



Virginia Desorgher  
Mayor

City of  
**GREENFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS**

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

**ERIC TWAROG**

Director

City Hall • 14 Court Square • Greenfield, MA 01301  
Phone 413-772-1549 • [eric.twarog@greenfield-ma.gov](mailto:eric.twarog@greenfield-ma.gov) • [www.greenfield-ma.gov](http://www.greenfield-ma.gov)

January 31, 2024

Tom Anderson  
Division of Conservation Services  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor.  
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Just Roots Application - Healthy Soils Challenge Grant  
Commbuys Bid #BD-24-1042-ENV-ENV01-96064

Dear Mr. Anderson:

I write on behalf of the City of Greenfield's Planning and Development Office in strong support of Just Roots' grant proposal for an EEA Healthy Soils Challenge Grant.

The City of Greenfield is the largest municipality in Franklin County and serves as the county seat. We enjoy a strong and mutually beneficial partnership with Just Roots. The Greenfield Community Farm - the centerpiece of Just Roots' work in Greenfield - sits on a 61 acre parcel of protected land owned by the City and leased to Just Roots through 2048. The farm serves as a hub of community engagement and grows and distributes food for hundreds of our residents through an accessible CSA program and a strong presence at our farmers markets as well as robust in-person programming and education on the farm. During the summer growing season, hundreds of residents visit the Greenfield Community Farm each week.

An award of funding to Just Roots under the Healthy Soils Challenge Grant would advance local initiatives related to open space and sustainability, including an identified goal of prioritizing climate resiliency in open space and recreational strategies to support the health of the City's people, natural resources, and infrastructure. Further, as indicated in the Commonwealth's Healthy Soils Action Plan, Franklin County (along with neighboring Hampshire County) is responsible for approximately half of cultivated acreage producing food in the Commonwealth ("the non-fallow half of the cultivated acres are dominated by Franklin and Hampshire counties

each with about a quarter of the acres,” page 67 of the Healthy Soils Action Plan). As a pillar of productive agricultural activity in the Commonwealth, Franklin County is uniquely positioned to implement and effectively demonstrate healthy soils practices.

If awarded funding under the Healthy Soils Challenge Grant, Just Roots would provide a two-fold benefit. Implementation of healthy soils practices on the Greenfield Community Farm would improve the farm’s resiliency in the face of climate change, improve its soil health, and support sustainable production of healthy local food for our neighbors. Additionally, due to the public nature of the farm and its programming, the implementation of these practices alongside public education initiatives would increase the general public’s understanding of the importance of soil health and provide a replicable demonstration of soil health promoting practices like low tillage and implementation of cover cropping.

In closing, I reiterate the City’s strong support of Just Roots’ application and encourage EEA to fund this important proposal that would advance both local and state initiatives relative to soil health. Please let me know if you have any questions and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eric Twarog". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eric" and last name "Twarog" clearly distinguishable.

Eric Twarog, AICP  
Director, Department of Planning and Development





Tom Anderson  
Division of Conservation Services  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor.  
Boston, MA 02114

January 30, 2024

**Re: Just Roots Application - Healthy Soils Challenge Grant**  
Commbuys Bid #BD-24-1042-ENV-ENV01-96064

Dear Tom:

I write this letter on behalf of the organization, Greening Greenfield, to commit support for Just Roots' project proposal for the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Challenge Grant Implementing the Commonwealth's Healthy Soils Action Plan.

Greening Greenfield is an all-volunteer group that has worked in the community since 2007 to build a more sustainable and resilient community.. We work on a broad range of topics motivated by our concern about our climate, biodiversity, and equity, such as how to stop using fossil fuels, build affordable housing, and embrace hands-on projects to build native habitat, like our work at Just Roots. We are very excited about Just Roots moving to no-till to improve food quality, and become more resilient to climate-driven floods and drought.

We will continue our collaboration with Just Roots to maintain momentum and expand the pollinator habitat garden and meadow that we have been installing and maintaining for the past three years. We will provide volunteer labor and make an in-kind donation of \$2000 (100 labor hours at \$20/hour). We will also provide support on Just Roots' tours, workshops and volunteer events to educate visitors about native plants and how they benefit our native pollinators and other critters and sequester carbon, all of which strengthens our ecosystem and community.

Just Roots is uniquely poised to implement the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan – both to its own benefit as a community farm centered on food access principles, and for the benefit of our local community as a replicable demonstration of the integration of soil health principles into a public facing production farm. Further, hundreds of families and individuals visit the community farm each week during summer - to pick their own raspberries as part of the sliding scale, SNAP/HIP eligible CSA; to grow food in their community garden plots;; and to participate in numerous on-site events and workshops offered in partnership with many other tremendous local organizations. The integration of soil health principles across all of these programs will reach a significant existing audience, educating the general public and others about the importance of soil health and the ways in which sustainable agricultural production can advance climate resilient solutions.

