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Baker-Polito Administration Awards Over $5.5 Million to Improve Food Security in Massachusetts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

Governor's Press Office

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

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BOSTON — Building on efforts to ensure a resilient, secure food supply chain in the Commonwealth, the Baker-Polito Administration today announced over $5.5 million in grants to address urgent food insecurity for Massachusetts residents as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding is being awarded as part of the third round of the new $36 million Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program, created following recommendations from the Administration's COVID-19 Command Center's Food Security Task Force, which promotes ongoing efforts to ensure that individuals and families throughout the Commonwealth have access to healthy, local food.

"As families across the Commonwealth continue to adjust to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential that we support the Commonwealth's food supply chain and increase access to fresh, local food," **said Governor Charlie Baker.** "We are pleased to build on the success of this grant program, which is making critical investments that strengthen our local food system and ensuring its resilience to future challenges."

"These grants will help Massachusetts families, especially those in underserved communities, access the nutritious food produced by the Commonwealth's local food system more easily," **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.** "Strengthening food security in the Commonwealth will not only benefit families across the Commonwealth, but will also address the economic impacts of the pandemic on the state's food supply chain."

The goal of the Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program is to ensure that individuals and families throughout the Commonwealth have equitable access to food, especially local food. The program also seeks to ensure that farmers, fishermen and other local food producers are better connected to a strong, resilient food system to help mitigate future food supply and distribution disruption.

The third round of the grant program includes 33 awards totaling $5,551,387 to fund investments in technology, equipment, increased capacity, and other assistance to help producers distribute food, especially to food insecure communities. When evaluating the applications, considerations included equity, economic impact and need, sustainability and scalability of efforts, and ability to support producer readiness to accept SNAP and HIP benefits. In the program's first two rounds, the **Administration** (/news/baker-polito-administration-awards-3-million-in-food-security-grants) **awarded** (/news/baker-polito-administration-awards-over-3-million-to-improve-food-security-in-massachusetts) a total of $6,266,187 to 60 recipients.

"While Massachusetts continues to progress in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many families throughout the Commonwealth continue to struggle with food insecurity during this challenging time," **said Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Kathleen Theoharides.** "The grants awarded through this program represent a significant investment in the Commonwealth's local food system, providing needed resources to our farmers, fishermen, and local food producers that will lead to economic activity while securing a diverse local food supply that will benefit residents throughout Massachusetts."

Eligible grantees include entities that are part of the Massachusetts local food system including production, processing and distribution, the emergency food distribution network, Buy Local, community and food organizations, school meal programming, urban farms and community gardens, non-profits, and organizations that provide business planning, technical assistance and information technology services. The Request for Responses for project proposals closed on September 15, 2020. Applications submitted before the proposal deadline will continue to be evaluated for future rounds of funding.

"The Commonwealth's COVID-19 Command Center Food Security Task Force has been working to address increased food insecurity for families as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, building on and strengthening the infrastructure in place, and leveraging existing nutrition resources like SNAP, WIC, and the new P-EBT," **said COVID-19 Response Command Center Director and Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders.** "These grants further strengthen the food system in Massachusetts, increasing access across the Commonwealth to support residents."

The Commonwealth's Food Security Task Force's work is focused on ensuring that food insecurity and food supply needs are addressed during the COVID-19 public health emergency and into the long-term, including setting up more than 1,500 grab and go meal sites at schools across the Commonwealth, investing $5 million in the **Healthy Incentives Program** (https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nam01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com_-3Furl-3Dhttps-253A-252F-252Fwww.mass.gov-252Fhealthy-2Dincentives-2Dprogram-2Dhip-2Dnotice-2Dof-2Doppo to bring on new retailers, launching the **SNAP Online Purchasing Program** (https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nam01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com_-3Furl-3Dhttps-253A-252F-252Fwww.mass.gov-252Fsnap-2Donline-2Dpurchasing-2Dprogram-26data-3D02-257C01- to allow SNAP recipients to use their benefits to buy groceries online from Walmart and Amazon, with over $9 million in transactions to date, issuing emergency SNAP benefits to more than 240,000 households to bring all SNAP recipients to their maximum benefit amount, bringing more than $210 million of federal dollars into the state, and leveraging federal flexibilities for SNAP and WIC to make it easier for households to get benefits. WIC flexibilities will continue through the end of the calendar year.

