# SNP Memo #2020-2021-53


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: July 10, 2020

TO: Directors, Supervisors, and Contact Persons Addressed

FROM: Sandra C. Curwood, PhD, RDN, ***Sandy***

## SUBJECT: 2020-2021 USDA Farm to School Grants Awarded in Virginia

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) awarded four 2020-2021 Farm to School Grants in Virginia: the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), Augusta Health Community Health Foundation, Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP) in Roanoke, and Project Grows, Inc. in Staunton.

The VDOE, Office of School Nutrition Programs, received a two-year USDA Farm to School Grant in the amount of $99,987. A Farm to School Leadership Team of representative stakeholders will be selected to develop and implement a strategic plan including sustainability beyond the two-year project period. Planned activities include establishing regional networks to develop infrastructure to connect school nutrition professionals and farmers for local procurement opportunities. Resources will include toolkits targeted to school nutrition professionals, farmers, and teachers. Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) agents will provide outreach and training for farmers. Teacher resources will include farm tours and an agriculture curriculum for students. A statewide Farm to School Conference will be held in year two. Key partners include the VCE, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom.

The Augusta Health Community Health Foundation received a $100,000 implementation grant. In partnership with Waynesboro City Public Schools, the grant will be used to expand the *Get Fresh* nutrition education initiative in an effort to reduce food insecurity, increase student access to local produce, and support the short- and long-term health of community members. Activities include expanding the curriculum to a third elementary school and utilizing a mobile café for food insecure students during the summer and when schools are closed.

The Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP) received a planning grant for $48,839. The LEAP will collaborate with VCE and Roanoke City Public Schools (RCPS) to plan the Roanoke Farm to School program. First year goals include strengthening partnerships between RCPS and farmers, expanding farm to school educational programming, facilitating farmer information sessions and focus groups, hosting a RCPS symposium to recruit new partners and gather feedback on program development, implementing a farm to school pilot program in several schools, and developing a farm to school action plan. The long-term vision for Roanoke Farm to School includes nutrition and agriculture education in all schools and at least 10 percent local procurement annually.

Project Grows, Inc. in Staunton received an implementation grant for $100,000 to implement a multi-pronged initiative that includes agricultural education programming with food tastings, curriculum integration of local food and farming concepts, and school garden experiential learning. The project will also expand local food procurement for schools, such as farmer meet and greets, and the publication of a regional farmer training manual.

### School Year 2021-2022 Grants

The USDA plans to release the Requests for Applications for the School Year 2021-2022 Farm to School Grants this fall. The funding will help communities incorporate local products into school meals, integrate agricultural education in the classroom, and cultivate and expand farm to school efforts.

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