In summary, Greening Greenfield offers full support of Just Roots' proposal without reservation, and we look forward to committing our time and expertise to support their transition to no-till farming and improving pollinator habitat for the benefit of the Just Roots community, the environment and for the edification of farmers, gardeners and the public.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Nancy Hazard for Greening Greenfield  
NancyHazard30@gmail.com

Just Roots Budget --Healthy Soils Challenge Grant						
Expense	Description	Time Frame	Total Cost	EEA Request	Matching Funds	Spend down before June 30, 2024
<b>Professional Personnel</b>						
Executive Director	.05 FTE x 15 mos organizational oversight	March 2024-June 2025	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	
Director of Farm Operations	.10 FTE x 15 mos to direct project design and implementation	March 2024-June 2025	\$ 10,800.00	\$ 10,800.00	\$ -	\$ 2,400.00
Farm Manager	.10FTE x 15 mos. to oversee project design and implementation	March 2024-June 2025	\$ 11,000.00	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Farm Team	400 hrs x 18/hr to execute no till farming and installation of perennial hedgerows	May 2024-October 2024	\$ 7,200.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 1,500.00
CSA Coordinator	.10 FTE x 15 mos to conduct project engagement with CSA members, volunteers, and farm tours, as well as PYO oversight	March 2024-June 2025	\$ 6,750.00	\$ 6,750.00	\$ -	
Community Engagement Coordinator	120 hours x \$25/hr to conduct project engagement through educational events	June 2024-June 2025	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ -	
<b>Consultant/contractors</b>						
Conservation land management project consultant	Pete Westover of Conservation Works will provide in-kind services to work with us to do a full farm assessment of our property and land use strengths, weakness, challenges and opportunities. We will create a land plan focusing on soil health, biodiversity and sustainability for Just Roots.	April-June 2024	\$ 1,800.00	\$ -	\$ 1,800.00	
Water management consultant	Expert landscape designer or water systems consultant to be engaged to help us understand and plan for ways to mitigate further flood risk at our farm	June 2024-December 2024	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00		
No-Till project consultant	Lincoln Fishman of Momentum Ag will help guide us in incorporating cover crops into our no-till system.	April-June 2024	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 900.00	\$ 900.00	\$ 900.00
<b>Engagement Supplies</b>						
Community engagement supplies	event supplies: workshop instructor, speaker fees + supplies--mainly for the large farmer to farm workshop in spring 2025	May 2025	\$ 850.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 350.00	
<b>Soil Health Supplies</b>						
Mulch straw	Mulch straw will be used as a natural weed suppressant and for maintaining moisture in our fields. We will use for both pathways, on beds and in the pollinator garden.	May + June 2024, May + June 2025	\$ 3,700.00	\$ 3,700.00		\$ 1,850.00
Compost	We source local compost from a business less than five miles from our farm. We will incorporate compost onto each bed in the no-till field, plus onto any new pollinator hedgerows we install on the farm	June 2024, June 2025	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 2,500.00		\$ 2,500.00
Plants and Seeds	cover crop seeds, and hedgerows/perennial plants	April 2024 + April 2025	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 2,000.00		\$ 1,000.00
psi/compaction recording tools	for measuring soil compaction, digital soil compaction testing tool	May 2024	\$ 600.00	\$ 600.00		\$ 600.00

Just Roots Budget --Healthy Soils Challenge Grant							
Other:							
<b>Equipment</b>							
Rock Rake attachment for tractor	To build healthy soil, we have to deal with the copious amounts of rocks in about 50% of our fields. This tool will aid us in efficient and rigorous rock removal.	April 2024	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	
high tunnel	We just invested in and will be installing a new high tunnel in spring 2024. This will be another space for us to focus on no-till techniques.	January 2024	\$ 26,000.00	-	\$ 26,000.00		
soil testing	for basic soil test + soil structure and other tests	Fall 2024, Spring 2025	\$ 500.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00		
<b>Overhead + Fringe</b>							
Fringe	@26%		\$ 11,375.00	\$ 9,633.00		\$ 2,140.00	
Overhead	@10%		\$ 10,287.50	\$ 6,063.30		\$ 1,280.00	
			<b>Total Project Cost:</b>	<b>Grant Request:</b>	<b>JR matching:</b>	Spend down by 6/30/24	
			<b>\$ 113,162.50</b>	<b>\$ 66,696.30</b>	<b>\$ 38,800.00</b>	<b>\$ 18,170.00</b>	

Nancy Hazard  
30 Spring Terrace,  
Greenfield, MA 01301

January 26, 2024

Tom Anderson  
Massachusetts Exec. Office of EEA  
100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor  
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Just Roots/Challenge Grant Implementing the Commonwealth's Healthy Soils Action Plan

Dear Mr. Anderson:

Please support of Just Roots's project proposal under the EEA Challenge Grant:  
Commonwealth Healthy Soils Action Plan.

I am very excited about this grant!! I pledge \$10,000.00 of match funding across the life cycle of the grant (2024 - 2025). I have been Just Roots supporter since its inception, and have urged Just Roots to move toward no-till farming, and improve its soil health, and, if awarded, your grant offers them a perfect opportunity to continue to improve their soil, and spread the word.

I am a resident of Franklin County and climate and biodiversity activist. I am retired, and an active member of the all-volunteer organization, Greening Greenfield, a longstanding community group of concerned citizens building a more resilient Greenfield by advancing sustainable practices.

Recently, Greening Greenfield has worked with Just Roots to install and maintain an educational pollinator meadow at Just Roots, the Greenfield Community Farm. The farm has demonstrated capacity for highly visible community education, with community gardeners, CSA members, workshop attendees, and volunteers all visiting the site frequently.

