



2018 New Entry Food Hub Annual Report



New Entry Food Hub aims to build long term economic self-reliance and food security among farmers in eastern Massachusetts and their communities, and to expand access of healthy and culturally preferred foods in underserved areas through production of locally grown foods.

www.nesfp.org

New Entry Food Hub

New Entry Food Hub (NEFH) was founded in 2005 as a program of New Entry Sustainable Farming Project. Its function is to provide beginning farmers with market-readiness training and multi-farmer aggregation and distribution services that support beginning farmers in Eastern Massachusetts to access new markets. To be an eligible producer for NEFH, beginning farmers must have graduated from New Entry's farmer training program within the prior three years. The Food Hub was developed to connect beginning farmers who often face barriers to accessing diversified markets (such as limited English language skills, limited production capacity, limited access to farmland, and lack of transportation) with local consumers interested in purchasing fresh locally grown fruits and vegetables.



The Food Hub provides market-based technical assistance and training to beginning farmers by offering crop planning, guidance on market opportunities, feedback and training around crop quality, and by teaching best practices for selling produce to commercial accounts on a professional level. These skills will not only support producers in selling to the Food Hub, but will help them prepare for establishing and maintaining other markets.

Over the past 14 years of running the Food Hub, operations have shifted and adapted to reflect the changes in the beginner farmer population that have enrolled in New Entry's training program. New Entry boasts a 'wall of fame' in our conference room, which recognizes individual photos and bios of those who have graduated from our farmer training programs since 2003. At our inception, New Entry farmers were immigrants and refugees from a diverse array of countries. Now, our farmer population is predominantly US born citizens with a mixture of young farmers starting out and, increasingly, career changers.

Program Overview

In 2018, New Entry Food Hub purchased produce from approximately 14 beginning farmers—all were graduates of New Entry's Farm Business Planning Course—as well as 5 regional independent farms. Through the Food Hub's partnership with Myers Produce, a produce aggregator based out of Hadley, MA, we were able to connect with an additional 15 regional farmers through the aggregator model. We expanded our work, stimulated the local food economy, and bought large quantities of specialty produce that New Entry's smaller farmers lacked the capacity to grow. The primary market channels for the Food Hub are a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program and a Food Access program that serves low-income individuals, families, and senior citizens.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

New Entry Food Hub runs an aggregated CSA program in which fruits and vegetables we source from small producers throughout the region to create a diversified weekly produce box. We receive availability from farmers each week and then put together a bountiful share to distribute to shareholders. The produce changes weekly and is representative of the New England farming season and showcases local production in the region. Over a 20-week period, members enjoy the opportunity to receive a diversified box of fresh, locally grown produce delivered to a convenient location where they live or work.



First share of the season from CSA member Alexandra Mann

Food Access Program

NEFH works to address food insecurity in our region by partnering with local community organizations through our Food Access Program, which provides fresh, locally grown food to low-income and vulnerable populations. We worked with 9 regional partners in 2018 including local senior centers, a transitional living center, and a food bank among others. We also supported 5 families receiving SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) with CSA shares through the HIP (Healthy Incentives Program) matching funds.

Farmer Training



Seona Ban Ngufor

The beginning of the 2018 growing season was fraught with difficulties for many New Entry farmers and other suppliers. Inclement weather and extremely wet fields delayed transplanting and harvesting activities, and as a result, the CSA season began slightly later than originally planned. Once the CSA distribution season started, it took a few weeks for farmers to hit their stride and begin producing sizeable quantities of early season crops. Despite the spring setbacks, many New Entry farmers had a very successful growing year and produced high quality vegetables to sell through the hub.

The Food Hub strives to support local agriculture by growing and supporting successful, resilient farmers. We strive to support farmers in a variety of ways without creating an entirely dependent relationship. Our hope is that with our technical assistance, we can adequately prepare farmers to develop their own direct markets and increase their produce sales over time to manage their risks and diversify their customer base.