The Administration also **announced** (/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-federal-approval-for-september-pandemic-ebt) approval for September Pandemic EBT, or **P-EBT** (https://www.map-ebt.org/), benefits, to help cover the cost of missed school meals from the month of September due to delayed school opening or remote learning for over 470,000 students and their families. Benefits will start being available September 30, 2020 for an estimated total amount of over $40 million of federal dollars. P-EBT benefits supplement the **free meals** (http://www.meals4kids.org/meals). Additionally, the majority of Massachusetts Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (**SNAP** (/snap-benefits-formerly-food-stamps)) participants will see an increase in their benefits starting October 1, 2020 due to the annual cost of living adjustment. The maximum monthly SNAP benefits will be **increasing 5%** (https://www.fns.usda.gov/news-item/fns-001020) to reflect the recent increase in food prices, making these maximum benefits the highest they have been in the history of the program. This will also increase the amount of emergency SNAP benefits that households have been receiving monthly since March.

This grant program implements the recommendations of the Food Security Task Force, which was convened by the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center in response to increased demands for food assistance. The task force is composed of a broad group of public and private members charged with ensuring food insecurity and food supply needs are addressed during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

"This pandemic has shown the gaps in the food chain and these grants will help to close that gap," **said Senator Anne M. Gobi, Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture.** "I am thankful to all the grant recipients for doing their part towards a more sustainable food security future."

"There has never been a more important time to support families struggling with food insecurity," **said Senator Michael J. Rodrigues, Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means**. "I applaud the Baker-Polito Administration for striving to direct Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program funding toward the areas that can help the most people have access to healthy food in their community, including many important projects on the South Coast."

“Elliot Farm has become a critical link to providing fresh vegetables to our region,”**said Representative Norman Orrall.** “I am very excited to see their grant award for food security infrastructure become a reality.”

“Thank you to the Baker-Polito Administration for recognizing the ongoing need and challenges so many face regarding food insecurity - especially during the pandemic. I cannot stress enough the incredible value of this program, and the countless individuals and families who will benefit from it,” **said Representative Kimberly Ferguson.** “Special thanks and congratulations to Lilac Hedge Farm for their ongoing hard work, commitment, and innovation within our community. They are true role models.”

The Food Insecurity Infrastructure Grant Program was announced in May 2020 as part of a $56 million investment by the Baker-Polito Administration to combat urgent food insecurity for some Massachusetts families and individuals as a result of COVID-19. The Administration also announced a $5 million increase for the **Healthy Incentives Program** (/healthy-incentives-program-hip) to meet increased demand for local produce and to increase access points that process SNAP and HIP benefits, $12 million for the provision of 25,000 family food boxes per week through a regional food supply system, and $3 million in funding as an immediate relief valve to food banks.

In August, the Baker-Polito Administration **launched** (/news/baker-polito-administration-launches-online-platform-to-enhance-food-system-connections) the **MassGrown Exchange** (/service-details/massgrown-exchange), an online platform designed to facilitate business-to-business connections within the local food system for products and services. Developed by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), in collaboration with the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), this platform was established to both address COVID-19 disruptions to the local food supply and to serve as a helpful tool and resource for Massachusetts growers and producers in accessing markets beyond the duration of the COVID-19 emergency.

