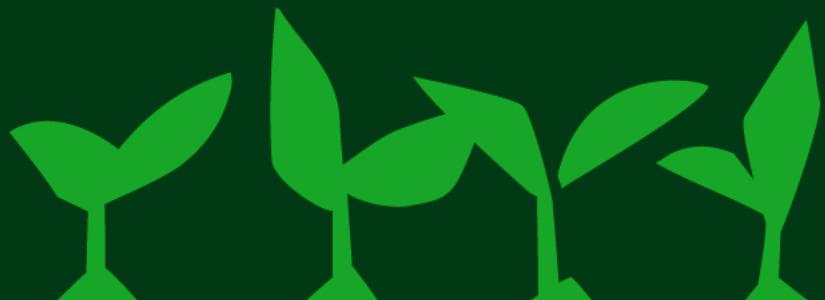


Fall 2022

Farmstand Business Curriculum



GROW^{NYC}



Grades 9-12

Teaching students the basics of growing food, creating a business, and working as a team to serve their community with support from GrowNYC's existing youth engagement programs.



GROW^{NYC}

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Note to Facilitator on How to Use this Curriculum

This guide will provide some detail for facilitating each step of the project; however, we urge you to adapt these steps to best fit the specific capacity and interests of your students and school campus. Students should ideally work on this project as a whole class, so you, the facilitator, can be involved in the whole process with one group. If your class size is too large to feasibly facilitate this project with the whole group, split your class into two groups and walk each group through each stage of the project.

There are main options you can choose from to facilitate this project:

Option 1. Set up a real food access business with the intent of growing and selling produce

Option 2. Set up a hypothetical food access business with no plan to grow or sell produce

Option 1 requires growing space and a dedicated facilitator who will oversee the project ideally over multiple years. Option 2 can be facilitated virtually or on school campuses that do not have access to growing space. This curriculum is primarily oriented towards Option 1 because it requires the most preparation, however, Option 2 can be taught with a similarly serious tone, understanding that students and facilitators are role playing or pretending that they are building a real business. The skills gained by following Option 2 are still valuable and we recommend participating in this project no matter the option you have access to.

If you've selected option 1 and plan on actually growing and selling produce, we recommend referring to GrowNYC's existing food access models, or reaching out to GrowNYC School Gardens' staff for logistical support at schoolgardens@grownyc.org.

Unit 2 introduces students to the real-world factors at play within farm businesses. Students will begin to picture themselves as stakeholders within the local food system. Activities in this unit transition students into thinking about the specifics of the farm business they wish to create on their school campus. Each lesson will help students understand an integral component of creating a business to support them in applying this new knowledge to the tangible goal of creating a food access business at their school.

*Please read through GrowNYC's [Food Justice Facilitation Guide](#) for tips on how to teach this curriculum.

Before beginning this curriculum, it is crucial to explain to students that this curriculum is centered on creating a (real or hypothetical) food access business. The food access business they create should be based on the garden or farm on your school campus. Meaning, students will ultimately build a business that increases food access in their community by growing food on their school farm or garden and then distributing the food, either through a farmstand, a CSA, or creating a food box. In this curriculum, students will begin their project by mapping the assets they have access to in their community.

Who is GrowNYC?

At GrowNYC, we protect the environment, create green spaces, help people stay healthy, and give them opportunities to make a positive impact. Our mission is to improve New York City's quality of life through environmental programs that transform communities block by block and empower all New Yorkers to secure a clean and healthy environment for future generations.

GrowNYC was originally created in 1970 as the Council on the Environment of New York City (CENYC). Born out of the spirit of the first Earth Day, CENYC was initially a policy-based organization, writing comprehensive reports about quality-of-life issues like air quality, traffic, and noise. Our city has changed a lot since then and so have we. As the largest and most established environmental organization in NYC, we are proud to have played a pivotal role in helping New York City transform over the past five decades. Today 3 million New Yorkers each year participate in our programs. We envision a New York in which every New Yorker can flourish. Every garden. Every school. Every street. Every neighborhood. Every borough. We work in 4 main areas: conservation, green spaces, education, and food access and agriculture.

Food Access and Agriculture:

Our network of Greenmarket farmers markets, Farmstands, Fresh Food Box pick-ups and Wholesale ensures that all New Yorkers have access to the freshest, healthiest local food. We are bringing more green space to our city by building and rejuvenating community and school gardens.

GrowNYC Farmstands are part of a [network of food access retail sites operated by GrowNYC](#), along with Greenmarkets and Fresh Food Box sites. Through Farmstands, GrowNYC trains and employs young people to sell fresh, affordable food in neighborhoods across NYC. The food sold at Farmstands is grown by farmers in the Northeast and transparently sourced through GrowNYC Wholesale. This vital food access program offers important job opportunities for young New Yorkers, ensures healthy, fresh food access across the city, and provides vital revenue for family farms in the Northeast. GrowNYC Farmstands were formerly known as Youthmarkets.

Education:

We foster future environmental stewards by providing 70,000 children each year with programs that provide meaningful interactions with the natural environment.

Conservation:

We are providing outreach and education to increase participation in the city's Zero Waste Programs and help conserve natural resources. We blanket the five boroughs with resources like textile and food scrap collection, Stop 'N' Swaps, and free training to make waste reduction easy for all.

Green Spaces:

We are transforming our regional food system and ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to the freshest, healthiest local food. We build and support community and school gardens through volunteer days, technical assistance, training, school garden grants and more.

UNIT 2:

Introduction to Business



Lesson 9: Business Basics

OBJECTIVE

In this lesson, students will explore business models and evaluate different operating procedures for their real or hypothetical food access business.

