



**FARM ALLIANCE**  
OF BALTIMORE

# **We're Still Here**

How the Farm Alliance of  
Baltimore used Community  
Resources to Help  
Micro-Scale Farms  
Survive the Pandemic

# Who we are

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The Farm Alliance of Baltimore (FAB) 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.

Our Values:

- Sustainable Agriculture
- Solidarity
- Collective Power
- Equity
- Education





# Staff & Membership

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## 3 Full Time staff

Executive Director - Mariya Strauss

Deputy Director - Denzel Mitchell

Program Coordinator - Alison Worman

## 16 Full Farm Members (nonprofit and for profit)

Farms - agricultural operations that produce >\$2000 worth of farm products for sale or donation annually.

## 9 Community Gardens (managed by: individuals, neighborhoods, schools, cooperatives)

Community Gardens - anyone/group practicing urban agriculture for their own use or producing less than \$2000 worth of farm products for sale or donation annually.

## 7 Individual Members (Friends of farmers, farm-less farmers)



# What we do

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- **Farmer Support**
  - One on one technical assistance & support
  - Farmer-to-farmer support & networking
  - Scholarships to farming and sustainability conferences
  - Access to tool & book libraries
  - Urban Agriculture policy & issue advocacy
- **Market Program**
  - Collective Farm Stand at Farmers Market
  - Refrigeration & vehicle
  - Marketing & promotion
- **Double Dollars Incentive Program**
  - Shared EBT Machines
  - Matching dollars for SNAP/EBT/FMNP purchases
  - Cooking demonstrations
- **Greenhouse/Seedling Production**
  - Shared greenhouse space (pre-COVID)
- **Soil Health**
  - Free soil tests & one on one soil coaching
  - Composting consultations & workshops
  - Cover crop seed





# Our Response

As the pandemic and necessary lockdown quarantine measures descended on all of us, we were concerned with how our member farms were going to survive.

- Conducted a needs assessment with our farms via phone interviews
- Shifted to virtual programs & membership meetings
- Communicated & advocated for our farms with City & State officials
  - Food production is just as important as food distribution
  - Farms are essential businesses, eligibility for vaccine
- Started online fundraising campaigns
  - COVID Resilience Fund
  - Expanded our Black Farmer Resilience Fund
- Applied for COVID relief grants
- Provided a lot of direct member support



## BLACK-LED FARM & FOOD ORGANIZATIONS FIGHTING FOOD APARTHEID IN BALTIMORE CITY

[DONATE](#) | [PURCHASE FOOD](#) | [VOLUNTEER](#) | [SPREAD THE WORD](#)

\* **Black Yield Institute**  
Cherry Hill  
[www.blackyieldinstitute.org](http://www.blackyieldinstitute.org)

\* **BLISS Meadows, a project of Backyard Basecamp**  
Frankford  
[www.backyardbasecamp.org](http://www.backyardbasecamp.org)

\* **Empower Project**  
Park Heights  
[www.empowerprojectbmore.com](http://www.empowerprojectbmore.com)

\* **Filbert Street Garden**  
Curtis Bay  
[filbertstreetgarden.org](http://filbertstreetgarden.org)

\* **Strength to Love II**  
Sandtown-Winchester  
[s2l2.intersectionofchange.org](http://s2l2.intersectionofchange.org)

\* **The Greener Garden**  
Hamilton  
[farmalliancebaltimore.org/farms/the-greener-garden](http://farmalliancebaltimore.org/farms/the-greener-garden)

\* **The Plantation at Park Heights**  
Park Heights  
[plantationparkheights.org](http://plantationparkheights.org)

\* **Whitelock Community Farm**  
Reservoir Hill  
[whitelockfarm.org](http://whitelockfarm.org)

\* **Black Church Food Security Network**  
City-wide network of community gardens  
[blackchurchfoodsecurity.net](http://blackchurchfoodsecurity.net)

