

Progress Report

Title:	Urban Farms for America with a Focus on Socially Disadvantaged Farmers in the Urban Agriculture Sector		
Sponsoring Agency	NIFA	Project Status	COMPLETE
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Submitted By	Karen Parker	Date Submitted to NIFA	12/13/2013

Program Code: BFRDP**Program Name:** Beginning Farmer and Rancher**Project Director**

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Performing Department

{NO DATA ENTERED}

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{NO DATA ENTERED}

Non-Technical Summary

We are entering a new age in agriculture. Rising energy costs, increasing awareness of health issues related to poor nutrition, and a surge in the environmental movement have combined to create a growing interest in locally-produced food. Additionally, urban areas throughout the United States provide a new and unconventional setting for economically viable commercial agricultural enterprises. Nationwide, cities face the problem of what to do with abandoned land in lower-income sections. The opportunities to expand successful urban agriculture enterprises throughout the United States are enormous. Urban Farms for America projects a future where these vacant lots are transformed into working, commercially viable farms that supply low-income, food insecure residents with more nutritious food. Some farmers are stepping forward to address these needs, developing strategies to economically produce high quality food, only to find that they also need to find new ways to distribute and market their products, especially to urban markets. In other instances, urban farmers utilizing traditional agricultural practices are finding it difficult to harvest enough produce to service major accounts. They are challenged to find and adopt more innovative strategies to increase their production to a sustainable level and to fine-tune their marketing while controlling costs. Even with increasing demand for locally grown produce in larger markets, there are not enough farmers with the ability to meet wholesale and local market standards. Although there has been an increase in interest in urban agriculture, there are still very few individuals with the expertise needed to participate in scaled-up market opportunities. A very unique set of skills are required to successfully begin and sustain a commercial urban agriculture enterprise. The Urban Farms for America project will benefit beginning and seasoned farmers by making their new commercial enterprises profitable and feasible. The goals will be accomplished on a national scale via Growing Powers long-standing and nationally recognized farmer-training programs: 1) From the Ground Up monthly weekend workshops held at Growing Powers Milwaukee, WI headquarters from January to June, annually. (400 farmers trained annually) 2) Commercial Urban Agriculture Training (CUA) is a 5-month intensive training program in Commercial Agriculture Business Development (50 farmers trained annually) 3) Growing Capacity for the Green Economy Initiative (GCGE), will train 100 low-income individuals in the Greater Milwaukee area over the next 3 years (30-40 farmers trained annually) 4) Growing Power Chicagos Iron Street Urban Farm will train urban farmers to increase production capacity to enter local community and wholesale markets (100 farmers trained annually) 5) Regional Outreach Training Centers (ROTC) includes 15 established community organizations across the U.S. that will assist Growing Power in providing regional trainings through outreach visits, hands-on workshops, face-to-face farmer consultations, and regional farmer recruitment (100 trainees per site, 1500 farmers trained annually).

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Accomplishments**Major goals of the project**

The long-term goal of Growing Powers Urban Farms for America project is To provide new and emerging farmers and ranchers with hands-on training in intensive urban agriculture production, post harvest handlings and wholesale volume, business and marketing planning, and long-term mentoring support to improve and develop farm operation viability and as a foundation in promoting food security in food desert communities. The Goals of this project will benefit beginning and seasoned farmers by making their new commercial enterprises profitable and feasible in the following ways: Goal #1: To increase the direct marketing of agricultural products from producers to food insecure consumers in urban settings; Goal #2: To increase the number of commercial agricultural enterprises operating in urban communities, especially food desert communities; and, Goal #3: To increase the number of farmers and producers in the marketplace with a focus on low-income, socially disadvantaged populations in urban communities. Growing Power will train beginning farmers with hands-on skills in sustainable agriculture, business and marketing, and project planning to compete in the thriving urban and local food sector. The current challenge is a lack of farmers and ranchers to meet the demand, and we have a solution for this. The program objectives support and utilize the standard BFRDP project priorities as a guideline to provide beginning farmers and ranchers with the necessary tools, information, and long-term mentoring to succeed beyond the project period. Objective 1: To develop and implement business and marketing plans with beginning farmers and ranchers. Objective 2: To train beginning farmers and ranchers in sustainable urban agriculture techniques, i.e., vermiculture and vermi-composting, year-round agricultural production, hoop-house construction, aquaponics, beekeeping, intensive agricultural production, integrated pest management, with a focus on post-harvest handling, food safety and wholesale packaging. Objective 3: To increase the direct marketing of agricultural products from producers to consumers in urban settings, with a focus on increasing fresh food access in food-insecure communities (food deserts). Objective 4: To increase the number of commercial agricultural enterprises operating in urban communities. Objective 5: To increase the number of farmers and producers in the marketplace with a focus on increasing the representation of low-income and/or socially disadvantaged populations. OUTCOMES: The estimates of beginning farmers and ranchers trained are: Commercial Urban Agriculture Training: 50 annually (150 total) From the Ground Up: 400 annually (1200 total, 75 scholarships via BFRDP) GCGE program: 30-40 annually (100 total) Growing Power Chicago: 100 annually (300 total) Regional Outreach Training Center trainings: 1500 annually (4,500 total) Total: 6,250 farmers trained over three years!!!

