2021 Annual Report
Regional Environmental Council
ABOUT US

Our mission is to bring people together to create a just food system and to build healthy, sustainable, and equitable communities in Worcester, MA and beyond.

OUR CORE PROGRAMS

YouthGROW
We provide economic opportunity and personal/professional development to Worcester youth through urban agriculture

UGROW
We help the Worcester community grow their own food through our network of 60+ urban gardens, including community and school gardens

Farmers Markets
We support local farmers and bring fresh, local produce to those who need it through our Mobile and Standing Community Markets

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MEET THE TEAM

Full Time Staff
Steve Fischer  Executive Director
Grace Slwiwoski  Director of Programs
Ajayi Harris  Development Director
Steven Murphy  Administrative Director
Ashley Carter  Farmers Market Program Coordinator
Stacie Brimmers  YouthGROW Coordinator
Noel Allen  Community Gardens Coordinator
Eliza Lawrence  School Gardens Coordinator
Tom Trepanier  Farm Manager
Gwen Weissinger  Communications Associate
Ashley Carter  Development Associate
Erika Akerson

Board of Directors
Rubin Williams  President
Julie Orozco  Vice President
Ted Hudson  Treasurer
Judi Kirk  Clerk
Eve Gilmore
Zach Dyer
Alison Bryant Ludden
Stephanie Crist
Jennifer Madison
Fransisco Valdez
Pablo Hernandez Itriago MD, MS
Justin Amevor
Gabriella Guzman-Jerry
Carl Rubin

YouthGROW Mentors
Adeline Hebert
Katie Flanagan
Laddy DeLuca Lowell
Madi Brady
Max Macort
Nathan Lewis
Rachel Coskey
Tamar Rubin Calvert

YouthGROW Junior Staff
Keiran Agyapong
Simone Barjolo
Owen Chase
Timia Gayle

Farm Mentor
Valeria Nyonkuru

Commonwealth Corps Members
Amina Ameur  School Gardens Volunteer Engagement Specialist
Max Macort  Youth Volunteer Engagement Specialist
Christine Tosti  Group Volunteer Engagement Specialist

Program Evaluation
Luca Barrett

Farmers Market Managers
Max Marcotte
Katie Flanagan
Macy Drude
McDavid Rodriguez
Amanda McConnell
Duncan Drapeau
Zach Wiff
Annabel Boateng
We were very excited to return this year to a full in-person summer session at each of the YouthGROW farms. In 2021, we employed a total of 37 youth, 10 of whom held formal leadership roles. Youth grew over 4,000 pounds of food and generated over $9,000 through produce sales, which helped to support youth wages throughout the year.
This year we developed a number of new and exciting partnerships to serve the members of our YouthGROW program. We were fortunate to bring in Sha-Asia Medina of The Village, an Afrocentric cultural, learning, and healing center and Main South neighbor of the REC, to facilitate a 6 week training on racial identity and healing. We paired Sha-Asia's sessions with on-farm yoga classes, to practice techniques for centering the mind and body and to decompress after difficult conversations as a community. YouthGROWers identified this program as a highlight of the summer and it was a critical piece in building a community of trust and support.

The YouthGROW program worked with the Woo Sox, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, and UMass Memorial Health to build and maintain a rooftop garden at Polar Park. We partnered with Northeastern University on a community climate resilience research project where members of YouthGROW were trained in research practices, did outreach, and led their own community focus groups. Youth supported the School Gardens network by visiting gardens weekly to weed and harvest. We worked with two local artists on our second mural at the Main South Farm, through a collaboration with POW! WOW! Worcester. Youth Leaders and Junior Staff met with the artists to brainstorm and share their ideas for the mural. During the summer session they worked together to complete the art installation!