\* **Black Urban Farmer Fund, administered by the Farm Alliance of Baltimore**  
> 100% of donations go directly to scholarships for Black urban farmers to attend conferences & workshops  
> [Donate at farmalliancebaltimore.org](http://Donateatfarmalliancebaltimore.org)  
and email [info@farmalliancebaltimore.org](mailto:info@farmalliancebaltimore.org)  
to specify that your donation is for the fund

# The Fund

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- We received \$103,500 from a variety of funders and individual donors = **The COVID Resilience Fund**
- **Created a rubric and application** form to evaluate and verify each farm's level of need.
- We shared each step and element of the rubric with our membership and welcomed feedback to **ensure transparency**.
- **We prioritized Black-led farms** so that regardless of how quickly each farm filled out their application form, assistance would go first to the Black-led farms that applied. Our membership agreed that this was a necessary tactic in order to compensate for the lack of personal generational wealth and capital on the part of Black farmers.





# Identified 5 Areas of Need

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Post-Harvest Handling and Food Sanitation

Seedling Production

Marketing Support

Infrastructure and Equipment Needs

Direct Cash Assistance



# Post-Harvest Handling and Food Sanitation

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We knew that many of the farms in our network had good post handling practices, but were lacking in sufficient materials.

- Mobile Washing Stations
  - Canopy, 3 stock tanks, tables, sanidate, insulated gloves, salad spinner
- Purchased additional packaging materials to ensure safe handling

This equipment ensured that all farms could accommodate COVID protocols





# Seedling Production

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Farms were short-staffed and access to our shared greenhouse was limited. Seeds & seedlings were in high demand.

- We contracted a professional grower in our network to grow seedlings for our membership.
- This increased overall production, supported several CSAs and neighborhood market stands and increased earning potential at our collective market stand.

Continuing this in 2021

Benefits: collaborate on crop planning, choose strong varieties, increases collective sales opportunities



# Marketing Support

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Farms with on farm markets were able to operate due to their smaller size and community support. Our collective farm stand is at an affluent farmers market that stayed open and had high demand for our products.

- Created protocol for market safety
- PPE to all market workers
- Paid a “hazard pay” stipend to staff at our collective market (still doing this!)
- Started accepting credit cards via PayPal
- New hire, Program Coordinator





# Infrastructure and Equipment Grant

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- We set aside funds for **5** member farms, prioritizing Black - led, for infrastructure repairs, improvements or equipment.
- Designed a very simple grant application
  - A rubric based on our board's recommendations
  - FAB passed funds through to a contractor or made purchases for each farm that qualified.
- Decided to “go big” and make these grants **\$1500** each instead of doing smaller amounts for more farms.
  - Grants were used to: improve cool-bot cold storage, repair leaky shed roof & purchase equipment



# Direct Cash Assistance

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- We knew that all Farms were going to lose revenue and labor due to the lockdown.
- Our Black and brown farmers were particularly vulnerable and left exposed by the quarantine and lockdown, leaving no access to volunteer labor and revenue streams that many folks depended on.
- **Gave out \$1250 in cash assistance to all 16 member farms**





# Lessons Learned & Next Steps

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## Organizationally:

- Recognize our capacity & focus on mission & member support
- Garnered A LOT of community support & mutual aid = metrics of resilience
- Expanded the FAB Black Farmers Resilience Fund
- Program support increased production capacity (market, seedling, soil program, volunteer opportunities)
- Some farms shifted to donation, mutual aid, supported gleaning efforts, and participated in food distribution.  
We need to collectively assess & strategize.
- Continue to advocate for policy & system change (land, worker rights, food sovereignty)

## Our Membership:

- Collective market stand is a strong outlet - more collective sales
- Value of niche crops (honey, flowers)
- More farms working to accept EBT/SNAP
- We have a strong network of urban farmers! (collaboration and support: sharing tools, labor, expertise)



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Farmalliancebaltimore.org

Alison Worman, Programs Coordinator  
[programs@farmalliancebaltimore.org](mailto:programs@farmalliancebaltimore.org)

