractor, basic irrigation mains for the front fields, and a wash station in the barn so that harvested products may be prepared for market. The community farm model - having multiple agricultural enterprises share resources around one central site - will allow Snake Den farmers to more efficiently leverage their own limited resources and will also facilitate inter-farm collaboration.



IN HER OWN WORDS: *“In addition to providing land and resources to the specific agricultural enterprises on-site at Snake Den, we also see the farm as a place to foster and facilitate skill sharing, education and on-farm research and demonstration practices around good agricultural stewardship, sustainable farming and land conservation. We want to not only facilitate access to larger land parcels for RI farmers scaling up, but also develop a shared resource infrastructure and system that will grow to be financially self-sustaining and managed by the Snake Den farmers.”*

—Cassie Tharinger, Farm Manager

The Local Catch

Charlestown

Awarded: \$7,500

Organization:
Program/Marketing Materials

PROJECT:
Local Seafood Distribution

The Local Catch is a Rhode Island seafood business that lands and processes its own fish, but also buys seafood from other RI fishers right at the dock, offering an alternative to selling RI-caught seafood to wholesalers. Owned and operated by Richard and Ann Cook, The Local Catch primarily promotes and sells local seafood at farmers markets around the state and through Consumer Supported Fisheries (CSFs). It is a unique business model in the RI seafood sector because The Local Catch is involved in all aspects of seafood production from the catch to the table, including landing, processing and retailing. The business has quadrupled in size since 2011, purchasing approximately 130,000 pounds of seafood from local fishers and selling it directly to RI consumers.

With their LASA funding, The Local Catch will build upon their past successes and try to put RI-landed seafood on equal footing with seafood imported from other states and countries. They will do this through extended promotion of The Local Catch brand at 4 additional farmers markets, increased advertising of CSF memberships, and by establishing an online order fulfillment center. Besides seeing a direct benefit to their own business, the Cooks hope to see long-reaching benefits for all RI fishers and consumers as a result of their expansion, which could serve as both a model and a teaching tool throughout the state. Increasing RI-landed fish sold in our state and educating RI consumers about the origins of their seafood will hopefully lead to an increase in demand and long-term market prices for RI-based fishers.



IN HIS OWN WORDS: *“This project addresses the disconnect between consumers and their food and the lack of a distribution channel to get RI fish to RI consumers. It is common knowledge in the fishing industry that most of the fish landed in RI is sold to auctions outside of RI. Most Rhode Islanders would be shocked if they knew that the majority of store-bought seafood originates not in Rhode Island, but in foreign countries without environmental and health regulations and is often processed with undisclosed chemicals and additives. Our goal is to keep more RI-landed fish in our own state while also creating local jobs and a healthier supply chain.”*

—Richard Cook, Owner

Urban Edge Farm Collaborative

Cranston

Awarded: \$17,000

Small/Beginning Farmer:
Capital Improvement

PROJECT:

Wash Station Upgrade

Urban Edge Farm is a farming collaborative consisting of seven small farms on a 50-acre parcel that was purchased and preserved by the RIDEM's Division of Agriculture in 2002 as part of the state open space preservation program. Through a partnership between the farmers and leaseholder Southside Community Land Trust, Urban Edge has been transformed from neglected farmland into a successful model of collaborative farming, providing products to farmers markets, CSAs and restaurants all across New England.

With the LASA funding, the wash station area in the barn will be renovated and sealed off from the rest of the barn to adapt to new federal safety requirements and comply with current state GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) certification standards. Later improvements include replacing 2 small porcelain tubs with 4 large stainless steel tubs, replacing the existing hose-based water supply system, replacing the existing drainage system, and installing replacement windows. The modifications will result in improved safety and higher efficiencies for all the participating farms.

The LASA funding will directly enhance the economic competitiveness of the products grown by the collaborative and will support the marketing and growth of all 7 farm operations. By making processing more efficient and reducing the amount of time spent in clean up of the wash space and drainage areas, farmers will have more time to engage in other activities – planting and harvesting, customer service, developing marketing products, and opening new sales channels.