Grade Level: 9-12

Length of Time: 45 mins

VOCABULARY

Business, business Model, CSA, customers, expenses, farmers markets, living wage, pop-up farmstands, product, revenue, wholesale

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is a business and what are the key factors involved in business?

A **business** is any organization that sells a product in an attempt to earn profit. A **product** is considered a good or service. A business earns revenue from selling their products to their customers (consumers). **Revenue** is a calculation of the number of items sold multiplied by the dollar value per item.

In order to generate revenue, the seller must provide products that are appealing to the customer; therefore, businesses must be in tune with what customers want and need. See here for more information on [how to start planning a farm business](#).

Customers, also referred to as **consumers** or **buyers**, are the business' audience. When a customer buys a product, the customer believes that the value of what they are getting from the transaction is greater than the money they are handing over to pay for it. Revenue tells us that there is a group of people that value what you do and believes your product serves a useful role in the economy.

When running a business, business owners must take into consideration their **expenses**. Expenses are the cost of running a business, including the cost of the labor, the cost of the materials needed to create the goods or services, and so on.

Once a business knows their revenue and expenses, they should also calculate their **profit**. Profit is what a business earns after covering all its expenses. The calculation for profit is revenue minus expenses. In the early stages of a business, profit is often reinvested directly back into the business to cover expenses and grow the business over time. It is very important for businesses to track their expenses, their revenue, and their profit, so they can ensure they can make informed decisions about the future of the business.

What is a business model?

In order to come up with a plan for generating profit, it is important to consider your **business model**. A business model "identifies the products or services the business plans to sell, its identified target market, and any anticipated expenses".¹

There are a wide range of business models out there. In this curriculum, we will focus primarily on farm businesses. Specifically, GrowNYC's goal is supporting students in understanding and participating in food access businesses. Students should be familiar with farm business models so they can participate as informed stakeholders in the local food business space. Examine different business models through the farm business context and identify the model that suits your group, community, and demographic needs.

FOOD BUSINESS TYPE	PROS	CONS
<p>Wholesale is selling bulk goods to other businesses that will go on to retail the goods to consumers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulk ordering • Support from government and large producers • High demand • Profitable • Must have a harvest schedule way ahead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonal production - you'll have smaller yields based on the weather • No flexibility - you must deliver what you promised • All products must meet rigid product quality standards • High Insurance • Only growing one main crop • Must have a harvest schedule way ahead • Requires very careful planning
<p>Restaurants are places where people pay to eat meals that are cooked and sometimes served on the premises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy first sale • Small order size / frequent delivery • Good market intelligence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High margin • Requires top quality • Buys by the carton-Slow pay • Can buy a little or a lot • Requires personal attention • High turnover of buyers
<p>Farmers Markets are marketplaces designed to sell food directly from farmers to consumers. Farmers' markets typically consist of booths, tables, or stands where farmers sell their goods. GrowNYC operates most farmers markets in NYC.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest margin – full retail • High selling cost per unit sold • No standard pack or grade • Can sell a little or a lot • Good market intelligence • Direct contact and feedback from customers • Customers support ethical farming and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may not like to sell face to face • Market schedule is grueling • Might have to pay additional staff • Must adhere to market rules • Would have to rent/pay for market space

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> willing to pay more for organic/naturally grown Customers often take responsibility of word-of-mouth marketing Emotionally gratifying, you see your product from seed to plate – and get to build a community in the process 	
<u>Pop-up Farmstand</u> is a temporary use of public space, used where farmers sell their goods directly to consumers, usually organized by the farmer, as opposed to a third-party market group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High margin – full retail Lowest overhead expense Very high profit per unit after breaking-even Staffing expenses Steady cash flow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High regulatory risk exposure No transport cost Location is critical Requires constant management skills High levels of farm maintenance
<u>Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)</u> is an arrangement between a consumer and farm business where farmers provide consumers with goods, usually once a week, or consistently over a recurring period throughout the growing season. Consumers usually pay the cost of all the goods for the entire duration of the CSA upfront, which helps farmers pay initial farm costs each season. Typically, the contents of the CSA are determined by the farmer based on what they have available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces the need for raising large operating capital You are selling your story more than you are selling produce High margin – full retail Can farm more ecologically No standard pack or grade Light post-harvest requirements Emotionally gratifying, you see your product from seed to plate – and get to build a community in the process Best risk management because you have consistent buyers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires very heavy and skilled marketing management Requires advanced growing skills Production risk transferred to CSA community Requires very careful planning

How does the labor of farming connect to the business of farming?

Labor means work, in this case, the work that goes into running a farm. This work is usually done by farm staff and owners. In order to run a successful farm, you need dedicated people who are willing and able to do physical and mental work on the land. Farming involves a lot of manual labor and exposure to the elements, but it is also a uniquely rewarding job. Farmers need to be able to move heavy items, be outdoors for extended periods of time; sometimes at extreme temperatures and must be willing to get their hands dirty. Farmers are also responsible for data entry, record keeping, managing expenses, marketing, client and consumer relations, public engagement, education, and more. Other responsibilities could include fixing machinery, amending the soil, weeding, fencing, site management and trash removal, crop planning, seed saving and ordering, creating small fires for ecological benefits and protection, planning, and executing community events and more. Farm owners must be able to take on these responsibilities or manage others who take them on, in addition to overseeing the business side of farming. They must also ensure that enough revenue is generated by the farm to cover all farm expenses including paying staff their wages.

