

Baltimore Farmer Pipeline Feasibility Study



Farm Alliance of Baltimore Mission/Vision

MISSION

The Farm Alliance of Baltimore is a membership organization of urban farms, neighborhood growers, and friends. We use connection, resource sharing, and collective advocacy with respect to food, land and water to expand communities' self-determination and power.

VALUES

- **Sustainable Agriculture.** Through farming practices that enhance environmental and workplace quality for our farmers and our communities, we hope to create and maintain a healthy food system for all.
- **Solidarity.** Recognizing that we are part of the City of Baltimore, we hope to engage in the community by connecting our partners and community members in order to foster a healthy and reliable support network.
- **Collective Power.** As a membership-based organization, strength in numbers is the foundation of our ability to leverage the voices of our farmers and their communities to change the structural inequities of our food system.
- **Equity.** Being a membership-led organization allows us ensure that our shared power and resources are used to promote fair and just programming and action that builds community and food sovereignty in our communities.
- **Education.** By facilitating the ongoing exchange of knowledge through experiential learning and critical dialogue, we aim to create a more informed consumer and producer base that applies their knowledge to the changing food landscape of Baltimore.

"...where I feel some real magic can happen is building that community of practice"

- MAYA KOSOK, URBAN FLOWER FARMER, HILLEN HOMESTEAD



*Growers with varying degrees of experience at a hoop house build day in 2019 (Photo Source: Eric Jackson)
Cover image, (Photo Source: Farm Alliance of Baltimore)*

Executive Director's Note

WE FIND OURSELVES IN A CITY on the verge of change. What do we know? We know that community-based urban farms, especially Black-owned and operated urban farms and gardens, nationally and in Baltimore, are experiencing a resurgence¹. In a majority-Black city like Baltimore, an alliance of farms and gardens is called to do more to support and sustain these Black-owned farms. We know that these farms and gardens remain precarious, both financially and structurally, because of a variety of factors.

They don't often control or own their land.

Unlike corporate-backed ventures that have the flexibility to acquire buildings and build greenhouses, they tend to lack the wealth to have a financial safety net to get them through difficult growing seasons.

They often don't know where to turn to hire the next farmer to keep the business running.

This last problem is what we aim to tackle with the Baltimore Farmer Pipeline project. A program that takes shape atop the groundwork laid by this feasibility study could be small or large in scale; it could be run by the Farm Alliance or autonomously run and owned by another nonprofit or business provider. We know that it will require the formation of partnerships among a variety of institutions and organizations that will need to work together to ensure that young and difficult-to-employ residents from Baltimore communities of color – centrally, but not exclusively, African American communities – can get the skills and experience they need to become urban farmers.

The energy that Baltimore residents are putting into the soil to grow food and thus increase their control of their food supply is undeniably powerful. We produced this feasibility study, with the generous support of the Kaiser Permanente Community Health Initiative, because we know how easy it would be for these efforts to fade away once more. We are working for a different outcome: with this study, we present the thoughts and opinions of real community residents and urban farmers who told us what they hope to see in a beginner farmer training program based in Baltimore City. The report you hold in your hands represents an exciting moment for a city that is on the cusp of freeing more land for Black communities to steward, and on the verge of its communities gaining greater control of their food supply. The Baltimore Farmer Pipeline is intended to produce more producers – to teach more folks who wish to learn to grow food for themselves and their communities, in order to bring this vision into being. We invite you to read on, ask questions, consider the possibilities, and step in to support the creation of this project with your thoughts, your time, and your dollars.

Mariya Strauss
Baltimore, Maryland
December 2019

*Denzel Mitchell harvesting mixed lettuces
(Photo Source: Farm Alliance of Baltimore)*



1 (Willingham, 2019)

Author's Notes

ON A BRISK WINTER MORNING in early 2017, I joined the board members, farmer members, and staff of Farm Alliance of Baltimore (FAB) at the beginning of a strategic planning process. Everything was fresh. It was my first meeting as a newly appointed board member. The goal of the strategic planning process was to revisit, reassess, and develop new mission and vision statements, values, and activities of FAB. During this session, I communicated an unwavering interest in being a leader of an organization that valued antiracism principles and deep community engagement. It was clear to me that the organization was headed in a direction that aligned with my interest. This was evidenced by the numerous “amens” and words of affirmation that followed my comment about The Alliance seeing itself as included in the larger Baltimore community rather than separate from it.

A few months later, a new Executive Director of Farm Alliance was named. While I was initially skeptical about the change, it didn't take long for me to replace my skepticism with frank communication about how the Farm Alliance should work toward being representative of Baltimore's community, which is primarily Black, and developing programming that came from the people. My communication, while shared by other board members, were overtly shared by our new Executive Director. As FAB leadership began planning and implementing such new developments, it was clear to me that the organization was actually moving in a direction with which I could align. An ad hoc group of farm members and board members began the process of creating concrete plans for organization-wide antiracism training. As a member of this group, I worked with others to develop a process, budget, and potential facilitators for this training. We submitted our recommendation which were met with enthusiasm that translated to a board presentation. Once this was approved, we began working on materializing our plans. The first step was to determine a facilitator and layout a schedule. It was important for us to develop a realistic timeline that included engaging farmers, board members, and staff of FAB.

After successfully implementing the antiracism training over several months, several actions came from the demands of the farm members. Top on the priority list was the need for a farming training program in Baltimore City. Farm Alliance issued a “Request for Proposals” for a consultant to lead a community-driven feasibility study for the potential development of the Baltimore Farmer Pipeline Program. I was initially not interested in submitting. But after some prodding from some members of the local food movement, I decided to do just that. Over the last 11 months, after being chosen as the leader of this study, I have remained excited about my choice to submit. It has been a journey which invoked various emotions and experiences. Most notably, is the feeling of comradery. When sitting in front of fellow food system changers, farmers, and prospective farm apprentices. I have been privileged to hear and record many amazing ideas that have increased my hope for what we can do collectively that transforms the Baltimore food system. Through this process, I have reimagined my contribution to this work, especially making urban agriculture a viable industry in the beloved city. To borrow from many of the farmer, it was caused me to take a more assertive effort to protect our farm land and the possibilities of growing our own enterprises and community assets.

It warms my heart to remember seeing the smiles of seasoned farmers and inquisitive looks from younger farmers about a future program that builds on their dreams. It makes me smile to read notes of young people who can see themselves as farmers in this bubbling tradition of urban farming which directly connects to the vocation of our enslaved ancestors. I have been gently nudged toward a vision that includes many voices, perspectives, identities, and aspirations—all as diverse as the ecosystems represented by the participants in this study. In the pages that follow, you will learn of the beauty, struggle, and humanity that embodies the current and future promises of a robust urban agriculture system and community in Baltimore City.



