

May 13, 2010

Terri Lee Freeman
President
The Community Foundation
1201 15th Street NW, Suite 420
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Freeman,

I am pleased to enclose a proposal to the Community Foundation for the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to fund the first year of [REDACTED]'s Youth Corps, an education and civic engagement program for 10 [REDACTED] middle school students. With a \$35,000 grant from the Community Foundation's Middle School Initiative, we will hire a Youth Corps Coordinator, recruit participants, and fund educational materials, transportation to volunteer sites, monthly field trips, and meals for participants.

[REDACTED], established in 2008, is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization, urban farm and education center committed to growing food, educating, and meeting our community's food needs. One third of [REDACTED] residents and 43% of children live in poverty. Since at least 1 in 5 residents are overweight and 1 in 10 have diabetes, lack of access to affordable, healthy food is a serious health concern. To combat food insecurity in our community, [REDACTED] offers free adult and youth hands-on workshops on gardening and nutrition as well as produce in exchange for volunteer farm work or Food Stamps and WIC.

As a young non-profit organization, we are looking to enhance our youth program. In particular, we want to reach out to middle school students, who are especially vulnerable to the health consequences of food insecurity and doubts about their self-worth and "place" in the world. Our proposed program, the Youth Corps, aims to make our current youth farm workshops more meaningful with related service projects. Through the Youth Corps, middle school students will attend our farm workshops once a week and volunteer as a group once a week at a local food security organization, such as [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. As a reward, we will also take them on monthly field trips to museums, sports games, dance performances, etc.

With your help, we will show [REDACTED] middle school students that they *matter*—as individuals and community leaders. Thank you for your commitment to [REDACTED] youth and to non-profits that create new solutions for community development. I will call you next week to confirm receipt of this proposal and to answer any questions. I can also be reached by phone ([REDACTED] [REDACTED]) and email ([REDACTED] [REDACTED]) anytime.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Founder, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] YOUTH CORPS
A proposal for Youth Empowerment

Prepared for the Community Foundation of the [REDACTED]

By [REDACTED]

May 2010

Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Problem Statement.....	3
Program Description.....	4
Goals.....	4
Objectives.....	5
Methods.....	5
Evaluation Methods.....	6
Future Funding.....	6
Conclusion.....	7
Budget.....	8

Executive Summary

██████████ is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization, urban farm, and education center committed to growing food, educating, and helping ██████ residents meet their food needs. We offer adult and youth workshops and opportunities to volunteer in exchange for fresh produce. Our crops can also be purchased with WIC and Food Stamps at local farmers' markets. With a \$35,000 grant from the Community Foundation, we will fund the first year of the Youth Corps program, in which middle school students will attend workshops on the farm, volunteer as a group at a local food security non-profit, and go on field trips.

The economic and health issues faced by the ██████ community are interrelated. One third of ██████ residents live in poverty. Lack of access to affordable, healthy food contributes to health problems because vital fruits, vegetables, and grains are replaced by inexpensive, high-caloric starches and refined sugars. One fifth of ██████ residents are overweight and one in ten have diabetes. In addition to physical health problems, insufficient nutrition among young adults increases fatigue, irritability, and difficulty concentrating. Middle school students in this community are particularly vulnerable, as the physical and mental effects of insufficient nutrition are coupled with rapid developmental changes that lead to doubts about self-worth and the utility of formal education.

Our proposed Youth Corps will help middle school students improve their own lifestyles and self-esteem while transforming ██████ communities. Through participating in weekly farm workshops and volunteer trips, students will develop into community leaders who can envision and execute viable, community-level solutions. A grant from the Community Foundation will enable us to hire a Youth Corps Coordinator, recruit participants, and fund educational materials, transportation to volunteer sites, monthly field trips, and meals for participants.

Introduction

██████████ is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization, urban farm, and education center committed to growing food, educating, and meeting our ██████████ community's food need. Lack of access to affordable, healthy food in our neighborhood contributes to health problems, because the overconsumption of high-caloric starches and refined sugars can lead to heart disease, obesity, and diabetes. Lack of vitamins and minerals from produce and grains also weakens immune systems.¹ A \$35,000 grant from the Community Foundation would help us launch the first year of our Youth Corps program, in which 10 ██████████ middle school students will act as partners in accomplishing ██████████'s mission.

Youth skilling building and civic engagement are ingrained in our organization's history. ██████████ emerged from the ██████████. From ██████████, the ██████████ engaged over 500 youth in hands-on community based projects throughout ██████████ neighborhood. One of the projects was building and sustaining the urban "██████████ Garden." When ██████████ closed, our co-founders, ██████████ and ██████████ were given permission to farm the land as volunteers and continue to engage youth and adults in sustainability education and food production.

