

# 10/14 VCLN Workshop

Building & Supporting Local Food Solutions – Chat from Zoom Call

## WHO'S ON THE CALL?

Paul Costello : Paul Costello, VCRD, Montpelier

Nick Kramer, VCRD : Nick Kramer, VCRD, Corinth

Jon Copans : Jon Copans, VCRD, Montpelier

Liz Ruffa : Liz Ruffa, Merck Forest & Farmland Center, Rupert and Town of Dorset Selectboard

Laural Ruggles : Laural Ruggles, Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital

Maggie Gordon - Hinesburg : Maggie Gordon - Hinesburg

Mikaileigh Baker : Hi! I'm Mikaileigh Baker - I am the AmeriCorps VISTA serving with Willing Hands (Norwich, VT).

Jacqueline Labate : Jacqueline Labate, director The Growing Peace Project, Topsham

Megan Herrington - Hunger Council Bennington County : Megan Herrington - Hunger Council of Bennington County/Vermont Department of Health

Sarah Danly : Sarah Danly, VSJF/Farm to Plate Network

Leslie Goldman : Leslie Goldman, Rockingham Help and Helpers

Callie Fishburn : Callie Fishburn, AmeriCorps VISTA at Bennington County Regional Commission

Jess Tompkins - ShareMRV : Jess Tompkins - ShareMRV (Mad River Valley)

Donna Mackie : Donna Mackie (she/her) - ShareMRV

Margaret Woodruff : Margaret Woodruff, Charlotte Library

Monica Collins : Monica Collins, Town of Hancock & Vermont Law School

Theresa Snow : Theresa Snow - Salvation Farms, Morrisville VT

Andrew Graham : Andrew Graham, Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association, White River Junction, VT

Diana Wood : Diana Wood. Essex Conservation and Trails Committee

Greta Hasler : Greta Hasler, Salvation Farms

Lindsey Berk : Lindsey Berk - ACORN (Addison County Relocalization Network)

Wendy Verrei-Berenback : Hello, Wendy Verrei-Berenback, Jericho Planning Commission

Luna Collins : Luna Collins -- SerVermont, Burlington

Christine Porcaro : Christine Porcaro, Healthy Roots Collaborative, St. Albans

Spoon Agave : Spoon Agave, Brattleboro.....may be a limited connection for me. I can see and hear but it may be that my voice will not get through

Dani Kehlmann : Dani Kehlmann, Waterbury Area Food Shelf

Camille Kauffman : Camille Kauffman, Paran Recreations, Bennington, VT

Brad Long : Hi folks - Brad Long here from Efficiency Vermont, calling in from the Mad River Valley -

Ben Waterman : Ben Waterman, Johnson, Vermont Land Trust

Colin Clarcq : Colin Clarcq, AmeriCorps member Middlebury

Allyson Howell : Ally Howell, Derby Line resident, Prevention Specialist at Umbrella NEK based in Newport.

Ashley Andrews-CVRPC : Ashley Andrews-Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission Calais VT, and Co-Chair Washington County Hunger Council

Anne Bijur : Anne Bijur, VT Department of Environmental Conservation, Solid Waste Program, Charlotte

Nancy LaRowe, (she, her) Vital Communities : Morning! Nancy LaRowe, Vital Communities. Zooming in from Norwich.

Beth Roy : Beth Roy - Vital Communities, Food and Farm Program

Erica Campbell : Erica Campbell, Senator Sanders' office

Kristin Blodgett : Kristin Blodgett, Center for an Agricultural Economy

Melissa Levy : Melissa Levy, Rural Economic Development Consultant, Community Roots and Hinesburg resident, Hinesburg Economic Development Committee

## **RESOURCES / PARTNER CONTACT INFO**

Sarah Danly : VT Food System Atlas: <https://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/atlas>

Sarah Danly : Issue briefs on statewide food/ag topics: <https://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/plan/>

Megan Herrington - Hunger Council Bennington County : [megan.herrington@vermont.gov](mailto:megan.herrington@vermont.gov)

Lindsey Berk : [www.acornvt.org](http://www.acornvt.org), [lindseyberk@gmail.com](mailto:lindseyberk@gmail.com)

Sarah Danly : [sarah@vsjf.org](mailto:sarah@vsjf.org)

Paul Costello : The new Community Leadership in Action guide has a chapter on local ag networking...you can find it at [www.vtrural.org](http://www.vtrural.org).

