



Supported by USDA NIFA – Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program

Farmers for Chicago (FFC) - New Farmer Incubation Program



"We must strengthen and grow both rural AND urban farming to support a sustainable, secure food system for everyone"

– Will Allen, Founder and CEO, Growing Power, Inc.

Urban agriculture contributes nutritious, flavorful food to communities through year-round, local food production. The ability to produce and distribute food throughout local neighborhoods is important, as the demand for nutritional, good-tasting food continues to grow throughout the country. It is crucial that healthy food be available to individuals and families in ALL neighborhoods!

While healthy food production is perhaps the most important aspect of urban agriculture, other benefits abound as well. Sustainable farming methods and food production contribute to the beauty of urban landscapes, while at the same time playing a crucial role in strengthening healthy environmental management practices within our cities.

Additionally, urban farmers and residents benefit as both the economic and social impacts strengthen neighbors and neighborhoods.

- **Are you ready to start farming in the city?**
- **Do you want to transition into a living wage occupation that transforms you and your community?**
- **Do you want to see your produce and products on the shelves of a local corner store?**
- **Do you want to create social justice and contribute to racial and economic equity in our city?**

**Become a Farmer for Chicago!
Join the Movement that has become a Revolution!**



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Farmers for Chicago

Farmers for Chicago is designed for individuals who have made the decision to grow food commercially in the city, have completed a farm training program, know how to farm, and are ready to get started!

The goal of this initiative is to support emerging farmers and provide incubation for the urban agriculture industry in Chicago.

One of the biggest challenges, for any new farmer, is to secure farmland. This is almost impossible in large metro areas, such as Chicago, without a great deal of capital and political support. There are many training programs locally and nationally, but few that incubate urban farmers who are ready to start their operation, on land they can farm on for long term.

Program Components

This program is designed for 3 years of support and offers:

- **access to land (1/4 acre increments);**
- **tool share program which includes access to tillers, wheelbarrows, seeders and other farm tools;**
- **technical support (monthly workshops with seasoned growers);**
- **individual on-farm assistance (15 hours per year);**
- **marketing support (wholesale, retail and farmers' markets);**
- **technical assistance to apply for loans and small grants;**
- **discounted rates for compost, plants and seeds;**
- **Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) training and technical support to become GAP certified; and**
- **access to volunteers for special projects.**



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All **Farmers for Chicago (FFC)** classes and the tool share will be housed at Growing Power’s Chicago Iron Street Urban Farm, which is situated on a seven-acre formally abandoned industrial warehouse in Bridgeport. Iron Street Urban Farm has the vision to “grow” healthy soil and energy, using closed-loop ecological practices in order to produce local, healthy, and sustainable food year-round for Chicago. Within its first year, Growing Power has already implemented seven hoop houses for year round food production, three 700-gallon aquaponic systems, mushroom production, a roof top apiary, in vessel static composting, and vermicomposting.

Successful trainees will gain an opportunity to participate in Growing Power’s farmer incubation program annually. Participants will have an opportunity to strengthen and implement their farm business plan, manage their own farm (ranging from 20’ x 40’ to 1-acre), and sell their produce.

Growing Power is also working with the City of Chicago to identify available land for local food production, providing potential employment for nearly 100 additional individuals.

About Growing Power

Growing Power is a national nonprofit organization and land trust supporting people from diverse backgrounds, and the environments in which they live, by helping to provide equal access to healthy, high-quality, safe and affordable food for people in all communities.

Growing Power implements this mission by providing hands-on training, on-the-ground demonstration, outreach and technical assistance through the development of Community Food Systems that help people grow, process, market and distribute food in a sustainable manner.

History of the Chicago Projects Office:

Growing Power’s Chicago office officially opened in February of 2002 to manage resource development and the technical assistance needed to assist emerging Community Food Centers and urban and small farm projects in the metropolitan Chicago area. Notable projects include the following: Iron Street Urban Farm; Grant Park Urban Agriculture Potager; Chicago Lights Urban Farm; Jackson Park Urban Farm and Community Allotment Garden; Altgeld Gardens Community Farm; Roosevelt Square Urban Farm; the Chicago Youth Corps.; the Farm-City Market Basket Program, which is distributed at 15 Chicago area sites; produce sales at Chicago’s Green City Market, 61st Street Market, and farm stands at the Chicago Lights Urban Farm, Iron Street Urban Farm, Roosevelt Square Urban Farm and Altgeld Gardens Community Farm; and the Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council, which represents over 175 diverse stakeholders who are creating food policy advisements for city, state and federal policy makers.



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Overview

FFC is a three year program, with weekly curricular activity for the first 12-weeks, including selection and site placement. Farmers for Chicago should plan to attend and actively participate in all trainings. Participants could still maintain a full time job during this time.

