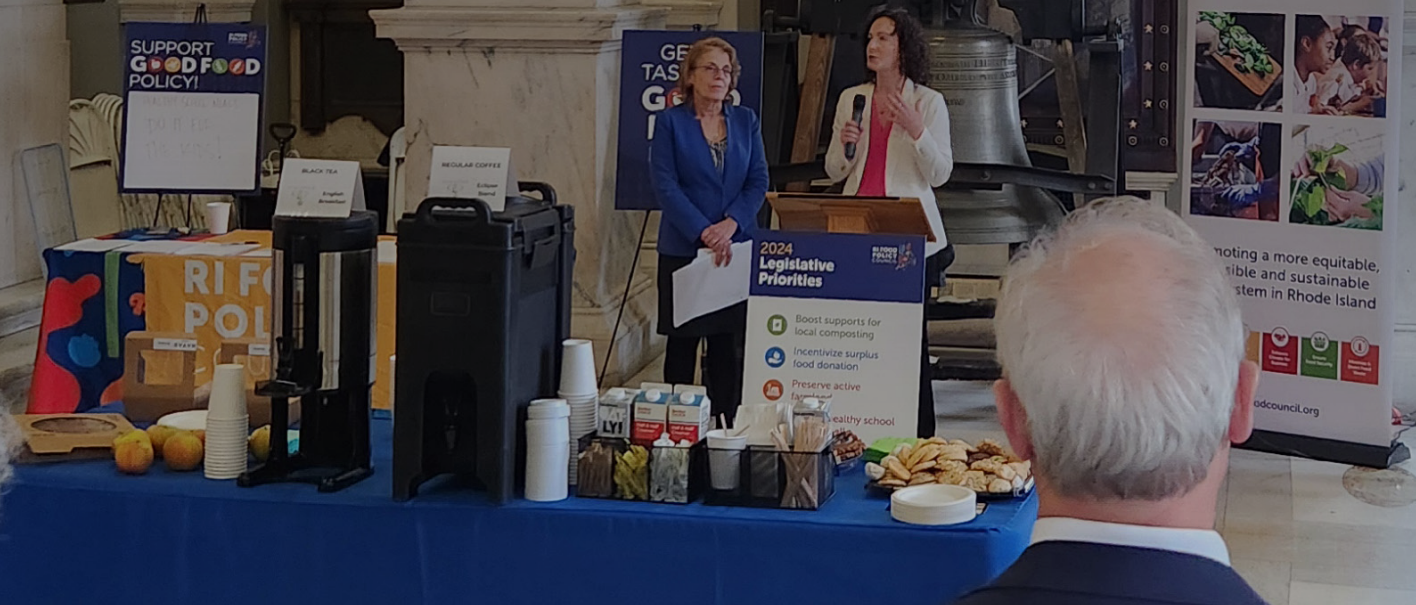


RI FOOD
POLICY
COUNCIL



2024 IMPACT REPORT

Deepening our network roots,
growing new shoots of impact



RHODE ISLAND FOOD SYSTEM HIGHLIGHTS



\$12B

OF ECONOMIC OUTPUT ANNUALLY

8,300 businesses in the state's food sector host 12.6% of all RI jobs, employing over 73,000 people



\$3.5M

PAID IN TIPPING FEES ASSOCIATED WITH WASTED FOOD ANNUALLY

75,600 tons of valuable food and seafood shells go into RI's near-capacity landfill every year.



\$17.5K

PER ACRE FOR THE MOST EXPENSIVE FARMLAND IN THE COUNTRY

1,054 farms operate across 59,100 acres yielding an average net income of \$22,969. RI has the highest percentage of beginning farmers in the US.



\$107M

OF SEAFOOD IS LANDED ANNUALLY

Longfin and shortfin squid account for 53% of pounds landed by 720 commercial fisheries while 84 aquaculture farms generate over \$8 million in sales



89,100

RHODE ISLAND HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING SNAP BENEFITS

Hispanic and Black Rhode Islanders are much more likely to receive SNAP benefits than White Rhode Islanders, supplementing food purchases for 36.3% of Hispanic households, 28.3% of Black households enrolled, and 10.1% of White households.



140,721

STUDENTS RECEIVE FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE SCHOOL MEALS ANNUALLY

45% of enrolled students are eligible to receive free school meals. 38% of RI households are food insecure.

LETTER FROM RIFPC PRESIDENT DIANE LYNCH

A YEAR OF EXPANDING LEADERSHIP AND IMPACT



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The Food Policy Council had another year of tremendous growth in 2024. We grew our staff and launched new programs, saw another big expansion in our network membership, and achieved a whole new level of advocacy at both the state and federal levels.

