

The Food Project
Proposal for Framingham State University
Cultivating Youth Leaders and Increasing Access to Healthy Food

Divisions of race, class, and age continue to be the overwhelming cause of inequity in many different aspects of our lives. The Food Project sees these dynamics at play in our food system, which treats people merely as consumers and land and food as commodities. The current system removes communities' agency and capacity for connection around how they nourish themselves, which has proven to be fundamentally unsustainable and harmful to both land and people. The Food Project believes that land and food present not only a site in need of repair, but also an opportunity with unique potential for creating and modelling egalitarian and inclusive communities, coming together with purpose and for the good of all.

Since 1991, The Food Project has envisioned a world where youth are active leaders, diverse communities feel connected to the land and each other, and everyone has access to fresh, local, healthy, affordable food. The Food Project brings together youth and adults from diverse backgrounds to learn through and across their differences to build capacity as powerful agents of change. Bridging the demographic groups of race, class, and geography that so often divide us, high-school-aged youth at The Food Project come together with shared purpose to gain leadership skills, practice communicating across difference, and grow healthy food for those in need. The Food Project annually recruits 60 young people in our Greater Boston region and 60 in our North Shore region—with half recruited from the urban centers of the Dudley neighborhood of Boston and the City of Lynn, the neighborhoods that are the focus of our food system work—while the other half are recruited from the MetroWest and North Shore suburbs. Youth are split into crews of approximately 15, with each crew consisting of a mix of gender, racial, ethnic, and geographic backgrounds.

The Food Project respectfully requests a grant of \$10,000 to fund youth payroll—the most significant expenditure of our programming. The Food Project must manage increased pressure on young people to “earn” in the summer and facilitate an accompanying rise in youth payroll costs. Experienced young people are paid at least the minimum wage, hourly, and receive raises depending on their experience with The Food Project. Youth in our introductory summer program are paid a stipend of \$275 a week, a recent rise from \$250. The Food Project must ensure youth are paid well not only because it is essential that their rigorous work is compensated fairly, but because participation should not become financially unfeasible for youth, some of whom are expected to contribute to household expenses, particularly during the summer, and could gain better paid—but less valuable—employment elsewhere.

Organizational Goals and Objectives

The Food Project builds and models local food systems in under-resourced communities that encourage individuals to develop and sustain agency around accessing high quality, healthy food; contribute positively to the health of the planet; and are economically viable and retain wealth within the community. To do this work, The Food Project's young people develop the skills and character to help define, then lead our initiatives. The Food Project currently focuses on two low-income, socially diverse communities: the Dudley neighborhood of Dorchester/Roxbury in Boston, and the City of Lynn. Operating in two regions enables experimentation with different systems and approaches, with experiences in one informing the projects in the other. The Food Project's food system work is grounded in trust built in the community over 14 years of work in Lynn, and over 20 years in Dudley. In both Dudley and Lynn, The Food Project has undertaken painstaking research of the values and needs of the community and the current foodscape. Working closely with community members, youth and staff have formed resident-led steering committees—including representatives from key community organizations—to ensure The Food Project's efforts are informed, effective, supported by residents, and utilize the experience and resources of all community stakeholders.

All of The Food Project's initiatives are supported by the sustainable operation of 67 acres of suburban farmland, three acres of urban farmland, and large greenhouses in the centers of both Dudley and Lynn (coming in the spring of 2018). Produce is used to support 400 SNAP-accessible CSA shares, 70,000 pounds of food donations (210,000 servings), and more than \$40,000 of affordable farmers market sales. The farms provide large amounts of produce for experimental supply-chain initiatives and offer a consistent revenue source for the organization. The greenhouses act as hubs for gardeners to obtain advice and affordable seedlings and supplies. In Dudley, The Food Project is building a resident-owned supply chain for locally-grown produce; building 50 raised-bed gardens in backyards annually and working to transform vacant lots into community gardens; encouraging Boston Public Schools to build kitchens equipped for cooking fresh food in local schools and supplying those kitchens with fresh produce; and offering "Eat Well" workshops teaching cooking fresh produce in economical ways. In Lynn, we are expanding farmers market locations and frequency, enabling the many local farmers and fishermen in the area to sell their produce to residents year-round; building gardens at elementary schools and teaching more than 1,000 children a year to grow their own food and to try, and ultimately like, eating that food; incentivizing families of those children to shop at farmers markets by sending them home with coupons; and building community gardens in neighborhoods where residents do not have sufficient space for growing.