Overall, farming is one of the most important jobs in the world because farmers provide us with the food we need to live. However, in our economy, food is undervalued. This means that because of the way capitalism values different forms of labor unequally, farm labor is often underpaid, so the wages given to farm laborers do not match the crucial role that they play in our society. For most farm businesses, employee wages are the biggest expense, even though farm labor is usually underpaid. Furthermore, today, most farm labor in the United States is performed by immigrant workers who are often paid below minimum wage; forced to bear inhospitable working and living conditions. According to a 2021 survey, "Immigrant farm workers make up an estimated 73% of agriculture workers in the United States today"².

When considering this demographic breakdown, the low wages offered to farm laborers presents not only an economic justice issue, but also a racial justice issue. Despite farming being an industry that is integral to our survival as a species, the industry sees to it that BIPOC and immigrant farm workers are rarely compensated fairly. However, there are many points in history where farm workers have fought this unfair treatment to change their conditions. The Filipino farm worker revolution of the 1960s is a great example, read more about it [here](#).

Food justice, labor justice, and immigrant justice organizers advocate for higher wages for farmers and workers. There are some protections in place, for example, farm workers are covered under the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#), and these legal frameworks can be used to advocate for better working conditions, however, because of the way our legal framework is set up, it can be difficult to utilize these laws to protect undocumented people. Everyone deserves fair pay, a livable wage, and to be granted legal protections, no matter their immigration status.

Livable wage "refers to a theoretical income level that allows individuals or families to afford adequate shelter, food, and other necessities. The goal of a living wage is to allow employees to earn enough income for a satisfactory standard of living and prevent them from falling into poverty...living wages are often substantially higher than the legal minimum wage."³

This means that the income you earn from your job affords you access to enough money to cover your basic human needs, like housing and food. Check out [MIT's Living Wage Calculator](#) to find out what is considered a livable wage in your area.

For farm owners, paying farm laborers a livable wage should always be considered worth the loss in profit because it means their farmers can have a good quality of life, which is priceless.

Farmers have a lot of different tasks that take significant amounts of time, all in all, farms take a lot of work to operate! Some farms, mostly large-scale industrial farms, try to save money on labor by automating some of the work. This means they use machinery to replace some work humans would normally do, which decreases the amount of wages they have to pay. The machinery required to do this can be very expensive, and often causes damage to the environment, either by using fossil fuels, or being too tough on the land. One example of this is soil tilling, the carbon sequestration that occurs when soil is kept in place (no-till) is reversed when machinery like tractors are used to till the soil, this disrupts the soil ecosystems and causes the carbon dioxide that would naturally be kept in the ground, to instead be released into the atmosphere, further accelerating climate change. Not to mention many farmers will often go into debt themselves to be able to purchase equipment from large corporations.

When owning a business, the quality of life of those you work with should be a priority. Quality of life is directly impacted by income because income grants us the ability to cover the costs of meeting our needs. Ideally, a goal of a business owner should be to provide their staff with a “livable wage”, though this can decrease the business’ overall profit.

PROCEDURE

Facilitator's note: As a reminder, the goal of this curriculum is to develop a real or hypothetical food access business where students feel they are authentically participating in our local food system. This lesson will ask students to begin envisioning the business they wish to create, with critical thinking and action-oriented processes. The activities in this curriculum are related to the culminating food access business project and should be taken seriously as a part of real efforts to build a food access business as a group in your school community.

1. Go over the business basics from the background information section of this lesson.
2. Facilitate a brainstorming session with the whole group to begin envisioning the real or hypothetical food access business you will create with as a class.
3. Discuss the following questions:
 - a. What food or produce do you want to sell?
 - b. How will your business generate revenue?
 - c. Who will your customers be?
 - d. What are your expenses?
 - e. How will you generate profit?
4. Break into groups and ask each group to select a farm business model.
5. Based on the discussion, have each group fit their vision for the food business into the business model they selected. How would your business work using this business model?
6. Have each group come up with a proposal for the food business using the business model they selected. Why would this business model best serve the group vision for the food access business you wish to create together?
7. After each group has presented their rationale, ask students to discuss which business model best fits the group vision all together. You do not have to select your final business model at this time but ask students to continue thinking about this question as you go through the rest of the curriculum.

EXTENSION

- What are your favorite businesses? Challenge students to think of one small-scale community business, and one large corporation. Identify their products, the roles they play in the market, and how they generate revenue. Brainstorm what their expenses might be (what are they spending money on?), estimate how large their staff is and how much profit they divert to pay wages. How did you first learn about these businesses? What key decisions have they made that help them operate a successful business? Does either business sacrifice their employees' quality of life? Do they provide their staff with livable wages?

Lesson 10: Farm Business Finance

OBJECTIVE

In this lesson, students will explore options for organizational structures and generating pathways start-up capital to fuel their food access business.

Grade Level: 9-12

Length of Time: 45 mins

VOCABULARY

Crowdfunding, donation-based crowdfunding, farm collective, farming co-operative, fixed costs, grant funding, investment-based crowdfunding, LLC, loan-based crowdfunding, non-profit, soft costs, startup capital, startup cost, worker-owned co-operative farms

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What organizational structures are used by farm businesses?

It is also important for businesses to determine the structure of their organization within the U.S. legal context. For farm businesses, the two main options for a business structure is to form an LLC or a 501(c)3.

An **LLC (limited liability company)** “is a business structure in the U.S. that protects its owners from personal responsibility for its debts or liabilities.”⁴ Many Farms operate as an LLC to both separate the owners/members from the business itself, and so that the farm can become its own legal entity, meaning it can be the owner of equipment, land, and a bank account. LLCs also offer some protection to the owners in the event of a lawsuit. For example, if the food a farm grows gets someone sick, the farmers or farm workers would not be **liable**, but rather the LLC would. To be liable means to be held responsible in the court of law. An LLC helps protect business owners’ personal assets like your house or car, because if someone sued your business, they cannot bankrupt the individual business owner, however, they can bankrupt your business. The owner of the LLC can be one or many members, not all have to work on the farm, and the owners can employ people to work on their farm. Read [this article](#) from the Center for Agriculture and Food Systems for more information about how LLC status protects farmers. An example of an LLC farm is [Brooklyn Grange Farm](#).

