



## Greenfield's Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center cooks up success for culinary startups



By [Cori Urban](#) | [Special to The Republican](#)  
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[GREENFIELD](#) — Food businesses make a smorgasbord of products at the [Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center](#), and thanks to a share of a \$100,000 state grant, technology and infrastructure there will be enhanced to provide even better service.

Cook Test + Launch in Greenfield and North Adams is sharing the grant - managed by MassDevelopment - as the Franklin County Community Development Corp. and [Greylock WORKS](#) make strategic improvements to their facilities.

The collaborative project hopes to grow new culinary businesses that support Western Massachusetts’ food systems.

The latest award complements a MassWorks Infrastructure Program grant supporting Greylock WORKS and a Massachusetts Food Ventures Program award to the community development corporation that were both awarded in 2016.

“We are one of the older business incubators in Massachusetts,” said John F. Waite, executive director of the [Franklin County Community Development Corp.](#), a regional non-profit since 1979.

For 27 years, it has owned and managed the venture center, which has incubated 55 businesses creating more than 1,000 jobs. Fifteen years ago, the development corporation established the regional food processing center, a shared-use commercial kitchen that has incubated 300 food businesses and currently has 49 active members.

The food processing center provides space, equipment and expertise for members to launch food products without the added expense of having their own certified facility, purchasing equipment and navigating the regulatory hurdles involved in opening a food business.

Among the successful businesses started in the center which have “moved up and out” but stayed in the area, Waite said, are [Real Pickles](#), Hillside Pizza and Chubby’s Sauces. “They start here, and they stay here. That’s what’s key,” he said.

The development corporation provides information to help businesses begin and grow and access to capital from various loan pools.

The mission is to support local food systems via new business creation. This collaborative project leverages the experience and user base of the development corporation and the public event capacity of Greylock WORKS to “Cook Test + Launch” new ideas that support local food systems.

With grant funds, both will make investments in technology and in strategic upgrades to facilities.

At the Greenfield facility, funds will be used to build a loading dock to get ingredients and supplies in and products out efficiently and for video conferencing for outreach and education.

“We have the history of doing a lot of good work with job creation and business development, and now we want to strengthen our technology and infrastructure,” Waite said. “It’s a good combination to keep up with technology and have an infrastructure that is so useful.”

Startup businesses in the Berkshires can test and produce their food products in small quantities in the North Adams facility then move to the larger Greenfield facility to produce more once they have enough customer demand, Waite explained. The grant will help Greylock WORKS expand the test kitchen.

Anthony J. Colapietro is production manager for [Goldthread Herbs](#), a Northampton-based producer of herbal elixirs that uses the food processing center. “This (center) gives us the ability to produce. Without the CDC we would not be able to (make the elixirs),” said Colapietro.

When the grants were announced late last year, Gov. Charlie Baker said, “Entrepreneurship is the engine that drives small business forward. By giving entrepreneurs across Massachusetts the tools and support systems they need to grow their own businesses, these grants will advance job creation and new businesses in communities while building stronger regional economies.”

In rural Western Massachusetts, the collaboration between the Franklin County CDC and Greylock WORKS gives entrepreneurs the best of what each has to offer to accelerate the innovation and growth of businesses in the Berkshires and Pioneer Valley, Waite noted.

“Entrepreneurs and innovators are building some of the most promising businesses in Massachusetts today,” said Senate President Stanley Rosenberg, D-Amherst. “Providing support for good, community-based companies helps our regional economies and strengthens our statewide economy overall. I’m excited to see what these outstanding grant recipients will now be able to do.”