In ██████████, in response to their successful work at the "██████████ Garden," the ██████████ Civic Association awarded ██████████, ██████████, and the other volunteers a larger land plot at a closed elementary school. In ██████████, we converted the half-acre ██████████ field into a farm and changed our name to ██████████.

██████████ is led by a paid Executive Director, ██████████, and a volunteer staff of ten, including farmers, environmental activists, attorneys, therapists, artists, and educators. We host youth and adult workshops on gardening, sustainable agriculture, and nutrition. Through our ██████████ program, low-income families and individuals can also volunteer on our farm for two hours weekly in exchange for fresh produce. The remainder of our crop is sold at farmers' markets, available for purchase with WIC and Food Stamps.²

As a young non-profit, we are committed to deepening our roots and creating new solutions in our community, especially for youth. Our hands-on workshops, on Monday-Thursday afternoons and Saturday mornings for students ages 8-15, establish an educational foundation for individual diet improvement and social change.

Recovering the values of the ██████████, our proposed program will help students put education into action and empower them as leaders in community development. Students who commit to attending a farm workshop once a week will volunteer at a local food security non-profit, such as ██████████ or ██████████, once a week.³ We will also reward

¹ Mozes, Alan. "Poverty Drains Nutrition from Family Diet," *Washington Post*, February 21, 2008. <http://www.washingtonpost.com>. April 28, 2010.

² For more information on ██████████

³ For more information on these food security non-profit organizations, visit:

██████████

students with monthly field trips, to museums, sports games, and dance performances, for example. The program will deepen students' commitment to the farm while connecting them to broader issues of sustainable agriculture and food justice.

Problem Statement

As an urban farm and education center, [REDACTED] connects the [REDACTED] neighborhood in [REDACTED] to fresh food. Since 1980, obesity in the U.S. among children ages 2-5 has more than doubled and tripled among children ages 6-19. These health concerns are inseparable from race and economics, as low-income, minority communities typically lack access to affordable, healthy food. As a result, less expensive, higher-caloric starches and refined sugars often replace vital fruits, vegetables, and grains.⁴ In [REDACTED], at least 1 in 5 residents are overweight and 1 in 10 have diabetes. Poverty rates are similarly high; one third of all residents and 43% of children live in poverty.⁵

At [REDACTED], community-driven urban agriculture is a mechanism for creating individual and community-wide social change. In addition to providing fresh, nutritious, and affordable food, farming is also a great source of exercise, fresh air, and recreation—especially in low-income areas that lack green public space. Working with neighbors to grow food, rather than relying solely on government assistance and local convenience stores, also strengthens communities and fosters self reliance.⁶

We are enhancing our youth program for low-income middle school students because they are especially vulnerable to both emotional insecurity and the consequences of food insecurity. Youth with insufficient nutrition often have difficulty concentrating and are more susceptible to fatigue, irritability, illnesses, and weak immune systems. While struggling to meet their food needs, [REDACTED] middle school students are also subject to rapid developmental changes leading to doubts about self worth and the utility of formal education. These doubts negatively affect individual and social behavior as well as academic achievement.⁷

By fusing education and civic engagement, the proposed Youth Corps will help middle school students realize that they *matter*. Food security and urban agriculture are particularly fruitful sites for youth empowerment because improvements are visible and tangible. In altering their diets and increasing physical activity through farm workshops at [REDACTED], students will feel healthier and more attentive. Through cooking and distributing meals with other non-profits in [REDACTED], students will see that with education and hard work,

⁴ Mozes, Alan. "Poverty Drains Nutrition from Family Diet," *Washington Post*, February 21, 2008. <http://www.washingtonpost.com>. April 28, 2010.

⁵ [REDACTED]

⁶ For more information on [REDACTED]

⁷ Payne, Kathy & Betty Edwards. "Service Learning Enhances Education for Youth Adolescents." *Phi Delta Kappa International*, February 2010. <http://www.pdkintl.org>. April 28, 2010.

they have the power to improve their lives and the lives of others. Youth Corps participants will take their present community roles and future aspirations more seriously.

Well-established non-profit urban farms throughout the U.S. have developed programs with civic engagement goals. The [REDACTED], a [REDACTED] non-profit established in [REDACTED], views its Youth Programs as “catalyst[s] for personal, local, and global change.”⁸ During the [REDACTED] Program, students ages 14-17 work on the farm, sell produce at farmers’ markets, prepare and serve food at soup kitchens, and participate in community lunches—in addition to attending educational workshops. The [REDACTED] currently works with over a hundred teens, with their summer program leading into the [REDACTED] Program and internships.

Our Youth Corps program, though on a smaller scale than the [REDACTED], will find similar success in [REDACTED].