What was accomplished under these goals?

Growing Power accomplished the following under the goals of the program:

Commerical Urban Agriculture Program-Growing Power trained 17 people in 2013 through our 5 month intensive, hands-on Commerical Urban Agriculture Program.

"From The Ground Up" Workshops- Growing Power trained more than 400 socially disadvantaged farmers from all over the United States through our weekend long, hands-on training workshops.

Growing Capacity for the Green Economy-Growing Power provded full time employment opprotunites to 52 minority, economical and socially disadvantaged people from the inner-city of Milwaukee.

Regional Outreach Training Centers-Growing Power staff visited six of our ROTC sites training more than 500 socially disadvantaged farmers.

Growing Power Chicago-Growing Power's Chicago office employed 45 teens during the spring and summer months of 2013. These teens learned skills in raised bed construction, seeding, planting, harvesting, marketing produce, cooking and nutrition.

What oppourtunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

January through June Growing Power hosted two day "From the Ground Up" workshops once a month. These workshops are intensive, hands on, training workshops offering diverse groups the opportunity to learn, plan, develop, operate, and sustain community food projects. Participants leave the workshop with improved skills that they can take back into their communities and pass on to others. Workshop Topics Include: Aquaculture/Aquaponics; Bee Keeping; Community Project Design; Living Biological Growing Systems; Composting/Vermiculture; Hoop House Construction; Year Round Production and Marketing Workshop; Mycoscaping and; Renewable Energy.

Our CUA program aims to train both individuals and non-profit organizations by providing hands-on, in-person training in how to produce food in an ecologically friendly manner, and just as importantly, to train these individuals and organizations in all aspects of creating and maintaining a successful commercial business enterprise. This training program is created to strengthen communities through creating profitable, ongoing commercial urban agriculture farming businesses. CUA participants attend the "From the Ground Up" workshops five months consecutively. These workshops are supplemented with classroom sessions focusing on: Project Planning; Fundraising; Financial Management; Human Resources; Community Engagement and; Project Implementation.

Growing Power's Growing Capacity for the Green Economy (GCGE) program works to alleviate Milwaukee's unemployment

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rate, especially among African American males (Milwaukee has one of the highest unemployment rates for African American males in the nation), while closing the skills gap that will be created by the ever growing Green Economy. GCGE is our workforce development program is designed to train disadvantaged populations through hands-on work experiences in the fields of sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, environmental education and community food systems. The goal is to prepare participants for work in the growing green sector of the economy. Growing Power collaborates with several local organizations to recruit our target population. Currently we work with the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board, United Migrant Opportunity Services, Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin. We also recruit from the nearby Westlawn Housing Development.

Growing Power staff visited six of our Regional Outreach Training Centers (ROTC) during 2013 providing outreach, hands-on workshops, face-to-face farmer consultations and farmer recruitment. Growing Power staff have also developed a draft Best Practices Manual. Once complete this manual will be distributed to all ROTC locations and be used to guide their outreach efforts and training programs.

Growing Power's Chicago office employed 45 teens during the spring and summer months of 2013. These teens learned skills in raised bed construction, seeding, planting, harvesting, marketing produce, cooking and nutrition. GP Chicago will soon be breaking ground on a seven acre farm site that will serve as an urban orchard, community garden and incubator for farmer training. This project is in conjunction with Chicago Parks District. Additionally, Growing Power was recently awarded a grant through the USDA Community Food Projects grant program. This grant will allow our Chicago location to expand our farmer training programs through the creation of the Farmers for Chicago program. This program will allow for the development of new farmers and the necessary infrastructure to grow and distribute healthy, locally grown produce year round for all Chicago communities. We plan to train 50 farms over the next three years through this program.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

Growing Power relies heavily on word of mouth for recruitment for all of our programs. We also work with our ROTC locations to disseminate our information to interested parties. Additionally, Growing Power distributes information via our website and to people who visit our headquarters located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

Growing Power plans to continue to provide all the training opportunities outlined in the grant during the next year. We plan to grow our programs, encouraging additional participants and urban farming enterprises.

Participants

Actual FTE's for this Reporting Period

Role	Non-Students or faculty	Students with Staffing Roles			Computed Total by Role
		Undergraduate	Graduate	Post-Doctorate	
Scientist	0	0	0	0	0
Professional	0	0	0	0	0
Technical	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative	2	0	0	0	2
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Computed Total	2	0	0	0	2

Student Count by Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Target Audience

The target audience for this program are individuals seeking to enter into commercial agriculture with a focus on urban and peri-urban production. We recruit socially disadvantaged participants and tend to attract minority farmers.

Products

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{Nothing to report}

Other Products

{Nothing to report}

Changes/Problems

{Nothing to report}