IN HIS OWN WORDS: *“Because of the limited amount of affordable farmland available in RI, it is difficult for small-scale farmers to increase economic viability by expanding the size of our farms. Farmers with limited resources must instead rely on small-scale, incremental investment strategies to improve financial sustainability. Our wash station project represents this kind of small-scale investment with long-term outcomes.”*

—John Kenny, Farm Member

Urban Greens Food Co-op

Providence

Awarded: \$14,450

Organization:
Project Planning

PROJECT:
Co-op Retail Grocery Store

Urban Greens Food Co-op is a consumer-owned cooperative working to open a full-scale retail grocery store. The store will provide and promote healthy, affordable, sustainably sourced and local food options. Although nonmembers will be welcome at the store, consumer ownership will help shape the store and ensure that it meets local food needs based on the values of equal access, local economy and social entrepreneurship. Urban Greens will support the local food system by offering a consistent retail outlet for local producers, establishing stable and guaranteed sources of revenue for them.

LASA funding will provide grocery store design plans from a nationally recognized co-op retail store design professional. Creating a clear architectural layout plan for the store as it works towards a final site will enable Urban Greens to plan and finance construction costs and ensure that the store, once open, is designed to match the co-op's priorities. Co-ops are leaders in the food retail sector for local sourcing and sales of locally produced goods, but to do this effectively, co-ops must focus on being highly efficient in order to compete with big box retail grocery store chains in providing an easy one-stop shopping experience. Urban Greens will use the professional design layout to coordinate the build-out from the site agreement to a fully stocked grand opening. The design will involve an initial schematic feasibility study, a fixture plan including cooler location, department layout, overall store layout, and a full equipment specifications list.



IN HER OWN WORDS: *“Grocery stores play an important role in local economies, primarily as employers but also as purchasers of goods and services. Co-ops source a far greater proportion of their products locally, so they have a bigger impact on the local economy than a typical traditional grocer of comparable size would. Competitive co-op models that source locally can be instrumental in incentivizing chain stores to re-evaluate their purchase quotas. We envision Urban Greens not only thriving as a retail leader in locally sourced goods, but also demonstrating to other businesses the need to invest more in local products.”*

—Delia Kovac, Project Manager

Young Farmer Network

Providence

Awarded: \$19,840

Organization:
Education/Promotion

PROJECT:

Outreach & Education for Beginning Farmers

Inspired by the agrarian tradition of neighborly collaboration once embodied by the Grange, the Young Farmer Network (YFN) addresses the unmet needs of beginning farmers by creating opportunities for social interaction and knowledge training. A grassroots organization dedicated to increasing the capacity for southern New England to produce environmentally, socially and economically sound food by supporting new farmers, YFN began as a series of informal events, run by volunteers, on host farms. The network has grown to over 300 members with organizers holding 30 events annually for new farmers. Their popular Young Farmer Nights program has provided the backbone for valuable communication and peer networking among farmers.

With their LASA funding, the YFN will expand upon their word-of-mouth successes and continue to become an organized, regionally recognized and formally established network. They will rent classroom space for their Short Courses Program – four or five-week intensive technical training sessions taught in partnership with URI Extension, and plan to offer young and beginning farmers with limited income sources the ability to attend classes for free or at a reduced rate. The LASA funding will also help increase YFN outreach efforts, specifically by developing and printing promotional materials for their events and continuing to develop their website.



IN HER OWN WORDS: “Young and beginning farmers are the future of RI agriculture. As young farmers continue to establish and grow business in RI, it is important that there is organizational support that responds to their needs. Beginning farmers are recognized as increasingly important to growing a safe and healthy regional food system that can feed our communities in the future, especially as the average age of farmers is increasing and farmland is becoming less accessible. The YFN seeks to confront these obstacles by fostering a modern, relevant agricultural community filling in gaps in the historical support system of knowledge transfer from previous generations.”