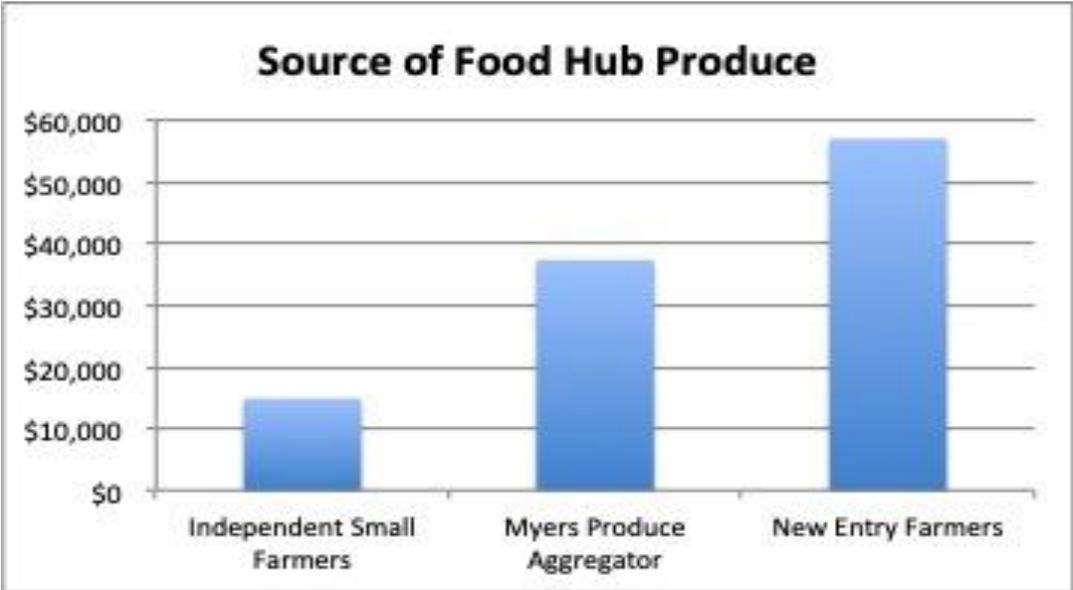


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Food Hub Earnings

In 2018, the Food Hub purchased a total of \$109,401 of produce from participating farmers compared to \$124,200 in 2017. This decrease is attributable to several factors. First, the Food Hub experienced a continued decline in CSA membership, particularly for the full season and summer memberships. This is the fourth year in a row we have experienced declining CSA share sales despite continual outreach and earnest recruitment efforts. In 2018, total CSA membership was 190, compared to the 2017 season which engaged 235 share members. The Food Hub added new pickup sites, consolidated some distribution sites, and dropped several underperforming sites (too few shareholders to justify deliveries), which may also account for fewer shares sold.

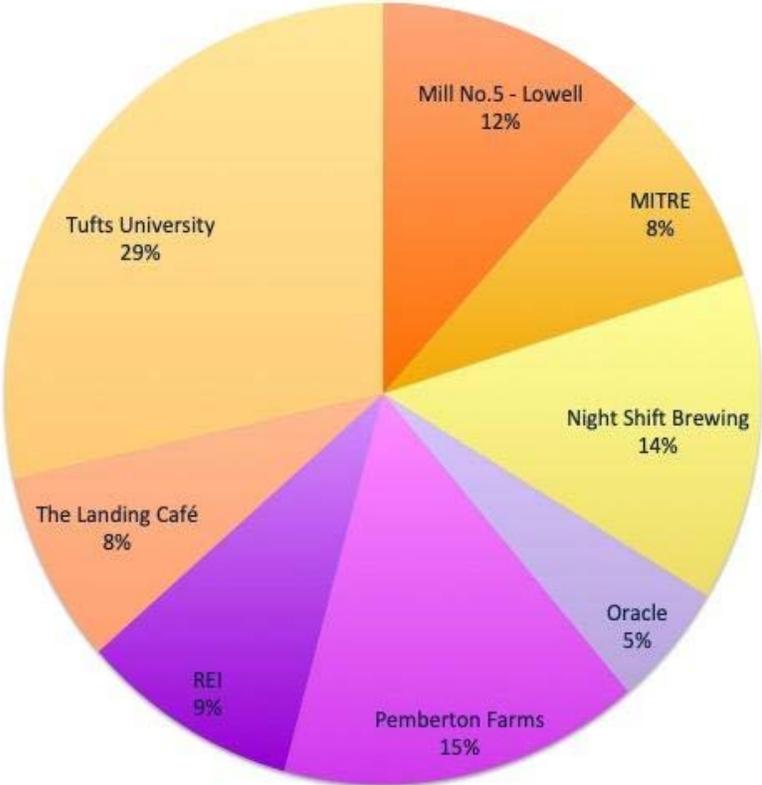
As in previous years, the Food Hub supplemented purchases from New Entry incubator and graduate farmers with produce from established commercial farms in the region to ensure that an adequate amount and variety of produce was available to customers.