Our growth was fueled by the generosity, vision and hard work of all of our staff and network members. We cannot thank you enough for what you have achieved! While it sometimes felt chaotic and messy, our combined work was always focused on ways to make our local food system more resilient, more sustainable, and more truly equitable.

To name just a few highlights from 2024:

Our state advocacy tackled some of the most difficult and long-standing challenges in Rhode Island's food system: preserving our dwindling farmland, growing our small and urban farms, reducing the wasted food clogging up our landfill, and ensuring that all of Rhode Island's schoolchildren are fed well during the school day. Meeting each of these challenges is a multi-year process. The workgroups that supported state legislation in each of these areas educated lawmakers and built coalitions and will continue their work in 2025 and beyond. We celebrated one big win: placing \$5 million in the Green Bond for farmland preservation.

For the second year a Council workgroup actively advocated at the federal level, focused on the Farm Bill. By joining the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), Council members were able to access real-time updates and analyses of Farm Bill negotiations and appropriations. Although Congress was too gridlocked to pass a new Farm Bill in 2024, network members and staff were able to educate our congressional delegates on which Farm Bill programs and funds were most important to the health of our local food system, and they will continue to advocate until the next Farm Bill is passed (hopefully in 2025).

The Council launched a multi-year program that brings together a broad coalition of local organizations and farmers to support the viability and growth of small, beginning, and traditionally under-served farmers in Rhode Island. Funded by the USDA, this multi-year program will allow local service organizations to better understand and meet the technical needs of these farms.

The Council led the development of a state-wide plan for ensuring adequate food access for all Rhode Islanders in the event of a prolonged disruption to our food system. Akin to other emergency management plans, this plan was developed with ongoing input from community-based organizations, state agencies, and emergency management organizations. The final plan will be published in 2025.

The Council brought together 'Food as Medicine' practitioners from across the state and region to understand how current efforts to increase access to healthy food for all Rhode Islanders are working, and to agree on how to increase access going forward. This multi-year effort will connect and coordinate the work of health service providers, community-based organizations, and local farmers and food aggregators.

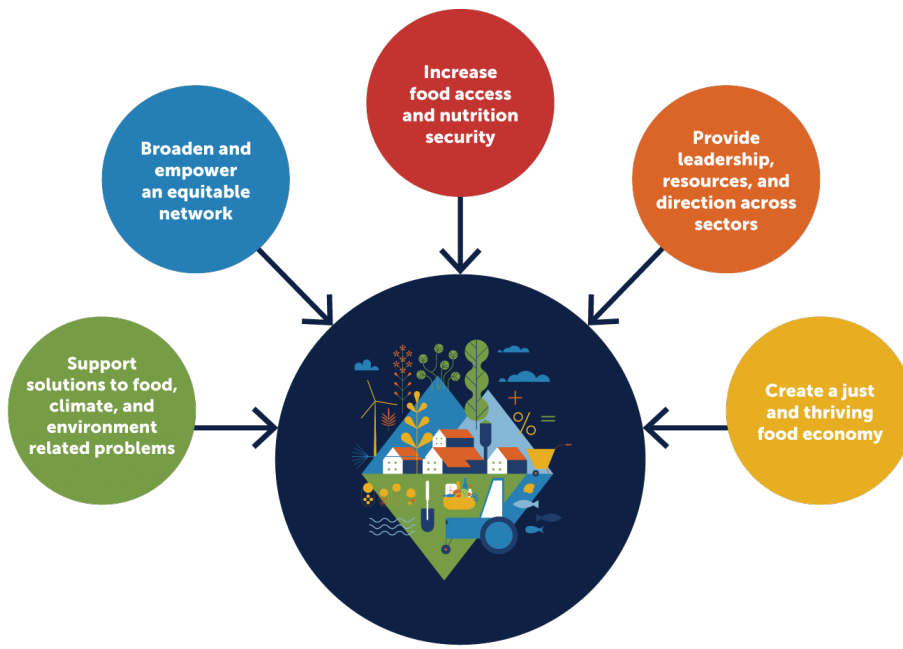
We took a leadership role in the state's annual composting conference and began working closely with municipalities across the state to develop ways to reduce food waste going to the landfill and increase composting capacities.

As part of our growth, our organizational structure continues to evolve. Our staff continues to experiment with the best ways to connect and support the individuals, communities, and coalitions that make up our network. We know that the strength of our network is our foundation for meeting the challenges ahead of us and we are preparing for another powerful year in 2025.

Yours,

Diane Lynch
Board President

RIFPC'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2023-2025



Increase food access, security, justice, and sovereignty for marginalized Rhode Islanders by coordinating and advocating for changes that enable all people to eat healthy, nutritious, culturally and religiously appropriate food of their own choice, regardless of zip code.

Support the economic strength and resilience of RI food businesses, especially those that have been historically under-served and/or under-resourced.

