

Photo by Coy Diamond - vendors and shoppers at the Champaign Farmers Market.



2020 IMPACT REPORT



THE LAND
CONNECTION

“Even a wounded world is feeding us. Even a wounded world holds us, giving us moments of wonder and joy. I choose joy over despair. Not because I have my head in the sand, but because joy is what the earth gives me daily and I must return the gift.” - Robin Wall Kimmerer, author of *Braiding Sweetgrass*

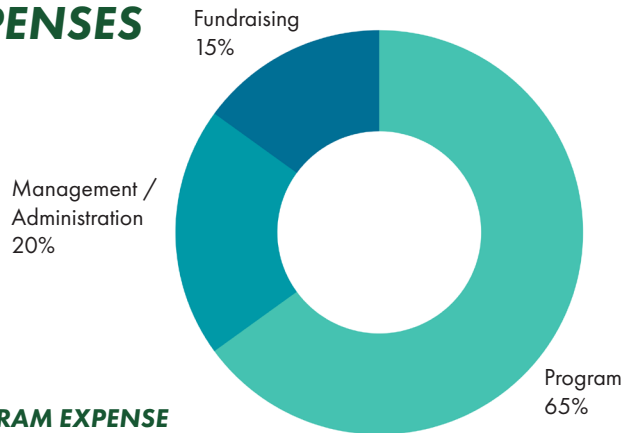
Last week I finished reading *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. The wisdom and science Dr. Kimmerer imparts on the reader is so meaningful it took me nearly six months to finish, as I kept stepping away to digest her words. For more than a year and a half, our conversations have been about the tragedy and despair COVID-19 brought to our families and communities. With a number of exciting changes unfolding at The Land Connection, I want to use this space to share with you all what is ahead. Not because, as Dr. Kimmerer says, our head is in the sand and we are unwilling to acknowledge the continued stressors our world is under as we head towards a post-COVID time, but because we are ready to return the gift — to take the lessons learned from 2020 and build solutions from them for the future resilience of our food system.

Donations from our community of supporters doubled from 2019 to 2020. This generosity gave us the resources and encouragement to act on the needs of farmers, food businesses, and community members this past year. Our work isn't over, though! In the pages ahead you will find details on our accomplishments from 2020 and the plans we have for 2021 and beyond. Gifts like yours create opportunity. And with your support, we have the opportunity to ensure that our communities have access to affordable and nutritious food that protects their health and our natural resources. We have the opportunity to invest in our local farms and keep our dollars circulating in our local economies. We have the opportunity to create collective impact with our collaborators for the betterment of our food system. Because together, we can return the gifts of our labor to continue to build a resilient, equitable, and just food system. We can't thank you enough for your investment in transforming our food system. For the health of people and our planet.

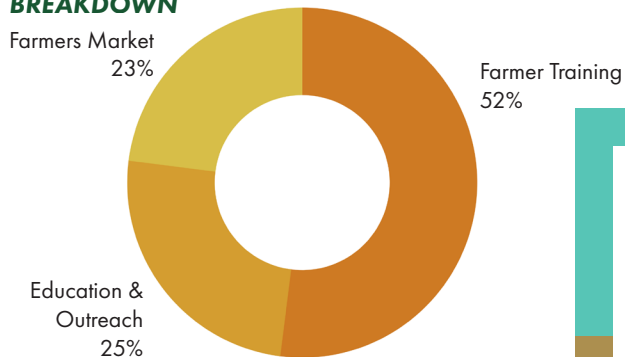
Be well,
Jacquelyn Evers, Executive Director, *The Land Connection*

2020 FINANCIALS

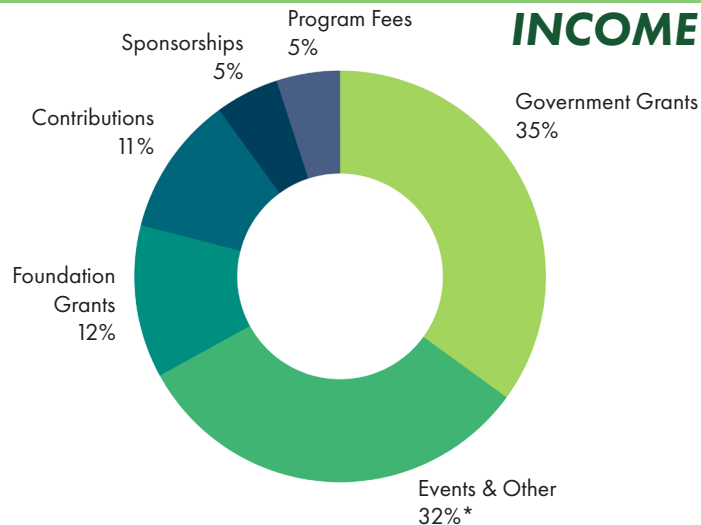
EXPENSES



PROGRAM EXPENSE BREAKDOWN



INCOME



*25% of Total Revenue from COVID support included in 'Other'

HOW YOUR DOLLARS SUPPORTED LOCAL FOOD AND FARM SYSTEMS

Funds Spent Directly Supporting Our Local Food Economy (*products*)

\$11,051.03

Funds Spent Directly Supporting Collaborators** (*services*)

\$20,782.05

**Collaborators include industry leaders, farmers, small business owners, researchers, contractors, educators, chefs, and more.

