



LEAP Annual Report | 2016



LOCAL
ENVIRONMENTAL
AGRICULTURE
PROJECT

Message from Maureen McNamara Best

When I step back and reflect on 2016 (and the last three years), I am so proud to be part of the Roanoke and greater Blue Ridge community. I am honored to work with people and organizations who seek each other out and come together to strengthen our neighborhoods, towns, cities, and rural communities. We are stronger together—thanks for continuing to show me the power of collaboration and collective action.

In 2016, we opened The Kitchen and built a small local food hub to better serve the expanded Mobile Market. Infrastructure development like this isn't very "fun," but it is incredibly important. The behind-the-scenes work helps farmers make a living growing delicious tomatoes, raising pastured eggs and meat, and making lip smacking salsas. The often-not-thought-of infrastructure allows community members to purchase fresh, seasonal produce and makes the Mobile Market possible. As a community, we still have a long way to go to build a resilient local food system—but we are making great strides!



Programs are a lot more exciting to talk about and 2016 is no different. We welcomed Alex to the LEAP team in 2016 who brought smiles and fresh produce to Roanoke neighborhoods via the Mobile Market and Sam made the first 8 months of The Kitchen a great success filled with great smells and small businesses. The LEAP Markets continue to be a vibrant space for food businesses and community members. And our incentive programs keep making local food more affordable and an integral part of individual and family food budgets. Our two stellar AmeriCorps members who joined LEAP in fall 2016 have helped make the LEAP programs tick.

LEAP is small, but mighty. Thanks for being the mighty-- we would be nothing without you-- partners, supporters, funders, farmers, market vendors, market shoppers, local food businesses, regional farmers markets, and local food enthusiasts. Thanks for being an essential part of LEAP and our work in 2016.

My two-year old loves trains (awesome that we live in a train town!) and some days I find myself repeating his "toot toot" as LEAP keeps on chugging.

Thanks for reading,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maureen M. Best".

Maureen McNamara Best
LEAP Executive Director

www.LEAPforlocalfood.org

LEAP's Mission

LEAP's mission is to nurture healthy communities and resilient local food systems. We work closely with our partners, farmers, and the broader community to meet this mission. LEAP believes that by re-localizing our food system, we are creating more environmentally, economically, and culturally sustainable communities. LEAP works to support all aspects of local food systems in order to create healthy communities that can respond and adapt to meet community needs. LEAP programs include LEAP Community Markets (West End and Grandin Village), LEAP Mobile Market, Healthy Food Incentive Program, and The Kitchen.

At the LEAP Community Markets and on the Mobile Market, local means that every product originates within 100 miles of the market. We have two exceptions for items that can't be sourced within 100 miles: coffee (roasted locally) and seafood from the coast of Virginia and North Carolina, sold by a local vendor.



LEAP Community Markets

LEAP continues to operate two community markets in Roanoke. The West End Community Market is open year-round (Tuesdays, 3pm-6pm) and the Grandin Village Community Market from late April through October (Saturdays, 8am-12pm). Just like farms, our markets are open in rain, shine, and snow. LEAP markets focus on building community in so many ways. A thriving market of small businesses is enlivened by shoppers who focus on supporting locally made products. This year, LEAP Market vendors did almost \$250,000 in sales. LEAP Markets directly support over 20 farms and food producers as well as another 80 food producers indirectly through aggregators that sell at our markets. Individuals meet, catch up, and strengthen relationships in this community space. Many market shoppers also visit nearby businesses, keeping even more dollars local. Shoppers can choose fresh, healthy foods to meet their dietary needs and feed their families.

In 2016, the Grandin Village Community Market took major strides to make healthy food more accessible to all. Before the season began, many LEAP Market vendors committed to producing food year round so that the Grandin Market could expand to once-a-month indoor winter markets (November-March). The CoLab, our gracious host, helped make the November and



December Grandin Village Winter Markets a success. The winter markets allowed shoppers to buy local for the holiday season and helped farmers be able to extend their growing season. Additionally, SNAP dollars and SNAP matching dollars spent at Grandin in 2016 increased nearly 50%, providing over \$13,000 in vendor sales at the market. The Grandin market continues to thrive thanks to the consistent hard work of our vendors as well as the fierce commitment of our shoppers.