(Photo Source: Cherry Hill Urban Garden)

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With this, I am grateful to my direct ancestors who were brought here to the land of indigenous peoples to cultivate rice and tobacco in South Carolina and who used their expertise to build the infrastructure for our current economy. I thank my ancestors who came to Baltimore City through the great migration and through other means to find work and build family. I honor my ancestors for illustrating resilience and resistance in their everyday lives by using food, labor, and love as mediums for relationship building in the city. To my ancestor on the Jackson and Briscoe sides—you are appreciated! To my indirect ancestors, I am grateful for the way that your humanity has illuminated through the omnipresent systems of oppression. I know you have laid the foundation for this work and the work to come—you are appreciated!

To my family—my life partner, Diara, and children Oryan, Erian, Amir, and Kamau—thank you for inspiring me and sharing me. Your generosity and love allow me to do this work. I give thanks to my family of origin for laying the foundation and providing the experiences that have prepared me for this work. I am grateful to all the elders who have paved the way for liberation struggle throughout the work. Your work and your lives are just like the seeds of life that allow me to live in this way. I am also grateful to all of those who contribute to Black Land Food Sovereignty, Food Justice, and engage in any other food struggle you are inspiring and dope as ever! I want to also give a big shout out to Maren Hilliard for your support with transcriptions and Diara Jackson for helping with the first draft of this report. Last, but not least, I am grateful to Mariya Strauss and the Board of Directors of Farm Alliance of Baltimore for your faith in me to lead and complete this project. Ever Forward! Asé!

Executive Summary

LIKE OTHER CITIES in the United States of America, Baltimore has an abundant history of urban agriculture². Local academic institutions, city agencies, and non profit organizations have publicized this tradition through newer projects and plans in recent years³. Farm Alliance of Baltimore (FAB), founded in 2011, is one of the organizations working to amplify and build a network that cements the practice of urban farming in the Baltimore area. One unique goal of FAB is to transform the local food system by elevating urban agriculture as a legitimate industry that produces local food, jobs, and pride. Farmers' roles in transforming the current food system, includes providing food hyper-locally (grown within and distributed within a community), advocating for policy change that contributes to land and water security and the provision of capital, and demonstrating effective community-based land use strategies.

One main ingredient to transforming food systems is ensuring leadership succession for food and farm businesses, which includes mentoring and providing real world experiences for prospective farmers. Therefore, training and advocacy are critical to ensuring the viability of this profession in the urban space. Amongst farmers, there is the allusion of a dearth of farm-talent, primarily because of the lack of information about this career option. While there are gardening programs⁴, until now, there has been no concerted effort in Baltimore to train farmers from the city; especially those from marginalized communities. As a result, a Baltimore Farmer Pipeline Program is essential to meet the gap that has been identified by current farmers. FAB recognizes the need to partner with current and prospective farmers, in order to determine the necessary elements of a training program that accomplishes the goal of solidifying urban farming as a possible vocation in Baltimore. During a 10-month, multi-phased process of studying the feasibility of such a training program, FAB found that it is essential to establish a program that builds on the following characteristics, as expressed by urban farmers and community members.

Through individual interviews, current urban farmers and farm personnel asserted a successful Baltimore Farmer Pipeline Program should include:

- **Compensation for both farms and apprentices**, in the forms of wages for farm managers and other support integral to daily operations, while supporting those enrolled in the program, making it possible for those without wealth to attend.
- **Explicitly concretized program goal(s) and pathways to accommodate diverse interests** for the purpose of facilitating the development of trainees with broad skills and experiences.
- **Wraparound/supplemental services** that would reduce the barriers to participation during enrollment and job placement once trainees complete the program, like childcare, transportation, criminal record expungement, and supplemental food.
- **Multifaceted programming** that integrates theoretical and practical knowledge with the possibility of attaining a certificate strengthening the knowledge-base and marketability of trainees.
- **Support for participants & measure impact** for a designated time after program completion, in order to assess effectiveness and ensure sustainability.
- **Urban agriculture and other food policy change for existing and future farms** with the goal of promoting various options for land tenure and additional protections around water and capital.
- **Make urban farming a viable industry** where farmers from marginalized communities have authentic opportunities to acquire a job and establish their own enterprises.

2 Kathryn A. Peters, Creating a Sustainable Agriculture Revolution, 25 J. ENVTL. L. & LITIG. 203, 237-38 (2010)

3 See the diverse projects and plans through Baltimore Office of Sustainability. <https://www.baltimoresustainability.org/projects/baltimore-food-policy-initiative/homegrown-baltimore/urban-agriculture-2/>

4 The University of Maryland Extension program offers a Master Gardeners' certification class in Baltimore. <https://extension.umd.edu/baltimore-city/master-gardeners-1>



(Photo Source: Cherry Hill Urban Garden)

Through community listening sessions, community members (as prospective apprentices) were interviewed and communicated that a Baltimore Farmer Pipeline program should:

- Lean on **the exposure to agriculture/growing through social institutions and family connections to the US and Global South** because prospective farmers have personal connections to land and growing. This will allow for the building on of knowledge and skills rather than starting from no experience.
- Include **collaborative workplaces** where one can work and learn, in order to maximize productivity and support learning.
- Help participants in **establishing self-control of their health and food access**.
- Help participants **learn various aspects of growing food and animal raising** in order to establish an array of skills that match interests of participants.
- Include a **comprehensive curriculum** that allows people to rotate to multiple farms and that teaches in the classroom and the field.
- Ensure that participants are **compensated somewhere between minimum wage (\$10.10 per hour) to \$20 per hour**.
- Help participants in **attaining employment, engaging in entrepreneurship, and community-centered efforts** once they have completed the program.

In conclusion, this report is to contribute to the process of creating a program that develops the home-grown talent of farmers from marginalized communities in Baltimore. In Farm Alliance of Baltimore's quest to "expand community self-determination and power," it is important to recognize the role of food production, processing, distribution, and land use in localizing and centralizing food within such communities. Community-based farms should be owned and managed by people from the communities that need good food. The feasibility study for the Baltimore Farmer Pipeline Program reveals a promising opportunity to contribute to the transformation of the food system through the training of the next generation of farmers in Baltimore.