In 2018, we sourced 52% of produce from New Entry’s beginning farmer graduates and 48% of produce was purchased from established independent farmers, versus 63% and 37% respectively in 2016. The increase in purchases from established regional farms can largely be attributed to the need for produce at the beginning of the growing season that New Entry farmers were not able to meet. As mentioned, inclement weather and field conditions significantly hampered early production. **In 2018, the average farmer income was \$4,758. In 2017, the average New Entry farmer earned \$4,882 while in 2016, the average New Entry program farmer earned \$5,666.** While the earnings through the Food Hub are insufficient to constitute a farmer’s only source of income, these earnings are an essential component of household income for many New Entry farmers. Most New Entry farmers are among the 80% of American farmers who have an off-farm job.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program

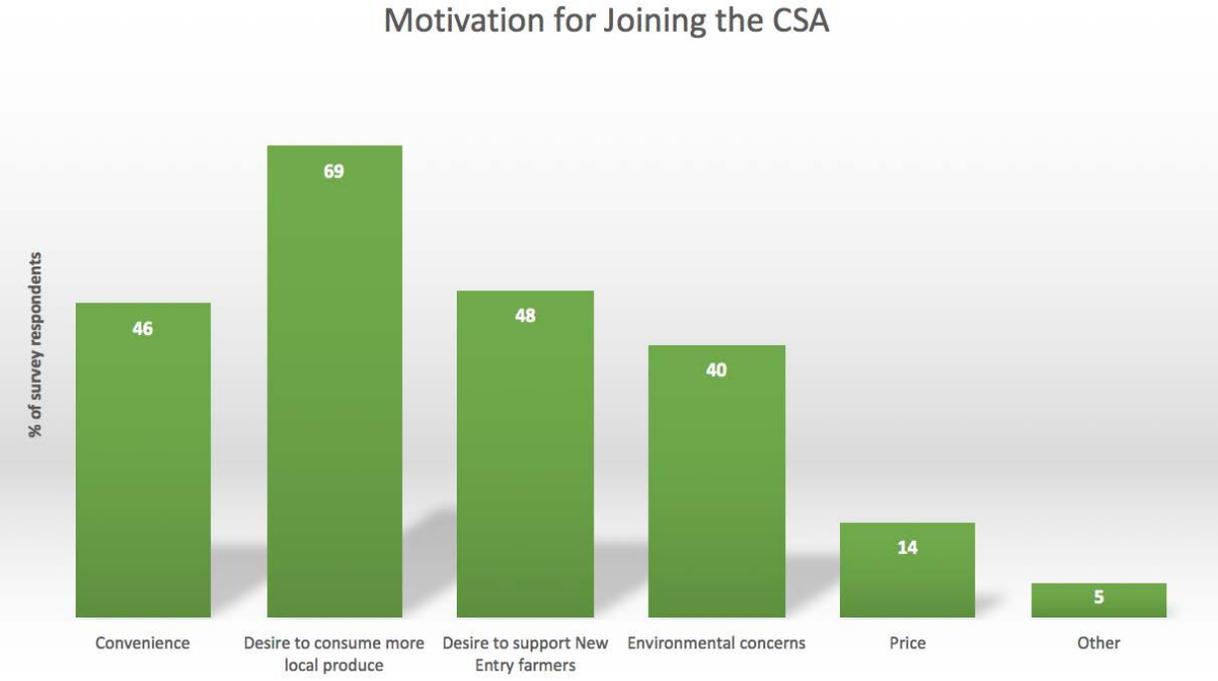
CSA Membership by Site



This year, we had 190 CSA members. Our full Farm Share, (20-week season), had 93 members. For our Summer Share (the first 10 weeks of the season) we had 63 members, and for our Fall Share (second half) we had 34 additional signups. **54% of CSA members who responded to our end of season survey indicated that this was their first season as a customer with the Food Hub, while 46% of respondents were returning customers.** CSA shares were delivered to 8 locations throughout greater Boston and Middlesex County.

New Entry staff worked together in 2018 to provide quality feedback and additional training and support to New Entry program farmers concerning crop production. **As a result of the improved training, 88% of shareholders reported that crop quality was either consistently good or generally good. 92% of shareholders gauged the value of the produce in their share as at or above the price of the share.**

In the Food Hub Annual CSA Member Survey, CSA members also provided information about their motivation for joining the CSA this season.



CSA Member Testimonials