A Healthy Soils Action Plan Challenge Grant award to Just Roots would have a double impact. Funding practices like cover cropping supports Just Roots in increasing its farm's soil health and nutrient rich locally grown food feeds people in Franklin County. Additionally, with our track record of community engagement with the general public, local farmers, policymakers, and home gardeners, Just Roots, as noted in the project proposal, will reach hundreds of people with the message about soil health – its importance and how to increase soil health.

Thank you for your consideration of the Just Roots proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Nancy Hazard", written in dark ink.

Nancy Hazard

## **Just Roots No-till: Innovation and Demonstration on a Community Farm**

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Just Roots respectfully requests a \$66,700 Challenge Grant in support of the **No-till: Innovation and Demonstration on a Community Farm** project. With the support of an EEA Challenge Grant, Just Roots proposes implementation of a multi-pronged approach to meeting HSAP recommendations for promoting and demonstrating soil health and sustainable land practices. Through this project, Just Roots will (1) transition a one-acre field on our farm into no-till production, (2) expand pollinator-supporting perennial hedgerows on our farm, and (3) host public and by-invitation educational events to share this demonstration project, including a large-scale, farmer-to-farmer workshop.

Founded in 2011, Just Roots is an equity-focused nonprofit organization and community farm with a goal to change the food system. Our mission is to create equitable access to healthy, local food in Western Massachusetts and to work toward just, vibrant, and sustainable farm and food systems everywhere. Our 61-acre community farm in Greenfield serves as both a local food production and distribution hub, and a site for community-based education. The core of our work has long been our Franklin County Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, one of the largest low-income, SNAP-enrolled CSAs in Massachusetts. Building on this success, Just Roots has scaled our CSA model to reach food insecure families statewide over the last few years. Our community engagement programs, including educational workshops, farm tours, community garden plots, and community celebrations, share our work with more than 1200 people each year.

Our climate is changing, and the sustainability of our food system depends on us all taking steps to adopt more climate-resilient and climate-friendly farming strategies. Our project is rooted in our desire to be part of this change. Our team of farmers, who are experienced both in farming and also in farming/gardening education and community engagement, will lead this project to improve our soil health, increase our sustainable agricultural practices, and share our learnings with our Western Massachusetts network of farmers, activists, gardeners, and community members.

The **No-till: Innovation and Demonstration on a Community Farm** project comprises five aspects:

No-till farming: The parcel of land we steward is unusually diverse, with no uniform soil across the seven acres that we cultivate. Our fields range from rocky to sandy, dry to wet, and windy to protected, and the Glen Brook bisects our land. We plan to convert one acre of production into a no-till farming system. One acre represents about one-fifth of our total land in current cultivation. No-till farming can reduce soil erosion, increase soil biological activity and soil organic matter, improve the water-holding capacity of the soil, result in less carbon dioxide being emitted from the soil, and reduce fuel/tractor usage. Our aim is to improve our ability to withstand increasingly severe weather events, particularly drought and flooding, and to do our part to minimize the carbon footprint of our farm by reducing the carbon released from the soil and by utilizing less fossil fuels.



Native pollinator habitat: Additionally, as climate change and development alter habitat and forage available to native pollinators, we seek to utilize our land in support of these critical organisms. To do so, we will undertake planting additional hedgerows of plants favorable to native pollinators alongside and throughout our fields. We will install plants that thrive in adverse conditions and are enticing to a wide range of native pollinators.

Climate smart farming: Our team will also explore “bigger picture” solutions, such as finding and securing additional land for diversification, and learning about water flow, issues, and diversion potential on our land and neighboring lands to be able to survive in these weather conditions.

Soil testing and research: With this grant funding we will invest in additional soil testing, mapping, and water flow planning to better understand our fields and farm, and potential problems and solutions. We will purchase soil compaction testing tools and begin consistent tracking of compaction in our fields.

Education and Outreach: We will share our project with our many visitors and volunteers as it is happening, as well as host a farmer-to-farmer workshop in Spring 2025 to demonstrate the successes and challenges of the 2024 farming season. We will share our experiences and knowledge gained by integrating no-till land, pollinator habitat, and regular soil testing on our community farm.

## **Goals and Objectives**

Goal 1: Increase and promote community knowledge of practices that support sustainable land management and increased soil health.

Objective 1.1: Produce one large workshop during this grant period, promoted to local farmers to demonstrate our experience integrating a no-till field into our production systems.

Objective 1.2: Host at least one workshop for farmers, gardeners and others showcasing our work integrating native pollinator habitat and hedgerows on our farm.

Objective 1.3: Produce at least two newsletter articles during this grant period that highlight our work on no-till and climate smart agriculture practices, disseminated to our over 1200 newsletter subscribers.

Goal 2: Increase monitoring of ongoing changes to agricultural soils as a result of climate change.

Objective 2.1: Increase our frequency of soil tests to two annually, across the entire farm.

Objective 2.2: Begin regular testing of compaction, using a psi testing tool, at least twice a year across the farm to monitor changes in no-till field versus other spaces on the farm.

Objective 2.3: Monitor crop yields farm wide, paying attention to rainfall, droughts, and other weather events.

Goal 3: Improve Just Roots’ sustainable land practices to support organizational resilience in the face of climate change.