Program Goals and Objectives

The Food Project's three-tiered year-round youth leadership development program develops advanced job and life skills for young people aged 14 – 17 with the support of staff experienced in the economic and psychological hurdles faced by youth from immigrant and minority racial and cultural backgrounds. The program centers on achieving three primary objectives for all youth who participate:

- To understand food systems through experiential learning with food production, distribution, consumption, and accessibility, and to understand the impact of one's own choices around healthy eating and food justice.
- To build self-awareness, personal agency, and capacity for teamwork and goal accomplishment.
- To gain skills and capacity to engage in the community promoting a greater sense of connection and well-being.

Each tier has specific core competencies across the fields of sustainable agriculture, diversity/anti-oppression, communicating powerfully, workplace skills, and social change. The primary goal of each tier of programming is for all youth to achieve the respective core competencies.

Seed Crew employs 72 youth—36 in each region. Seed Crew youth work five days a week during the summer, growing food for their community and preparing and serving that food for those in need at hunger relief organizations. Seed Crew workers also undertake a series of workshops on food justice and the concepts of privilege and oppression, and participate in intensive feedback and personal reflection sessions to enable sensitive and careful learning. The experience of a first real, rigorous, and meaningful job in Seed Crew, and the demanding learning around difference and inequality, is essential to preparing youth in the advanced tiers to achieve competencies beyond the ordinary for a young person and to lead social change here and now, as well as in their future adulthood. The secondary goals of Seed Crew are:

- To grow 200,000 pounds of food sustainably on 70 acres of farmland.
- To provide 1,700 hours of service at hunger relief organizations, such as soup kitchens and food pantries.

Dirt Crew employs graduates of Seed Crew, paid an hourly wage to work every Saturday during the academic season with occasional after school sessions for special events. Dirt Crew members lead adult volunteer groups on our farms, demonstrating fieldwork techniques and presenting an introduction to local food justice issues. Dirt Crew also lead our Build-a-Garden program that constructs a total of 100 raised-bed gardens annually in backyards and community spaces; they facilitate resident interest, organize material supply, and take full ownership of the garden construction. Dirt Crew

plan and staff our annual City Farm Fests that provide local gardeners with free or affordable supplies and seedlings for the new growing season, as well as skilled advice and expertise for a successful season of gardening. Dirt Crew continue to participate in our series of workshops on social justice and food justice and in reflective sessions that include journaling, goal setting, creative expression, and assorted other activities — all of which enable youth to evaluate their progress and contemplate their experiences in workshops and within the community. Dirt Crew employs 30 young people in the academic season. Their secondary goals are:

- To build 100 raised-bed gardens annually, providing new growing space for 400 residents, and to support approximately 750 existing gardeners.
- To conduct City Farm Festivals to support gardeners for the upcoming growing season.
- To lead 2,500 volunteers on our farms in fieldwork and food justice education.

Root Crew employs 30 young people in both the academic and summer season in our most advanced tier. Root Crew lead much of The Food Project's work; they serve as peer leaders and role models to Seed Crew and Dirt Crew, and project manage and implement food system initiatives. Root Crew staff our affordable farmers markets, provide advice and support to local gardeners, market fresh produce stocked at local corner stores, design and facilitate community workshops on nutrition and food justice, assist staff in mapping local food access points, survey residents on their needs and interests, and advocate alongside residents for their food interests in local planning. In the summer, Root Crew undertake advanced farm tasks and demonstrate effective techniques to Seed Crew. Root Crew requires youth to lead The Food Project in reaching its goals of developing economically and environmentally sustainable healthy food supply models for low-income neighborhoods. Root Crew's goals are to provide leadership and mentorship for their peers in Seed Crew and Dirt Crew and to further the outcomes respective to the food system initiatives they project manage in Dudley and Lynn:

In Dudley:

- Increase in number of businesses selling fresh locally and sustainably grown produce, or using fresh local produce in servings.
- Increase in fresh produce sales reported by local businesses over one year.
- Increase in number of gardeners utilizing the greenhouse hub and identified within the Dudley gardener network.
- Number of new gardeners with growing spaces.

In Lynn:

- Increase in number of food justice and nutrition workshops and attendance.
- Number of new gardeners provided with growing spaces in Lynn.

- Decrease in distance to available growing space for interested gardeners.
- Decrease in distance to source of affordable locally-grown fresh food for residents in Lynn’s USDA-classified food deserts.
- Increase in number of elementary school children engaged in growing food and trying the food they harvest.