“I love the fresh, colorful, and flavorful produce I receive, the convenient pick-up location, and the recipe suggestions for items I don't usually include in my meals. I also love the option to donate a share to a SNAP recipient or receive double the following week if we are away. If anyone is unsure about whether the cost is worth it, I would definitely suggest trying it! The share size is not as overwhelming as I've seen with other farms, which prevented me from ever getting one, and yet it is definitely enough for two to consume. I highly look forward to CSA day each week and already cannot wait for next season!” -Chelsea Willis, returning CSA member at Nightshift Brewing

“The colors and smells that greeted us when we unpacked our share each week inspired us to build our meals around vegetables. It was like having a personal produce consultant provide us with healthful ideas for the week's recipes, with tastes and textures both familiar and entirely new.” -Jillian, New CSA member at Tufts Medford

"This was a great opportunity to explore recipes every week and plan meals. I rarely purchased a vegetable during the 20 weeks of CSA. The green bins were always extremely clean and carefully packed. The pickup hours at REI were so convenient. Thanks!" -New CSA member at REI

"This was my first experience with a CSA and it was wonderful. I think the monetary value is good compared to buying the same produce on your own, but for me it was more about the experience. At first, I found it challenging to find a way to use everything in my box every week, but I have learned so many new recipes and ways to preserve food, and making substitutions to my regular repertoire is now second nature. There is also a kind of magic in "eating with the seasons" (nobody likes to say goodbye to summer, but opening your share to find gorgeous purple carrots eases the pain.) Knowing that you are supporting community and sustainability in the process feels great too." -Mary M, new CSA member from Mill no.5 Lowell

"I love the convenience of having your fresh produce delivered to my workplace. I am so impressed with both the variety and the quality of your food, and it is fun to read what farm and town each item comes from. I rely on the on recipes you include in you weekly newsletter... very helpful and I like that they usually combine several of the items in our share. Thank you for your great communications and food!" - 3 year CSA member at WGBH