—Sarah Turkus, YFN Representative



LASA 2014 Applicants

The LASA Grants Advisory Committee reviewed an impressive pool of applications, with over 90 grant proposals submitted for the 2014 LASA Grants Program. The Committee would like to recognize all applicants for their time, energy, and engagement in this process.

Abbouds Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Smithfield

Construction of a drip irrigation system, farm equipment and bee hives for a squash blossom farm

ABC Fish/The Fishery (Seafood/Fish)

Program Request, Westerly

Marketing and promotion program for a retail fish market to grow their customer base

African Alliance of RI (Non-profit)

Capital Request, Providence

Construction of a greenhouse in Providence for the African community and market growers

Alexander Caserta/"Harvesting RI" TV pilot (Seafood/Fish)

Program Request, Cranston

Production of a television pilot educating consumers on seasonally harvested local seafood

Blackbird Farm & Eat Drink RI (Farm)

Capital Request, Coventry

Development of a small-scale commercial kitchen to be used for processing meats into value-added products

Breene Acres Family Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, West Greenwich

Construction of an on-site processing room for broilers and turkeys

Captain Elisha Steere Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Greenville

Construction of a 30 x 40 foot retail farm store on the historic vegetable farm

Cedar Edge Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Saunderstown

Construction of a greenhouse to grow certified organic seedlings to supply to farmers and home growers

Chris Raymond (Farm)

Capital Request, Warwick

Revitalization of a specialty mushroom farm in a small pond, to grow shiitake, maitake and oyster mushrooms

City of Providence, Healthy Communities Office

(Municipal Government)

Program Request, Providence

Business development and instruction for growers in the Lots of Hope Urban Greenhouse

Coastal Growers (Non-profit)

Program Request, Bristol

Expansion of an indoor commercial aquaponics system

Commercial Fisheries Research Program (Non-profit)

Program Request, Saunderstown

Updating of 2011 profile of the RI Commercial Fishing & Seafood Industries to assess changes and trends in the industry to improve the promotion of local seafood

Daniel Capuano (Farm)

Capital Request, Jamestown

Development of a 400-bulb elephant garlic crop

Dave McGhie (Aquaculture)

Capital Request, Warwick

Gear to help grow out existing oysters, market the RI shellfish and make small boat upgrades

Driftway Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Saunderstown

Seed and fertilizer, a hay rake and disc mower, and roof replacement on existing barn

Eating with the Ecosystem (Non-profit)

Program Request, Warren

Program expansion for educational and culinary project that promotes local, sustainable seafood

Emma Acres & Schartner Farms (Farm)

Capital Request, Exeter

Collaborative effort of two farms to purchase a manure pump for revitalizing soil

English for Action (Non-profit)

Program Request, Providence

Collaborative program to increase access to agricultural opportunities for RI's immigrant families

Environmental Justice League of RI &

New Urban Farmers (Non-profit)

Program Request, Providence

Creation of a Mobile Farmer's Market to increase access to local food for low-income residents

Farm Fresh RI (Non-profit)

Program Request, Pawtucket

Development of a year-round Public Farmers Market and Food Hub

Fertile Underground (Coop/Collaborative)

Program Request, Providence

Funding to use catering truck as a pop-up retail market and food truck to promote local foods

Fresh to You & RI Public Health Institute (Non-profit)

Program Request, Providence

Expansion of mobile food access program, increasing the efficiencies of the existing fruit and vegetable distribution program

Gather Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Johnston

Mobile food demonstration unit to educate the public and sell local farm products

Global Village/Beekeeping (Coop/Collaborative)

Program Request, Providence

Establishment of a beekeeping/honey production co-op business run by immigrant farmers in Olneyville

Golden Tassel Dairy Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Tiverton

Repair/rebuilding of dairy farm barn to maximize efficiency

Harry Whilden (Aquaculture)