Youth Testimonials

“To me, food justice means food for all. I can count many times where growing up money was tight, and I really didn’t have the opportunity to eat a healthy meal or to eat all three meals. No one should go hungry. In our society, there are a lot of challenges many people face. What food they are putting on the table, or if there is food to put on the table, should not be one of them.” – Omar C, Seed Crew ‘11

“Growing food challenges me to really think. What I mean by that is, you can think about a lot of things and put it into food. In your own life you start out small, nothing major to the world. But you are able to grow into something powerful—something that can change a life or feed somebody.” – Zeke M-M, Seed Crew ‘10

Sustainability

The Food Project has invested in new evaluation methods and metrics for the youth crews, including revising the core competencies and learning objectives for each of the three tiers of the curriculum. We recently welcomed a new fellow whose responsibility is to focus entirely on integrating the recording of staff assessment of youth progress seamlessly into the summer curriculum, and on analyzing and presenting the data effectively post-program. New “Youth Employee Performance Review” forms have been designed for this coming year; this will enable regular tracking of progress towards core competencies, the measure of success for youth in each tier. This priority on outcome-based evaluation is integral to our current strategic plan. The Food Project identified that these necessary changes require more of our youth development supervisors: the ability and time to combine ongoing evaluation—regular staff assessments and youth reflections—with a deepening of youth activity requiring closer supervision. The training required to get short-term fellows up to speed was demanding and time-consuming both for supervisors and senior leadership staff conducting the training. Employing permanent staff for all youth development specialist positions—primarily recruited from the communities of Dudley and Lynn in which we work—enables deeper community engagement, more effective evaluation and programming, and more efficient use of leadership staff time.

The Food Project
FY18 Organization Budget
October 1, 2017 - September 30, 2018

Income

Anticipated Donations	2,962,508
Sales, Services, & Other Revenue	458,957
Interest & Other Income	86,160

Total Organizational Income	3,507,624
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Expenses

Support and Assistance	6,500
Depreciation	114,237
Equipment	84,113
Facilities	135,292
Utilities	47,365
Bank, Merchant Account & Admin Fees	17,995
Insurance Expense	71,632
Regulatory Fees	2,262
Networking	71,005
Team Building	42,997
Advertising	82,401
Farm Supplies	59,825
Supplies	105,401
Communications	24,321
Vehicle Expense	34,620
Youth Transportation	41,847
Professional Fees & Consulting Services	195,400
Youth Payroll	476,969
Employee Payroll	1,805,994

Total Operating Expenses	3,420,177
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INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
DISTRICT DIRECTOR
P. O. BOX 2508
CINCINNATI, OH 45201

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Date: MAY 20 1995

Employer Identification Number:
04-3262532

DLN:

17053093758039

Contact Person:

DONALD G HERRING

ID# 31171

Contact Telephone Number:

(877) 829-5500

Our Letter Dated:

May 1995

Addendum Applies:

No

FOOD PROJECT INC
C/O GREGORY GALE
PO BOX 705 10 LEWIS ST UNIT 4
LINCOLN, MA 01773

Dear Applicant:

This modifies our letter of the above date in which we stated that you would be treated as an organization that is not a private foundation until the expiration of your advance ruling period.

Your exempt status under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in section 501(c)(3) is still in effect. Based on the information you submitted, we have determined that you are not a private foundation within the meaning of section 509(a) of the Code because you are an organization of the type described in section 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(1)(A)(vi).

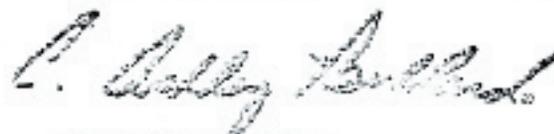
Grantors and contributors may rely on this determination unless the Internal Revenue Service publishes notice to the contrary. However, if you lose your section 509(a)(1) status, a grantor or contributor may not rely on this determination if he or she was in part responsible for, or was aware of, the act or failure to act, or the substantial or material change on the part of the organization that resulted in your loss of such status, or if he or she acquired knowledge that the Internal Revenue Service had given notice that you would no longer be classified as a section 509(a)(1) organization.

If we have indicated in the heading of this letter that an addendum applies, the addendum enclosed is an integral part of this letter.

Because this letter could help resolve any questions about your private foundation status, please keep it in your permanent records.

If you have any questions, please contact the person whose name and telephone number are shown above.

Sincerely yours,



District Director

Letter 1050 (DO/CG)