KIDS KITS

Visit thelandconnection.org/kids-kits to see all of the Kit recipes and videos created thus far in the series.



**CHECK
THEM
OUT!**

Donating to The Land Connection means helping set the table with fresh, locally grown produce for kids just like Brielle.



Our Farmers Market and Outreach Manager, Cay Diamond, created Kids Kits as a solution to the COVID-19 restrictions placed on the Champaign Farmers Market in 2020, which prevented programming and gathering on-site. This once monthly program provides families a free take-home kit filled with all of the ingredients needed to make a snack or light meal that includes locally grown produce, plus a printed recipe card, kids activity, and tutorial video. The video showcases the farm where the produce was grown, a chat with the farmer, and a how to prepare the dish segment with a local chef and an actual kid. *We distributed 250 kits last year and continue to run the program monthly!*

Photo by Elisabeth Spratt - beef cattle in a field.

REGENERATIVE GRAZING

Your gift to The Land Connection ensures we can continue to support regenerative grazing, help rebuild degraded soil, and foster a more resilient foodshed.

Regenerative Grazing Field Day - Sept. 8
thelandconnection.org/events

**JOIN US
IN THE
FIELD**



In 2020, The Land Connection, in partnership with Champaign County Soil and Water Conservation District, University of Illinois Extension, and Pasture Project, began working to increase regenerative grazing in the Embarras River Watershed.

We kicked off our effort with a six-part online series to introduce Illinois agricultural service providers to the principles and practices of regenerative grazing and followed up with a three-part online series for Illinois farmers. Both series were led by Kent Solberg of the Sustainable Farming Association with support from Illinois graziers Jill Vonder Haar, Jim Eiserman, and Grant and Casey Bauman. This fall, we will head into the field to see regenerative grazing in practice and learn how to assess forage quality and herd health, set up fencing, and more!

Our collaborative group has big hopes for continuing to build on this work and grow the community of regenerative graziers in Illinois.

Visit PastureProject.org for more information and to see what's next!



THE LAND
CONNECTION

FROM SOIL TO SUPPER PLATE:

The Land Connection supports farmers, food businesses, and consumers so that, together, we can build a more just, equitable, and resilient food system, from soil to supper plate. Our trainings, resources, and outreach are created in response to the needs of our community. We take great pride in the holistic

SOW the SEEDS



Clarifying values to create a farm dream



Farm and food business development support



Farm financial health assessments and risk management education



GROW the ROOTS



On-farm food safety training



Matched savings accounts for 3rd party farm food safety audits



Marketing analysis and strategy for farm and food entrepreneurs



Your **donation** helps sow the seeds that grow into future food and farm businesses and build the foundation of the local economy.



To sustain growth, there are a lot of skills and processes rooted in the soil that are rarely seen. **Help us strengthen** these skills and build our network of roots.

HOW YOUR SUPPORT AFFECTS CHANGE ACROSS OUR FOOD AND FARMING SYSTEM

approach we use to address issues throughout the entire food and farming system. From starting a business to planting the first seed to creating a dish made with local foods, The Land Connection provides the tools necessary for progress in each of these critical stages of the food system. **Your donation ensures the resources exist for this work to succeed.**

HARVEST the BOUNTY



Year-round access to local foods through farmers markets



Decision support for farmer-centric online sales platforms



Networking events for farm and food entrepreneurs and buyers



SET the TABLE



Showcase and promote our local food and farm businesses



Digital content on food prep for all ages and skill levels



Creation of a local food and farm business search plugin



Your support allows food and farm businesses to bring their bounty into the community, connect with buyers, build **resiliency**, and grow.



The table is set... show your support in 2021 and **donate today.**



SCAN CODE or
visit thelandconnection.org/donate

ORGANIC GRAIN APPRENTICESHIP

Your contribution to The Land Connection sows the seeds for the next generation of organic grain farmers in Illinois and across the Midwest.

Thank you to our seed funders!

