Advancing Next Generation Urban Farmers:
Experiential Training, Mentorship and Employment

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Multinational Exchange for Sustainable Agriculture (MESA) and Planting Justice

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Project Overview

- **Audience:** Formerly incarcerated people, immigrant farmers, refugees and otherwise socially disadvantaged beginning farmers to gain training, mentorship and employment in sustainable and profitable urban and peri-urban farms

- **Key Approaches:** Agro-ecology Hands-on Training, Paid 3-6 Month On-Farm Mentorships, Living-wage job creation, New Farm Startups

- **Target Outcome:** 116 Beginning Farmers, including 90 Formerly Incarcerated, Immigrant, or otherwise Socially Disenfranchised Farmers; 20 New Full-Time Farmers Employed or Self-Employed
Project Accomplishments

- 25 Currently Incarcerated People Enrolled in San Quentin Beginning Farmer/Gardener Program, Inside the Prison
- 13 People Currently Enrolled in 1st 4-month Cohort, all Socially Disadvantaged Beginning Farmers
- 2 Excellent Lead Agro-Ecology Educators Hired
- 7 New Living Wage Jobs Created for Beginning Farmers Currently in Cohort #1, including 4 Formerly Incarcerated People
- 114 individuals enrolled in online courses in agroecology and organic seed production
Impact and Evaluation

- Sustainable employment of socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers
- Mentorship network of experienced farmers committed for next phase
- 4-month Training Immersion foundation complete for remaining cohorts
- Online multimedia courses developed for hybrid learning and partners at learn.mesaprogram.org
- Online evaluation template created to track short term and long term impact
- Evaluations are submitted online, as well as via in-person and phone interviews
4. To evaluate the dangers posed to farmworkers by pesticides and inhumane working conditions.
5. To suggest solutions to the current decline in pollinators.

Lesson Modules

- Self-Assessment
- History of Pesticides
- The Pesticide Treadmill
- Socio-political Consequences of Pesticide Treadmill
- Pollinators
- Methods for Managing Insect Pests
- The History of Weed Control
- Wild Plants in Traditional Farming Systems
Lessons Learned & Best Practices

• Outreach and recruitment timeline modified
• Training immersion timeline adjusted
• Online curriculum in Applied Agroecology collaborative development and pre-training
• Integration of training immersion, formal paid-apprenticeship model with mentorship tools, customized apprentice training plans, and individual consultation
• Experience facilitating the empowerment of re-entry and new-entry beginning farmers
Next Year & After

• Two 4-Month cohorts planned for next year, with 50 participants and 75% socially disadvantaged
• First round of on-farm mentorships post graduation
• Development of incubator program
• First round of funded agripreneurs and incubated farmers
• Goal of 10 full-time employed farmers by year two who participated in program
Thank you!

Questions?

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