

Youth Grow Indy Guide

A guide for farmers who want to host a workforce development program for youth

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Introduction

Welcome

Thank you for taking the time to download this manual. We designed this guide to assist you in starting your own youth employment program on your farm. Our goal is to provide you with detailed information and step-by-step instructions to help you establish a successful program.

We cover a wide range of topics in this manual, including the benefits of youth employment programs, legal considerations, recruitment strategies, program management, and much more. Our hope is that this guide will serve as a valuable resource for you as you embark on this exciting and rewarding journey.

Please note that while we've made every effort to provide comprehensive information in this manual, it's possible that we may have missed something. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to us for assistance.

Thank you again for downloading this manual, and we wish you the best of luck in your youth employment program endeavors.

Vision

Youth Grow Indy is a community-based program that was established in the year 2018 with the aim of empowering young individuals to cultivate their own food and become leaders in their communities. The program has been designed to cater to the needs of the youth and provide them with a diverse range of opportunities to develop their skills in areas such as gardening, cooking, and leadership.

Youth Grow Indy offers a comprehensive curriculum that covers various aspects of gardening, from seed to harvest. Youth are taught about soil preparation, plant care, pest management, and composting. In addition, they also get an opportunity to learn about cooking and nutrition, which helps them understand the importance of healthy eating habits.

The program is designed to be inclusive and accessible to all youth in the community. It provides a safe and welcoming environment where young people can learn, grow, and socialize while developing their skills and confidence. The program also offers leadership training, which helps participants develop essential skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

Overall, Youth Grow Indy is a valuable resource for young people in the community who are interested in learning about gardening, cooking, and leadership. It provides them with the tools and support they need to become self-sufficient, responsible, and engaged members of their communities.

History of the Program

Youth Grow Indy started in 2018 when our founder Danielle, received a phone call from a county extension educator. This educator was working with two organizations to launch a youth gardening program at an apartment complex and needed someone to coordinate. It was supposed to be temporary work as the program was already designed; they just needed someone to implement it. This partnership between Carriage House East Apartments, Felege Hiywot Center, Purdue Extension, and Danielle formed the basis of the program.

In 2018, there were 8 youths enrolled in the program, and we learned a lot. Teaching youth about gardening involved more than knowing a spade from a shovel it being a listening ear, a nurse, a mentor. The youth worked Monday through Friday this first year and were paid weekly in gift cards. The program's structure was farm work in the morning, with various lessons in the afternoon.

The afternoons could be described as random as some activities did not directly correlate to the program. As we were just facilitators of an already-designed program, nothing could be changed. At the end of the summer, Carriage House East asked Danielle to take the lead on the program for the next year and help with the planning. This was readily accepted because it allowed us to integrate our Temple Garden location.

The summer of 2019 was challenging because it brought a new partnership with the United Northeast Community Development Corporation. This organization was serving as our fiscal sponsor so we could go after larger grants for the program. This partnership helped us develop other partnerships, such as a local bank that came out and taught financial literacy and helped the youth start their bank accounts. These bank accounts allowed us to pay the youth in checks as they now had somewhere to deposit them.

With SFP (formerly known as Temple Gardens) running the program, it made sense that the youth would spend some time in our garden. This caused us to think about transportation, so we acquired bus passes for the youth who lived in the apartments. On the days that the youth worked at our garden, they would take the bus to us and then leave as a group from us.

The pandemic hit in 2020, and we weren't sure if we would have the summer program. A few of the young people from the previous summer reached out to see if it was happening so we had to make a decision. Carriage House East was not allowing programming to happen, so the only way it would happen would be outside at our new site on Sheldon. We decided to make the program three days a week and a half days. Since we were working outside, we figured this would keep the risk down. The program ended up being canceled halfway through the summer due to behavioral issues.

2021 was the first year we brought in extra help. We hired a college student to help with social media and the program. This solved the transportation issue as we had two crews temporarily: Carriage House East and Sheldon St. Danielle would start the day at Sheldon and then head to

Carriage House East for their start. At the same time, the intern led the Sheldon crew in work. The days were still shorter because many of our partners did not do in-person workshops. This was also the year we began hosting the school year program.

The school year program was not very structured this first year. We had 3 youth work Saturdays throughout the year and over their school breaks. They operated as junior farm hands, performed farm work, and assisted with sales at our annual plant sale and farmstand.