Program Description

In order to nurture youth leaders who take their education and their role in community development seriously, [REDACTED] has developed a program that applies the lessons learned at the farm to communities and food security organizations outside the farm.

The [REDACTED] will be an extension of our youth program for middle school students ages 10-15. The first year’s group will include approximately 10 students because finding community service opportunities for small groups is more feasible. With a small group, the Youth Corps Coordinator will also be able to give students more individual attention and foster group cohesion. Students who enroll in the program will attend farm workshops at least once a week and volunteer as a group for two hours a week with a local food security organization, such as [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].⁹ A Youth Corps Coordinator will lead the volunteer trips. Each week, while the students eat lunch, they will discuss their experiences, challenges faced, and lessons learned. Students will also be required to write in a personal journal after the farm workshops and volunteer trips. Once a month, students will go on a local field trip instead of volunteering. Since most of our students come from low-income families, trips to movie theaters, mini-golf courses, ice skating rinks, sports matches, museums, parks, etc. are not part of their daily life and would be especially valued.

Goals

The goal of the [REDACTED] Youth Corps is to deepen middle school students’ interest in [REDACTED] and local food justice initiatives. We want the participants to value themselves as leaders and see the importance of taking civic engagement and career aspirations seriously. The first year of the Youth Corps will serve as a starting point and model for an expanded youth civic engagement program in upcoming years.

⁸ [REDACTED]

⁹ For more information on these food security non-profit organizations, visit:

[REDACTED]

Objectives

Through consistent participation in farm workshops, community service, and field trip activities:

- All students will have an increased understanding of certain gardening practices, nutrition, and the importance of local, sustainable agriculture.
- All students will improve their ability to complete tasks, individually and as a group, while effectively communicating questions and concerns.
- All students will feel part of a community united by common interests and friendships. Students will also see staff members of [REDACTED] and the other non-profits as role models and mentors.
- At least half the students will continue committing to community development initiatives. We can arrange positions for them at [REDACTED] or other organizations of their choice.
- Two thirds of students will return to [REDACTED] once a month for a Youth Corps alumni volunteer day.

Methods

[REDACTED] will implement the Youth Corps as a one-year pilot program, during which the program will be monitored and assessed for future adjustments.

Hiring a Youth Corps Coordinator- Within a month of the program's approval, the Board will hire a part-time Youth Corps Coordinator for 15 months to allow additional time for planning and concluding the program. We will consider applicants' experience with youth education and outreach programs, farming, and food security issues. Preference may be given to current [REDACTED] volunteer staff members.

Organizing and reaching out- The Youth Corps Coordinator will contact organizations like [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] regarding volunteer opportunities. The Coordinator will commit to one food security organization or arrange a rotation of up to three. Volunteering with a maximum of three organizations will enable students to build stronger, more consistent relationships with the staff.

The Youth Corps Coordinator will also work with our Youth Education Coordinators to recruit 10 students who are already involved with [REDACTED]. If we cannot enroll 10 participants from our current group of students, however, the Executive Director will contact teachers and administrators at [REDACTED] middle schools, requesting specific student referrals.

Seeking parental/guardian consent- Before the start of the program, parents/guardians and students will sign a form that states the program dates and attendance requirements. Though retention cannot be guaranteed, the Coordinator will establish regulations regarding the number of sessions that can be missed, excused absences, etc.

Planning the field trips- Once the students are enrolled, the coordinator will also begin arranging the field trips. We plan to have the first three trips arranged before start of the Youth Corps, because knowing the field trips in advance might encourage retention. The coordinator will also collect the necessary permission slips from parents for the field trips in advance.

Facilitating reflection time- The Coordinator will facilitate informal reflection time throughout the year. In addition, students will be given a journal for weekly private reflections about what they learned through workshops on the farm and community service experiences. The Coordinator will also engage students in discussions during lunch. The Coordinator might arrange further meetings to address students' concerns or to resolve any conflicts that may arise.

Evaluation Methods

The Coordinator will write a brief, weekly assessment on the program, students' individual progress, and the group dynamic. The Coordinator will keep them for future reference and to track possible concerns, but the Director may view them upon request. The assessment will include questions such as the following:

- How did students handle the tasks assigned by the non-profit staff?
- How did students interact with the non-profit staff members and with each other?
- Which students, if any, showed improvements in attitude and behavior from previous weeks? In what ways?
- What conflicts, if any, arose that might need to be further addressed next week?