Create, contribute to, and advocate for policy that integrates climate, justice, environment, and food recovery in a way that centers social responsibility and economic equity at the municipal, state and federal levels.

Provide leadership, resources, and direction to state food system planning and policymaking in alignment with RIFPC's commitment to equity.

Empower the network – current Council, Council alumni, and the broader network – to build community power and affect positive change in alignment with our mission.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS: ADVOCATING, EDUCATING, CONVENING



Supporting and advocating for municipal food waste composters



Holding our first-ever produce prescription summit



Supporting our farms with state and federal funding wins



Expanding our reach and impact with new programs, staff, and events

SUPPORTING AND ADVOCATING FOR MUNICIPAL FOOD WASTE COMPOSTERS



The Council took a leadership role in organizing the state's annual composting conference, held in March 2024 at Rhode Island College. Guest speakers and workshops offered education and insights on food waste, composting, and sustainability at a gathering of more than 100 food systems stakeholders.

At the conference the Council convened the Wasted Food Solutions Action Network (The Network) to address food waste and promote composting across Rhode Island. The Network's goal is to create the state's first Food Waste Action Plan that identifies and helps to remove barriers to a more sustainable organic waste management system in Rhode Island.

HOLDING OUR FIRST-EVER PRODUCE PRESCRIPTION SUMMIT



More than 80 attendees gathered in February 2024 for a Growing Produce Prescription Programs in Rhode Island Summit. National experts from the healthcare and academic sectors and community program representatives discussed challenges and opportunities in advancing a statewide produce prescription (PRx) program.

Documents resulting from the summit include a shared vision overview and action plan. The Council has designed a multi-year effort in three phases. The earliest phase, through 2026, will focus on establishing baseline metrics, developing a feasibility and growth plan, advocating for state and federal funding as well as other funding support, and developing shared purchasing, aggregation, and delivery systems for existing PRx programs. [Read more](#)

The Council also led the planning process to develop a [Rhode Island Food Disruption Response Plan](#). We sought broad stakeholder input through facilitated focus groups and other components to create a strong plan so our state is ready to respond to and recover from future disruptions to our food system.

SUPPORTING OUR FARMS WITH STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDING WINS



The Council scored a significant legislative win by ensuring that state funds for farmland preservation were included in a \$53 million Green Bond, which Rhode Island voters passed in November 2024. The Council and other organizations lobbied the General Assembly to include a \$5 million investment in the Agricultural Lands Preservation Commission (ALPC), which was created in 1981 to preserve the state’s fast vanishing farmland.

The Council also launched a multi-year program to support Rhode Island’s small, beginning, and traditionally underserved farmers with business planning, marketing skills, and one-to-one coaching. The multi-year program is funded by a \$738,000 grant from the USDA through its Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. The Council is partnering on the effort with the African Alliance of RI, the Carrot Project, the RI Association of Conservation Districts, Farm Credit East, Young Farming Network, and the Sankofa Program of the West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation. Rhode Island’s grant is one of 45 to be awarded nationwide.

“Local farms are critical to our state’s food security and economy, now and in the future. We need our beginning farmers to grow and thrive. This critical investment will go a long way to building a more just and self-reliant local food system. We and our partners are excited to start doing this innovative and important work together,” said Nessa Richman, RIFPC executive director.

EXPANDING OUR REACH AND IMPACT WITH NEW PROGRAMS, STAFF, AND EVENTS



The Council's 2024 network-wide events drew its largest gatherings to date. In April, 100-plus network members gathered at the State House for our first-ever Good Food Policy Day, designed to raise awareness about how state policy can support a just and resilient food system. More than a dozen legislators joined us as we celebrated the fact that all five of RIFPC's legislative priorities for 2024 were supported by active legislation

Our staff grew to include Isaac Bearg as our program director for food, climate, and environment and Rozie Schleinig, program director for food, business, and economic development.

In September, our annual Policy Retreat left attendees feeling better prepared and inspired to advocate for key issues such as composting, active farmland, surplus food, and urban farming as we approached the 2025 legislative session. We also celebrated our 2024 Food Policy **Changemakers**—[Senator Tiara Mack](#) and [Representative Terri Cortvriend](#)—for their dedication to Rhode Island's environment and food systems.

In November, we drew our largest attendance ever to our annual "Farm Visit With Legislators." More than a dozen legislators joined staff members from Congressional Delegation offices and state food system leaders at the

nonprofit Barrington Farm School. The event, cohosted by district legislators Representative Jennifer Boylan and Senator Pamela Luria, focused on raising awareness of the critical role the food system plays and laying out the Council's "[2025 Good Food Policy Agenda](#)": support for local composting, surplus food waste donation tax credit, healthy school meals for all, and tax burden relief for urban and small farmers.