At the beginning of the summer of 2022, we hired our first full-time program coordinator for the youth program. Aubrey was able to follow the plan and add in other activities that benefitted the youth. The school year program became more structured as the youth had scheduled days after school and assignments they had to complete. Transportation was still a challenge as we had limited our time at Carriage House, but most of our youth were still coming from there. This caused us to do a lot of driving before the day started to pick up the different youth.

2023 was a year of change for us. Aubrey and Danielle took lessons from the summer of 2022 and enforced several things. First, the youth had to have their rides to our Sheldon St farm. We would begin and end the day there to make it easy on parents, but that was required.

Using this Manual

The summer program may only last for 7 weeks, but the planning and implementation process is ongoing throughout the year while running the regular school year programming. This manual provides a chronological guide, from recruitment and setup to implementation and evaluation. Additionally, this manual touches on our school year programming, an extension of our summer program. As both programs build off each other, we've also included information on the school year programming.

Recruitment

Overview

Bringing together the best possible youth group each summer is very important. These youth will be the next generation of your program and can serve as ambassadors for your project. At Soul Food Project, we focus on demographics, youth development, and community dynamics when selecting youth for the program. Recruitment should be a year-round activity.

Timeline

Recruiting happens throughout the year, but our official application process opens in early January and closes in April. These three months are crucial and busy, during which we regularly post on our social media platforms to engage with the community. We aim to attract as many

applicants as possible to build a strong pool of candidates. The April deadline provides time to plan orientations, crews, and work schedules.

Application

Our application lives in Google Forms. It is not a typical job application as we rely on short and long-form questions to get to know the youth. It is important that the youth actively apply and express interest in the work. With the right questions, we can decide whether they would be a good fit for us.

Everyone who completes an application receives an interview. We want to honor their effort by allowing them to showcase their personality. The interview also helps us to see how they interact with our staff and each other.

Interviews

Interviews always take place outside unless it is raining. The work is primarily outside, so we want to see how the teens react when encountering bugs and dirt. This is their first job experience for most, so we utilize group interview techniques. We typically allow our DIRT Crew participants to sit in on the interviews and ask questions. This helps them practice their skills and allows them to meet their future crew member(s). We schedule the interviews in batches. The interview format is as follows:

- Ice Breaker/ Group Game: This is important because it helps relax the applicants. For many, it is their first job interview, so we try alleviating some nervousness. (10 mins)
- Tour: DIRT Crew members lead a small group on the neighborhood and farm tour. (15 minutes)
- Activity: DIRT Crew members lead their group in a small activity on the farm after the tour. (1 hour)
- Interview: Throughout the activity, each applicant is individually pulled for a 20-minute interview.

The plan is that each applicant will spend a maximum of 90 minutes at the farm during their interview.

Selection of Workers

The interview day is long and exhausting, but one final activity must be completed. The DIRT Crew meets for the last hour, discusses each candidate, and gives a yes, no, or maybe on each one they met, along with their reasons. They submit this to the staff to be used along with the results from the interview.

Each interview question is scored and averaged to give each applicant a score. The score and recommended slate from the DIRT Crew are looked at over the next few days, and then offers are sent out. We use the recommendation from the DIRT Crew because we know sometimes

applicants may not interview well or be good writers (the application) but may show their true personality when around their peers. Sometimes, the applicant can score low on the interview but be highly ranked by the crew and will get an offer.

Paperwork

We enroll all of the youth into our payroll system to pay them through direct deposit. Every youth is considered an employee so they will receive a W2 during the year. We require a couple of other forms for the youth.

- Waiver and Liability: This form is the standard waiver for participants, and it also covers
 photographs on the farm that may be used for social media.
- Health History Form: We ask all participants to submit a health history form so we are aware of any allergies or any other medical conditions.

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Orientation

Orientation day for our Seed Crew is a full-day event. We aim to introduce them to a professional environment and want them to have fun! Parents will be invited to attend the second half of the orientation day, so they can ask any questions and get to know our organization.

During the orientation they will:

- Get an overview of Soul Food Project's history, values, and company culture
- Meet their peers, peer leaders, and crew leaders
- Get an explanation of their responsibilities, expectations of behavior, and performance measurement
- Sign/receive any remaining paperwork
- Take a tour of their work site(s)

Set-up

Schedules

Creating schedules involves a systematic process of organizing tasks and allocating resources to meet specific goals within the given time frame. We have six weeks to expose these youth to all parts of the food system, farm, and the organization.

