

**Report on Act 51 of 2009: Section 3(b)  
An Act Relating to Encouraging Use of Local  
Foods in Vermont's Food System: Fresh  
Fruit and Vegetable Grant Program;  
Technical Assistance**

**Report/Recommendations to the House and Senate Committees on  
Agriculture**

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**Submitted by:**



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### **Legislative Charge and Executive Summary**

In 2009 the Legislature enacted Act 51 (H.192), an act relating to encouraging the use of local foods in Vermont's food system. Section 3 required that technical assistance be provided to schools and supervisory unions as follows:

*(a) The department of education has received funding through the federal fresh fruit and vegetable grant program to increase the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables and promote the nutritional health of school children. However, some of the schools receiving these funds have been unable to maximize their use due to lack of storage equipment, staff to administer the programs, staff to process the foods, or knowledge about how to optimize consumption of the fresh foods by young children. Therefore, the general assembly hereby directs the department of education to work with school districts and supervisory unions to identify ARRA funds they or the department will receive in fiscal year 2010 to determine if any may be used to provide the resources or technical assistance to schools that will help them maximize the purchase and use of local fruits and vegetables under the fresh fruit and vegetable grant program.*

*(b) On or before January 15, 2010, the commissioner of education shall report to the senate and house committees on agriculture on the success of finding and using funds to help to implement the fresh fruit and vegetable grant program.*

In response to this legislative directive, Child Nutrition Programs at the Department of Education facilitated the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) School Equipment Grants. Grants totaling \$205,000 as allocated to Vermont through USDA were awarded to the eligible schools. Nineteen schools in Vermont received the federal funds to purchase equipment for use in their school food service programs. Many items included equipment which would support the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program as well as school meals programs. In a few cases, new walk-in cooler/freezer combinations were funded which would provide optimal storage for the additional fresh fruits and vegetables purchased. In another example, a salad bar unit was funded to increase the consumption of local vegetables at the school level.

In addition, technical assistance was provided to schools in the form of training sessions, revised funding procedures and claim-processing requirements to facilitate effective management of all Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program funds.

Training sessions focused on allowable uses of funds with respect to the types of fruits and vegetables that should be served and local markets to contact as potential vendors.

Revised funding procedures included allocating funds to schools based on planned use of funds for the two sections of the federal fiscal year within the current school year to ensure that schools could have the maximum amount of funds available throughout the program period.

Claiming procedures were revised so that schools receive monthly reimbursement for their fresh fruit and vegetable purchases and allowable program expenses. This optimizes receiving timely payments.

**Next Steps**

Future plans relative to the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program include training sessions and dissemination of additional guidance to eligible schools who receive funds. This will include techniques to increase access and consumption of fresh and local products. This will be important as it is anticipated that Vermont will receive a higher level of Fresh Fruit and Vegetable funds in future years which will provide more benefits to our school children. Training and technical assistance will continue to be provided to the growing number of schools that we expect to enroll in the program.

Vermont is also slated to receive additional USDA equipment funds which will assist eligible schools in the purchase and installation of equipment to provide storage for fruits and vegetables purchased by schools. Technical assistance will continue be provided to schools.

Child Nutrition Programs will be collecting data to measure the effectiveness of the program, its implementation in schools and the variety of fruits and vegetables served, including those purchased locally.