The West End Community Market continues to help build a stronger community in the West End neighborhood. As the city finished its infrastructure project on 13th Street, LEAP welcomed a new community organization project onto our

block of Patterson Avenue in Maker Mart, which will teach children technical skills that will help prepare them for skilled industry jobs. The Market continues to be the only source of fresh, local foods in the neighborhood. Meanwhile, we continue to develop a diverse group of vendors and customers who value quality products, affordable prices, and convenient access.

Healthy Food Incentives

LEAP runs a number of “incentive” programs that help make fresh, local food more equitable and affordable. National data and our local data show that incentives for fresh produce result in people purchasing and consuming more fruits and vegetables. Incentives are a win-win for farmers (additional income), consumers (greater buying power), and the community at large (improved health). In order to help make healthy food more affordable, LEAP accepts and doubles SNAP-EBT benefits (food stamps) at all our markets (thanks to funding from Carilion and other community partners). LEAP also works with the Virginia Cooperative Extension Family Nutrition Program to provide low-cost and simple cooking demonstrations at our markets that feature in-season ingredients! With up to \$30 doubled per market, the SNAP Double Value Program makes a huge difference in the food budgets of SNAP participants.



In our second year as a sub-grantee of Wholesome Wave for the Food Insecurity Nutritional Incentive (FINI) program, LEAP acted as a regional hub to help five farmers markets to grow their SNAP Double programs (Floyd Farmers Market, Blacksburg Farmers Market, Vinton Farmers Market, Salem Farmers Market, Catawba Valley Farmers Market). Designed specifically to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, the FINI incentive programs help our most vulnerable families in the Roanoke Valley have more healthy food. Additionally, LEAP piloted multiple new incentives to ensure healthy food was accessible and affordable to all. Our Bonus Bucks program provided \$10 per month to SNAP shoppers as a customer loyalty program, providing these families with extra fruits and vegetables at the end of the month when money is tight.

In addition to the SNAP Double Program, LEAP also has program-specific incentives for neighborhoods and community groups served by the Mobile Market. In 2016, LEAP piloted the Senior Incentive program at Melrose Towers (see section below), expanded the TAP Head Start incentive, and worked with two additional Fresh Foods Rx stops. Including our innovative Fresh Foods Rx program, LEAP distributed over \$42,000 in local foods through our Healthy Food Incentive programs.

LEAP Mobile Market

The LEAP Mobile Market completed its second year in 2016. A farm stand on wheels, the Mobile Market travelled to nine neighborhoods per week (up from five the previous year) in NW and SE Roanoke, where many residents don't have easy access to fresh food. Much of the produce sold on the Mobile Market came from Lick Run Urban Farm in NW Roanoke, complemented by 20+ other producers. While we had some problems with our vehicle, the season was ultimately a success, and one that saw a great expansion of our schedule, sales, and customer base.



We made an incredible new partnership with the residents of Melrose Towers, a low-income senior housing facility. Many of the residents are mobility impaired and many more don't drive, making access to fresh foods

difficult and infrequent. Stopping at Melrose Towers every Tuesday, the LEAP Mobile Market provided these residents with a weekly opportunity to stock up on fresh fruits and vegetables. They also loved our eggs! Through a grant from the Foundation for Roanoke Valley, we were able to provide residents (65 or older) with a \$5 voucher each week to spend on healthy foods. We arrived for our 12:00 stop each week to a line of patiently waiting customers eager to shop for the foods they grew up eating.

Thanks to a partnership with Healthy Roanoke Valley, we also helped expand the Fresh Foods Rx program. Last year saw 12 participants complete the pilot season of the 16 week program. This year, over 40 participants completed the healthy lifestyle program at 3 clinics across Roanoke, including Carilion Clinic and New Horizons Healthcare. It's amazing to see the healing power of fruits and vegetables, made even more powerful by simultaneously supporting local farmers!

The Kitchen

The Kitchen, Roanoke's shared commercial kitchen and food business incubator, opened in April 2016. In just its first 8 months of operation, we've given dozens of tours and hosted a wide variety of uses. Two local caterers use The Kitchen as their base of operations for off-site events. Happy Healthy Cooks, a Roanoke non-profit that hosts cooking lessons in Roanoke City elementary schools, uses The Kitchen for their weekly prep work. LEAP market vendors, including 'ot Chihuahua Salsa, have moved their operations from their home to The Kitchen. Our members love The Kitchen because it provides a reliable commercial space to expand their operation without costly investments in rent and equipment. Because of this, local small businesses have taken steps forward, LEAP markets have introduced new products, and new business plans are being hatched.