To ensure things go smoothly, it's important to plan and create schedules in advance. Ideally, schedules should be finished by April, so there's enough time to check them, make changes if needed, and put them into action. This also gives enough room to handle any unexpected

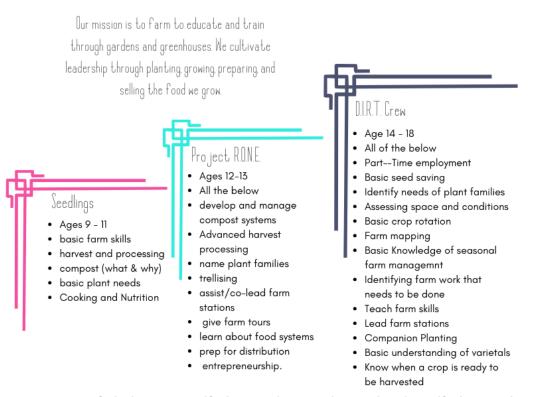
issues that might come up during the summer season. By finishing schedules early, it can prevent any last-minute problems and confusion, and help make the project a success.

Curriculum

Our curriculum is designed in accordance with the Junior Master Gardener program. We believe in providing hands-on fieldwork experience to our youth that complements our farm plan. To ensure that our young participants are assigned age-appropriate tasks, we have categorized the tasks based on their difficulty level. We have divided the tasks into different categories that align with the earlier years of a child's development, as illustrated below. However, we no longer offer programming to children aged 9-12 years. Therefore, we have combined the two categories of tasks and assigned them to the Seed Crew.

We have a special program called Job Ready Indy that helps people in Indianapolis find jobs. It was made by the mayor's office, EmployIndy, the Indy Chamber, and a bunch of companies and groups from around the city. Anyone can use the program to learn important skills that employers want, like how to communicate well, work as part of a team, and be responsible. You get badges for completing different sections of the program, which shows employers that you have the skills they need.





For more info check out www.soulfoodprojectindy.org/youth or email youth@soulfoodprojectindy.org

Staff

We bring on extra staff during the 7 weeks of the program to help coordinate the program this frees up our Farm Director to focus on other areas of the farm. We hire an Operations Specialist, who helps to coordinate the schedule and ensures we move smoothly during the day. Their role is to ensure that the farm crew knows when to expect the youth for fieldwork and to be the point of contact for all external partners or field trips. We also hire two local college students to serve as pseudo-camp counselors or crew leaders. They are the day-to-day point of contact for the youth. The youth are expected to report to them to learn about their assignments and their schedule for the day.

Partnerships

Since the program's inception, the farm has established partnerships with external organizations. These collaborations have brought in external partners who give the farm crew a

much-needed break from engaging with the youth all day. By doing so, it helps the crew focus on other critical tasks that require their undivided attention.

It is essential to note that building in times for external partners to come in and teach the youth a lesson is a good idea. This approach ensures that the farm can focus on tasks that require specific skills and knowledge that the youth may not possess. By having external partners teach lessons to the youth, the youth can learn from professionals and gain valuable insights into different aspects of farming and agriculture.

This approach also helps the youth develop relationships with external partners, creating a sense of community and belonging. Additionally, the youth can gain exposure to different career paths and opportunities in the agriculture industry, which could help shape their future goals and aspirations.

Overall, establishing partnerships with external organizations and scheduling times for them to come in and teach the youth a lesson is a valuable approach for the farm program. It not only helps the farm crew but also provides the youth with valuable learning experiences and opportunities for growth.

Crews

At our organization, we have found it beneficial to divide the youth into crews of five. This allows us to assign tasks more efficiently and keep the ratio of adults to youth at a manageable level. By keeping the youth in smaller groups, it is easier for us to monitor their progress and ensure everyone is staying on task.

Additionally, it provides a sense of community and belonging for the youth, as they can work closely with their peers on projects and activities. Overall, we have found that this approach has successfully promoted teamwork and productivity among our youth members.

Infrastructure

In previous years, we have provided our youth participants with water bottles and backpacks to use during their activities on the farm. However, we have noticed that many of them fail to keep track of these items, and they end up becoming an added expense that is not justified. Therefore, we have decided to discontinue providing these items.