Project Organizing & Methodology

THE BALTIMORE FARMER PIPELINE PROJECT feasibility study, funded by Kaiser Permanente Community Health Initiative, is a project designed by Farm Alliance of Baltimore (FAB). The idea for the project came from future-oriented farmer-members of FAB with the ultimate goal of developing a pipeline of young and seasoned African American and other people from marginalized communities in Baltimore. The farmers said they wished to reverse the dearth of skilled farmers from the community. According to FAB Executive Director Mariya Strauss, the project was planned with two major goals in mind: “(1) creating a paid training opportunity for residents of Baltimore City -- especially members of our African American, immigrant and refugee, and other communities that have been harmed by disinvestment and redlining -- to gain professional skills and be connected with employment in urban agriculture/horticulture, and (2) creating a pipeline of new farmers that will be able to take on leadership roles on the Farm Alliance’s member farms in the future.” In this report, urban agriculture is defined as the practices of growing edible and ornamental plants and raising animals by farmers within the context of urban communities.

The project was designed to include several layers of accountability and engagement. Initially, a “Request for Proposals” was developed and issued to the Farm Alliance’s regional networks of food and land-based professionals. An ad hoc group of member-farmers, Board members and staff of FAB reviewed applications of candidates, and with the use of a rubric based on the needs of the project, selected Eric Jackson as the consultant. Strauss met with the consultant to discuss the details and develop a plan for activities associated with the project. Next, a steering committee of local government agency, community-based organization, and farmers was organized to assist in shaping and monitoring the process of engagement over the duration of the project. Strauss expressed that the members of the steering committee were tasked to:

- “Advise the Farm Alliance on how this program should respond to the stated needs of community members and farms;
- Provide guidance and access to community leaders, organizations, spaces, city personnel, and other resources we will need in order to build out and staff this program;
- Determine areas of connection and complementarity with existing and fledgling farmer training efforts in the city and around the region and suggest partnerships so we avoid duplication of efforts;
- Advise the Farm Alliance on seeking funding for the program.”

(Photo Source: Cherry Hill Urban Garden)





Listening Session with 10th graders at Ben Franklin High School, May 2019 (Photo Credit: Kimberly Appleby)

In addition to the above process, Jackson developed and led a two-phased engagement process with the goal of deeply listening and collecting insights through a community building process. The consultant communicated, during the first phase, with current farmers within the membership of FAB. Emails and phone calls to farm personnel were the main means of communication to set up one-on-one interviews. Interviews were conducted and conversations occurred in diverse spaces—from farms and offices to local restaurants and a local library. I interviewed 13 people representing seven (or 40%) of the 17 urban farms within the Alliance. About 62% of those interviewed are Black farmers or farm personnel; 38% are white farm personnel. In terms of gender, over 35% of the people interviewed are women, while the majority are men (over 60%). All the farms represented in the samples are located in East, Northeast, South, and West Baltimore. The process of engaging farm professionals was fairly straightforward; however, organizing listening sessions with prospective Baltimore Farmer Pipeline Project participants proved to be more complicated⁵.

For the second phase of the engagement process, we needed to identify community residents who might eventually become trainees in the BFP program. To do this, we reached out to 7 community-based organizations that touch farmwork, land-based work, and service work.. Through months of engagement, via email and phone, the consultant directly communicated with thirteen organizations (listed in the appendix) serving Black and Brown adults and teenagers, immigrants, asylum-seekers, and returning citizens in the city. Indirect communications, through FAB members, staff, and steering committee members, also effectively connected agencies and programs to the project. In this phase of engagement, the consultant gathered information through three institutions amongst the number of organizations engaged. As a result of these outreach efforts, four listening sessions were facilitated, which engaged a total of 40 people (31 young people from 15 to 25 years of age and nine adults 25+ years old). The listening session participants represented communities in Baltimore (mostly South and West) and several surrounding counties. Each listening session entailed two categories of questions—"Experiences/Preferences" & "Programming"—requesting participants to share their insights that will help the consultant learn how to engage and create programming that are germane to the needs of prospective trainees. In the next section, the author will present the thematic gleanings that were gathered through each engagement process.

⁵ Farm Alliance's members are diverse and expand across several regions in the Baltimore area. <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=3a9512913c5d4d5cb59460bd8e56494d>

Findings through Engagement Process

GLEANINGS FROM CURRENT FARMERS

The interviews with farmers and farm personnel yielded some interesting results and insights. The themes communicated below will inform the reader of the interviewees' strong considerations for a Baltimore Farmer Pipeline from pre-program developments to post-program follow-up. The gleanings, additionally, reveal that farmers are thinking about programming at the micro and macro-levels. This suggests that there is a need for a robust curriculum that includes soft and hard skills related to farming in Baltimore City. The farmers also suggest that there is a need to raise the banner of establishing urban agriculture as a legitimate profession for people with hopes of pursuing a career that sustains them, their families, and their communities. Ultimately, farm-members of Farm Alliance of Baltimore have high expectations for a Baltimore Farmer Pipeline. Based on the collective genius of some of Baltimore's best growers, a farmer pipeline in Baltimore should include the following elements.

The Baltimore Farmer Pipeline program should include **compensation for both farms and apprentices**, in order to serve apprentices well. Farm personnel in the study have communicated that there is a need for funding to either hire new management staff or to pay for the labor of existing staff if training is to be executed effectively. Compensation should also include support with the purchase of tools and other equipment, in order to support the materials needs associated with educating apprentices. It was expressed that compensation should also include insurances to "protect the necks" of farms and organizations that operate farms in the program⁶. This compensation, should ideally cover industry-specific licenses and certificates that will offer greater credentials for the independent operations. Farmers also believe that farm trainees should be compensated at a respectable wage, perhaps at the standardized livable wage for Maryland. Farmer Rich from Bon Secours Urban Farm Initiative communicated that "the apprentice program maybe it can be run in a way that [funding people is] less of an issue." He said that he "would love it if [apprentices] could make at least \$10, \$12 an hour, you know what I mean? Is that feasible and reasonable?"⁷ Others would agree that compensation for trainees is certainly feasible and reasonable.



(Photo Source: Cherry Hill Urban Garden)

During the recruitment and partner development phases of program implementation, the program should have explicitly concretized program goal(s) and pathways to accommodate diverse interests. Programming should also include clearly defined and communicated metrics of success. Prospective trainees or apprentices, farmers, and institutions should also be provided clear program participation requirements, accompanied by an orientation for "onboarding," as stated by Farmer Rich. A few farmers also suggested that there be an interview process by both placement sites and farmers and by Farm Alliance of Baltimore. Farmers (7 out of 13 or 53.8%) asserted the necessity of this feature in future programming.

