



## Food Business Development from Field to Fork

The core strategy of VC2 is to build profitable, equitable, supply chains that create jobs by moving more local food from farm to table. VC2 provides hands-on technical assistance such as accounting set ups, branding and marketing support, enterprise budgeting and process development. Coaching services offered support business structure organization and development. Access to capital support comes in the form of business plan development and financial plan documentation. Outreach and network support fosters new sales connections and builds a supportive network of these businesses across the state.

VC2 does many different things, but perhaps one of the most important is filling in the gaps. We help clients prioritize which issues to tackle first; we connect clients to the best resource; we add a communication link between the clients and their technical assistance contractors when we see signs of a breakdown; we provide encouragement when the client's to-do' lists get too long; and we help clients weave through paperwork and red tape when they have lost all patience.

VC2 works with associations and groups that want to formalize their business structure and offer more services to their members. That frequently involves encouraging more independent types to work together for the greater good. Our first introduction to groups often involves supporting a training or workshop. These events bring folks who may or may not know each other into the same room. By sharing with other groups, participants realize that they are not alone and can achieve more by working together.

This type of 'gap work' is important to get people beyond what stops them. Farming and running a food business is hard enough. Too often food and farm businesses give up on expansion projects when they get busy on the farm, get stuck on the paperwork, frustrated by a contractor who doesn't understand what they need, or fed up with trying to work within a group. The VC2 staff takes the time to check-in with our clients during the Technical Assistance process to make sure that everything is on track and that everyone is focused on the end goal. We listen to what clients are saying, and not saying, about their project. Then our staff takes the time to help our clients solve problems and complete their projects.



### The Value Chain Cluster Initiative,

a signature program of the Natural Capital Investment Fund (NCIF), provides hands-on business development and coaching services to strengthen local food and farm businesses in four regions of West Virginia. VC2 focuses its work on farms and food businesses that are interested in expanding current operations and in learning new ways to be efficient, productive and profitable.



Our work has been effective because completed projects lead to more income, efficiencies and profitability on food and farm businesses in West Virginia. Profitability leads to new jobs. When businesses receive critical help to get through one project, they gain the confidence and new skills that will encourage them to take on new ventures and see future opportunities for growth. Success breeds more success.

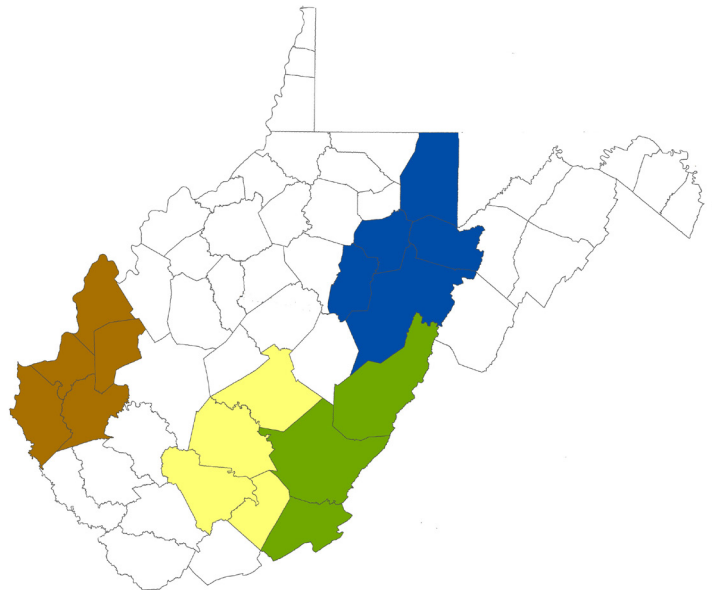
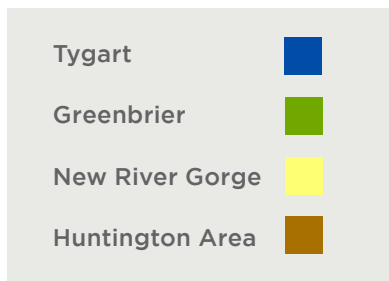
From the start of the program in December, 2012 to the end of March, 2015, VC2 has actively engaged over 74 private businesses and 32 regional organizations. Through those efforts, VC2 has created 65.5 jobs and retained 162 jobs

across four regions. Other impacts include: \$110,000 in additional business revenue, nine businesses receiving loans and \$2,200,000 in private investment leveraged.

The local food movement has expanded rapidly across West Virginia. Our partners and sister organizations have stepped up their work to support trainings, workshops and outreach to increase the supply and demand of West Virginia food on West Virginia tables. VC2 has actively participated to broaden the view that farming can be a productive and profitable way of life, and that local foods are better for our health and rural economies. Local agriculture is economic development.

## Where We Work

VC2 works in 17 counties in West Virginia divided up into four regional clusters. West Virginia is a state with both high economic disparities as well as high potential for growth. The 17 counties that Vc2 works in are recognized hubs for local food.



### Cluster Name

Greenbrier Valley
Huntington Area
New River Gorge
Tygart Valley

### Counties Served

Greenbrier, Monroe, Pocahontas
Cabell, Wayne, Lincoln, Putnam, Mason
Summers, Raleigh, Fayette, Nicholas
Barbour, Preston, Randolph, Tucker, Upshur

To learn more, visit [www.vc2.org](http://www.vc2.org)