Instead, we are focusing on providing other essential items that will help ensure the safety and well-being of our youth participants. For instance, we will purchase a t-shirt for each youth, which will serve as a keepsake and help identify them as part of our team. We will also ensure that our farm's first aid area is fully stocked with important items such as sunscreen, bug spray, itch cream, ibuprofen, and acetaminophen. These items will be readily available to anyone who needs them.

Moreover, we understand the importance of hydration and proper nutrition while engaging in physical activities. Therefore, we will ensure that there is always water and snacks to energize our youth participants throughout the day. To ensure that we have enough supplies for the entire season, we will run to a large warehouse-type store to purchase these items in bulk.

We believe these changes will help us better serve our youth participants and provide a safe and enjoyable experience for all.

Implementation

General

Crew Efficiency and Motivation in the Field

When it comes to the youth, we must provide enough time and guidance to ensure they can learn and develop at their own pace. While it's true that some young people may require more assistance than others, it's important to remember that with proper support and good role models, they can all make progress. One important aspect of this is setting the right pace and expectations. If we push the youth too hard or fast, they may become easily overwhelmed or discouraged, hindering their growth and development. Rather, it's essential to model the desired speed and approach and to provide them with examples to follow where possible. By doing so, we can help the youth grow and develop into capable and confident individuals ready to tackle the challenges of the future.

Physical Safety

Working on a farm involves several tasks that require various tools and equipment. However, it is crucial to prioritize safety while performing these tasks. As responsible adults, it is our responsibility to model safe tool usage practices for the younger generation. We must ensure that the youth on the farm are not allowed to use any tools they have not received proper training on. Additionally, we must make it clear to them that they are not authorized to access the tool shed without explicit permission. By enforcing these rules, we can minimize the risk of accidents and injuries on the farm and create a safe working environment for everyone involved.

Emotional Safety

When working with young people, it is crucial to prioritize their emotional well-being and safety. This entails understanding the unique emotional needs of each individual and creating a safe and supportive environment that fosters positive emotional growth. It also involves recognizing signs of emotional distress and providing appropriate support and resources to address any issues that arise. By prioritizing emotional safety and well-being, we can help young people develop the resilience and emotional intelligence they need to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

Personal Possessions

At our farm, we make sure that each youth is provided with their own cubby to keep their personal belongings safe. We understand the importance of personal space and privacy, so we assign a cubby to each individual. Additionally, we treat all the youth as valuable employees, and as such, they are entitled to use the employee fridge to store their lunches and other food items. We believe a nutritious and balanced diet is important for everyone, and we want to ensure that the youth in our care have access to healthy food options throughout the day.

Payroll and Attendance

Payroll is provided through our payroll system. This payroll system allows our employees to clock in and out on an app on their phone or at a kiosk in our farm stand.

Communication

Our organization values transparent communication and ensures that all stakeholders are informed. To maintain a strong relationship with the parents of our youth employees, we send out a weekly newsletter. This newsletter includes a detailed plan of activities for the upcoming week, including where their child will be and what they will be doing. We understand that emergencies can arise at any time, so we believe it is vital for parents to be aware of their child's whereabouts. Our goal is to provide a safe and secure environment for the youth employees and their parents, and we believe that regular communication through our weekly newsletter helps us achieve this goal.

Activities

Morning Meeting

The morning meeting is an essential element of our daily routine. It involves the farm Director/Manager, Crew Leaders, and Assistant Crew Leaders and takes place before the youth arrive for the day. During this meeting, we discuss the tasks for the day, train any new skills that may be required, and make sure that we have all the necessary tools prepared for the day's work. This is particularly helpful because we are a working farm, enabling us to divide the tasks effectively between the youth and the rest of the farm crew to ensure efficient operation.

Crew Lunch

At our establishment, we provide a 30-minute lunch break for the youth. We understand the importance of socialization; therefore, we usually don't sit with them during lunchtime. This allows them to interact with their peers without any interference from us. However, we are always present nearby in case they need any assistance. We don't permit them to leave the property during lunchtime for safety reasons. We encourage the youth to bring their lunch, but we also provide some snacks and drinks in case they forget to bring their own.

Crew Outings

As part of our summer program, we organize a crew outing to provide our youth with a fun and refreshing break from their work routine. Our priority is to ensure that the youth have a well-rounded summer experience, which is why we allow them to take charge of planning this outing. It is typically scheduled during the final week of the program, so the youth have something to look forward to as they wrap up their summer work. This outing is a great opportunity for our youth to bond with each other outside of their work environment and create lasting memories. We believe that this activity not only promotes team-building but also strengthens relationships amongst the youth.