A **Non-Profit** (Not for Profit), also known as a **501(c)3**, is an organization that is structured to perform a social good or work towards a mission. They are considered Not-for-profit because they do not pay out profits to their owners, in fact there are no owners, rather the organization is run by a board, who directs the organization towards its mission, and hires a director to see to the day-to-day of seeing towards this mission. For a Non-profit farm, their mission is often loosely to feed their communities in a collaborative way. The tax benefits of this model are that profits are not taxed the same way for profit companies are. One example of a non-profit in the food industry is us at [GrowNYC!](#) Another example is [Corbin Hill Food Project](#).

Farm collectives act as a group of entities that share at least one common interest or work together to achieve a common objective. Collectives can differ from cooperatives in that they are not necessarily focused on an economic benefit or saving but can be that as well. Collectives are often looser and are born in the spirit of mutual aid, meaning that their members come together to find ways to support one another. There is no legal structure tied to this term, though a range of businesses may use this term. An example of a food worker collective is the [Food Issues Group \(FIG\)](#).

Farming Cooperatives are cooperatives formed to market goods, purchase equipment, or another shared expense. They often occur in farming sectors that require expensive equipment, such as grain or dairy farmers. The farms themselves may or may not be cooperatives, but in essence, many farms come together to form another entity in which they all have a stake, and then share the governance and production of that entity. For example, several smaller grain farmers in a region may form a cooperative to build a mill, and each own a “piece” of the mill and create a schedule for a way to share the mill. This way they don’t each have to buy their own piece of expensive equipment. This can also work for other shared tasks, like trucks to take their goods to stores, or packaging facilities to package their products. An example of a farming co-operative is [Good Food Farmers Network](#).

Worker-owned cooperative farms are a structure of farms owned by the workers doing the work at the farm. This means that the farmers pool their time and financial resources into a farm and share the profits amongst themselves. Worker-Owned Cooperative farms are owned by its workers instead of by outside shareholders or investors or a single farmer. Each member of a cooperative farm usually has a vote in business decisions, but they can be structured in many ways. Worker owned co-operative farms try to avoid some of the labor ethics issues by organizing in a way where the people who work on the farm also own the farm. Because they share the profit of the business, they are often able to pay better wages than they would if there was a traditional owner-worker dynamic. This leads to a more equitable distribution of profit. Technically speaking, they are often created with an LLC, but use cooperative principles in the LLC’s bylaws. An example of a worker-owned cooperative farm is [Rock Steady Farm](#). An example of a worker-owned cooperative food project is Brooklyn Supported Agriculture’s [Brooklyn Packers](#). The about page beautifully articulates the spirit of Brooklyn Packers’ organizational structure: “As anti-capitalists under capitalism, we organize to build, and be a part of, a solidarity economy. To this end, we guarantee worker-owners the same salary and equal company voting rights; we buy from small, sustainable food businesses in our local economy, with a preference for women / LGBTQIA+ / POC-owned farms; and we facilitate community access to our products by only charging for our labor (i.e., we never markup food).”⁵

How do farm owners pay for the initial costs of starting a farm?

The initial costs of starting a farm include fixed costs and soft costs.

Fixed Costs are set expenses the business has committed to that are not tied to production volume. For instance, paying for rent is a fixed cost because you’ll always have this expense regardless of whether you make money or not.

Soft Costs are any costs that are not considered direct construction costs or fixed costs. These costs typically are associated with non-tangible items, such as design, fees, taxes, and insurance. Soft costs can be a significant part of a project’s budget. Use [this document](#) to continue evaluating what costs will be associated with your business operations.

To run a farm business that generates revenue, farm business owners must be thoughtful about their expenses/costs, pricing, accounting strategies, and sales strategies.

Startup costs refers to the money a business needs to spend on things like materials, infrastructure, and space to begin operating a business. **Startup capital** refers to the money gathered to pay startup costs. These costs usually must be covered before the business has ever

earned a profit. Without startup capital, it can be difficult for new business owners to cover startup costs because they have yet to earn money through their business. The initial cost of starting a business, especially a farm, can be high. For this reason, there are systems of support that farmers can access in order to acquire the money needed to cover startup costs. A common strategy for acquiring startup capital is crowdfunding.

Crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising small amounts of money from many people, typically via the Internet. Crowdfunding is a form of crowdsourcing and alternative finance. If you are on social media, you have likely seen crowdfunding take place. It is very effective over social media because it gives people the ability to reach large numbers of people while incorporating visual elements to tell a story. Effective utilization of social media can yield powerful results, especially for marginalized communities and folks with little to no access to startup capital. Crowdfunding legitimizes your claims and your vision, so it is important to have a strong plan for your business before requesting funding support. Early crowdfunding sometimes promises donors something in return, like naming something after someone who donates a certain amount or an early version of the product.

Donation-based crowdfunding asks people to support a project without getting their money back. These individual donations are usually smaller than loans or investments, but usually reach a larger audience of donors, which can add up to a lot of money. [GoFundMe](#) is an example of a donation-based crowdfunding website.

Loan-based crowdfunding is a type of crowdfunding where the people that invested in the project get their money back over time as the business begins earning profit, usually with interest. [Kiva](#) is an example of a crowdfunding platform that is recommended for farmers.