Every three months, the Executive Director will meet with the Coordinator and students to discuss their experiences and what they've learned. She will take notes on the discussions and ask students to complete a survey or questionnaire for her review. She will also talk to the Coordinator regarding any questions, concerns, and suggestions. The surveys and group discussions with students will include questions such as the following:

- Are you enjoying the Youth Corps program? In what ways?
- What have you been learning in the farm workshops?
- Which non-profit organizations do you like working with the most? The least? Why?
- Which volunteer tasks do you enjoy the most? The least? Why?
- What is the hardest thing about the Youth Corps?
- How do you feel about the other Youth Corps participants, the Youth Corps Coordinator, and staff at the non-profits? Do you all get along?
- Which field trips have you enjoyed the most? The least? Why?
- Is there anything you wish was different about the program?

Upon completion of the year program, the Coordinator will write and present a memo to the Board, drawing on student assessments and feedback. He or she will evaluate the program and include suggestions for the following year's program.

Future Funding

The Youth Corps will serve as a starting point for more comprehensive civic engagement programs in subsequent years. With a grant from the Community Foundation for the Youth Corps' first year, [REDACTED] will have the experience and credibility valued for USDA grant opportunities. The USDA offers competitive grants specifically for Community Food Projects.¹⁰

¹⁰ Hunger and Food Security: Community Food Projects. *United States Department of Agriculture*. http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/food/sri/hunger_sri_awards.html. April 28, 2010.

Depending on the strengths, weaknesses, and lessons learned, the following year's program may include an additional group of 10 students, either from middle school or a different age group. With greater financial resources from additional grants, we will hire a full-time Youth Corps Coordinator to increase our organizational capacity. In future youth programs, students will develop their own community service project rather than or in addition to working with outside organizations. Students will also lead educational workshops or presentations at local schools, churches, and community centers. We will offer a civic engagement program both during the school year and the summer.

We will also include Youth Corps alumni in the planning process. We will value their suggestions and encourage them to help us launch fundraising and outreach initiatives.

Conclusion

With a \$35,000 grant from the Community Foundation, [REDACTED] will give middle school students the skills, resources, and confidence to grow into leaders for community-driven social change. Through education, healthy eating, farm work, and collaboration with other community members, students will experience physical and emotional development at a time when they need it most.

With less than two years in [REDACTED], [REDACTED] is only beginning to forge a relationship with the community—a shared commitment to locally grown, sustainable agriculture and food justice. Our current farm workshops are a start, but an education and civic engagement program will inspire individual, proactive investment in community development. As the [REDACTED] future, students should not merely be the targets, but also the perpetuators of [REDACTED]'s mission to improve food security in our neighborhood.

We appreciate the Community Foundation's support in empowering youth to build greener, healthier communities.

Budget

Personnel Costs (1):	Annual Salary	Project %		
Salary:				
[REDACTED], Executive Director	\$60,000	10%	\$	6,000
Payroll Taxes and fringe benefits		25%		1,500

Total Personnel Costs	\$ 7,500
Non-Personnel Costs:	
In-kind donation- volunteer Farm Education staff	\$ - 5,107.44 (1)
Consultant- part-time Youth Corps Coordinator stipend	20,953.60 (2)
Student journals	17.60 (3)
Printing & photocopy fees	100.00 (4)
Metro transportation	2,802.80 (5)
Nutritious lunches	2,288 (6)
Monthly field trips	1,320 (7)
Total Non-Personnel Costs:	\$ 27,500
Total Grant Request:	\$ 35,000

Budget Narrative:

- (1) This represents the value of volunteer time in [REDACTED], \$ [REDACTED]/hr, for a weekly farm workshop of three hours for 52 weeks (approximately a year).¹¹
- (2) This represents the value of volunteer time in [REDACTED], \$ [REDACTED]/hr, for the Youth Corps' Coordinators 10 weekly work hours for 64 weeks (approximately 15 months).
- (3) This represents the costs of journals from Staples for 10 students.
- (4) This represents printing and copying fee for program materials, flyers, surveys, etc., based on the Staples price of 10 cents per sheet with black ink and 50 cents per sheet with colored ink.
- (5) This represents the weekly round-trip metro transportation costs for 10 students and the Youth Corps Coordinator for 52 weeks (approximately a year). The metro fare listed is 25% higher than the current metro fare to account for predicted rate hikes.¹²
- (6) This represents the cost of a weekly nutritious lunch at \$4.00/person for 10 students and the Coordinator for 52 weeks (approximate a year) from [REDACTED] Food Stores. The lunch will include a sandwich with vegetables and protein, fresh fruit, and healthy snacks.
- (7) This represents the approximate cost of 12 monthly field trips, \$10/person, for 10 students and the Coordinator. The lowest-cost ticket for a [REDACTED] baseball game is \$10.¹³

¹¹ "Value of Volunteer Time." *Independent Sector*. http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time. April 28, 2010.

¹² [REDACTED]

¹³ [REDACTED]

