



Farm to School Institute

Cultivating vibrant communities, equitable food systems, and healthy kids

Vermont FEED is a partnership project of Shelburne Farms and NOFA-VT



Our kids face the challenges of a lifetime. Farm to school is making a difference.

DISCONNECT FROM THE LAND

41% of children under 8 don't know that eggs come from chickens.

OBESITY & CHRONIC DISEASE

1/3 of American children are overweight or obese.

FOOD WASTE

30-40% of the American food supply is wasted.

FOOD INSECURITY

15 million American children live in food insecure households.

LOSS OF FARMS & LOCAL ECONOMIES

Since 2013, there's been a **45% decrease** in net farm income for American farmers and ranchers.

FOOD & FARM LITERACY

7,101 school gardens exist nationally, where kids learn how food grows. **31%** of schools with farm to school programming bring students on field trips to local farms.

HEALTHY CHOICES

Studies have shown that kids eat up to **3x more** fruit and vegetables when they participate in hands-on, food-based activities, and **33%** of students eat more fruits and vegetables when schools serve local food.

SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOR

Cafeterias see an **18% reduction** in food waste in schools with farm to school programming.

FOOD ACCESS & EQUITY

30 million students participate in the National School Lunch Program, and increases in school meal participation have been **as high as 17%** as a result of farm to school.

LOCAL PURCHASING

Schools have invested **\$789 million** on local food nationally.

Find sources @ vtfeed.org/FTSIstats



The World Needs Farm to School

Farm to school programs are springing up in all fifty states to address some of our most pressing problems: childhood health and nutrition, farm viability, and disconnected communities. But we need change to accelerate, and we need change to last.

The Farm to School Institute is a unique, whole-school professional development model that creates robust, sustainable farm to school programs. It builds capacity in school communities to create a culture of wellness while improving educational, environmental, and community outcomes. And it's rapidly becoming a national model.

Accelerating Change

The Farm to School Institute's model of working with school teams unites individuals from across a school's community to leverage and accelerate change. Change in one area of the school, such as a classroom, is reinforced through change in other areas, like the cafeteria.

Making Change Last

Lasting change doesn't happen by accident. The Farm to School Institute builds school leadership, skills, and capacity to tie isolated activities into robust, sustainable programs. What may start as one individual's passion is shaped into a system to support an enduring farm to school program.

Now it's ready to scale.

The Farm to School Institute

Creates Lasting Change in Classrooms, Cafeterias, and Communities

Since 2010, the Farm to School Institute has helped school and community teams work together to create a culture of wellness, improve food access, engage students, and strengthen local food systems. The Institute brings these teams together for a three-day retreat to build relationships, skills, and a collaborative action plan for their schools. Then, with the support of a coach, they spend the next year putting their plans into action and strengthening their capacity to impact classrooms, cafeterias and communities long into the future.

The Institute was developed by Vermont FEED, a partnership of two nationally recognized farm to school leaders: Shelburne Farms and NOFA-VT. It has helped 74 schools and districts build enduring farm to school programs, reaching 54,000 students. And there are thousands of schools yet to go.

“Farm to school connects students to fields, and farmers to classrooms. With the Farm to School Institute, communities from across our region can share in the program’s success and realize the health benefits that come when children enjoy fresh, locally grown food at school.”

— SENATOR PATRICK LEAHY (D-VT)
pictured below with
VT FEED Program Director Abbie Nelson





What Are Institute Alumni Saying?

ENGAGING WHOLE-SCHOOL TEAMS

84% of school nutrition staff were committed to expanding farm to school programming.

“Spending time with my team has been incredible. It’s bringing us together, helping us discover each other’s strengths, and bonding us into a committed team.”

“The focus on agriculture, local food, and nutrition is paying off in the classroom. Kids are interested, and teachers are given more diversity in the curriculum.”

MAKING CHANGE

9 out of 10 participants reported progress in creating a culture of Farm to School.

BUILDING COMMITMENT

100% of school administrators indicate they plan to integrate FTS into the curriculum and have more confidence doing so.

“The energy of the other schools keeps me motivated! Sometimes this work can get discouraging and seeing other schools move forward is encouraging.”

“Without the opportunity to be together, away from the distractions of the school year, our team would never have built the skills to work together so well.”

BUILDING CAPACITY

9 out of 10 participants said they now have the capacity to solve problems and connect with resources.

Recipe for Success

Working with past participants, we've evaluated the outcomes of the Institute for eight years. Across the board, we've found that change lasts. Why? Institute teams report that the program leaves them with stronger relationships, more skills, and a clear roadmap for action.

Investing in a proven model of team-building, action planning, and coaching is an investment in the capacity for long-term change and outcomes—for participating schools, communities, students, and farm to school practitioners.



3C APPROACH

Truly impactful farm to school programs connect the dots between what happens in classrooms, cafeterias, and communities. The Institute is structured around this 3-C model of change, ensuring an integrated and connected program that shifts school culture towards wellness.

WHOLE-SCHOOL



People with diverse roles in a school make up each team: nutrition staff, parents, teachers, administrators, nurses, and community partners. Team members leave ready and able to support one other, to integrate activities and learning school-wide, and to build shared leadership and capacity for the long haul.

LOCAL EXPERT COACHES



Each team is paired with an experienced coach who helps the team develop and implement its action plan, troubleshoot, connect with resources, and maintain accountability. Teams have access to experts on Farm to School topics like scratch cooking, local procurement, funding, and communications.

ACTION PLANNING



Custom action plans are the heart of the Institute experience. Each team assesses its school's strengths and opportunities, then creates an integrated action plan that builds on those strengths. Teams learn to track progress, communicate and celebrate success, and change course as needed.

Join Us!

Help us grow the impact of farm to school across the country with the Institute model. Join us as we scale and expand this unique program to build a better future for our kids, our farms, and our communities.

Build a Model

[Invest in a model for change and a network of practitioners](#)

The Farm to School Institute is our flagship professional development program. Each year, the Institute cultivates twelve robust farm to school programs in school districts across New England and New York, which then serve as models within each state. It costs schools under \$1,000 for the yearlong program, and scholarships ensure that it is affordable for any school to participate.

The Institute model is also building a network of farm to school leaders across the country, who share innovations and promising practices, strengthening all their work and expanding their impact to more schools and more students.

Expanding Farm To School Nationwide

[Help states across the US bring the Farm to School Institute home](#)

The Institute is designed to be replicable, and we are eager to see other states and regions adapt and adopt this proven model. We are already supporting organizations in Georgia, New York, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts to create local versions of the Institute, and we're working with many more states across the country that are interested in replication. Investments in new regional Institutes can exponentially increase the impact as we reach more schools and create new cohorts of leaders who can share their learning and experience.

Contact us to explore the possibilities.

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FOOD EDUCATION EVERY DAY

Vermont FEED is a farm to school partnership project of Shelburne Farms and the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT). These two nonprofit organizations have more than 40 years of experience in farm to school.



Shelburne Farms, based on a 1,400-acre campus that is a working farm, forest, and National Historic Landmark, cultivates and inspires learning for a sustainable future.



NOFA-VT, an association of farmers, gardeners, and consumers, promotes an economically viable and ecologically sound Vermont food system for the benefit of current and future generations.

Learn more @ vtfeed.org