Investment-based crowdfunding is when people invest in a project in exchange for a percentage of ownership over your business, also referred to as a **share**. This means investors see the value of their shares rise and fall, but you don't need to pay back their investment. [Crowd Street](#) is an example of an investment based crowdfunding platform.

Grant Funding is when you obtain access to funds that you don't have to repay. Those funds are usually allocated to non-profit organizations or community groups doing specific projects. Usually groups need 501(c)3 status to be able to qualify for grant funding, or they can use a "fiscal sponsor", which means an outside organization is willing to lend their 501(c)3 status and process the funds through their organization to you. In order to obtain grant funding, it requires a great deal of administrative support, documentation proving that there is a need, tracking of spending and showing proof of how you spent the funds. Grants funds can also be tricky, as funds are not always made available even after you receive the grant. Funders are usually prioritizing groups and organizations that already have access to some form of funding and organizational structure.

How do farmers determine the price of the food they sell?

How do you price something that sustains life itself? Food pricing is a complex subject, because the above is true; people need to eat, be nourished, and have a right to fresh and local foods. How do you set a price on a basic human right? When setting prices in the food sector, large industrial agriculture businesses can produce food at low dollar costs to the consumer, but those costs are

often offset to other areas of the business. There's a reason why a head of broccoli costs \$1.50 at a supermarket chain, and \$4 at the farmers market. The \$1.50 broccoli was likely produced with underpaid labor and at more dramatic cost to the environment, ecosystem, and climate. What is the human and environmental cost of this "cheap" food? The cost, in fact, is huge, as the industrial food sector is responsible for over 25% of global greenhouse gas emissions, which doesn't even account for the human costs along the supply chain.⁶

Some industrial farms, especially those growing commodity items like corn, wheat, or dairy, often receive big government subsidies which make it harder for small-scale, more sustainable farms to compete with. These subsidies were created after a long history of unfair lobbying in the food industry. This is a huge issue in the dairy industry where the cost of milk is very low because industrial dairy farmers income is offset by these government subsidies. This means that industrial farmers are incentivized but small-scale farmers are forced to either sell their products at a higher cost and risk loss or they sell at unsustainably low prices that often lead to them eventually going into crippling debt. Farmers markets and farmstands are places where farmers can set their own prices that reflect the true cost of food. Conscious consumers understand the reality of this and are often eager to support smaller farms and pay higher price points. However, these higher price points aren't accessible to everyone, which can exclude low-income people from affording healthy, sustainable, and nutritious food. It is important for farmers to consider food access and offer alternatives for low resource communities, however, this can be challenging for farms with smaller budgets. All in all, it can be very difficult for small scale farmers to compete with these corporate industrial agriculture companies. Even in the small-scale farming world, labor exploitation is rampant, as farmers are forced to sell their produce below market value to stay afloat. But we don't want to encourage this race to the bottom. We want to build pathways for farmers and farmworkers to be adequately compensated for their labor and time. The actual cost of producing a head of broccoli, if you paid labor a living wage all along the supply chain—from seed to harvest to sale would be much greater than any of us are used to seeing in the grocery store or at the farmers market. Farmers should take note of all the labor hours it takes to produce their product and charge a reasonable amount to be adequately compensated for their hard work! Often, farmers will work up steadily to an amount that feels manageable for themselves. But on the flip side, passing all those costs to the consumer would also be inequitable, as we want to ensure that everyone has access to local nourishing foods. Some farms will use **sliding scale models** where those with more class privileges or higher income may pay more to help subsidize the cost of someone who has a lower income, or none at all. These are stopgap measures employed in a broken food system. It's not your fault that food is exceptionally undervalued in this capitalist world. It's also time to dream up a new one!

There are many other factors that affect the cost of food, including the length of the growing season, farm or harvest size, weather conditions for the growing season, and overhead costs. For additional information on food pricing, check out The Rockefeller Foundation's [True Cost of Food Measuring What Matters to Transform the U.S. Food System](#).

How do farmers prepare inventory?

When growing food as a business, it's important to predict to some degree how much food you're going to get after your harvest. Factor that information in with how much you think you'll be able to sell, and how much you need to sell to maintain and sustain your business, then you're able to plan for what and when to grow. Almost all vegetables have a date to maturity, meaning you can often

know the approximate days to when they will be ready to harvest. So, for example if you grow 20 broccoli plants, and their date to maturity is 59 days, you'll have 20 broccoli heads in 59 days. This is of course assuming everything goes perfectly smoothly. Unfortunately, in farming, nothing ever goes smoothly, and it's about how you respond to challenges. After you have spent a few years working on your farm, you will have a better idea of the amount of food your land will be able to produce, and when your crops will be ready to harvest. Things such as amount of water, amount of sunlight, and the nutrients in the soil will all factor into how big, how fast, and how nourishing the crops you grow are. When you look at seed packets, you'll notice they will note down the days to maturity. So if you have an order for broccoli heads on August 1st, you'll want to plant your broccoli at least 59 days before that order so that it will be ready in time! Farmers use crop plans that they often tabulate and create in the winter to plan what parts of the farm will be growing which crops when and for how long. From there, they can predict a rough estimate of what kinds of crops and how much of each they will have at a given point. Thereby being able to estimate when they will be ready to sell their harvest to their community. Of course, extreme weather events, pest and bug pressure, and even personal mishaps (like forgetting to turn on irrigation) may delay or quickly destroy a perfectly laid plan.

PROCEDURE

1. Have students use their brainstorm from the previous lesson to evaluate what organizational structure would work best for their business. Re-introduce these questions:

- How will you generate profit?
- How does your business meet the market needs?
- Who is your customer or target audience?
- What is your goal income and what are your expenses?