Additionally, The Kitchen provides the community with a much needed education space. Led by the Virginia Cooperative Extension, The Kitchen hosted a series of classes on cooking and preserving. Especially popular was their class on making canned foods as holiday gifts. Thanks to a grant from our neighbor, Freedom First Credit Union, we started our Food Business StartUp program and awarded scholarships (free rent in The Kitchen for up to 20 hours) and business education to four low-income entrepreneurs. Look out for the exciting new foods that these entrepreneurs will be bringing to market in 2017!

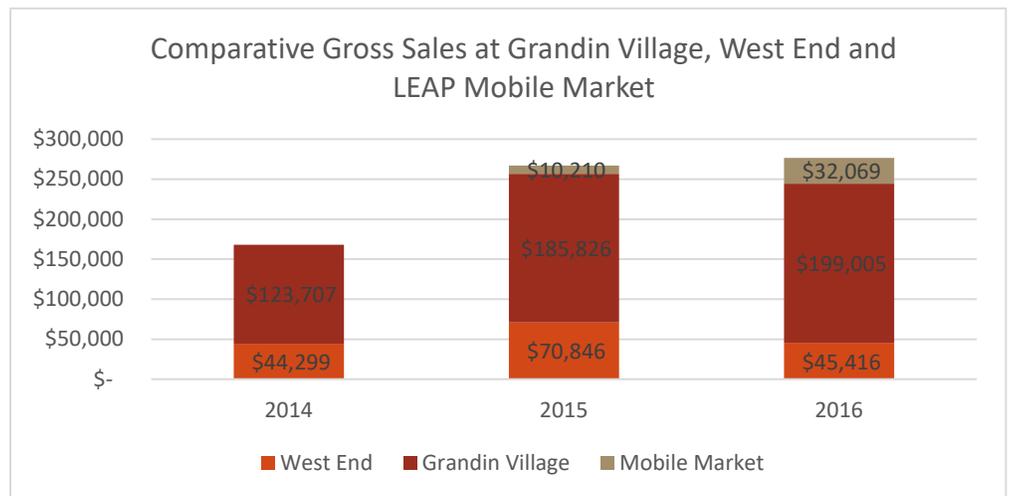
Regional Food System Planning

Food and agriculture blur city, county, regional and state lines. In order for us to be successful in meeting our mission to have a resilient local food system, we have to work collaboratively and regionally. In 2016, LEAP compiled and presented a report for the Roanoke Valley-Allegany Regional Commission (RVARC) Regional Local Food Planning Committee. This report analyzed all the existing agriculture, food, and access data in the region and helped us have a better understanding of the food system, current and future needs, and potential ways to address the needs. We plan to hold Farmer Listening Sessions in 2017 to listen to regional farmers' challenges for producing food for the local market. Stay tuned! Check out the full report here, <http://leapforlocalfood.org/blueridge/>.

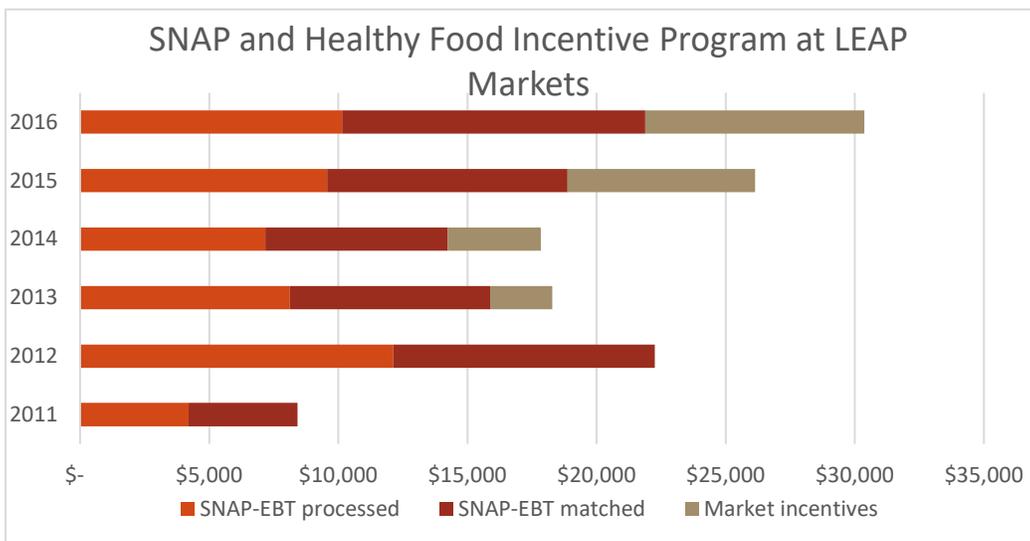


Program Impacts

LEAP Community Market Program. LEAP Markets continue to build community and support local food. In 2016, sales at the Grandin Village Community Market and LEAP Mobile Market increased, leading to an overall increase in sales of local products. Sales at the West End Community Market dropped due to difficulties on farm for two separate regular vendors. The hot summer led to pest and predator problems, leading to a major drop in production for some farms. As the smaller of our markets, the West End Community Market is more vulnerable to changing weather patterns and production issues.