Objectives 3.1 Research diversified sites for our annual vegetable fields within our neighborhood and within our municipality. Create sub-lease documents that can be used by other organizations in similar situations.

Objective 3.2: Experiment with no-till farming and create systems and SOPs around integrating no-till methods across our farm.

Objective 3.3: Invest in perennial food crops, trees, and hedgerows that diversify our farm, fields, and production across different weather extremes.

### **Specific Areas where this project will advance the objectives of the HSAP:**

A6-Eliminate technical and knowledge barriers to adoption of practices which increase soil health. (Farmer-to-Farmer: Encourage farmer-to-farmer events, including “twilight talks”, that promote use of best practices.)

- Hosting soil health workshops and farmer-to-farmer events
- Training Just Roots farmers and workshop attendees
- Working directly with expert consultants on land, water and innovative regenerative techniques, our farmers would gain further knowledge and can train other farmers

A7-Increase monitoring + research of ongoing changes to agricultural soils from climate change.

- Increasing monitoring of soil health and fertility over time
- Introducing monitoring of soil compaction
- Increasing monitoring of land around drought, rainfall and crop

A8-Incentivize integration of trees and other perennial crops into agricultural systems to increase resistance and resilience to more frequent droughts, floods, and extreme weather.

- Demonstrating use of perennial crops to diversify our habitat and increase our resilience to climate extremes
- Conducting of new trees/shrubs and woody crops that can also be marketed to our customers

A3-Accelerate efforts to increase the viability of farm livelihoods.

- Working to increase production on a small community farm
- Working to build networks of small farms in our local food system
- Investing in other farms within our local food system, expected to be around \$340,000 this year.
- Investing in our food hub infrastructure to improve the viability of small farms in our local farm system.

### **Methodology**

Just Roots grows over 50 different types of fruits, vegetables, and herbs on roughly seven acres. Our growing practices are guided by a respect for nature and natural systems. We seek to increase biodiversity, and foster an environment where beneficial insects, fungi, and microbes can thrive. We use practices that protect the diverse ecology on the farm, and minimize environmental harm both on and off the farm. Just Roots has a commitment to sustainable, organic farming practices. Although we are not a certified organic farm, we use only materials approved by the Organic Materials Review Institute for pest control and fertility management.

Pest Control: We use holistic management practices to reduce pest populations and do not use any conventional pesticides. We use a variety of methods to control pests including good fertility management, crop rotation, intentional plantings to attract and support beneficial insects, beneficial insect releases, biological and mycorrhizal inoculations, and selection of resilient crops and varieties. We use organic pesticides as a last resort.

**Fertility:** Our fertility management program utilizes regular, annual soil testing to determine what materials need to be added each year for optimum soil health and growing conditions. We use cover crops to provide organic matter and nitrogen, as well as to smother weeds and break up compact soils. We add a variety of minerals including many important trace minerals (boron, cobalt, selenium, copper, etc.) that are often overlooked on farms. We also use a variety of other materials for fertility including dehydrated poultry manure, lime, gypsum, bone char, soft rock phosphate, and more. In 2020, we added a project called Just Compost, a partnership with the Compost Cooperative (worker-owned coop made up of people with experience of incarceration) whereby they divert clean food scraps from Greenfield residents and businesses to our farm and we build and manage compost which eventually is spread on our production fields, building soil fertility.

## **Project Methodology**

As part of our innovation and demonstration project, the team at Just Roots will consult with experts in the fields of no-till and regenerative farming to incorporate new and innovative techniques into the development of our permanent-bed, no till pick-your-own field. Over the past year, we have worked towards this transition and are ready to incorporate our learnings and be guided by trials done on other farm projects, specifically learning from the farmers at Momentum Ag. In Spring of 2024, we plan to re-shape 100 raised production beds in our pick-your-own field and reseed the field with white clover that will serve as a living mulch. During the 2024 season we will plant, weed, and nurture our crops, which will be harvested by more than 100 CSA member families. We will make observations, track our labor hours and tasks, record crop yields, and soil test twice (spring and fall) to monitor the health of our crops and soil.

Toward our educational engagement goals, we will be producing signs and adding informational aspects out in our field that will highlight our work, methods and crops, so that visitors and CSA members can learn more about our project and process as they spend time in the field. We will also host tours and volunteer opportunities in the no-till field that will provide project exposure to a wider variety of people throughout the year. In the late Spring of 2025, we will host a farmer to farmer workshop, in collaboration with other farms and organizations, to highlight the success and challenges that we will have faced in 2024. There will be a tour, discussion and hopefully some hands-on work for participants to do.

We have a team with a depth of experience in education and community engagement, and we intend to pursue opportunities to further disseminate our learnings and project details by way of other workshops, on or off our farm, and in newsletters and articles throughout the grant funded period.

We expect that hands-on work, observation, rigorous record keeping and soil testing will lead us to deep learning in 2024 in the realm of building healthy soils through reduced, or zero, tillage and in proper management of projects centering soil health, native pollinator habitat and education and engagement around this work. Sharing this work with farmers and others in the community will amplify and disseminate this learning through our networks in Western Massachusetts.

## **Expected Outcomes or Deliverables**

Events and learning opportunities:

- Spring 2024, Seedling sale and tour of pollinator habitat and no till field.