2. Have students break into 5 groups to determine the best organizational structure for their food access business.

- LLC
- Non-Profit
- Farm Collectives
- Farm Cooperative
- Worker-owned Cooperatives

3. Once they've created a rationale for their organizational structure, have students determine how they will generate their initial start-up capital for this project using the background information section of this lesson. Options include:

- Crowdfunding
- Donation-based crowdfunding
- Loan-based crowdfunding
- Grant funding
- Other

4. Have students present their findings and explain why their organizational structure would be successful based on the information given and their previous work.

5. Facilitate a group discussion on how the organizational structure and start-up capital plans fit into the business model discussion from the previous lesson.

EXTENSION

• Explore crop planning tools and growing guides using these free resources: [Veg Plotter](#) and [Old Farmer's Almanac](#).

• In this curriculum students should gain a basic understanding of business finance, however, it is essential that students also develop a strong understanding of personal finance. This is an important life skill that is often left out of classroom curricula. To set students up to sustain themselves long term after high school, students should explore the following personal finance concepts: credit score, taxes, opening a bank account, setting up a budget, managing loans, and creating financial goals. Here are some resources to get them started:

- Credit: [Credit Karma](#), [Experian Boost](#), [Self Credit Builder](#), [Extra Card](#)
- Taxes: [IRS - Link and Learn Courses](#), [Video on Understanding Taxes](#)
- Opening a bank account: [Basic Banking](#)
- Loans & Interest Rates: [Student Loans and Interest Rates](#)
- Personal budgeting: [Personal Finance for H.S. Students](#)
- Creating financial goals: [How to Set Financial Goals](#), [10 Financial Goals Examples for Students to Set Now](#)

Lesson 11: Filling Gaps in Your Community

OBJECTIVE

In this lesson, students will begin engaging directly with their community in order to learn the key gaps that exist in their local food system. Students will design and disseminate a community needs assessment that will be used to shape their food access business.

Grade Level: 9-12

Length of Time: 45 mins

VOCABULARY

Community relations, competitors, customer base, demographics, market research, marketing, personas, social capital, target audience

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is a target audience?

A target audience profile is a specific group of customers most likely to respond positively to your promotions, products, and or services. Often, your target audience analysis will be based on specific factors like location, age, income, and more. A crucial component of business is providing a product that is appealing to your buyers. For example, people might not come to our farm stand each week if we only sell one thing, like broccoli. Assuming one goal of your business is to serve your community, think about and inquire within your community about what goods or services your community would find useful. One way to do this

is to create and distribute a survey to find out if what you think your community needs is aligned with what your community actually needs.



Figure 1: Identifying your target audience

How do businesses use customer demographics to shape their work?

Understanding community demographics can support your business in various ways. Demographics tell the larger story behind who's in the community and why, and how you can use that information to influence your business. For most businesses, demographic data collection is one of the first forms of research they implement. [The U.S. Census Bureau](#) allows you to search by ZIP code, city, county, and/or state to find a specific area's income levels, ethnicities, ages, and other social characteristics. Demographic information examples include age, race, ethnicity, gender, marital status, income,

education, and employment. You can easily and effectively collect these types of information by surveying your community.

Steps To Take	Questions To Consider
<p>Use Google Analytics and The Census to Explore Demographics</p> <p>Demographics are statistical data showing the population and particular groups within it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who is in your community? - What are some of the cultural and language barriers you may face? - What's the class structure of the community? - How did this factor into your pricing, product/services list, and location?
<p>Analyze Your Customer Base and Carry Out Client Interviews</p> <p>Customer Base is the group of customers who repeatedly purchase the goods or services of a business. These customers are a main source of revenue for a company.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What kind of products or services are needed in the community? - How would xyz business support the local community? - What feedback do you have for me? - How can I make this idea stronger? - Who are some community members that would support this idea? - Who are community members that are doing similar projects?
<p>Conduct Market Research and Identify Industry Trends</p> <p>Market Research is a process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting information. The information could be about a target market, consumers, competitors, or the industry as a whole.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What's trending now? - What was trending before? - How can you use that data to evaluate the current market? - What are some market and trend predictions you have? - How do those predictions support or go against your idea?
<p>Marketing</p> <p>Marketing is the action or business of promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who is your target audience? - What are some of the things that they enjoy? - How does your business fit into their lifestyle? - What are the demographics of your target customer?
<p>Create Personas</p> <p>Personas are the aspect of someone's character that is presented to or perceived by others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What type of person are you looking for? - How would you describe your customer?
<p>Define Who Your Target Audience Isn't</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who is not your customer?

<p>Target Audience is a particular group at which a product, service, film, book, advertising campaign, etc., is aimed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who isn't going to like your product or services? - Whose toes are you stepping on?
<p>Analyze Competitors</p> <p>Competitors are where two or more parties strive for a common goal. Competition can be between entities such as individuals, economic and social groups, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who's already doing it? - What can you learn from their successes and failures? - If this is an innovative project, what are some projects that are similar? - Who can you collaborate with?
<p>Continuously Revise Based on Results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow your idea the flexibility to change once you have more information - What new things can you implement? - What drawbacks did you discover? - How does this new information influence your original plan?

What are community relations?

Community relations is defined as the function that evaluates public attitudes and interests; identifies the mission of an organization; executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance. Community relations is one of the most undervalued resources that businesses can use. Having a positive, transparent, and symbiotic relationship with your community can fuel your business and offset any major issues. Social capital is defined as a set of shared values that allows individuals to work together to effectively achieve a common purpose. **Social capital** can contribute to a company's success by building a sense of shared values and mutual respect.