The first year of the program is the most intensive. Farmers will focus on acquiring land, building growing beds, and related infrastructure and gearing up to market produce and products. Classes will take place evenings and weekends. Year-two will provide continued support with a focus on increasing production and added-value products. Year-three will be a transition year, with Farmers able to access technical assistance and support.

While the program is designed along a series of benchmarks we want all new farmers to achieve, this is a program designed with the learners in mind and will evolve according to the needs of the farmers involved.

We will focus on the following:

- **Farm preparation (land lease begins)**
- **Bed building**
- **Hoop house construction**
- **Successful production and marketing of crops**
- **Recordkeeping**
- **GAP training and certification**
- **Technical support in loan and financing**



This is a tuition based program based on current income. Fees and scholarships will be awarded according to a sliding scale.



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Year 1

Beginner Farmer internships begin October 1 – December 20th each year. This provides FFC applicants who need intensive training to attain practical experience prior to entering the rigor of the program. This also provides opportunity to 'try on' farming

before the financial and life transformation commitment of becoming a farmer. Candidates may apply for the internship at www.growingpower.org.

Weekly workshops begin Saturdays from 1-5 pm at Iron Street Farm.

February: Saturday February 1st and 8th.

Project Planning – The Vision- Seeding the Future. We will solidify farm plans and production goals. (Securing land)

March: Saturday, March 1st, 8th, and 15th.

Marketing – developing clear sales objectives, markets and opportunities for added product development. Farm training will focus on compost and vermicomposting.

April: Saturday, April 5th, 12th, and 19th.

Financials, Record keeping and GAP training. Farm training in hoop house production and harvesting.

May: Saturday, May 3rd and 10th.

On farm installations – hoop house construction, bed construction, farm layout, and irrigation.

During this foundation year, participants will each be able to access 12 hours of individual 1:1 assistance on site, with Growing Power staff and consultants. As the growing season begins, FFC will transition to site specific preparation and farming. All program participants will be encouraged to apply for Organic certification, or other third party sustainable certification.

Workshops will range from a revisiting of each FFC's business plan (with feedback and critique from the group and staff), soil nutrition, composting and vermicomposting, bed construction, pest management, post-harvest handling, GAP training, planting, seeding and maintenance of crops, season extension, and hoop house construction and management. Specialty workshops in food preservation, beekeeping, aquaponics, micro-greens and mushrooms will also be offered to those interested.





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Year 2

Participants will continue with monthly workshops and utilize individualized technical assistance (10 hour time bank). Expanded production and marketing is expected. The introduction of value-added product development, animal husbandry, aquaponics, and beekeeping will be introduced. The utilization of financial tools, record keeping and bookkeeping, seeking certifications, GAP, organic, etc. This is a year to expand and finish building the farms' infrastructure.

Monthly workshops:

- **Expanded crop production**
- **Ability to market more product**
- **Increased capacity**
- **Peer mentoring of new FFC participants**

Year 3

Farmers for Chicago will continue attending monthly workshops, access individual technical assistance (5 hour bank of time) and market products via the program.

This program is designed to support individuals who are beginning urban farm businesses, growing and producing food products commercially. We see this as a three-year program, to incubate and support farmers operating in the city of Chicago. This is not a training program; individuals should be finished with their training and ready to start their farm operation. The cost supports staff providing technical assistance, workshop costs and materials, land use, tools for tool share and materials related to the program.



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APPLICATION

**Farmers for Chicago
COMMERCIAL URBAN AGRICULTURE INCUBATOR PROGRAM**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip code: _____

Telephone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Best time to reach you? _____

Deadline: May 15, 2014.
Call: 773-376-8882 for more information

PLEASE RETURN TO:
Email: chicago@growingpower.org / subject line: Farmers for Chicago

Tuition/Program costs: \$2,500 per year. Scholarships are available.



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APPLICATION

Farmers For Chicago Application Questions

1. Describe your current situation that defines or is propelling you to farm? What has inspired you, or motivated you to pursue your venture?
2. Please submit your business plan. Include budget and marketing strategy, as well as financing that you have solidified.
3. What are your qualifications? What training programs, internships, or farm experiences have you completed? Briefly describe past projects that would qualify your organization/business to successfully establish a dynamic program.
4. Describe any preliminary research and planning completed for your proposed urban agriculture enterprise.
5. Describe in detail, the amount of land, training and technical assistance that you would most benefit from receiving in the program.
6. The expected duration of direct program support for participants is 3 years. Tenure on land can be ongoing, renewed annually as long as the business is active. Is this adequate for your needs?
7. Will you include the community you are working in? Describe.

Please provide three letters of reference with contact information. At least one of the reference letters should be agriculture related.



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