Veggie Boat from
CSA member



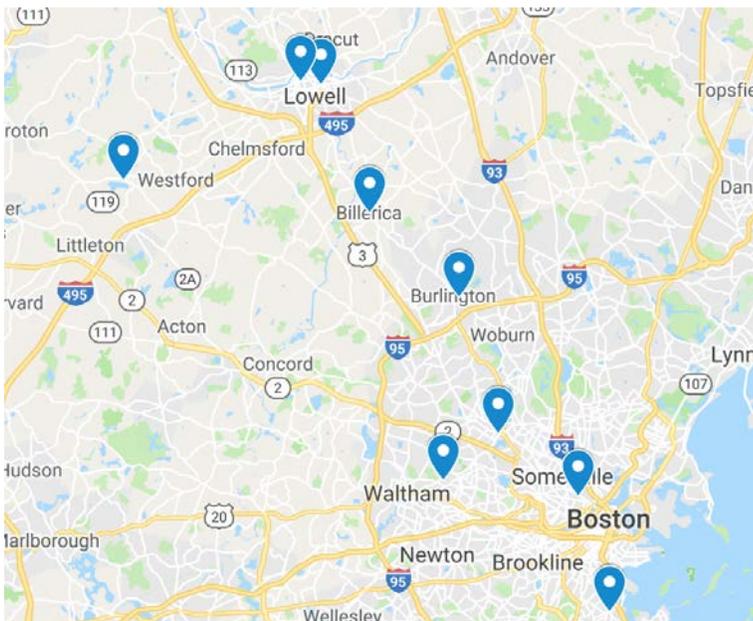
Food Access Program

9 Partnering Organizations

\$80,000 in fresh produce provided

In 2018, we partnered with Springwell in Waltham, Westford COA (Council on Aging), Burlington COA, Arlington COA, Billerica COA, Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services, Lowell Transitional Living Center, Dorchester Senior Services (Kit Clark), and Merrimack Valley Food Bank. In total, we provided 12,561 meals (each share contains produce for 3 meals). The distribution style and frequency varied at each location as outlined below.

Burlington COA (50 seniors with a share value of \$16), **Arlington COA** (70 seniors with a share value of \$13), **Billerica COA** (70 seniors with a share of \$13): these three organizations distributed produce through a weekly free farmers market to seniors at their respective centers. This program ran with support from Lahey Health.



Westford COA (45 seniors with a \$11 share value) distributed produce for six weeks through a free farmers market on site.

Springwell received 40 CSA shares at a \$25 share cost for homebound seniors.

Lowell Transitional Living Center received bulk deliveries for 10 weeks

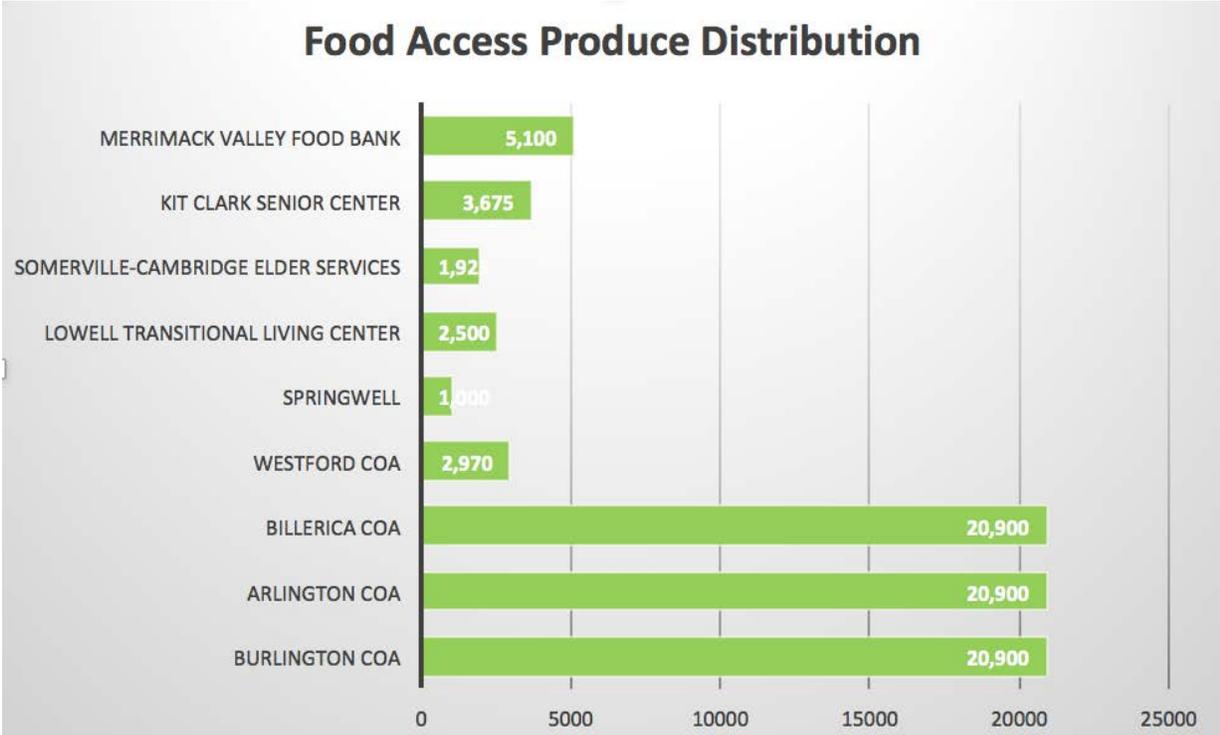
Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services received a one-time delivery of 77 shares valued at \$25 each.