A small team of youth developed a partnership with Earn-a-Bike and worked over the summer to repair 25 children's bikes that were given to families living in Great Brook Valley. We also partnered on a very exciting project with UMass Prevention and Research Center to offer training for our youth in evidence based research around the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this partnership, our youth participated in a community competition to develop social media content promoting the vaccine. YouthGROWers were thrilled to be recognized with awards for the categories of both individual and group submission for teens in this contest.
REC’s UGROW program supported our network of 60+ community and school gardens and the broader gardening community in Worcester this past year. In 2021, we built 17 raised vegetable bed gardens, 2 pollinator gardens, and planted 10 fruit trees. We offered 64 workshops, with 6 being offered virtually and the rest offered in person and outdoors, with topics ranging from soil erosion to cover crop planting.
We bid farewell to Program Coordinator Pat Barnosky in the Spring but were excited to welcome Noel Allen as our new Community Gardens Coordinator this Fall. You may remember Noel as our former Farmers Market Coordinator but her original REC connection was as a member of the UGROW Community Garden network!

We launched summer support programs at North High, Vernon Street School, and May Street school, bringing in youth, community partners, and elders to help step up and keep the gardens growing strong throughout the summer months. We worked especially closely with North High, where we ran a full summer youth program, in partnership with the EcoTarium. Students were able to show off the fruits of their labor at a garden visit with Congressman McGovern this fall.

In the late summer, with funding from the United Way of Central MA, we hosted mini farmers’ markets and a garden-themed storytime for preschool and toddler aged “shoppers” at the Boys and Girls Club of Worcester, Central Community Branch YMCA, and YWCA Central MA. We hosted minimarkets for preschool and toddler age “shoppers” at the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, and YWCA, paired with a garden themed story circle.

We’re thrilled to announce we will be expanding this successful “Farm to Preschool” program citywide, in partnership with Edward Street Child Services, through a generous United Way of Central Massachusetts Community Challenge Grant! At the close of the year, in partnership with our community garden volunteer leaders we developed a new UGROW workshop series that will launch in March of 2022!

“Having the REC come with their farmers market was awesome for our children! We need more programs guided towards gardening and fresh foods for our children to learn from.” Myrtle Okai, Lead Preschool Teacher, Central Community Branch YMCA
With the help of dedicated staff, community supporters and generous sponsors, we offered uninterrupted and safe access to local, farm fresh produce to food insecure areas of our region all year long.
2021 kicked off with a relaunch of the curbside pre-order program we developed in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We expanded the program to offer a fully customizable online marketplace with instructions in 4 languages and with 6 pickup locations in Worcester and Webster, MA.

We partnered with Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center and Worcester Housing Authority to distribute 200 bags of produce and information about the MA Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) to housing authority residents. This state program provides $40-$80 of fresh local produce to SNAP recipients every month. We also provided training about the HIP program to early intervention specialists, Health Outreach Champions at the Community Builders, Inc., Central MA Housing Alliance Staff, and service providers across the state in collaboration with Project Bread.

All REC Markets in 2021 remained certified to participate in the Healthy Incentives Program and accepted SNAP, WIC, and Senior Coupons, as well as credit, debit, and cash.

We resumed in-person farmers’ markets in June at Beaver Brook Park and University Park on Mondays, Fridays, and Saturdays and served 10 Mobile Market stops weekly in Worcester, Southbridge, and Webster on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Although our markets were scheduled to close at the end of October, because of the critical need for healthy food access heightened by the pandemic, we made the decision to extend our full Mobile Market schedule through the month of December again this year.

We offered 8 “pop-up” markets at locations not served by our usual schedule and made weekly produce donations to Buen Samaritano Food Pantry and Worcester Community Fridges. We spent the final two weeks of the year preparing for the launch of indoor winter markets which began in January of 2022!

“During the pandemic, I had to learn how to manage food stamps and the REC’s produce at mobile markets helped me do that. Going to these markets also exposed me to people of different cultures, languages, and economic backgrounds.”
Christine Tosti, Farmers Market Customer
The annual REC Earth Day Neighborhood and Community Garden Cleanups resumed in 2021 after a year off due to the pandemic. In partnership with the City of Worcester Department of Public Works and Parks and with support from our lead sponsor, National Grid, over 600 volunteers collected 57 tons of trash from over 55 cleanup sites across Worcester!
We hosted our annual Plant Sale in May where we sold over $15,000 seedlings to 300+ community members. With your help, we raised enough funds to donate over 5,000 vegetable seedlings to community gardens across Worcester. We continue to offer sliding scale payment and accept HIP/SNAP for seedling purchases as part of our comprehensive efforts to increase access to affordable local food here in Central Massachusetts!
**FY 2020 FINANCIAL REPORT**

Fiscal Year 2021, in spite of the ongoing pandemic, was another solid year for the REC. Donors and donations were up substantially. We continued to increase program spending year-to-year. Our Farmers Markets remained an efficient revenue generator and reached more people during challenging times. A tough year, but a rewarding one.

**STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPPORT &amp; REVENUE</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions and Grants</td>
<td>$917,989</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government Grants and Contracts</td>
<td>$301,156</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Income</td>
<td>$209,717</td>
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<td>Special Events</td>
<td>$40,889</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
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<td>Donated Goods &amp; Services</td>
<td>$128,615</td>
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<td>Other Income</td>
<td>$2,971</td>
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<td><strong>Total Support &amp; Revenue</strong></td>
<td>$1,601,337</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>EXPENSES</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Program Support Services</td>
<td>$913,365</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management and General</td>
<td>$168,765</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$153,765</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td>$1,235,895</td>
<td>100%</td>
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**Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets**  $365,442

In FY21 total Revenue increased by 29% over FY20 led by a 32% increase in contributions and a 73% increase in government contracts and grants. The total number of donors to REC continued to increase, up 15% from the previous year. We spent almost $90,000 more on programs while decreasing program support costs by 5% versus FY20.

Total cash at year-end was $785,232. This is a 34% increase from FY20, the equivalent of 232 operating days (at FY22 budgeted spending). Sustainability, a primary strategic objective, was enhanced by a year-end operating reserve of $128,518.
## ASSETS

### CURRENT ASSETS

<table>
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<th>Asset</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>$785,232</td>
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<td>Contributions &amp; Grants Receivable</td>
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<td>Contributions Receivable</td>
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<td>Prepaid Expenses</td>
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**Total Current Assets** $997,129

### OTHER ASSETS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Asset</th>
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<tr>
<td>Restricted Cash</td>
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<td>LT Contribution Receivable</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
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<td>Property and Equipment</td>
<td>$125,115</td>
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<td>Investments</td>
<td>$2,153</td>
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**Total Assets** $1,154,397

## LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

### CURRENT LIABILITIES

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<th>Liability</th>
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<td>Accounts Payable</td>
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<td>Accrued Expenses</td>
<td>$79,738</td>
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<td>Current Portion of Notes Payable</td>
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**Total Current Liabilities** $112,864

## NET ASSETS

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<th>Net Asset</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Unrestricted Net Assets</td>
<td>$385,531</td>
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<td>Restricted Net Assets</td>
<td>$527,484</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board Designated Assets</td>
<td>$128,518</td>
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**Total Net Assets** $1,041,533

**Total Liabilities & Net Assets** $1,154,397
We are so grateful to you, the 525 individual donors and supporters who make our work possible throughout Worcester and Central Massachusetts. Thank you! In addition, we’d like to thank the foundations, government agencies, and businesses listed below that also provide essential support.

**Our Funders**


**Corporate**


**Government Funding**

City of Worcester, Worcester Arts Council, Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General, United States Department of Agriculture, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Massachusetts Development Finance Agency
Farmers Market
Clark University, Wegmans, Workers Credit Union, Farm Credit East, Rollstone Bank, Country Bank, UniBank, Cornerstone Bank, The Food Trust / Franklin County, Webster Five Foundation, Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare Foundation, Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, United Way of Central Massachusetts

Earth Day Cleanups

Plant Sale
Mass Cultural Council, Workers Credit Union, Open Sky Community Services, Tufts Public Health Plans, Open Sky Community Services, Reliant Medical Group, College of the Holy Cross, Seven Hills Foundation, Bay State Savings Bank, United Way of Central Massachusetts

Farm Party
Newbury Investment Partners, Worcester County Food Bank, Miller Fence
The Regional Environmental Council

With your support, we’re bringing people together to create a just food system and to build healthy, sustainable, and equitable communities in Worcester, MA and beyond