Farmer's Markets

Farmer's markets are crucial in promoting fresh and healthy food and supporting local farmers and producers. As part of our commitment to sustainability and community involvement, we actively participate in a weekly farmers market, in addition to running our own farmstand.

We believe that it is essential for young people to have the opportunity to engage with this work and develop important customer service skills. That's why we offer them the chance to work at our booth, where they can interact with customers, learn about the food system, and gain valuable experience in marketing and sales.

To ensure that they get the full farmers market experience, we also require them to volunteer at a market. This gives them a chance to see how other vendors operate, learn about the challenges and opportunities in the industry, and build relationships with other members of the community. We believe this kind of hands-on learning is critical for building a sustainable and equitable food system, and we are proud to be a part of it.

Field Trips

As part of our regular schedule, we plan visits to other farms in and around the city. Our goal is to learn from other farmers who grow differently than us and also to be of assistance to them. We understand that giving a tour to visitors can really throw off a farm's schedule, so we always offer to lend a hand and spend additional time working on a task.

In previous years, we have had the opportunity to help a farm harvest radishes for the market and set up their trellis system for their tomatoes. It was a great learning experience for us, and we were happy to help out. We look forward to more opportunities to learn from and assist other farmers in the future.

Leader Training Week

Leadership training week is specifically designed for the Y.G.I. members who are taking on a peer leadership role during the summer program. This week prepares them to lead other youth in an activity, manage a team, and other trainings that will prepare them for the next six weeks.

Leadership Orientation Week

We will begin and end our days at the Sheldon location.

Arrive with enough time for you to be clocked in by 9:00 AM & ready to go (Sunscreen on, water bottle filled, etc.)

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9:00 AM	Morning Check-in Ice Breaker LOD:	Morning Check-in Daily expectations LOD:	Morning Check-in Daily expectations LOD:	Morning Check-in Daily expectations LOD:	Morning Check-in Daily expectations LOD:
9:15 AM	What a typical day		Sotting goals	Class	Tour Prep
9:30 AM	looks like	Farm Activity	Setting goals	Class	
9:45 AM	Corm Cofotul				
10:00 AM	Farm Safety!		Farm Work Youth Leading:	Farm Work Youth Leading:	Y.G.I Service Tour
10:15 AM			rodin Ecading.	rodui Ecading.	9:30 AM - 11:00 AM
10:30 AM	Farm Work Youth Leading:	Bullying Prevention	Break Time	Break Time	
10:45 AM	- Todin Loading.	10 AM- 1PM			
11:00 AM	Break Time	Breaks @	Farm Work Youth Leading:		Break Time
11:15 AM			rodin Ecading.	Partners	
11:30 AM	Farm Work Youth Leading:		Team Building		Class?
11:45 AM	Todai Leading.	Lunch	Activity		
12:00 PM	Lunch	Bring your own lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:15 PM	Bring your own lunch	Bullying Prevention	Bring your own lunch	Bring your own lunch	Bring your own lunch

12:30 PM	Team Building		Hold yourself and		
12:45 PM	Activity		your crew	Farm Work	Farm Work
1:00 PM	Your role as a leader	Farm Work Youth Leading:	accountable		I allii vvoik
1:15 PM	Tour role as a leader		Handling Conflict	Break Time	
1:30 PM	Coophing Model		Tranding Commet		Break Time
1:45 PM	Coaching Model			Farm Work	
2:00 PM	What is Real Talk? How do you lead it?		Farm Work?	Failli VVOIK	Farm Work
2:15 PM			Cai Taik:	raiiii vvoik?	
2:30 PM	Thom do you load it.			Farm Chores	
2:45 PM	Farm Chores	Farm Chores	Farm Chores	Transportation	Farm Chores
3:00 PM	Prep for Real Talk	Prep for Real Talk	Prep for Real Talk	Prep for Real Talk	Prep for Real Talk
3:15 PM					
3:30 PM	Real-Talk	Real-Talk	Real-Talk	Real-Talk	Real-Talk
3:45 PM					
4:00 PM	End of Day Report	End of Day Report	End of Day Report	End of Day Report	End of Day Report

(Figure 1

School Year

Recruitment

Our recruitment efforts are focused on the Near Eastside and Martindale Brightwood corridors in Indianapolis, IN. We primarily serve youth aged 13-17 and our recruitment reaches out to three high schools in the area, which are Arsenal Technical High School, KIPP Indy Legacy High School, and Purdue Polytechnic High School. We also collaborate with other local urban farms to employ youth who have completed their programs. For instance, Mother Loves Garden is a local urban farm that serves youth aged 9-12. Once they complete their program, they can move up to ours. Our school year program requires the completion of a summer with SFP or an equivalent experience from another organization.