Kit Clark Senior Center has a Meals on Wheels program that used our produce to serve 147 seniors at \$25/share.

We provided numerous produce deliveries to the **Merrimack Valley Food Bank**, totaling 1,700 pounds of produce.

In 2018, we saw a marked decrease in SNAP CSA participant numbers from 23 to 5. These customers paid \$80 through their EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) account monthly for their share and were reimbursed \$40 through the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP). This was the sixth year of our SNAP CSA program and the second year of the HIP matching program. HIP went through periods of high funding uncertainty during the year and the prospect that the program might not last, was a contributing factor to lower enrollment.

Using SNAP benefits for a CSA program can be a great model for some, but more often than not, people on a limited food budget want to be able to choose the produce that they get each week. Below is the total value of the produce shares delivered to each of our partnering food access groups.



At the end of the season, staff measured the program impact using a paper survey tool at the programs that ran for 20 weeks (Billerica, Burlington, and Arlington). Surveys are collected at the start of the program and at the end of the program in order to assess the impact of the fruit and vegetable distribution on the health, quality of life, and food security of participants.

Our 2018 survey results demonstrated that many participants in the Lahey/New Entry Subsidized Farmers Market program earn less than \$30,000 per year. The average age of the participant is 78 and the majority are women. Results also showed that many participants struggle with food insecurity and food access. At Burlington COA, 53% of respondents said that buying more produce would be hard on their budget, while 56% of respondents at Arlington agreed, and 40% at Billerica COA. About 30% of respondents at Burlington COA agreed that it is difficult to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables where they normally shop, and about 16% reported frequently or sometimes using an emergency food program in the past 12 months. Billerica participants reported 35% and 14% to these questions respectively, while Arlington reported 28% and 19%.

In the post-season survey conducted after the end of the Lahey/New Entry Farmer’s Market program, senior citizens largely indicated their diet had improved as a result of participation in this program. 86% of respondents said that during the program they ate more fruits and vegetables. While 78% said they ate better quality produce because of this program. These results indicate that the program has made fresh, healthy food more accessible for senior citizens. These results also indicate that food access and food security are real concerns for many of the senior citizens in our region, and programs like this are critical to ensuring this population has access to a healthy diet, keeping them in good health into their later years.

This season, we evaluated the impact that this program had on decreasing social isolation. At the end of the season, 90% of respondents said that it is important that this program provides an opportunity to interact/socialize with other people. Staff have reported that senior citizens arrive early to the distribution to meet up with and visit with friends. In this space, senior citizens discuss recipes and swap vegetables, talk about what they've been cooking at home, and even invite others to share the meals they have made. Staff at our partner organizations have said that participants truly value the time and space created by the distribution. They have noted decreases in social isolation among participants as the farmers' market gives them an opportunity to engage with their peers and oftentimes leads them to stay for other activities at the senior center. We are actively working to quantify social isolation and hope to get a clearer picture next season of the programs ability to reduce seniors' isolation. As mentioned above, this program has also provided the benefit in some instances of exposing seniors to other programs that the COAs have to offer by bringing people into the center who might otherwise not have found their way there.