⁶ Kolm, Richard. Personal interview. 06 February 2019.

⁷ Id.

Farmers unanimously (100% of all farmers-interviewed) asserted that the program should encompass **wraparound/supplemental services**. These are services that support prospective trainees to overcome barriers to traditional employment, based on their personal and professional experiences with diverse populations in Baltimore. People inserted a need to consider the inclusion of transportation assistance to get to work. Farmer Marcus of Boone Street Farm shared of an anecdote of a young intern who had an issue with consistent transportation and Wykeem, Program Manager at Whitelock Community Farm offered the idea of a “shuttle” to transport folks to work. Charlotte, formerly of Real Food Farm, said that the program should include a “bucket” start-up kit that includes tools, uniform, and other goods to support the development of tools of the trade.⁸ Others named childcare and criminal record expungement as possible assistance services to accompany traditional training elements.

Farmers Alison and Clayton formerly of Whitelock Community Farm and Real Food Farm, respectively, championed an idea that a Baltimore Farmer Pipeline should include **multifaceted programming that integrates theoretical and practical knowledge with the possibility of attaining a certificate** through an accredited institution of higher learning.⁹ This program curriculum would be most effective, says many farm-member representatives, if it includes multiple learning tracks that supports personalized learning. The curriculum should also include themes of racial and social equity and community-engaged farming and lessons on realistic business planning and market development that is based on farm experiences. Farmers also said that the program should leverage networks with potential organization for realistic job placement. It was stated that the program should facilitate a community of learning amongst farmers and apprentices through farm rotations (to enhance education through diverse styles). Ten of the 13 (about 77%) farm personnel interviewed communicated a need for various aspects of this type of curriculum.

The Baltimore Farmer Pipeline should also **support participants & measure impact for a designated time after program completion**. This would require Farm Alliance of Baltimore, as the lead implementing institution, to help “graduates” with navigating city services that may otherwise be complicated and pose barriers. It would also call for what Farmer Clayton calls a demonstration farm incubator for post-program skill honing. Additionally, as Farmer Maya of Hillen Homestead advocates, upon completion people would have access to start-up funding in the form of grants or another funding mechanism.¹⁰ Maya highlighted an where a trainee “complete[s] the program and you’re eligible for a \$1,000 grant to kick start your farm... that could be pretty significant.” She continues by asserting that “training is one part, but then what happens to get people to that point and what happens after that point.”



Value-added product, tomato sauce, concept developed by Black Yield Institute, made from tomatoes grown at Cherry Hill Urban Community Garden (Photo Source: Eric Jackson)

⁸ Haase, Charlotte. Personal interview. 07 February 2019.

⁹ Williams, Clayton. Personal interview. 11 March 2019.; Worman, Alison. Personal interview. 13 February 2019.

¹⁰ Kosok, Maya. Personal interview. 14 February 2019.



(Photo Source: Cherry Hill Urban Garden)

Looking at the macro-level of programming, with implications for the present and future, interviewees reveal that the program should consist of **urban agriculture and other food policy change for existing and future farms**. One of the biggest “vote-getters” is the need to advocate for policies that improves land security, water access, and physical space, like bathrooms, offices, and hoop-houses, for farms, Farmer Lavette of The Greener Garden communicated that there is a need for legal protections and licensing in the pursuit of designating farmland in Baltimore.¹¹ This theme represents a highly regarded need for a Baltimore Farmer Pipeline, with 76.9% of the farmers communicating policy change as key to programming.

An enormous task, and a majority-held position among interviewed farmers, is that the program should be committed to **making urban farming a viable industry** in Baltimore.

69.2% (9 out of 13 of farmers interviewed) articulated a strong

conviction for the pipeline to advance urban agriculture. Some people call for a pathway for farms to embrace the for-profit model, which is believed to increase the chances for economic stability and self-sufficiency for farms and communities. Farmers Denzel (of Strength to Love II) and Maya illuminated that, in the food system’s current state, there is a need to diversify the pathways and systems utilized to materialize profitable urban agriculture ventures in Baltimore, to include nursery production, animal farming, value-added production, commercial compost production, and medicinal herb production, to name a few.¹²

LESSONS FROM PROSPECTIVE FARMERS

Below are seven themes from the listening sessions that Jackson facilitated with a diverse collective of prospective farmers that represent the voices of both young and seasoned people interested in the possibility of a Baltimore Farmers Pipeline program in the near future.

The voices of the listening session participants are relatively consistent across groups when considering their personal connections to growing food. Many people have **exposure to agriculture/growing through social institutions** like schools, churches, and community programs committed to growing food and educating about food and health. Most interested folks have **connections to agricultural families from the US and Global South experiences**. These revelations will be helpful when thinking about recruitment. One student at Ben Franklin High School reminisced that her connection stemmed from an early experience her class and she “were like the first ones to go into the Filbert Street Garden.. a long time ago” while in grad school.¹³ While another student who is really interested in farming, shared that her family is from “down south so they know how to really [farm] – my aunt... raise[s] chickens [and gets] the eggs every morning and stuff. So when [she] went down there that made [her] want to do something like that.”

Prospective farmers expressed interest in **collaborative workplaces where one can work and learn** through asking questions and partnerships amongst colleagues. Ideal workplaces include space for sharing ideas, collective problem solving, task-oriented, and acceptive of bringing whole self through humor, music and other forms of expression. Approximately 55% of the community members interviewed expressed interest in a workplace where these features exist.

¹¹ Blue, Lavette. Personal interview. 11 March 2019.

¹² Mitchell, Denzel. Personal interview. 14 February 2019.

¹³ Student. Focus group. 25 February 2019.

Future Baltimore farmers represented in this study are **motivated by establishing self-control of their health and food access**. The general sentiment amongst participants was their wish to know what is or is not in their food currently. There was a great expression of desire to be self-sufficient and self-aware. It seems that many people were interested in farming as a means of subsistence for self and family, which includes cognitions of saving money and not giving up their money to “other people.” About 25 out of the 40 (or 62.5%) communicated this need for controlling their own food choices and expanding options for their families and communities.

In the program, participants would like to **learn all aspects of growing food and animal raising**, as they gain motivation from seeing the “fruits of their labor.” It seems that prospects desire an experience all aspects of farming that can be translated to post-program attainments, from production to distribution and the administrative tasks. A 10th grade student participating in a listening session said, “You could try to get a scholarship somewhere to a good agricultural college for which you have now in our lifetime, what we accomplish we could use for others too.”¹⁴

60% of Prospective farmers interviewed are interested in a **comprehensive curriculum** that is science-based; on farm & classroom experience; and, travel to other farms within and outside of the FAB network. People were also interested in skills related to farm management, tool handling, budgeting, crop planning, and market analysis, to name a few. They are also interested in program management skills, like effective communication, time management, multitasking, program planning, and public speaking.