- Spring 2025, Seedling sale with tour of pollinator habitat and no till field
- Spring 2025, farmer-to-farmer workshop on installation of no-till field and pollinator habitat
- May 2024-October 2024: Pick your own field open to CSA members. More than 100 people will harvest crops weekly from the no-till field at our farm
- April-October 2024: at least four educational visits with a tour and information sharing about our no-till and pollinator project
- Spring 2025: at least two educational visits with a tour and information about our project

#### Communication:

- 2024: at least two newsletter articles focused on this work for our 1200+ email newsletter subscribers
- 2025: at least one newsletter article reporting details on whole grant funded project

#### Fields and Farm Systems:

- No-till transition completed in 2024, pick-your-own crops grown and harvested
- Increased crop yields, soil health and farm resilience in our PYO field
- Increased pollinator habitat at our farm
- At least (3) soil tests performed during grant period

#### Long Term Farm Resilience:

- New relationships made with local landowners and possible land opportunities identified, allowing Just Roots wider rotation and production potential.

## Budget

We respectfully request EEA Healthy Soils Challenge Grant funding of \$66,700.00 to transition a one acre field on our farm into no-till production, for the expansion of pollinator-supporting perennial hedgerows on our farm, and to host multiple educational events for the public around this demonstration project, including a large farmer-to-farmer focused workshop. Funds will be used for equipment, compost, hedgerow installation, cover crop seeds and project management. A detailed budget is attached.

[Budget Narrative:](#)  
[Budget Worksheet](#)

## Organizational Capacity and Background

Just Roots seeks to remove barriers to eating fresh, local food and participating in our local food economy. Just Roots began in 2011 as a grassroots community farm with the goal of growing food and sharing it with people of all income levels. Located on 61 acres of preserved farmland, our community farm includes seven acres of organically cultivated vegetables, flowers, and herbs; an historic barn that serves as a food hub for the aggregation and distribution of food from our farm and other local farms; 64 community garden plots; parcels we lease to other farmers and community programs; and gathering space for educational and community events.

Our Franklin County Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is one of the largest low-income, subsidized programs in Massachusetts. We work hard to make fresh food from our farm affordable for our 250 members, 70 percent of whom are low income. CSA members pay what they can on a sliding scale, and they can use SNAP/HIP and other food access benefits for their payments. We run our CSA program year-round, and we offer supportive services to assist our members in getting and using the food they receive, including cooking classes and tips, recipes

and educational materials, and multiple options for pickup times and locations, as well home delivery for those with limited access to transportation.

In 2020, we launched the Farm to Family CSA program, a Food is Medicine initiative to provide our CSA model with wraparound support at no cost to low-income, food insecure households across the state referred to us by healthcare partners. We will serve 675 families this year through this program. As part of this expansion, we have taken a leading role in creating collaborative partnerships among small farms, serving as a “food hub” for aggregating and distributing farm products to those in need. Just Roots is well-poised to continue to help build strong local and regional food systems to help protect farms, promote land stewardship, and get fresh food to people who need it.

Just Roots works hard to develop diverse income streams, to foster and care for a diverse donor base, and to target grant funding to continue to innovate and invest in our physical and organizational infrastructure to ensure our long-term sustainability. We have expanded rapidly in the past several years, but we have also invested in building and expanding our staff organizational capacity so that we are well positioned to manage complex programs and projects. In support of our work, we have received grant funds and capably and responsibly managed multiple projects in partnership with the USDA, MDAR, and the EEA.

Please see included Letters of Support that demonstrate our capacity for, and commitment to, this work.

### **Key Personnel and their roles in the project**

#### Laura Fisher, Executive Director

Laura joined Just Roots in 2022, bringing with her over seven years of combined experience as a practicing attorney and higher education administrator as well as years of dedication to the advancement of robust, resilient, and equitable farming and food systems in Western Massachusetts. She comes to Just Roots from the Western New England University School of Law, where she served as an Assistant Dean. Previously, she founded the Easthampton Community Garden and coordinated its operations for a decade, and was a member of the Board of Directors for Grow Food Northampton. Laura serves on the Massachusetts Advisory Board for Conservation Law Foundation and as a mayoral appointee to Easthampton's Agricultural Commission. Laura is a graduate of Smith College and received her Juris Doctor summa cum laude from Western New England University School of Law. Laura was born and raised in Western Massachusetts and spent her childhood on her family's farm in Easthampton.

Role in project: Project oversight and organizational leadership.

#### Meryl LaTronica, Director of Farm Operations

Meryl is a dedicated and experienced leader, production farmer, farm-based educator, community organizer, and mentor to new farmers. She has been with Just Roots since 2017 and oversees all aspects of farm production and land stewardship on our 61 acres of leased municipal land. At Just Roots she has helped to build and grow the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, expanded our farmers' market program and launched a farm store, transformed our farm sustainability and soil health practices, and built a dedicated community of CSA members and community partners. Meryl came to Just Roots from The Trustees of Reservations, where she launched Powisset Farm and managed it for nine years. Powisset Farm grew to include a large CSA, thriving on-site farmer's market, educational workshops and a commercial kitchen operation for community programs. While at Powisset Farm, Meryl

managed the \$300,000 renovation of their old barn into a state of the art facility complete with commercial kitchen, cold and dry storage, packing area, and farm store/distribution space. Meryl received her BA in Sociology from Simmons College, and has two decades of farming experience.