The awardees for the third round of the Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program include:

Applicant Name	Location	Project Description	Funding
Four Town Farm	Seekonk	Four Town Farm will install a ground level storage area comprised of 4 new shipping containers. The containers will be used to store excess packaging and essential farm supplies to extend the sales of produce through the winter months.	$43,100
Elliot Farm LLC	Lakeville	Elliot Farm will construct a new three level facility with additional food storage capacity, a packing and processing area, wash stations, and a retail area. Elliot Farm partners with Farm & Community Collaborative to improve access to local farm fresh produce for the Gateway Cities of Brockton, Fall River, New Bedford, and Taunton.	$500,000
Apex Orchards, Inc.	Shelburne	Apex Orchards will purchase a new delivery vehicle and a packing line to increase efficiency and provide better access to local fresh fruit.	$71,400
Signature Oyster Farm	Edgartown	Signature Oyster Farm will be starting a scallop farm to increase the local availability of this seafood.	$66,000
Lexington School Lunch Program	Lexington	Lexington School Lunch Program will purchase a refrigerated van to assist with the transportation of food products and meals within the district. They will also purchase hot and cold mobile transporting equipment as well as a new serving line.	$209,820
Dartmouth Public Schools	Dartmouth	Dartmouth Public Schools will purchase machinery to better seal and package food for transport as well as refrigeration, heating capacity, and insulated boxes to deliver to classrooms or make available to send home to students.	$65,307
New Bedford Public School District	New Bedford	New Bedford Public School will renovate and redesign the High School Central Kitchen serving areas. This will include transforming the serving areas into a grab and go service area as well as allow the Food Services Department to provide food to 30 sites in the district.	$484,579
New Bedford Public School District	New Bedford	New Bedford Public School will renovate and increase storage and refrigeration capacity as well as purchase packing equipment for the High School Central Kitchen. This renovation will allow the Food Services Department to provide food to 30 sites in the district.	$485,008
New Bedford Public School District	New Bedford	New Bedford Public School will purchase kitchen equipment as well as install a fourth serving pod in the High School Central Kitchen. This will allow the Food Services Department to provide 30 sites in the district.	$450,753
Coastline Elderly Services	New Bedford	Coastline Elderly Services will purchase and install refrigeration units to allow for the procurement, storage, and distribution of additional perishable foods, produce, and dairy products. Coastline Elderly Services provides meals to seniors in need.	$9,775
Lilac Hedge Farm	Holden	Lilac Hedge Farm will construct a packing barn as well as the installation of a walk-in cooler, and ice machines to better deliver products at a safe temperature.	$456,575