In terms of scheduling and compensation, prospective farmers have a range of availability and interest for training. The commentary resulted in a range of **three to seven days per week** for their training. The duration of the training was too much of a range to record. Folks are interested in being **compensated somewhere between minimum wage (\$10.10 per hour) to \$20 per hour**.

It is important to note that the **community members, once training is complete, are interested in attaining employment, engaging in entrepreneurship, and community-centered efforts**, which include interests in enrolling to college majoring in agriculture; start own farms, to include herbal medicine production, fruit and vegetable production, and animal husbandry; obtaining a job on a farm; and, lastly, sharing training with and training others in an effort to “pay it forward.”¹⁵



(Photo Source: Black Yield Institute)

“You could try to get a scholarship somewhere to a good agriculture college for which you have now in our lifetime, what we accomplish we could use for others too.”

- TENTH GRADE STUDENT, BEN FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL

14 Student. Focus group. 29 May 2019.

15 Participant. Focus group. 05 August 2019.

Spotlight on National Farmer Training Programs

Note: The following spotlights have been authored by Strauss, based on first-hand communications with each institution represented below.

SPOTLIGHT: GANGSTAS TO GROWERS, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Farmer/Grower Training Programming for formerly incarcerated youth ages 18-24. The youth make \$15 per hour to grow hot peppers, make and bottle hot sauce in commercial kitchen which they sell for \$10 per bottle in farmers markets and specialty grocery outlets all over town. The grassroots project run by Abiodun Henderson also provides therapy, self-care & mindfulness courses, boxing, yoga, and financial literacy and political education. They are located just off the campus of Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA, and share a location with a Black-owned vegan restaurant. The program has gained prestige because of the high quality sauce it produces, and Henderson keeps in touch with graduates of the program to make sure they are still employed.

SPOTLIGHT: TRULY LIVING WELL, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

The nonprofit farm (which owns its seven-acre property, CollegeTowne Farm) runs bootcamps for adults to learn urban farming, as well as summer camps for kids to learn gardening. Founded by urban agriculture expert and movement elder Rashid Nuri, the Truly Living Well's mission is to "to use food production as the plate on which we create a culture of health and wellness in our community." Community members pay to attend the courses in sustainable urban agriculture. Staffed by farmers who graduated from its own training program, the organization also runs a community farm stand and has a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) subscription to sell its produce to the public.

SPOTLIGHT: WINDY CITY HARVEST, CHICAGO, IL

A program of the Chicago Botanic Garden, Windy City Harvest is the largest urban agriculture training program in the city of Chicago. Through lease agreements with land-owning nonprofits and colleges around the city, WCH places paid apprentice growers at over a dozen gardens and farms across the city to learn growing techniques. Because of this diversity of growing operations, WCH graduates emerge with marketable skills that allow them to be hired immediately at industrial scale agricultural operations, horticulture companies, and specialty and organic grocery stores. Models taught include aquaponics, vertical/hydroponic farming, outdoor vegetable growing, and more. WCH students learn via a classroom component of its program as well as the hands-on apprenticeship. WCH boasts a 90 percent post-graduation job placement rate, making it a bona fide workforce development program. WCH is partly supported by a grant from the USDA's Beginner Farmer & Rancher Program. It is the only model program we have included here that is non-POC-led.

(Photo Source: Black Yield Institute)



Geographical Agricultural Employment Scan

The Baltimore Farmer Pipeline aims to develop beginner farms who are skilled and prepared for roles within existing enterprise and entrepreneurship opportunities in organic production, farming, live-stock, horticulture, and landscaping/landscape design, and stormwater mitigation/wetlands restoration/conservation. While the pathway of creating new farms is a feasible option, the Baltimore Farmer Pipeline will also help beginning farmers to gain skills that they could apply in jobs in the above industries. In order to prepare beginner farmers, it is important to lay out the prospective opportunities and employers within the agriculture industry in Maryland. This section highlights some career pathways for beginner farmers in the greater Baltimore region and elsewhere in Maryland.

Currently, the city has a few job opportunities for beginner farmers. One major player in the game is the very new company, Gotham Greens.¹⁶ Gotham Greens, located at the former Sparrows Point steel mill in Dundalk, MD, has a 100,000ft² greenhouse and utilizes hydroponic methods. The operation currently has positions that seem well designed for a graduate from the Pipeline program. While the company does not post salaries, positions such as Nursery and Young Plant Specialist, Production Assistant, Greenhouse Supervisor and Distribution Supervisor¹⁷ provide opportunities for trainees to maximize their skills and practice their knowledge in the job market. Bowery Farming,¹⁸ operating an indoor production farm, offers positions for beginner farmers starting over \$15 per hour. The Farm at Our House¹⁹ is a farm hiring for a Field Crew Member position and offers up to \$16 per hour.

Beyond these options, at the time of this writing, 94 jobs were listed on the horticulture/greenhouse production industry jobs board HortJobs²⁰ across the state of Maryland. Additionally, according to an article on the website The Balance, career options available to trained urban and organic farmers include: organic restaurateur, median income around \$46,000/yr; organic chef, median income \$39,000; organic niche marketer/retailer, which is a \$2billion industry; organic handler/wholesaler, median income \$48,000; and organic landscape designer/architect, median income range \$46,000-\$78,000.²¹

The author anecdotally adds, through experience, that local farms are always hiring for seasonal, part-time, and full-time positions through listserv and group emails. The positions usually offer opportunities to beginner farmers at livable wages, in the cases where compensation is listed. It is important to note that the farming community in Baltimore and in the Baltimore Metro area often communicate about opportunity and utilize the networks to share information. Baltimore Farmer Pipeline is uniquely positioned to serve as a pipeline for information and staffing for the farms mentioned above and others that provide food for Baltimore and the region. While this section highlights only some examples, the landscape for jobs in agriculture in Maryland, just like other industries, is changing. The search for current positions revealed the need for clear job position sharing and candidate preparation. The Baltimore Farmer Pipeline programming provides an opportunity to fill this gap.

16 Gotham Greens opened a farm operation in Baltimore in December 2019 and has created approx. 60 jobs. <https://www.gothamgreens.com/careers/>

17 i.d.