Role in Project: Project planning, development and oversight

#### Fran Kleinsteinber, Farm Manager

Fran (they/them) has been living and farming in Western Massachusetts since 2017. Fran's love for plants and food began as a child in their hometown of Denver, Colorado, where they worked alongside their mom at her landscaping business and spent many years in the food service and restaurant industry. Fran's experience and interests found a natural convergence in farming while studying at Hampshire College, with their studies in sustainable agriculture and food systems culminating in a thesis about local seed systems. Fran spent three years working for Riverland Farm as an assistant manager, and was managing the Hampshire College vegetable production program before coming to join the team at Just Roots. They are passionate about farm and community resilience, and are invested in contributing to a future of unconditional access to culturally significant and fresh, delicious food for all. Fran is honored to bring their experience in commercial agriculture and educational farming to the team at Just Roots, and is excited to continue to share the joy and fulfillment they find in farm work with their community. When not at the farm, Fran can be found walking in the woods with their hound dog Harold, relaxing at a quiet spot along the river, or tending to their personal seed-keeping project with dried beans.

Role in project: Leading farm team in installation, production, maintenance and soil testing.

#### Avi Flynn, CSA Coordinator

Avi (they/them) is the CSA Coordinator at Just Roots, entering their fourth season at the farm. In addition to running all aspects of our CSA program, they manage all volunteers, visits and tours and work closely with our engagement team to create a welcoming and exciting farm experience for anyone visiting Just Roots. Having grown up in a suburb of Boston, they are grateful to have stumbled into farming and have found so much joy and community in growing food. Avi studied Sustainable Food and Farming at UMass and feels lucky to have interacted with so many different farms across the state through that program and through briefly working with the vegetable Extension program there. They have spent the most seasons nerding out about vegetables, but have also cared for flocks of chickens, cows, bees, and other creatures that have been sources of nourishment in many forms. They draw a lot of hope from this humbling opportunity to be in relationship with this piece of land, and all the people who tend to and eat from it.

Role in Project: To manage all harvesting, signage (creation and installation), information sharing and tours in the pick-your-own field and visitor services at Just Roots.

### **Project Timeline**

[SEE THIS WORKSHEET](#) (budget narrative with work timeline)

DATE	PROJECT ACTIVITY
March 2024	Project awarded.

	Project review and planning phase
April 2024-June 30, 2024	Order seeds and plants Meet with no till consultant Purchase rock rake Purchase compost Purchase straw bales Purchase soil testing tools Set up permanent beds in pick your own fields Host seedling sale and tour of pollinator habitat and no till fields Host local food policy council meeting at farm, discuss HSAP and provide tour of farm, fields and work we are doing focused on this plan
July 2024-October 2024	Grow produce and flowers using no-till methods in farm season 2024 Observe, record and document yields, soil conditions and compaction Connect with partner organizations to share experiences and build our network around regenerative agriculture practices.
November-January 2025	Soil testing across the farm Publish newsletters about 2024 season success and challenges Try to secure and sign new leases for additional farm land within 10 miles of our farm
February 2025-March 2025	Review and planning for 2025 season Order seeds and materials for 2025 season
April 2025-June 2025	Turn over and plant 2025 pick your own field Host farmer-to-farmer workshop highlighting no till field and pollinator habitat
June 30, 2025	Project completed.

## Project Evaluation and Monitoring

With the support of an EEA Healthy Soils Challenge grant, Just Roots will implement the **No-till: Innovation and Demonstration on a Community Farm** project and submit timely reports on performance metrics in accordance with contract requirements.

Goals and performance metrics for the project include the following:

Goal 1: Increase and promote community knowledge of practices that support sustainable land management and increased soil health.

Performance metrics:

Program attendance at our educational workshops

Program attendee satisfaction with workshops, per survey

Diversity of attendees at workshops (e.g., farmers, gardeners, municipal representatives, organizational partners)

Media outreach and coverage  
Newsletter read rates

Goal 2: Increase monitoring of ongoing changes to agricultural soils as a result of climate change.

Performance metrics:

Completion of twice-yearly soil testing, across the entire farm

Monitoring (at least twice yearly) of soil compaction in no-till field and other spaces on the farm

Monitoring of crop yields farm-wide, with attention to weather events

Goal 3: Improve Just Roots' sustainable land practices to support organizational resilience in the face of climate change.

Performance metrics:

Number of potential farming sites researched

Creation of sub-lease documents

Systems and SOPs created around integrating no-till methods across farm

Number of crops, trees, and hedgerows planted and maintained

Monitoring, by volunteers, of types and amounts of pollinators

## **Sustainability Plan**

The proposed project spans 15 months. The first 12 months will be spent preparing and executing a no-till plan for our pick-your-own field at our farm, while sharing our learning with community partners. This first year of the project will set up for subsequent years of success and improvement in this project.

The final months of the project will give us time to make adjustments in the 2025 crop plan to incorporate changes and improvements to the space and put on a large, farmer-to-farmer workshop to share our learning.