Foxborough Schools' Food Service	Foxborough	Foxborough Schools' Food Service will purchase an online ordering system as well as storage and cooking equipment to better expand their program and feed those in their community.	$63,827
Lyonsville Farm	Charlemont	Lyonsville Farm will purchase a new van that will allow for the increase in delivery capabilities to the Greenfield Farmers' Market.	$53,212
Mapleline Farm, LLC	Hadley	Mapleline Farm will purchase a refrigerated delivery truck to be able to better deliver their products throughout Massachusetts.	$115,991
North Adams Public Schools-Food Services	North Adams	North Adams Public Schools Food Services Department will purchase a new van to continue the operation of grab and go meal sites as well as home delivery meal sites for students in need in the community.	$27,000
Hockomock Area YMCA	North Attleborough	Hockomock Area YMCA will purchase three modular food centers as well as retrofit a farm barn as a series of Healthy Food Access Centers. These Healthy Food Access Centers will effectively and efficiently meet the growing needs of the communities they serve, including helping to address access/distribution, short-term storing, and sourcing issues.	$392,563
Stillman's at the Turkey Farm Inc	Hardwick	Stillman's at the Turkey Farm will expand and update their poultry and meat processing facility. This project will increase meat processing capacity in Massachusetts.	$313,048
Mycoterra Farm	South Deerfield	Mycoterra Farm will purchase refrigeration, storage, and transportation equipment as well as develop a commercial kitchen to expand food storage capacity for a variety of crops as well as increase capacity for winter storage. Mycoterra farms serves adult day care and housing facilities and low-income residents and will be able to deliver food to those in need.	$447,563
Bree-Z-Knoll Farm, LLC	Leyden	Bree-Z-Knoll Farm will install a milk and dairy processing facility, which will include dry good storage and refrigeration as well as a farm store to be able to sell their products. They will also purchase a refrigerated truck to be able to make deliveries throughout Massachusetts.	$500,000
Hickory Hill Farm	Worthington	Hickory Hill Farm will construct a food grade kitchen facility to enable them to better package their products for distribution.	$21,000
Community Action Pioneer Valley	Greenfield	Community Action Pioneer Valley (CAPV) is the federally designated anti-poverty agency for Franklin and Hampshire Counties. They run the Center for Self-Reliance food pantry, which serves residents in Franklin County. CAPV will purchase a refrigerated truck to expand their ability to offer food delivery services, a refrigerated display, and develop an online system to allow for curbside pick-up.	$65,606
We Grow Microgreens, LLC	Boston	We Grow Microgreens is an urban farm in Boston that serves mainly residents in Roslindale, Hyde Park, and Mattapan. They will purchase shade curtains for the workroom and growing area, delivery van, and raised bed with tools and a water line to better grow vegetables.	$171,469
Braintree Public Schools	Braintree	Braintree Public Schools will purchase vending merchandise kiosks for schools to increase the accessibility of meal distribution within each school. Additionally, they will purchase a software to help provide choices for parents and students.	$42,614
Mapleline Farm	Hadley	Mapleline Farm will upgrade their milk processing equipment to be able to better fill containers in a safer manner and expand into new markets.	$163,822
Mills River Cranberry Co.	Barnstable	Mills River Cranberry will purchase a new tractor to be able to grow, harvest, and deliver cranberries to market safely.	$41,500
Marshfield Farmers' Market	Marshfield	Marshfield Farmers Market will expand virtual components of the farmers market by allowing for ordering, pickup, and local food distribution.	$891
Hagers Farm Market LLC	Shelburne	Hagers Farm Market will purchase and install two cooler/freezer units as well as purchase a refrigerated truck to be able to deliver their products in a safer and more effective manner as well as expand into the winter months.	$109,547
Monk's Cove Sea Farm	Bourne	Monk's Cove Sea Farm will purchase a boat to be able to deliver product from the farm to the dock to serve as a mobile, open-air farm stand. They will also purchase a refrigerated concession trailer to begin to participate in local farmers markets.	$63,935
Boston Medical	Boston	Boston Medical Center will purchase two delivery vans to support the delivery of emergency food to vulnerable patients.	$48,550

Center Corporation			
Grace Hill Farm	Cummington	Grace Hill Farm will construct a walk-in cooler for cold storage of fresh cheeses and bottled milk. This will enable them to meet the increased demand for fresh cheeses and milk.	$20,000
Hartley-Rhodes, Inc	Rochester	Hartley-Rhodes will purchase a utility vehicle, trailer, and forklift attachment to be able to continue to harvest cranberries to meet demand as well as allow for proper social distancing for employees.	$21,664
Round Island Shellfish	Fairhaven	Round Island Shellfish will purchase an ice machine and insulated storage bin to produce ice on site to be able to store and transport oysters to market.	$6,965
Stratford St United Church - Rose's Bounty Food Pantry	Boston	Stratford Street United Church's Rose's Bounty food pantry will convert a small room into a cool storage location to better be able to store and distribute food to residents in need in the Boston area.	$18,300

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Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito (/orgs/office-of-the-governor)

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The Executive Office of Health and Human Services is the largest secretariat in state government and is comprised of 12 agencies, in addition to 2 soldiers' homes and the MassHealth program. Our efforts are focused on the health, resilience, and independence of the one in four residents of the Commonwealth we serve. Our public health programs touch every community in the Commonwealth.

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EEA seeks to protect, preserve, and enhance the Commonwealth's environmental resources while ensuring a clean energy future for the state's residents. Through the stewardship of open space, protection of environmental resources, and enhancement of clean energy, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs works tirelessly to make Massachusetts a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family.

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Department of Transitional Assistance (/orgs/department-of-transitional-assistance)

The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) assists and empowers low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, improve their quality of life, and achieve long term economic self-sufficiency. DTA serves one in nine residents of the Commonwealth with direct economic assistance (cash benefits) and food assistance (SNAP benefits), as well as workforce training opportunities.

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