Capital Request, North Kingstown

Materials needed to commercially grow eastern oysters in Narragansett Bay

Helger's Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Little Compton

Mobile poultry processing unit for chicken farm

Hope & Main Culinary Business Incubator (Non-profit)

Capital Request, Warren

Establishment of a farm hub on location to centralize washing, sorting, processing and marketing of RI farmed foods

Howard Gilbert Fountain (Farm)

Program Request, North Kingstown

Funding to plant a trap crop on a corn and pumpkin farm to reduce damage caused by deer

Ian Campbell (Farm)

Capital Request, Wakefield

Establishment of an aquaculture (oyster) farm on Point Judith Pond

JMJ Family Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Portsmouth

Purchase and installation of commercial aquaponics system

John Chace (Farm)

Capital Request, East Greenwich

Construction of greenhouse and set-up of commercial aquaponics system to produce butterhead lettuce

John Hirschboeck (Seafood/Fish)

Capital Request, Newport

Refurbishment of lobster boat for an educational on-board program to promote RI interest in lobster

Kettlebottom TV Production Company (Aquaculture)

Program Request, Jamestown

Documentary film "How to Grow a Marketable Oyster"

Knight Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Glocester

Revitalization/transformation of outdated apple orchards into diversified vegetable acreage

Lazy A Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, North Scituate

Construction of a multi-purpose building for storage and public sales of farm products

Lisa DeWetter (Farm)

Capital Request, Exeter

Construction of hydroponic greenhouse

Monique LaFrance & David Bartley (Aquaculture)

Capital Request, Narragansett

Start-up costs for an aquaculture farm for oysters, quahogs and razor clams on Point Judith Pond

Mount Hope Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Bristol

Building and installation of raised bed garden with handicap accessibility and sensory elements for developmentally and physically challenged workshop participants

New England Grass Fed (Farm)

Program Request, Hope Valley

Expansion of existing Silver Fox rabbit meat production program through education of others and expansion of breeding herd

New Urban Farmers (Non-profit)

Capital Request, Warren

Construction of newly patented solar greenhouse

Northeast Organic Farming Association of RI (Non-profit)

Program Request, Chepachet

Expansion of specialty crop programming including advanced farmer training, organic farming conference and farm workshop programs

Northern RI Area Health Education Center & Healthcare Without Harm (Non-profit)

Program Request, Woonsocket

Development of RI Local Food Hospital Challenge - events, marketing and trainings to shift purchasing patterns of 3 RI hospitals

Otter Brook Farm (Farm)

Program Request, Little Compton

Capital request for a tractor on a dairy and beef cattle farm



Pierce Anthony Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Portsmouth

High density trellis system to increase output of apple crop

Radio Newport/Arts and Cultural Alliance of Newport (Non-profit)

Program Request, Newport

Series of monthly farm interviews focusing on local agricultural producers

RainHarvest Initiative (Non-profit)

Program Request, Providence

Installation of rainwater harvesting tanks in urban community gardens

Red Planet Vegetable Farm (#1) (Farm)

Capital Request, Johnston

Renovation of historic building on the property for use in farm operations

RI Dairy Farms Cooperative (Coop/Collaborative)

Program Request, Hope

Marketing initiative to increase sales of dairy products (excluding milk) from Rhody Fresh coop members at farmers markets

RI Farm Bureau (Non-profit)

Program Request, West Greenwich

Social media campaign to promote and support RI farms and farmers

RI Farmers' Market Collaborative (Coop/Collaborative)

Program Request, Saundertown

Design and implementation of a collaborative marketing program to promote RI farmers markets

RI Land Trust Council (Non-profit)

Program Request, Saundertown

Initiative to improve farm access and transfer, providing assistance to land trusts and municipalities to develop good leasing practices

RI Lobstermen's Association (Non-profit)

Program Request, Wakefield

Creation of self-guided website and app called "RI Lobster Trail"

RI Raised Livestock (Non-profit)

Program Request, North Scituate

Marketing and media research for organization's member farms and products

RI Sea Salt (Farm)