18 Bowery Farming has several positions for entry-level farming operations. <https://boweryfarming.com/careers#open-positions>

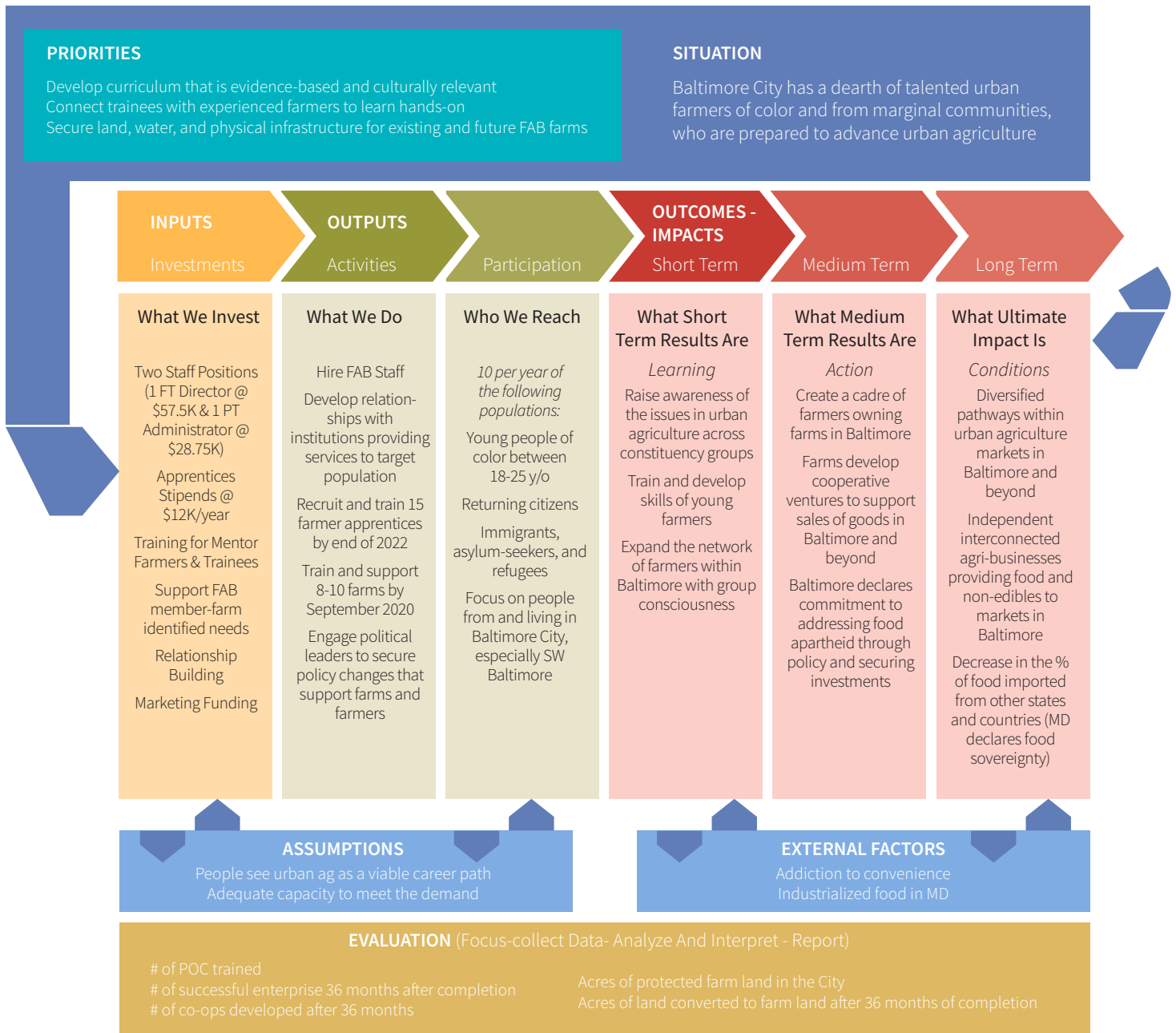
19 The Farm at Our House is in Montgomery County and connected to a service organization. <http://www.thefarmatourhouse.com/>

20 https://www.hortjobs.com/search/#results/5e5ffba98bcf7b3274ff7d70?kw=&loc=Maryland&page_num=1

21 <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/top-careers-in-organic-industry-2538073>

Baltimore Farmer Pipeline Program Logic Model

Based on the data gathered through the engagement process, the following logic model offers a pathway forward in developing the Baltimore Farmer Pipeline Program. The following logic model represents the necessary inputs, outputs, and outcomes necessary to impact the food and farming community in Baltimore. The logic model outlines the necessary investments and specific assumption present in envision such a program. Please note that the logic model may be altered for any reason after this report has been published.





(Photo Source: Black Yield Institute)

“I’m so excited about new farms starting and having all conversations from the ground up. Because I think that will build stronger institutions or farms or communities...”

- ALISON WORMAN, URBAN FARMER

Conclusion

The commitment to the pursuit of this study, by farmers and the administrators at Farm Alliance and the responses from prospective farmers for the future of urban agriculture, illustrate powerful results. We conclude that the development of a Baltimore Farmer Pipeline is feasible socially and economically. The synergies between seemingly different populations—practicing farmers and prospective farmers—on matters of curriculum, compensation, and training are evidence of this feasibility. While our sample size was not enormous, we spoke with enough community members to conclude that this program has the potential to create real opportunities for farms, farmers, communities, and the emerging industry of urban farming. Just like many of the brilliant people that communicated their dreams and fears, the author is excited about the growth of an innovative market for Baltimore’s unforgotten peoples.

With the right funded partnerships and community investment, the Pipeline will fulfill the original goal of this study—to prepare a cohort of farmers who are ready to transform the food system. Ideal partnerships will require clear communication, transparency, and collective commitment to the goals identified in this study. Young and seasoned workers, African Americans, refugees, asylum-seekers, LGBTQIA individuals, disabled people, and immigrants will have the opportunity to partake in creating opportunities that tread away from the tendency to merely provide services that do not assist in building power. The excitement surrounding this revelation that Baltimore is closer to having the first farmer training program that is uniquely designed for and by the people it aims to support in changing material conditions in Baltimore. The writer encourages readers to remain hopeful for a future that amplifies a program that trains homegrown farmers in the pursuit of food justice and sovereignty. We further recommend that readers build their argument and support for this initiative on the promising data presented in this study.

(Photo Source: Black Yield Institute)



Appendix

BALTIMORE FARMER PIPELINE PROGRAM PROJECTED BUDGET

The following project budget is a projection of the expenses and revenues associated with implementing the project as mapped out above in the logic model. Please review the below itemized budget.