After the grant we expect to continue to refine our no-till techniques, improving on the initial investments and installations done in the 15 months of the grant funded project. Additionally, once we have established and found some success in our systems we can incorporate more signage and education information at our farm to produce a self-guided tour for visitors to learn more about pollinator habitat and no till projects.

Our commitment to engaging community partners and community members will help us maintain momentum on this project in the years following the grant funded period. The volunteers at Greening Greenfield will help us stay committed to building and nurturing pollinator habitat on our farm and across our county. They will share our work across their organizational membership and at events and help us feel connected to many devoted environmentalists in our region. And, our work to learn, grow and care for a no-till field at our farm will put us in touch with expert mentors, fellow farmers, gardeners and interested individuals. The work of sharing our knowledge to many different audiences will keep us engaged and committed. Additionally, climate catastrophes and extremes are now the norm. If we want to stay resilient and nimble in these unpredictable times, we will have to commit to maintaining and growing projects like this one as they become more vital to the survival and success of our farm and business.

## **Partners Involved and Roles**



As a community farm and social justice focused nonprofit, Just Roots is unusually well connected to intersecting networks of individuals, farms, businesses, and nonprofit organizations working in farming, environmental activism and care, local food systems resilience, sustainable agriculture and land care, food access, healthcare, and social services. Our capacity for sharing our work as part of our educational mission is supported by staff members dedicated to outreach and engagement with other organizations and individuals in our community.

Greening Greenfield is a longtime partner in our work around supporting pollinators as a part of overall sustainability. They have generously committed to offering in-kind labor in installation and maintenance of pollinator plants, as well as support of farm tours, workshops, and events in support of this project. This is valued at \$2000 and detailed in their included Letter of Support.

Momentum Agriculture and Conservation Works have also pledged in-kind support in professional consulting in sustainable land management. They will provide considerable experience and expertise as we amplify our work around soil health, sustainable agricultural practices, and climate resilience. Please see the included letters of support for more information.

## **Community Engagement**

Just Roots began as a grassroots group of citizens concerned about lack of access to fresh vegetables and fruits, land to farm, and connection to land, farmers, and the local farm systems. We continue to prize accessibility, hospitality, and inclusiveness as the heart of who we are, and we work hard to involve our members in our organizational planning and decision-making. We welcome community members, school and community groups, volunteers, and partners to our farm for dozens of on-farm events each year, including farm tours, educational workshops, community meals, community celebrations, and more. Our farm is open to the community, and we welcome individuals and groups to walk the land, get to know our staff, and become part of Just Roots.

Just Roots participates in a number of local, regional, and state networks organized around food justice, farming, sustainable land management, and local food systems. We are active members of the Food is Medicine Massachusetts (FIM-MA) coalition, and leaders of our local food policy council. In the past year, we've hosted a number of high profile visitors interested in our work, including Representative Jim McGovern, the Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, and Governor Maura Healey. We are always looking for opportunities to share our work and our impact with others, learn from healthcare, food systems, and farm partners, and collaborate with community partners to identify challenges and propose solutions.

## **Risk Assessment**

As with anything in farming, there are no guarantees that things will go exactly as planned. However, our determination is that risks to seeing this project to completion are low, and are mitigated by the agility and skills of our farm team and the quality and longevity of our partnerships. The work of this project will be well integrated into our systems of land management, and we have the depth of experience on our team and resources in hand to pivot as needed in response to challenges as they arise.

Project Timeline:

One possible challenge that may come up in setting up our no-till field is that if we have a very wet Spring, it will be difficult to get this field work done. This may delay the project, but would not make it impossible to complete by the end of the grant period. Weather unknowns and soil conditions will be the primary factor in the risk assessment of our project. We have years of experience in knowing when to push our soil and when to let it rest in order to balance production and long term soil health.

We also feel strongly that the deep and varied partnerships we have with other farms, farmers and food and farming based-organizations will aid us in facing any challenges that come our way in either the planning, execution or evaluation of this process. We have support beyond our organization to tackle a wide range of unknowns.



1 February 2024

Tom Anderson  
Division of Conservation Services  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Just Roots Application - Healthy Soils Challenge Grant  
Commbuys Bid #BD-24-1042-ENV-ENV01-96064

Dear Tom:

Just Roots is pleased to apply for a Healthy Soils Challenge Grant in support of our **No-till: Innovation and Demonstration on a Community Farm** project. Just Roots proposes to address HSAP recommendations for promoting and demonstrating soil health and sustainable land practices through (1) transitioning a one-acre field on our farm into no-till production, (2) expanding pollinator-supporting perennial hedgerows on our farm, and (3) hosting public and by-invitation educational events to share this demonstration project, including a large-scale, farmer-to-farmer workshop.

Founded in 2011, Just Roots is an equity-focused nonprofit organization and community farm with a goal to change the food system. Our 61-acre community farm in Greenfield serves as both a local food production and distribution hub, and a site for community-based education. The core of our work has long been our Franklin County Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, one of the largest low-income, SNAP-enrolled CSAs in Massachusetts. Our Farm to Family program builds on this model to reach food insecure families. Our community education programs engage more than 1200 people each year with our work.

Just Roots is uniquely poised to implement the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan. While benefiting our community farm, this project offers our larger community a replicable demonstration of the integration of soil health principles into a public facing production farm. Hundreds of people visit our community farm each week during the summer. The integration of soil health principles across our programs will reach a significant existing audience, educating them about the importance of soil health and the ways in which sustainable agricultural production can advance climate resilient solutions.