Healthy Food Incentive Program. Our longest-running and largest incentive program is the SNAP Double Value Program where LEAP matches SNAP-EBT benefits (formerly known as food stamps) at the markets. This year, SNAP usage and incentives continued to grow at LEAP markets.

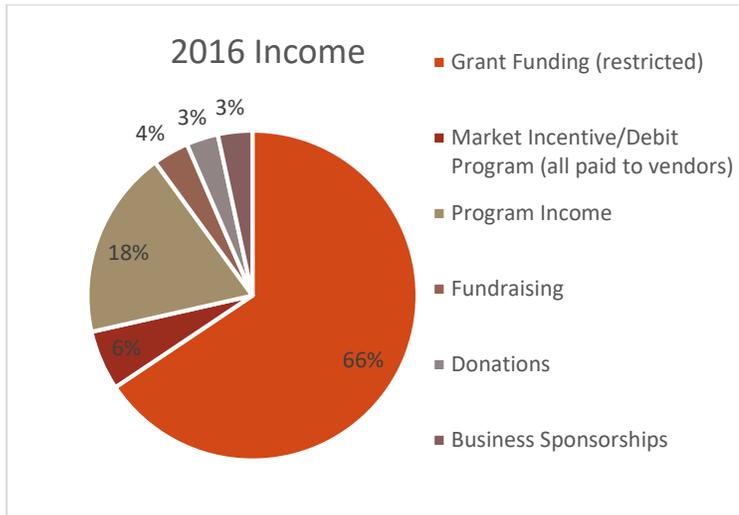


incentives continued to grow at LEAP markets. In 2016, LEAP partnered with five other local farmers markets (Town of Vinton, City of Salem, Catawba Valley, Town of Floyd, and Blacksburg Farmers Market) to provide funding for their existing SNAP-EBT matching programs. As a region, LEAP and partner markets helped SNAP customers purchase over \$70,000 in local foods. The

Blue Ridge region is a model for the rest of the state in terms of our regional collaboration and the impact we have on food access. With a significantly lower population than other regions in the state, SNAP sales in the Blue Ridge accounted for 21% of all SNAP sales at farmers markets statewide! In addition to the SNAP incentives, LEAP has incentive programs for Head Start families and low-income seniors who live at Melrose Towers (listed in the chart as “market incentives”).

Resources and Financial Management

As you can see, 2016 was a big year for LEAP. We paid for the construction of and equipment for The Kitchen, built a food hub, expanded our Healthy Food Incentives and the Mobile Market, and hired a Mobile Market Manager.



In the coming year, we will continue to focus on grant funding to support programs; however, we anticipate that total grant income will be lower in 2017 since we no longer have large construction/equipment expenses for The Kitchen. A major focus in 2017 will be to increase fundraising and unrestricted funds (including program income) in order for LEAP to invest in our programs and our staff to better serve our community.