	FY19 Projected	FY20 Projected	FY21 Projected	Total Projected Line item	Justification
	<i>Jan 20 - Dec 20</i>	<i>Jan 21 - Dec 21</i>	<i>Jan 22 - Dec 22</i>		
REVENUE					
Grant Awards	\$150,950.00	\$167,850.00	\$184,750.00	\$503,550.00	Funds raised through foundations, city and state agencies
Charitable donations	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$15,000.00	Funds raised through independent donors
Fundraiser	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$518,550.00	Funds earned through fundraiser events to support the program
TOTAL REVENUE	\$165,950.00	\$182,850.00	\$199,750.00	\$548,550.00	
EXPENSES					
Personnel (wages & benefits)	\$86,250	\$86,250	\$86,250	\$258,750.00	Two Staff Positions ((1 FTE Director/Manager @ \$50K + Fringe & .5 FTE Administrator @ \$25K + Fringe))
Stipends for Trainees	\$48,000	\$60,000	\$72,000	\$180,000.00	Stipends for Apprentices (@)\$12K/year (starting with 4 and increasing one trainee per year)
Infrastructure Support for Farms	\$20,000	\$25,000	\$30,000	\$75,000	Financial support for farms to provide capacity to effectively train prospective farmers (each farm is eligible for up to \$5,000 per year)
Office Supplies	\$500.00	\$400.00	\$300.00	\$1,200.00	Costs associated with program supplies and office materials
Marketing	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	\$3,600.00	Costs associated with program marketing, FAB uniforms, and sponsored tools
Evaluation	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$30,000.00	Cost to hire a program evaluator
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$165,950	\$182,850	\$199,750	\$548,550.00	

BALTIMORE FARMER PIPELINE PROJECT ASSET MAP/ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Name	Description/Relevant Programming	Collaboration Potential
Workforce Development Organizations		
<i>National</i>		
Public Allies- Maryland	Youth/Young Adult focus on job placement and job training	Potential Source of Funding/Workers
Americorps	Youth/Young Adult focus on job placement and job training; Volunteer Service Program	Potential Source of Funding/Workers
Roots to Reentry (PA)	Farmer/Grower Training Programming	Current Farmer/Grower Training Program; Learn from Programming Successes and Struggles
Windy City Harvest (IL)	Farmer/Grower Training Programming	Current Farmer/Grower Training Program; Learn from Programming Successes and Struggles. Visited 9//18 with Denzel, Clayton, Darriel, Holly, Abby, and Mariya
Truly Living Well (GA)	Farmer/Grower Training Programming -- farming bootcamps for adults, summer camps for kids, and gardening 101 for all.	Current Farmer/Grower Training Program; Learn from Programming Successes and Struggles . Visited 5/19 with Mariya and Adamaah
Gangstas to Growers (GA)	Farmer/Grower Training Programming for ages 18-24, growing and Value Added work making and bottling hot sauce in commercial kitchen which they sell for \$10. Also provides therapy, self-care & mindfulness courses, boxing, yoga, and financial literacy and political education.	Current Farmer/Grower Training Program; Learn from Programming Successes and Struggles . Visited 5/19 with Mariya and Adamaah
Habesha, Grow Where You Are/Maitu Foods, and Georgia Organics (GA)	Habesha: Political education/African American history & gardening classes for all ages; Grow Where You Are: 1yr residential Afro-ecology veganic growing education, farmer exchange for African American farmers, and seed bank; full-scale agroecological farm coming. Georgia Organics: Trainings, grants, and technical assistance for all farmers transitioning to certified organic.	
<i>Local</i>		
Workforce Collaborative	Collective of NPOs and other entities working in workforce issues, meeting in South Baltimore	Source of Potential Learning & Workers
Civic Works	Youth/Young Adult focus on job placement and job training; Volunteer Service Program	Source of Potential Learning & Workers
Blue Water Baltimore	Environmental Health Services with budding green jobs program in 2020	Potential Collaborator re: Green Workforce Development program
Real Food Farm	Urban Farm with Farmer training programming and community programs	Source of Potential Learning & Workers

Strength to Love II	Urban Farm with budding youth workforce training program, connected to Intersection of Change	Potential Collaborator re: Youth Workforce Development program
Bon Secours Community Works	Community arm of Bon Secours Medical Center; provides many social services, along with a landscaping and greening job program	Potential Collaborator re: Green Workforce Development program
Dreaming Out Loud (DC)	NPO working on food issues in DC; Organization has distribution programming, farmers markets, food entrepreneur program, and connected to DMV food system change work	Source of Potential Learning from Entrepreneur Training Program
Community-based, Grassroots, & Faith-based Organizations		
Union Baptist Church	Social Justice and outward focused church in West Baltimore	Organization of people and programs; source of potential workers
Huber Memorial Church		Organization of people and programs; source of potential workers
Pleasant Hope Baptist Church	Social Justice and outward focused church in Northeast Baltimore	Organization of people and programs; source of potential workers
Cherry Hill Ministerial Alliance	Collective of churches located in Cherry Hill and Brooklyn, which share info and collaborate across churches in South Baltimore	Organization of churches; source of potential workers
Black Church Food Security Network	NPO working on erecting gardens in Baltimore City and County and is working on an equitable food distribution system in Baltimore and connecting other black producers in the region or South.	Organization of churches; source of potential workers
Cherry Hill Community Coalition	Collective of Cherry Hill-based community organizations, associations, and public servants tasked with implementing the Cherry Hill Master Plan	Organization of organizations; source of potential workers
Baltimore Black Worker Center	Grassroots organizations for black workers in Baltimore; currently working on base building and resource sharing for workers	Connection to workers and advocacy for workers during and post programming
Communities United	A neighborhood power organization focusing on organizing community members living in public housing in McCulloh Homes, Cherry Hill and other places to address community issues like housing and other things prioritized	Organization of people and programs; source of potential workers
BUILD	Power organization of churches and organizations that work on political issues determined by members; use various tactics to create change, including lobbying, housing development, etc.	Organization of organizations; source of potential workers
Safe Streets	Public violence prevention program of Baltimore City Health Department, operating in Cherry Hill, Mondawmin, McElderry Park, etc.	Potential source of workers
Mera's Kitchen	Worker Co-op centering women who are immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers	Potential source of workers