Nick Kramer, VCRD : Link to Leadership Guide pdf: [www.vtrural.org/leadership/guide](http://www.vtrural.org/leadership/guide)

## **DISCUSSION**

Erica Campbell : Megan, this sounds a little like the work that VDH used to do with the Healthy Retailers program. VDH and the community coalitions worked with Farm to Plate early on, which sparked the independent retailers work. While VDH does not have designated funding anymore, it's been great to see healthy retailer projects around the State emerge. This one in Bennington is inspiring! Another one is the new FQHC owned store in Richford.

Jacqueline Labate : Lindsey, when you distributed food bags did you collect data on how many families used the menus and made the meals?

Cathy McGrath : In our community, we cannot rely on internet orders for food (many do not have access to internet) nor do we know in advance what produce we're receiving from Willing Hands(so it is difficult to help clients understand how they can use the produce). Did you have to address these issues?

Lindsey Berk : Hi jacqueline, we did distribute surveys pre- and post- program, but we are still analyzing that data. If you sign up for our newsletter through our website, we will send updates.

Jacqueline Labate : Great, can you put your website in the chat? Thx!

Lindsey Berk : [www.acornvt.org](http://www.acornvt.org)

Lindsey Berk : Cathy, we do communicate with Farmacy members via phone, text or email, depending on internet access and technology comfort. We contract with the three farms we work with so we can plan in advance for what kind of food we're getting, but of course that can change based on weather... the farmers were pretty good at updating me weekly with what we're getting, but that is definitely a challenge for the newsletter.

Jess Tompkins - ShareMRV : Ben, where can we find more info on Freezers for Farmers?

Cathy McGrath : In Dorset, were there competitive issues with farms that already had CSA programs?

Ashleen Buchanan : Lindsey would you be able to talk more about the funding sources for food farmacy? Do you know how they funded? Do you know how Porter had funding to offer this program? Was it through a grant or otherwise?

Lindsey Berk : Some of the funding came from OneCare, I'm not sure where the rest came from, but I can put you in touch with my contact there if you'd like more details. We've been told the OneCare funding probably won't happen in 2021.

Ashleen Buchanan : That would be great! We are considering a similar program at Little Rivers Health Care

Lindsey Berk : Cool - shoot me an email [lindseyberk@gmail.com](mailto:lindseyberk@gmail.com) and I'll connect you.

Ashleen Buchanan : will do

Jacqueline Labate : there was a question for Ben about freezers

Gary Dir : Does Shaws participate in prenatal program?

Anne Bijur : My internet cut out for a while so this might not be relevant but has anyone tried to rescue food from retailers/grocers, restaurants, or food manufacturers?

Spoon Agave : I may not be able to transmit sound. Thought: every organization must be thinking about developing any amount of self-sufficiency possible. It would be nice to be able to count on being in control of our governments to help with basic needs but now and throughout history this has had only limited success. One important response has been the co-operative, the modern rendition that we live with today starting in England in the 1840's. Note that every area we are hearing from today exists only through government money. Does all this die if the funds get cut off? One idea that occurred to me as I listened. The Vt Land Trust placing more emphasis on ownership or some sort of sufficient control of land for more farms like Pine Island. At some point, the Trust itself drawing some support, in return, from these farms. The Housing Trust down here gets a lot of money from the Feds but also charge just enough in rents to cover the maintenance of all their units. If Fed funding dries up totally they can at least keep everyone in their homes. The co-operative economic theory is extremely difficult for Americans because our entire history has evolved and revolved around "every man for himself." This of course is what the ruling class teaches because this enables it to maintain their status as ruling class. Thus Life Liberty and Happiness went to life liberty and the rights of private property in the constitution. The Founders were among the biggest property owners in the colonies. We went from British rule to self rule but really, bottom line, nothing changed other than paying taxes to our own ruling class rather than the British. Co-ops begin to counter the capitalist owning class and return control to the people. Co-ops are not just food stores but can be producer such as Welch's grapes, Sunkist oranges, land o lakes. These have all slowly drifted to the capitalist model because they couldn't maintain a strong enough commitment for co-operative economics. In the 1920's almost all the plywood in this country was produced by co-operative plywood mills. When we talk here about community are we really just talking about individuals hired by the state to distribute to the needy? In the 1930's farmers survived by forming co-ops. The Farm Bureaus across the country. They also co-operatized the grain elevators so all their profits would not be taken by corporate ownership of the elevators. Nationwide Insurance was started as a co-op by the Ohio Farm Bureau to enable Ohio farmers to afford insurance. If Rural Development wanted to do something that will enable people to take care of themselves it should be teaching and other related activities that would actually enable people to take care of themselves. I know about co-ops in VT; I worked for them for the last 32 years, and in Ohio and the mid-east for fifteen years before that. Even though Vt has about the highest food co-op participation in the country (outside of Washington) the amount of the food economy in co-ops is still a teensy percent of total food system, and for all these years of food co-op activity and the general liberal culture in Vt almost no co-ops have formed in any other area. The idea of co-operative economy and lifestyle still isn't strong enough to counter the "American Dream." We are still firmly entrenched in the notion that our happiness is tied to ownership...homes, cars, land, businesses etc. We are afraid we couldn't be happy in egalitarian communities.