Social capital arises from the capacity to consider others, to think and act generously and cooperatively. It involves people knowing each other and having positive relationships based on trust, respect, kindness, and reciprocity. One of the first steps in community building is creating a profile of who's currently in your area; schools, hospitals, churches, non-profit organizations, green spaces, gardens, farmers markets etc. This profile will allow you to reach out to the respective groups and get direct feedback about how your project would fit into the community before inception.

Community relations also means providing transparency about any expectations the community may have or need from you. Transparency allows others to see your vision more clearly; and for more targeted and specific support systems. One of the difficulties of community building is successfully managing relationships with various groups and navigating through difficult conversations. While your business may provide a service to the community, you should expect some pushback from community members for various reasons.

PROCEDURE

- Revisit Lesson 2 or Unit 1, revisit the local food system map that they created to identify what already exists in your local system. This should give students an idea what to look for in their community needs assessment.
 - Refresh what points in the local food system are missing
 - Update your map to include any new local stakeholders or potential partners
- Now that students have an idea of what they personally think is missing from the local food system, let's find out what other services in the community people think are missing.
- This will take place in the form of a community needs assessment, which is typically a survey that is distributed to community members to determine the gaps that exist around food access in your community. Students should begin designing their survey by brainstorming questions they think will help them answer this main question: What services are missing in our community food system?
- Have students break up into groups to come up with their own questions for community members and local stakeholders. One example of a question is, "How would you rate your level of access to food in your community?"
- Once they finish coming up with their questions, have students create their survey in [Google Forms](#). If students have never used this tool before, they might need some time to play around with it.
- Now come up with a plan for disseminating their survey to community members.
- Ask students to evaluate what metrics and information will be captured with this survey. Use these questions as a guide.
 - Who will your survey reach? How will your survey reach a wide audience?
 - What languages does your community speak? Does the survey need to be translated to reach a larger audience?
 - What are some of the best ways to capture information?
 - How will you measure the results of your survey?
- Have students come up with a plan to send out their survey. When the survey is being sent to community members, be sure to give a clear deadline for when you need the survey filled out.
- Once you've gathered responses from community members and can identify the gaps that exist based on the survey findings, discuss the following questions:
 - Do you think the food business model and organizational structure you chose for your food access business matches the community needs based on the results of your survey?
 - Decide how you would like to share the survey results with your community.
 - What are some common themes that are coming up from your interview?
 - How do you think you as local food stakeholders can fill some of the gaps identified in the survey?
 - Who can help you fill these gaps? Are there any community members, organizations, or groups that exist that would be willing to collaborate?

EXTENSION

- Interview a business owner in your community and write a blog post outlining their services, the role they play in the market, and their business model. What sets them apart from their competitors?

Lesson 12: Facing the Public

OBJECTIVE

In this lesson, students will learn about the value of marketing in order to reach their target audience and explore strategies for implementing a marketing campaign for their food access business.

Grade Level: 9-12

Length of Time: 45 mins

VOCABULARY

Advertising, content marketing, countermarketing, direct response marketing, email marketing, marketing, pricing, public relations, search engine marketing, social media

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is marketing?

Once a business understands the product they are selling, has created their business model, and determined the role they wish to play in their community, business owners must decide how they want the public to engage with their business.

This is where **marketing** comes in! Marketing is happening around us all the time. On billboards, in YouTube ads, products sneakily placed in movies and TV shows, fake social media posts, and even the layout of a grocery store or farmers market, you are being marketed to whether you know it or not. Whenever someone tries to convince you to do something, marketing is happening. To market to someone is to try to get them to see value in what you want them to do or buy.

Marketing is an important part of running a business. Without marketing, your target audience might not know that your business exists or understand the products you are selling. It explains how your product can solve your customer's problem by presenting the benefits of your product in creative ways. Many things fall under the marketing umbrella, including:

- **Advertising:** Communicating with potential customers about goods in an attempt to convince them that your goods are worth exchanging for their money.
- **Public relations (PR):** The maintenance of a favorable public image by a company, organization, or a person.
- **Social media:** Web platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Snapchat, LinkedIn, etc.
- **Content marketing:** A type of marketing that involves creating and sharing online material (such as videos, blogs, and social media posts) that do not specifically promote a brand but is used to build interest in its products or services.
- **Email marketing:** A form of commercial messaging that sends information about a business and their goods to potential customers via email.
- **Search engine marketing:** Using a digital marketing strategy to increase website visibility in search engine results.
- **Pricing:** Determining the cost of the goods you are selling.
- **Direct response marketing:** A call to action that attempts to get potential customers engaging with your business.

Although each area of work handles a specific aspect of marketing, they all work towards the major goal of communicating value to your customers.

A simple way to break down this down is the Four Ps of Marketing:

- **Product:** The details around the good or service is being sold
- **Price:** What the consumer pays for the product
- **Place:** Where the product is sold and where the product is marketed
- **Promotion:** How you're going to spread the word about your product and increase sales of your product (advertising)

For more information on the Four Ps, read [this article](#).

What are some marketing strategies used by businesses?