Druid Heights CDC	Community Development Corporation in west Baltimore with focus on education, health and housing mostly, with investments in the Druid Heights community	Organization of people and programs; source of potential workers
Center for Urban Families	Organization serving many populations with the community around jobs, social services, family relationship development, etc.	Organization that serves people; source of potential workers
Intersection of Change	Organization established by a church focused on youth programming, urban farming employing returning citizens, and drug recovery services	Organization that serves people; source of potential workers
Matthew Henson Community Association	Community association with a social justice focus and has worked for years on food issues in West Baltimore.	Organization that serves people and programs; source of potential workers
Humanim	NPO working on education, workforce development and other program areas	Organization that serves people and programs; source of potential workers; Works on Workforce works
International Rescue Committee	Agency dedicated to provision of information and support for immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees	Organization that serves people; source of potential workers
CASA de Maryland	Social Service and Advocacy agency focused on immigrants, mostly those from Mexico and Central and South America	Organization that serves people; source of potential workers

Public Agencies

Baltimore Food Policy Initiative	City agency	Potential allies and supporters for funding, policy work, and other post-program support of land. etc.
Office of Sustainability	City agency	Potential allies and supporters for funding, policy work, and other post-program support of land. etc.
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs	City agency	Potential allies and supporters for funding, policy work, and other post-program support of land. etc.
Mayor's Office of Employment Development	City agency	Potential allies and supporters for funding, policy work, and other post-program support of land. etc. ; Access to potential workers
Baltimore City Community Action Partnerships	City agency	Potential allies and supporters for funding, policy work, and other post-program support of land. etc.
University of Maryland, Extension	State public university/Land grant institution.	Potential allies and supporters for funding, policy work, and other post-program support of land. etc.
Open Society Institute	NPO foundation providing supports for diverse issues in Baltimore, steeped in intentional network building	Potential allies and supporters for funding, policy work, and other post-program support of land. etc. ; Network of organization with access to people

Schools/Educational Institutions		
Family League of Baltimore- Community School Strategy	Quasi-government entity serving as a funder and technical assistant to many agencies providing healthy meals, community school services, among other things	Access to high schools with potential apprentices
Yo! Baltimore	Baltimore City Schools program geared toward older students and students with special needs	Potential source of workers
Success Academy	Public High School servicing students returning to school after dropping out and/or hard to place students	Potential source of workers
Green Street Academy	Public High School with Urban AG program	Potential source of workers
Ben Franklin @ Masonville Cove High School	Public High School with Urban Ag program	Potential source of workers
New Era Academy	Public High School with technical training programs	Potential source of workers
Renaissance Academy	Public High School with technical training programs	Potential source of workers
Augusta Fells Savage High School	Public High School with technical training programs	Potential source of workers
Patterson High School	Public High School with technical training programs	Potential source of workers
Mervo Tech	Public High School with technical training programs	Potential source of workers
Douglass High School	Public High School with technical training programs	Potential source of workers
Friendship Academy	Public High School with technical training programs	Potential source of workers
Coppin State University	HBCU in West Baltimore/ Developing a 2yr Urban Ag certificate program. Interested in partnering.	May offer accreditation and certificate.
Supplemental Resources		
Promise Heights	Program within University of Maryland School of Social Work, providing comprehensive services in Druid Heights community, based on the Harlem Children's Zone model in NYC	Advice for providing wraparound services in workforce training
Just Advice	A UMB Law School and School of Social Work program to support people with criminal records or legal issues	Support with criminal records
Social Work Community Outreach Services/Family Connections & Social Work in	Program within University of Maryland, School of Social Work providing family services and student placements for interns.	Support with family social services
Bon Secours		Advice for providing wraparound services in workforce training; Childcare, expungement, etc.
In-Home Therapy Program		Support with mental health care

Department of Social Services	Public Agency	Support with mental health care and other entitlements
Community Action Agencies	Public Agencies	Support with tax services and other social services
Roberta's House (Grief Counseling)	NPO serving as a resource for people experiencing grief, loss, PTSD and other mental and emotional health challenges.	Support with Grief and Loss
House of Ruth	NPO providing shelter and services for Women and children experiencing intimate partner violence	Support with Homelessness for Women and children
BGE Resource Books (2019)		Booklet with social supports
Casa de Maryland		Support services for immigrants
Transportation		Support resources or service helping folks to get to work
SAAFON (GA)	NPO building collective power among African American farmers and securing their land across the South, including MD.	
Funders		
Kaiser Permanente	Health Care Company	Funder
Abell Foundation	Foundation	Funder
Open Society Institute	Foundation	Funder
Annie E. Casey Foundation Baltimore Civic Site	Foundation	
BFRDP - USDA	Government	

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS COMMUNICATED WITH DURING ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

RICH in Music	Casa de Maryland
International Rescue Committee (IRC)	Strength to Love II
Asylee Women Enterprise (AWE)	Elev8 Baltimore
Togolese Association of Baltimore	UMBC Choice Program
Family League of Baltimore City	Bon Secours Community Works
Ben Franklin High School	The Y of Central Maryland
St. Vincent De Paul	

About the Author

ERIC JACKSON is an organizer, educator, and filmmaker. He humbly serves as Servant-Director of Black Yield Institute, a Pan-African institution based in Baltimore, Maryland committed to movement building toward Black Land and Food Sovereignty.

Eric has over ten years of experience in organizing, education, and program development and management. Of these years, Eric worked with others in various capacities to support community development in Cherry Hill (an urban village in Baltimore) on issues of food access, improving education opportunities, and organizational capacity building. He is also a 2017 OSI Baltimore Community Fellow and a 2016 US Human Rights Network FIIHRE Fellow. In 2018, Eric co-directed a film entitled, *Baltimore's Strange Fruit*, a documentary film that explores the intersections of food, land, race, and class politics through personal narrative and social commentary.

Since 2013, Eric has been contributing to educating future change agents, as an Adjunct Professor teaching/ facilitating courses on community organizing and macro social work practice, earning the 2017 Exemplary Faculty Award. In 2019, he was also awarded National Association of Social Work- Maryland's Social Worker of the Year and Association of Community Organization and Social Action's Outstanding Practitioner.

In previous years, Eric has served in leadership capacities on issues and programs related to food access, community schools, youth development, and overall community organizing and development. Eric has received Bachelor's and Master's Social Work degrees from Morgan State University & University of MD, School of Social Work, respectively.

Ultimately, Eric's vision is to organize and develop leadership within Black and poor communities with the goals of dismantling racism, building greater social, political and economic power, and establish self-determination through institution and movement building. Outside of his work, Eric, a life-long resident of Baltimore, Maryland, enjoys teaching, reading, basketball. Playing spades, connecting with good people and eating good food. He is supported and loved on his journey by his four strong children and powerful Queen, Diara.



(Photo Source: Eric Jackson)



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