BY THE NUMBERS: RIFPC IN 2024



FOOD BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

29

local farm and seafood business helped

\$415K+

in grant capital for small farmers and fishers

300

hours of 1:1 expert business assistance coaching



FOOD ACCESS & NUTRITION SECURITY

115

new partnerships between food hubs and farms

104

small farmers with increased revenue of \$845K+

18

new jobs and 141 maintained jobs

97

new local food access points

77,900

food-insecure people fed.



FOOD, CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT

100+

attendees at Compost Conference co-hosted by RIFPC

\$18.7M

grant awarded by Environmental Protection Agency

90

partners/members formed a statewide Food Waste Action Network

POLICY FOR THE PEOPLE

Policy for the People, our webinar series designed to demystify local food policy and advocacy, truly took hold in 2024. Sessions ranged from Food Advocacy 101 (how laws are made in Rhode Island and how to influence legislators) to Impact Storytelling, an update on the Farm Bill, a discussion of the Council’s legislative priorities, and more. The free hour-long programs are presented live at noon with recorded videos available afterwards.

“The series was a success right away,” says Executive Director Nessa Richman. “Policy for the People has become our signature educational program. The sessions offer detailed but approachable information for anyone who wants to help build a more just and resilient food system for everyone in the Ocean State—no experience required.”

OUR PEOPLE

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Isaac Bearg
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Rozie Schleinig
Program Director, Food Business
& Economic Development

INTERNS

Joleen Owusu-Sekyere

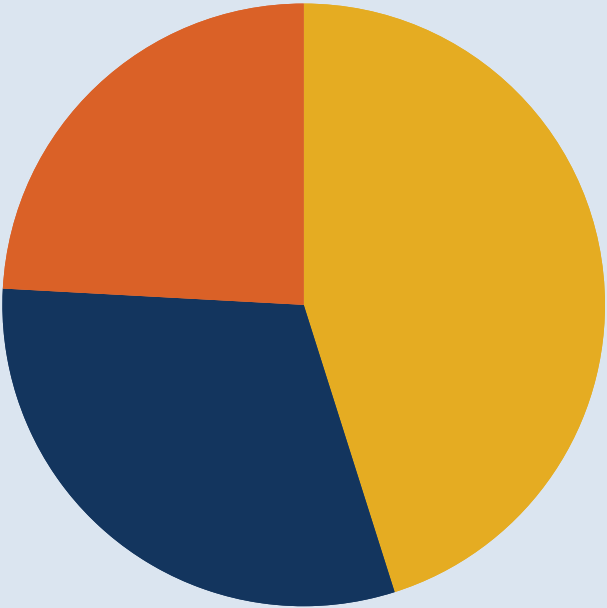
Madeleine Lee

Olivia Capriotti

FINANCIALS

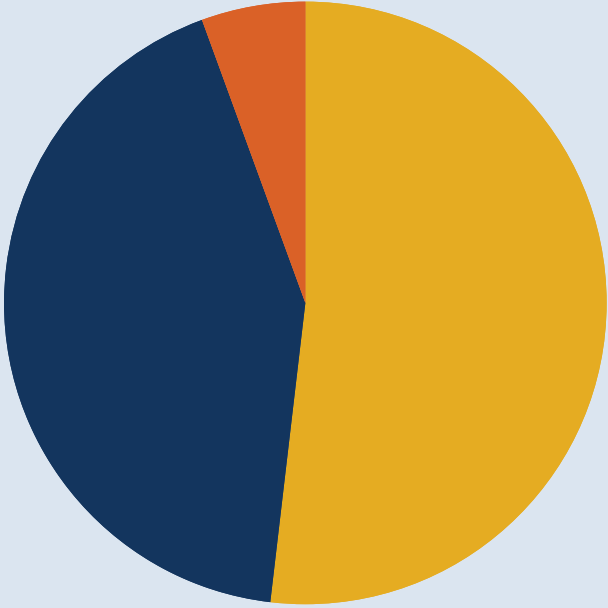
FY 2024: 1/1/2024-12/31/2024

REVENUE



- Government Grants - \$644,800
- Private Foundations - \$439,321
- Contracts - \$344,934

EXPENSES



- Personnel - \$651,872
- Contracts - \$535,100
- Program & Admin - \$70,075

FUNDING PARTNERS

Our funding partners are critical to our success. We are grateful for their ongoing support, which allows us to leverage innovative, inclusive ideas that create solutions to complex challenges, and foster a healthier, more prosperous food system in Rhode Island as well as the Northeast region.

11th Hour Racing Foundation

Rhode Island Foundation

Angell Foundation

UNFI Foundation

Henry P. Kendall Foundation

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

Island Foundation

USDA National Institute of Food & Agriculture

Point32Health Foundation

USDA Rural Development



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