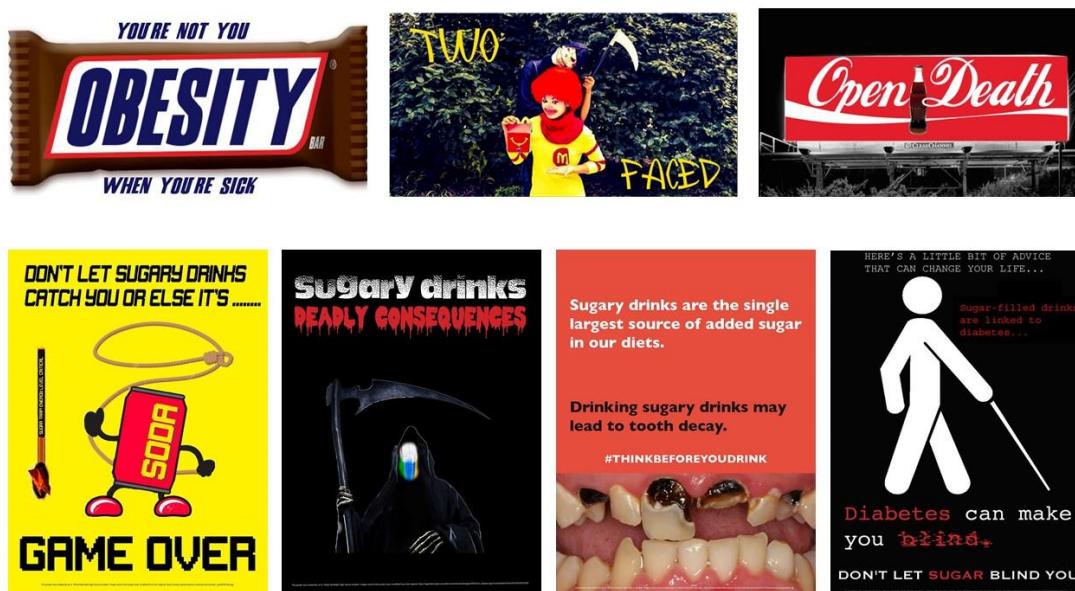
Marketing strategies include marketing in person, market by mail order, on the Internet, or through buying clubs. Increasingly, new farmers are marketing through larger-volume markets, including food retailers, restaurants, and institutions that feature foods grown by local farmers. The best way to foster successful word-of-mouth marketing is to make certain your farmers market customers enjoy their experience. A satisfied customer will feel compelled to tell others about their experience. Online advertising offers an easy and inexpensive means of promoting the farmers' product.

Another form of marketing that you can implement is **Countermarketing**. Food Countermarketing is defined as going against or opposing the targeted marketing of unhealthy products.

Countermarketing urges the public not to be deceived by junk and unhealthy food marketers who relentlessly market unhealthy products or falsely market food as healthy. Countermarketing has been an instrumental tool for youth and students who have used it to help influence their peers to create healthier habits and make better choices. This marketing technique also helps to visualize the effects that unhealthy foods can have and can offer alternatives. To watch a video on the true cost of food, [click here](#).

[Food Countermarketing - CUNY Urban Food Policy](#)

Examples created by students:



How do farm owners apply marketing strategies?

Explore UC Davis' [Golden Rules for Farming Marketing](#) below:

Know what you are selling

- It is more than just the product, but instead a bundle of valuable things that are appreciated by your target customers.

Know who you are selling to

- Each group of customers has a different set of characteristics and needs that you have to adapt your sales approach to meet.

Know your own story

- Your story is unique to your business, it adds value to your product
- Your story must show in everything your customers sees and you do
- You need to be able to tell it in the time it takes to ride an elevator to the top of a building with a potential investor in your business
- Your story is your position

Don't make assumptions

- Don't guess about the viability of your business idea or the behavior of your customers. Find some way to prove that what you think is true really is.

Be customer oriented not product oriented

- Think "My customer wants lettuce – how can I get it to her the way she likes it? NOT "I grow lettuce – how can I find someone to buy it?"

Sell feature and benefits

- Say, "this red lettuce is contains more vitamins to keep you healthy" not just "I have red lettuce to sell"
- Each feature has a benefit that your customer values. Connect each thing to make a sale

Be a price maker not a price taker, don't sell commodities

- If you're selling something that can't be distinguished from another farmer's product, you can't control the price at all. If the other farmer is big, you will lose.

Diversify carefully in all directions to manage risk

- Growing many crops, for many kinds of customers will reduce your risk of loss. But your management job can become overwhelming, and your quality, reliability, and service will slip.
- You must strike a balance between diversity to manage risk and management time to maintain quality.

Start as small as possible and learn the market

- Find out the smallest way you can enter the market in order to minimize your risk. Then once you learn how it works you can grow."

What is storytelling in the context of a business?

Before you launch your business to the public, it is important to hone in on the story you wish to convey to potential customers. This story can be shared on your website, on social media, on packaging, etc. Craft your farm story using the questions below.

- Tell us about you, your group, and the place you farm
- What you grow, how much you sell it for, and when you will have goods to sell
- What makes your product special and why should people buy it?
- How can buyers contact you?
- Include a photo

PROCEDURE

1. As a whole group, brainstorm how you want to market your business. Who is your audience and how will you reach them? Are you interested in creating content for social media and/or a website for your food business?
2. Develop marketing campaign materials using digital tools like [Canva](#). Some examples of marketing materials are
 - Flyers
 - Posters
 - Banners
 - Stickers
 - Business Cards
 - Social Media Posts
 - Presentations
3. How will you ensure your business' digital presence reflects your values and goals?
4. Once the group has developed a few pieces of marketing materials, find a few members of your school community, outside of this class, to test the materials on. Ask them to share their initial thoughts and reactions to the materials, and based on their feedback, create a second draft that students can share with the public.

Once this activity is completed, proceed to the [Project Guide](#) to continue this curriculum.

EXTENSION

- Make a logo for your food access business that conveys the goals and mission behind the project. Use [Canva](#) to design multiple drafts and vote as a class on which logo you will use for your marketing materials. To learn about how to create a logo in Canva, watch [this video](#).

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