2016 Grant Awards	Restricted use of grant funds	Amount
FINI (Federal grant), subgrantee of Wholesome Wave	Fruit and Vegetable incentive funds (SNAP matching) for LEAP and Partner Markets (Catawba Valley, Salem, Vinton, Blacksburg, Floyd farmers markets). Funds to be used SNAP Double incentives, SNAP Double marketing and some staffing. 3-year grant (reimbursement based)	\$38,501
United Way of Roanoke Valley (Healthy Start Collaborative)	Collective impact based collaboration with other organizations in Roanoke to provide a healthy start to families and individuals. LEAP receives funding for LEAP Mobile Market, Head Start incentives and outreach to improve food access.	\$36,850
Carilion Clinic Community Grant Program (Spring cycle)	To support Community Markets and SNAP Double Program at LEAP Markets.	\$15,000
USDA Agricultural Market Service Local Food Promotion Program	For Kitchen staffing, operating costs (rent/utilities) and equipment/supplies (outdoor walk-in, keycode entry system, disposable and cleaning supplies). 2-year grant (reimbursement based)	\$47,351
Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer services AFID Grant Program	City of Roanoke Economic Development Authority matching \$20K and VDACS \$20K. For Kitchen construction. Awarded in 2015, spent/reimbursed in 2016.	\$40,000
CSX Conservation Fund	To purchase outdoor cooler for hub/mobile market. Awarded in 2015, spent in 2016.	\$10,000
Carilion Clinic Community Grant Program (Fall cycle)	To purchase equipment for The Kitchen. Awarded in 2015, spent in 2016	\$20,000
Sam and Marion Golden Helping Hands Foundation	To support The Kitchen (construction/equipment). Awarded in 2015, spent in 2016	\$10,000
Foundation for Roanoke Valley, Special Interest Grants	To pilot a Senior Incentive program for seniors to purchase food from Mobile Market (will stop at low income senior housing site Melrose Towers)	\$6,000
City of Roanoke, General Fund	To support LEAP programs The Kitchen, Mobile Market, Community Markets	\$10,000
Invest Health, Initiative of Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Reinvestment Fund	The Invest Health Team is made of staff from Roanoke College (team lead), Healthy Roanoke Valley (program of United Way of Roanoke Valley), City of Roanoke, LEAP, and Freedom First Credit Union. The 18-month grant provides some funding to support LEAP's AmeriCorps VISTA member who provides program support.	\$3,750

LEAP as an Organization

LEAP is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization. We have a small but very dedicated staff: Tim Saunders (AmeriCorps State Member), Ned Savage (AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer), Sam Lev (Program Coordinator), Alex Stewart (Mobile Market Manager), and Maureen McNamara Best (Executive Director).

As a non-profit, LEAP is governed by a Board of Directors made of community members who volunteer their time and talents to support local food. The current Board of Directors includes: Brent Cochran (Board President), Susan Clark (Board Vice President), Dave Prosser (Board Treasurer), Pat Young (Board Secretary), Betty Bailey, Jim Crawford, Diane Elliot and Connie Kenny. For more information about LEAP's Board and staff, visit <http://leapforlocalfood.org/about-leap/leap-staff-and-board-members/>.



LEAPing Forward

2017 will be another big year for LEAP and we can't wait to keep on truckin'.

Finance: We are moving out of the start-up phase for some of our programs and into the sustainability phase. In 2017, our focus is to make sure that our programs run efficiently, especially The Kitchen and the Mobile Market. Even with low overhead, we want to ensure that our expenses are as low as possible and our income is used to invest in our community and our staff.

Programs: The Kitchen opened in April of 2016 and is working toward sustainability. In 2017, The Kitchen will host educational events and business education to help build new small businesses and support local food production. The Mobile Market will add additional weekly stops, continue to grow Fresh Foods Rx program, and add a second site for our successful Senior Incentive Program. After two years of service, we have to retire the original Mobile Market vehicle—it is a lemon. We purchased a used Penske box truck in December 2016 and will retrofit it over the winter to create an integrated display that will improve our efficiency and the customer experience. We will also work with new markets in the Blue Ridge region and across the state to improve access affordable, local, and fresh foods.

Your Donation is More Important than Ever Before

As LEAP builds new programs and grows our organization, we need your support. Your gifts, no matter the amount, are what make LEAP possible. We are a very lean organization, but like any non-profit or business we have do have some program and overhead costs that aren't covered by grants. We need your support to help make up the difference. All donations are tax-deductible. You can donate online at <http://leapforlocalfood.org/donate/> or mail us a check (PO Box 3249 Roanoke VA 24015).

LEAP Community Partners and Sponsors (provided financial or in-kind support in 2016)

Accounting Techniques

BNC Bank

Carilion Clinic

City of Roanoke

City of Roanoke Economic Development Authority

CoLab

Glenn, Feldman, Darby and Goodlatte

Good Food Good People

Goodwill Industries of the Valleys

Grandin Village Business Association

Imagination Station

Foundation for Roanoke Valley

Freedom First Credit Union

PCD Engineering

Roanoke Natural Foods Co-op

United Way of Roanoke Valley

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Agriculture and Forestry Industry Development Fund

West End Center for Youth

Wholesome Wave

William Alexander (graphic design)

LEAP Individual Donors and Volunteers

A big thank you to all the people who have donated their time, talent, and resources to support LEAP and improve food access, individual and community health, and the economic viability of local food businesses.