Implementation

Curriculum

Fall Trimester dives deeper into agriculture and food justice. Summer gives them a chance to go all into farming, but we don't always get down into the fundamentals of why we do certain things in agriculture. The crews will get to evaluate the farm's analytics and sales of produce. Understanding what impact their work has had over the summer, while also getting to know the business side of the organization. The underlying theme will be food justice: how do we do it as an organization and what part do they play in it.

The Winter Trimester is focused on community. Crews participate in volunteer opportunities, plan and prepare for a Community Day event, and provide an appetizer for the first community dinner. The students will make connections within the community while also giving back to the local organizations. The schedule is flexible enough that if the students choose to do so we will allow them to plan their own service project for the community. The Community Day is for the students to invite the community in to showcase the skills they have learned through the school year.

The Spring Trimester is focused on leadership. Crews will begin leading the farm tours, helping our volunteers on service days, and participating in community events. This is the semester students invite the community in for their Community Day in April & Community Dinner in May. At the same time, the students begin preparing to lead the seedling crew that arrives in the summer.

All three trimesters include agriculture lessons from Jr. Master Gardener or Purdue Extension, along with independent work projects that the students can take part in.

Schedules

The school year program functions on a trimester schedule with each trimester having a different focus. Saturdays are our main work days, but we also offer pick-up shifts during the weekdays for youth.

Saturdays

The schedule for Saturdays fluctuates depending on the trimester. Since we are not outside for farm tasks during the winter months, our Saturdays are supplemented with volunteering. This year we have had a variety of opportunities to volunteer with different organizations. In the future, we are looking to partner with other organizations for our youth to work shifts for a month at a time with other organizations.

	Saturday Schedule Month 00, 0000	
9:00 AM- 9:15 AM	Morning Huddle	Morning Check-in Go over Farm Tasks/Community Work
9:15 AM- 11:30 PM	Fall: Farm Tasks Winter: Community Work Spring: Farm Tasks	Crews take breaks every 45min- 1hr -Water & Sunscreen are a must
12:00 PM- 12:30 PM	Lunch	
12:30 PM- 12:45 PM	Mini Activity	Youth Lead Activity
1:00 PM-1:30 PM	Leadership workshop	
1:30 PM-2:30 PM	Lesson	
2:30 PM-2:35 PM	Lesson	
2:30 PM - 3:25 PM	Fall: Farm tasks Winter: Farm Workshop	
3:25 PM- 3:30 PM	Reflection before Real Talk	Y.G.I crews take this time to reflect on their day, and prepare positives & deltas to share during real talk
3:30 PM- 4:00 PM	Closing Meeting	Real Talk, Students write down their feedback in journal Announcements

(Figure 2)

Weekdays

Weekdays consist of two types of work options: an independent work assignment or fieldwork sign-ups. Independent work assignments are mainly given to ROOT Crew members as they are leading some of the larger projects for Y.G.I. They can consist of creating and scheduling a social media post to planning an event for the organization. Fieldwork during the week is only scheduled during the Fall & Spring Trimesters, once a week from 3:30 PM- 5:30 PM. This is not a requirement, but we allow them to sign up to gain additional experience and hours if they need them.

Winter Service Days

During the winter our farm is shut down, so we supplement our work with service within our community. As of now, we schedule with multiple organizations for Saturday morning service work and then go back to our local library to finish the day. We are hoping to organize with a few key food organizations in our community to have our students work at their organizations during the winter season next school year. The goal is to give them as much exposure to the organizations in our community along with getting to know the job positions available in the food space.

Evaluation

We have been using student surveys to evaluate their learning. Surveys are given at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year program. During the summer surveys are only given at the beginning and end of the program since it is only 6 weeks.

After students complete the end-of-year survey, they have a one-on-one with their Crew Leader to discuss their growth and possible improvements.