Capital Request, Providence

Project to harvest, brand and sell an artisanal RI sea salt unique to Narragansett Bay's ecosystem

Rossi Farm (Farm)

Program Request, Prudence Island

Research into the effectiveness of 3 different sustainable techniques to improve soil and pasture quality

Southern RI Volunteers (Non-profit)

Program Request, Charlestown

Materials, tools and recruitment efforts to increase production at an all-volunteer garden

Sun Farm Oysters (#1) (Aquaculture)

Capital Request, Block Island

Customized sorter for oysters, run by solar electric on a dock or boat

Sun Farm Oysters (#2) (Aquaculture)

Capital Request, Block Island

Ice-making equipment to address new requirements meant to lower frequency of shellfish bacteria during harvesting and transport

Sustainable Ag & Fish (Non-profit)

Program Request, Middletown

Education, training and mentoring support of students in a transitional school-to-work program

Sustainable Aquidneck (Non-profit)

Capital Request, Newport

Equipment, including trailers, a truck and backup generator, for tenant farms of organization

Sweet Pea Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Johnston

Construction of a toolshed and purchase of tools, equipment and materials to start organic vegetable and cut flower operation

The Poultry Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Portsmouth

Two poultry houses for raising Narragansett turkeys

Thorndale Urban Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Providence

Equipment to expand market into winter months with preserved herbs and value-added products from herbal farm vouchers and Senior Coupons

Thundermist Health Center (Non-profit)

Program Request, Woonsocket/West Warwick

Program to increase customers at the healthcare center's farmer's markets and the amount that people can spend through WIC vouchers and Senior Coupons

Tilted Barn Brewery (Farm)

Capital Request, Exeter

Modifications to existing barn to convert it into a barn brewery, at the same time increasing hops growth

Timberdoodle Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Scituate

Poultry farm processing equipment (a picker and scalding) to perform work currently done by hand

Tom Hoxsie Fish Trap Company (Aquaculture)

Program Request, Narragansett

Creation of a logo and promotional materials in order to more effectively brand and sell its products

WaterFire Providence (Non-profit)

Program Request, Providence

Launch and branding of food-focused event called "Oyster Fire" to promote local agriculture and aquaculture to the WaterFire audience

Welcome House of South County (Non-profit)

Capital Request, Peacedale

Creation of a sustainable community food garden in support of emergency shelter and soup kitchen guests

West Bay Land Trust (Non-profit)

Program Request, Hope

Development and implementation of a management plan aimed at an increase in active farmland acreage

West Elmwood Housing Development Corp. (Non-profit)

Program Request, Providence

Support to grow Sankofa World Market in the West End of Providence, and market bonuses for EBT/SNAP users

Wild Food Foraging (Foraging)

Program Request, Cumberland

Establishment of a wild food foraging and cultivating business

Wild Harmony Farm (Farm)

Program Request, Exeter

Expansion of marketing strategy/resources and creation of apiary program on a small-scale livestock farm

William and Annette Hibbad (Farm)

Capital Request, Tiverton

Replacement of tractor transmission for beef cattle and hay farm

Zephyr Farm (Farm)

Capital Request, Cranston

Construction of a mobile kitchen trailer to produce value-added products from current farm produce

RI DEM



The **Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management** is committed to preserving the quality of Rhode Island's environment, maintaining the health and safety of its residents, and protecting the natural systems upon which life depends. Together with many partners, we offer assistance to individuals, business and municipalities, conduct research, find solutions, and enforce laws created to protect the environment.

www.dem.ri.gov



RI Food
Policy Council

The **Rhode Island Food Policy Council** envisions a day when Rhode Island's food system will be a national model because of the strength of its local food system and its success at achieving community food security and optimal public health. We envision a Rhode Island where safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food is accessible and affordable in every Rhode Island community and in which an increasing proportion of the state's food supply is raised, caught, and processed locally. **www.rifoodcouncil.org**