DD Danforth

Drucker Family • Jaci Davis

Nathan and Mayumi Aaberg

Rick Kerchenfaut • Janie's Mill



The Land Connection's Farmer Training Program Manager, Cassidy Dellorto-Blackwell, spent 2020 working with area organic grain farmer and co-founder of Silver Tree Spirits, Will Glazik, to develop an intensive apprenticeship program for individuals interested in organic grain farming. While several farm apprenticeship models exist, almost none have addressed transferring the knowledge and skills required for entry into row-crop farming. Our multi-season training and mentorship program will provide aspiring organic grain farmers skills in all aspects of production, including the inherent challenges in transitioning conventional ground to organic. The program will also train farmers in marketing, business planning and management, and will develop systems to support farmland acquisition. Additionally, this program will work to build a network of farmers to collaboratively address challenges and develop systems that support rural economies and ensure the long-term viability of our regional grain value chain. The pilot program began April 15, 2021 with apprentice Tim Roth and things are off to a great start.

Photo of Will Glazik in front of cattle.



LEARN
MORE

thelandconnection.org/markets

UNIVERSAL LINK MATCH

**Donations to The Land Connection help
set the table for food insecure
households in
our community!**



In partnership with the City of Urbana and Common Ground Food Co-operative, we successfully launched a Universal LINK Match program for farmers markets in Champaign-Urbana. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) shoppers now have increased food budgets and year-round access to healthy, fresh, local food at our farmers markets and food co-op through the program, which also greatly benefits our local food economy! To participate, SNAP shoppers swipe their LINK card for any amount at one of the farmers markets to receive the value of their LINK swipe in wooden tokens (used for all SNAP-eligible items at the markets) and up to \$20 in LINK Match coupons (used for fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables at the markets or at Common Ground). On the third week of the month, SNAP shoppers receive triple the value of their LINK dollars up to \$20.

In 2020, before launching this program, we provided \$8,652 dollars of incentives to our community through the Champaign Farmers Market and Champaign-Urbana Winter Farmers Market. As of May 2021, we distributed 95% of last year's total.

Photo by Cay Diamond - family at the Market Tent.

FARMLAND ACCESS INITIATIVE

"It's competitive for land. Same across the state. The big thing we need to address now is farmland access for new and beginning farmers." - Eliot Clay, Agriculture & Water Programs Director at Illinois Environmental Council



Beginning farmers in Illinois face many barriers to building successful agriculture enterprises. Securing access to farmland is consistently rated as the number one challenge, and is particularly fraught for Black farmers and other people of color who continue to face historical and systemic discrimination. Currently, there is no single place for farmers or farmland owners in Illinois to turn to for advice, resources, and assistance with land access. To address these challenges, The Land Connection, in collaboration with The Conservation Fund and Liberty Prairie Foundation, is establishing the framework for a full-service Farmland Access Initiative for Illinois, launching in Fall 2021.

Photo of Prairie Fruits Farm.

CORE PROJECT TEAM — The Conservation Fund • The Land Connection • Liberty Prairie Foundation

CORE PROJECT PARTNERS — Black Oaks Center • Food Works

PROJECT COLLABORATORS — American Farmland Trust • Chicago Food Policy Action Council

Illinois Environmental Council • Iroquois Valley Farmland REIT • Land for Good



**LEARN
MORE
AND GET
INVOLVED**



Illinois Farmland Issues

01	Farmland Access is the No. 1 challenge faced by beginning farmers in Illinois	⚙️ Farmland Access Navigation Services ⚙️ Illinois FarmLink Website ⚙️ Farmer and Landowner training
02	No coordinated land linking system exists for Illinois farmers and landowners	⚙️ Illinois FarmLink Website ⚙️ Farmland Access Navigation Services
03	Beginning farmers and farmland owners often lack skills, knowledge, and support	⚙️ Farmer and Landowner training ⚙️ Farmland Access Navigation Services
04	A majority of exiting farmers in Illinois have no transition or succession plan	⚙️ Transition and Succession Support ⚙️ Farmland Access Navigation Services
05	There is no coordinated space for Illinois organizations working on farmland access to collaborate	⚙️ Farmland Access Hub

Solutions Through Initiative

Cultivating the next generation of Illinois farmers and supporting them to build successful enterprises is critical to sustaining Illinois' rich agricultural legacy.

Your gift this year provides the resources needed for this initiative to take root in Illinois!



COLLABORATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

Artisan Grain Collaborative • Buy Black Champaign
Buy Fresh Buy Local Illinois • Champaign Center Partnership
City of Champaign • City of Urbana • ConnectFresh Network
Experimental Station • Farm Beginnings Collaborative
Healthy Champaign County • IDEA Farm Network
Illinois Farmers Market Association • MarketMaker
Midwest Grazing Exchange & Pasture Project
Organic Agronomy Training Service (OATS)
ReGenerate Illinois • Routes to Farm Alliance

MAJOR PROGRAM SPONSORS

C-U MTD • Compeer Financial • Illinois Farm Bureau
Smile Politely • WCIA TV 3

JOIN THE MOVEMENT!

DONATE TODAY

206 N Randolph St., Suite 400
Champaign, IL 61820

thelandconnection.org/donate