Sarah Danly : Hi Spoon, I don't want to speak for Lindsey but I think part of the answer gets back to her point about how ACORN usually does its own fundraising instead of relying on grants, that was just not possible during COVID. I assume at some point normal fundraising opportunities will be possible again. One of my big takeaways from this work is also that really small changes (like the freezer at the corner store in Bennington) can make a big difference. It makes sense to rely on government and foundation funding when that's available, but could also be done with community support. In many cases these projects are also meant to set up systems that will be self-sustainable long term. In the example that I referenced only briefly from my own community, the federal/state funding that we accessed is actually to develop a business plan which might very well become a co-op.

Lindsey Berk : Thanks, Sarah. You're right. Pre-COVID, ACORN did not rely on any government funding. We fundraised via an Annual Appeal and running our own events and programs that generated revenue. Of course, thankfully government funding is available at this moment in time!

Margaret Woodruff : Thanks for this information. Would love to know how libraries can help with these efforts!

Lindsey Berk : Margaret - the Brandon Library has a free seed library that has been great for the community to access to grow their own food

Sarah Danly : Margaret, one of the ways I've seen libraries get involved is with community education/workshops. The Rooted in Vermont campaign has an annual library week partnering with libraries around the state to run food workshops -- would be a good place to look for what other libraries are doing!

Margaret Woodruff : Thanks for the library information! We too have a seed library and have done the Rooted in Vermont partnering, both of which we are grateful to have and be part of. I guess I wonder if there's a way for libraries in a more general and institutional sense to be a "go-to place" for programs and resources. I'm on the Vermont Library Association board and would love to chat with folks in that capacity if anyone is interested?

Jacqueline Labate : Question for anyone: In our area we have lots of programs for feeding folks. Identifying those in need and getting food to them is always sensitive, especially welcoming those who are reluctant to self-identify as food insecure. Wondering what other strategies folks have employed to get help where it's needed.

Lindsey Berk : I'd be interested in that, Margaret - always looking for ways to engage community folks offline

Sarah Danly : I'm interested too Margaret -- and in the example Lindsey mentioned about Brandon. I know some people in my area were interested in exploring libraries as a partner in tool sharing libraries and I don't know much about that model.

Jacqueline Labate : Brad, do you do any work with hydroponics or aquaponics?

Wendy Verrei-Berenback : Can anyone speak to the Vermont Agrarian Commons?  
<https://agrariantrust.org/agrariancommons/vermont/>

Sarah Danly : Unfortunately I have to jump off -- sad to leave early, this is such a great conversation, but feel free to email me at [sarah@vsjf.org](mailto:sarah@vsjf.org) if I can be of any help or if you just want to learn more about the farm to plate plan or network

Margaret Woodruff : Thanks, Sarah and Lindsey. I'll get in touch with you both via email and see if we can find time to chat!

Andrew Graham MOFGA/MEFTI : Thank you VCRD for putting together this excellent session. Thanks also to all of the presenters and the attendees.

Margaret Woodruff : Thanks so much for this! Be well.

Wendy Verrei-Berenback : Thanks Lindsey!

Laural Ruggles : Gotta go. Thank you everyone for all your work for Vermonters.

Liz Ruffa : I have to move on with my day, but thanks for including me and for a great conversation. Liz

Luna Collins : Will there be a follow up email going out so that we can see the email addresses of everyone who participated today?

Jacqueline Labate : Great webinar, thanks so much!

Theresa Snow : Thank you VCRD!

Ashleen Buchanan : Thank you!