Thank you for your consideration of the enclosed proposal.

Sincerely,

Julie Gillette, Director of Development

34 Glenbrook Drive, Apt. 1B  
Greenfield, MA 01301

413.325.8969 | [info@justroots.org](mailto:info@justroots.org) | [www.justroots.org](http://www.justroots.org)  
*Everyone's Farm to Everyone's Table - Just . Vibrant . Sustainable*

January 28, 2024

Tom Anderson  
Division of Conservation Services  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor.  
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Just Roots Application - Healthy Soils Challenge Grant  
Commbuys Bid #BD-24-1042-ENV-ENV01-96064

Dear Tom:

I write to commit my support for Just Roots' project proposal for the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Challenge Grant Implementing the Commonwealth's Healthy Soils Action Plan. I am pleased to offer both this letter of support as well as **10 hours of consulting time at \$90/hour** across the life cycle of the grant.

Momentum Ag runs farmer-led trials to develop and drive adoption of climate-smart techniques and technologies. Our farmer network has developed a deep understanding of tillage reduction practices. As Momentum's Director, I'll be pleased to bring our group's findings to bear at Just Roots, as they expand their no-till plantings. I anticipate the relationship being symbiotic in the sense that Just Roots' public-facing operation will also provide a space where other farmers can see a variety of tillage reduction techniques in action.

Just Roots is uniquely poised to implement the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan – both to its own benefit as a community farm centered on food access principles, and to the benefit of our local community as a replicable demonstration of the integration of soil health principles into a public facing production farm. Further, hundreds of families and individuals visit the community farm each week during summer - to pick their own raspberries as part of the sliding scale, SNAP/HIP eligible CSA, to grow food in their community garden plots, and in connection with numerous on-site events and workshops sponsored in connection with so many other tremendous local organizations. The integration of soil health principles across all of these programs will reach a significant existing audience, educating the general public and others about the importance of soil health and the ways in which sustainable agricultural production can advance climate resilient solutions.

In closing, I offer my full support to Just Roots and their proposal without reservation, and look forward to committing my time and expertise to support their transition to no-till farming for the benefit of the Just Roots community and for the edification of farmers, gardeners and the public.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Momentum<sup>AG</sup>

Lincoln Fishman

Director, Momentum Ag



January 10, 2024

Tom Anderson  
Division of Conservation Services  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor.  
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Just Roots Application - Healthy Soils Challenge Grant  
Commbuys Bid #BD-24-1042-ENV-ENV01-96064

Dear Tom:

I write to commit my support for Just Roots' project proposal for the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Challenge Grant Implementing the Commonwealth's Healthy Soils Action Plan. As a member of the Just Roots Board of Directors as well as a longtime ecological consultant through my work as Co-Founder of Conservation Works, I am pleased to offer both this letter of support as well as an in-kind match totaling **\$1,800 (\$90/hour consulting time x 20 hours)** across the life cycle of the grant.

Conservation Works, based in North Hatfield, MA, interfaces with public, private, and nonprofit landowners to enhance land conservation and ecological resilience. I counsel on a variety of land-based issues and projects, ranging from ecological assessments to creation of land management plans. Through my role at Conservation Works, I offer a variety of services that will be useful to Just Roots throughout the implementation of this project, including customized GIS mapping, drone monitoring of conditions, and assistance and counsel with regard to wetland areas and water resources on the property they farm.

Additionally, I look forward to supporting outreach and community engagement regarding the project through my network and beyond. In addition to my role with Conservation Works, I am a frequent adjunct professor of ecology at Hampshire College. Formerly, I worked as the long-time Conservation Director for the Town of Amherst. I currently serve on the Massachusetts Advisory Board for the Conservation Law Foundation on the board of the Hitchcock Center for the Environment. I am a co-founder of Valley Land Fund and the Massachusetts Society of Municipal Conservation Professionals, and I served as a long-time advisor to the Kestrel Land Trust.

Just Roots is uniquely poised to implement the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan – both to its own benefit as a community farm centered on food access principles, and to the benefit of our local

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**CONSERVATION WORKS, LLC**

P.O. Box 705, North Hatfield, MA 01066 | [info@conservationworksllc.com](mailto:info@conservationworksllc.com) | (413) 695-4627 or (413) 665-4077  
[www.ConservationWorksLLC.com](http://www.ConservationWorksLLC.com)



community as a replicable demonstration of the integration of soil health principles into a public facing production farm. Further, hundreds of families and individuals visit the community farm each week during summer - to pick their own raspberries as part of the sliding scale, SNAP/HIP eligible CSA, to grow food in their community garden plots, and in connection with numerous on-site events and workshops sponsored in connection with organizations like NOFA Mass, Greening Greenfield, and the Franklin County Food Council. The integration of soil health principles across all of these programs will reach a significant existing audience, educating the general public and others about the importance of soil health and the ways in which sustainable agricultural production can advance climate resilient solutions.

In closing, I offer my full support to Just Roots and their proposal without reservation, and look forward to committing an in-kind match for the grant valued at \$1,800.00.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

*Pete Westover*

Pete Westover

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**CONSERVATION WORKS, LLC**

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