Food Access Participant Testimonials

"Great access to fresh fruits and vegetables"

"This is so wonderful! I cannot get this quality of food in Billerica supermarkets"

"Learning how to cook the veggies was important. Was cooking too long."

"This program is great we talk with everyone and swap recipes and how they cooked the veg from the week before."

"My wish is a program which would be for a longer period, if possible."



Senior cooking demonstration and produce distribution at Billerica Senior Center

"Great, especially for people that can't go around too much!"

"Food is my hobby. I enjoy the diversity of the organic fruits and vegetables. I enjoy going to the senior center also."

2018 Food Hub Profit and Loss Statement

	YTD Actuals
Contributions	820
Foundation Grant Revenue	30,083
Federal pass thru revenue	5,135
Other Government Grant Revenue	6,400
Total Grant Revenue	41,618
Federal Grant Revenue	65,175
Federal Contract Revenue	11,386
State Contract Revenue	7,844
Total Government Revenue	84,406
Contract Revenue	(1,719)
In Kind Donations	710
G/L on Contracts and Awards	823
Sales Revenue- Non-Taxable	150,935
Total Other Revenue	152,468
TOTAL REVENUE	277,593
Total Personnel Expenses	100,583
Consultants	9,751
Stipend Honoraria	807
Total Contract & Professional Fee Expenses	10,558
Office Supplies	1,330
Postage	10
Phone Internet Online services	466
Printing	699
Total Office & Administration Expenses	2,505
Rent & other occupancy costs	17,111
Total Occupancy Expenses	17,111
Equip Rental, Repair & Maint	409
Total Equipment, Rental, Maint Expenses	409
Travel	1,988
Total Travel & Meeting Expenses	1,988
Financial Service Charges	1,712
Credit Card Serv Fees	1,148
In-Kind Other	710
Total Other Expenses	3,570
Farmer Produce Payments	100,861
Total Direct Expenses	237,585
Fiscal Sponsorship Fee	24,130
TOTAL EXPENSES	261,715
	15,878

Staff, Intern, and Volunteer Experience

New Entry Food Hub volunteers make the operation thrive! **In 2018, the NEFH worked with a number of committed volunteers. Pictured at right are some of the fantastic volunteers that came every week from American Training, a workforce development program for individuals with disabilities.** Volunteer share packers assist NEFH staff in packing orders and sorting produce that will feed CSA members, senior citizens, children, and other local community member in the greater Boston and Middlesex County region. Without our dedicated volunteers, our farm-fresh produce would never make it to so many plates around the region. **NEFH also had additional support from volunteers who primarily supported efforts on the incubator farms.**



NEFH CSA relies on dedicated volunteers within the community. Volunteer “Cluster Coordinators” enable the NEFH to establish pick-up locations in neighborhoods across eastern Massachusetts, making fresh produce accessible and convenient for customers. The Cluster Coordinators are responsible for coordinating each of the CSA and Food Access sites, assisting with outreach and promotion of the program, overseeing logistics at the site, and putting forth a friendly face to customers.



Teleflex Employee Volunteer Day, New Entry Incubator Farm in Dracut, MA

Thank you to all who helped make 2018 a great year for New Entry's Food Hub – we are grateful to the farmers for their hard work to grow the fresh, healthy food, for the consumers who purchased shares, and for the opportunity to feed all our neighbors in our communities!



For more information about New Entry Food Hub, please contact:

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You can make a difference!

Your Gift at Work

- \$50 - Provides tractor services for a farmer at our incubator training farms
- \$150 - Pays for one-on-one technical assistance for a farmer
- \$500 - Pays for a farmer's tuition in the Farm Business Planning Course
- \$10,000 - Purchases a full season of fresh fruits and vegetables for a low-income food access organization



Tax deductible donations are accepted online through Tufts University Friedman School. Please select the Friedman School and specify that you would like the donation to support the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project.

To donate, visit: <https://tuftsgiving.org>

