



The Blueprint

A Business Assistance Alliance for Farm and Food Businesses Summary 2019

The Blueprint aims to increase the number and economic viability of farm and food businesses representing the diverse populations of the Hudson Valley and New England.

The Blueprint is the right project at the right time for this region.

Farm and food businesses feed us, help keep our environment healthy, can mitigate climate change, and support our regional economy—so we need them to be viable, thriving businesses. Business technical assistance ensures they can succeed.

The Blueprint helps farm and food businesses succeed.

The Blueprint network will increase the number and economic viability of farm and food businesses by bringing together providers and organizations from across New England and New York's Hudson Valley to address shared challenges, facilitate more uniform high-quality coverage, and more effectively share and expand limited resources.

This project serves business technical assistance providers and organizations that will ultimately support long-term farm and food-enterprise viability in the region. In addition to our economic impact, our work also fosters a more equitable and inclusive sector that engages traditionally underserved communities, and we support and strengthen entrepreneurs who help conserve farmland and mitigate the effects of climate change for generations to come.

The Blueprint recognizes local agriculture's role in regional and local economies.

Farm and food businesses are a critical piece of just about every local economy—urban and rural, state and regional, wealthy or marginalized. Especially in (but not limited to) rural areas, they create jobs, build wealth and capital, drive community development, produce healthy and culturally appropriate food, and offer unique opportunities to new entrants.

Without the success of our end beneficiaries—farmers and food entrepreneurs—our world would look very different:

- Unfarmed land would lie fallow or, more likely, be sold for development, depleting our region's open spaces, destroying the best agricultural soils, and leaving the land irrevocably unfit for future agriculture.
- Local markets, groceries, food hubs, and wholesalers would lack access to healthy, locally grown food—meaning that consumers would fall victim to food insecurity or be forced to purchase food transported from far away.

- The loss of agricultural infrastructure—physical, economic, and knowledge-based—would be nearly impossible to recover once lost, making the return of future generations to this line of work more difficult.
- Farm and food businesses also protect our water supply, build soil, and propagate humane production processes—practices that will disappear if these enterprises do.
- Our region’s distinct agricultural identity would fade, depriving future generations of important historical legacies.

The success of small farms and food businesses, especially in an era of Big Ag and bigger chains, offers a sense of economic democracy—a chance for anyone to successfully build a thriving business that can do *good* in addition to doing *well*.

Our Solution

The status quo offers at best a patchwork of informal networks—meaning providers depend heavily on personal connections, end beneficiaries may not know what individual resources are available or may not be able to access one-on-one coaching locally, and the system as a whole lacks efficiency, unity, and connection. *In short, we can and must do better.*

Led by longtime sector experts, the Blueprint project is distinguished by its collaborative, forward-thinking approach to business viability for farmers and food entrepreneurs—a unique regional purview, a broad collection of stakeholders, and a specific focus on this critical element of farm and food enterprise viability. The Blueprint project will create a singular network of business advisors working for farm and food businesses—resulting in a group better able to share best practices, build a pipeline for the future, and deliver more uniform high-quality services to a larger client pool. The network will also be well equipped to fundraise collectively for sector-wide benefit.

The Blueprint aims to increase the number and economic viability of farm and food businesses representing the diverse populations of the Hudson Valley and New England. The project will shift the regional status quo of service provision by networking, elevating, and supporting business technical assistance to farm and food businesses and by constructing a professional network of providers that is representative of the diversity of our farm and food community in our region

Executive Committee

Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development Corporation, The Carrot Project, and Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program

Steering Committee

Albany Cooperative Extension American Farmland Trust, Grow NYC, Hudson Valley Farmer Training Collaborative, Land for Good, and New Entry Sustainable Farming Project

To learn more, visit thecarrotproject.org/sector_development/the_blueprint or contact Johanna de Graffenreid, johanna@thecarrotproject.org.

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