

LESS CIC

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Feb 2022

Dear candidate,

Thank you for downloading the Application Pack for the current vacancy for a Grower and FarmStart Supervisor at LESS. Contained within this document are instructions on how to apply, a job description and information about the job, including a person specification.

LESS is a Community Interest Company, based in Lancaster and set up in March 2007 to:

1. Inform and educate people and organisations about sustainable lifestyles
2. Promote and provide sustainable solutions
3. Act as local agents for suppliers of products, systems and services for sustainable living.

As a Community Interest Company, LESS is a not-for-profit organisation.

This job is based in and around the Lancaster District.

Background to LESS and the role

The main focus of LESS's work over the last few years has been supporting the development of the local food economy.

In April 2018 a feasibility study was commissioned to explore a FarmStart project for the local area. You can read the study [here](#).

In 2019 we secured grant funding to run a pilot [Growers' Support Course](#) for would-be new entrant farmers and growers.

We now have a small (just under 1 acre but expanding to two acres this season) site at Old Holly Farm which is around 8 miles south of Lancaster and a large polytunnel at White Lund near Morecambe. The Plot has operated for one season, training four FarmStart trainees in year one, and selling to local retail/hospitality and directly to customers.

You can read more about the Plot [here](#). We have wider plans to build local supply of veg and build a collaborative network of small farms across the district.

As part of its work, LESS sits on the [FoodFutures](#) partnership and currently employs North Lancashire's FoodFutures coordinator.

FoodFutures is North Lancashire's award-winning regional food partnership that is working to build a collaborative community of practitioners, policy makers and researchers working on food matters in the local area. It is made up of representatives from the local farming community, local food businesses, the public sector, Lancaster City and County Council, NGOs, community food groups and our local academic institutions, including Lancaster University (LU).

The Food Economy working group supports the strategy development for a thriving local food economy, including FarmStart and other projects.

More information about FoodFutures and LESS see www.foodfutures.org.uk and www.lessuk.org

The timetable for this recruitment is as follows:

Application closing date: 1.59pm, Sunday, 20 February 2022

Short-listing: by Tuesday, 22 February 2022

Interviews: on-site, 25 February 2022

Starting date: to be agreed, but ideally as soon as possible, but some agreed handover with the current grower

If you are short-listed for an interview, you will be notified by email. You may be required to undertake a short exercise and bring it to the interview. We will confirm arrangements for interviews and will forward more details to you prior to the interview.

The four-day a week role has been set-up to work Mon/Weds/Thurs/Fri, with Tuesday as a non-working day. Over time, there could be flexibility around this, but orders/deliveries/picking/FarmStart training is currently based on this working pattern.

How to apply

To apply please email ellen@lessuk.org with a cover letter (two pages maximum) stating how your skills and experience meet the job description and person specification, your curriculum vitae (CV) and details of two referees by the 20 February.

References

Please provide the names and contact details of two people who can provide references. One should be from your current or most recent employer. In both cases, please include: name, organisation, position in organisation, email and phone contact details and their relationship to you.

Job description

Job title: Grower and FarmStart supervisor

Responsible to: LESS Directors

Salary: £25,350 FTE (pro rata 30 hours per week: £20,280 p/a)

Hours of work: 30 per week (4 days) with flexibility required

Purpose of job: To coordinate and run a successful two acre market garden.
To deliver a dedicated FarmStart training programme, supervising the FarmStart trainees day to day.
To support the development of new sites within the Lancaster area.

Place of work: Old Holly Farm (Cabus, PR3 1AA), White Lund (Morecambe) and growing sites within Lancaster District. Travel will be required between sites

We seek a part-time (four days per week) grower to coordinate and run a successful two-acre market garden and to run the FarmStart training programme day-to-day.

We are looking for an experienced, passionate grower to help to shape this project and build on our successful first season. This is a varied, multi-skilled role with responsibilities for overseeing growing, packing, deliveries, sales, finance, and day to day mentoring of the FarmStart trainees. You will work closely with the The Plot/FarmStart project coordinator who will coordinate project funding, marketing and local distribution networks, and recruitment and coordination for the FarmStart programme.

Responsibilities:

- 1) To lead the set up and on-going coordination of successful agro-ecological growing sites around Lancaster, including, Old Holly Farm and the White Lund polytunnel site
- 2) To manage and coordinate the sites, working closely with and coordinating a team of FarmStarters and volunteers
- 3) To ensure that we meet the organic certification standards, including maintaining appropriate records and labelling/packaging requirements
- 4) To crop plan and manage sales targets in collaboration with local stakeholders
- 5) To produce high quality organic fruit and vegetables as per the crop/yield plans
- 6) To manage the pricing, availability and delivery notes for the Plot, enabling accurate invoicing by the finance team
- 7) To build and manage strong relationships with customers, both for direct sales and retail/hospitality
- 8) To complement the dedicated and structured training to the FarmStart cohort with effective on-the-job mentoring and support
- 9) To manage the risks on-site, including ensuring risk assessments are in place along with appropriate first aid and manual handling qualifications, and appropriate briefings to staff and volunteers

- 10) To manage the deliveries of orders to customers and other logistics relating to the day-to-day management of the sites
- 11) To provide regular updates and reports on project progress, achievements, challenges and risks to directors for the LESS Directors' Meetings and if requested at other times
- 12) To do additional work as agreed with LESS directors should the plans for the projects change

Person specification

Essential:

Growing:

- Track record of growing in a small-scale commercial set up, managing outdoor and polytunnel growing sites
- Experience of managing an organic certification (or similar) process
- Experience of crop planning and sales forecasting
- A full, clean, UK driving licence
- Ability to work occasional evening and weekend days as required
- A knowledge of and commitment to food sovereignty, organic and agro-ecological approaches, alternative food growing and distribution models and economies

People and project coordination:

- Enthusiastic, proactive and collaborative working style and good at team working, cooperative working and conflict resolution
- Experience of delivering engaging training, workshops, open days and/or training qualification
- Experience of running a food distribution model and/or working cooperatively with other growers/distributors
- Good verbal and written communication skills
- An ability to follow all organisational policies and procedures
- Experience of the creation and delivery of project plans
- The ability to manage budgets and finance, producing cash flow forecasts and cash flow statements
- The ability to manage, prioritise and organise work, and to work independently
- Experience of working effectively with volunteers
- Access to own transport as the sites are in different locations

Desirable:

- Experience of working with stakeholders and organisations in the food sector (growers, farmers, caterers, community groups and/or retailers)
- Good computer skills and ability to use the following, email, the internet, word-processing, Survey Monkey and Excel
- Track record in securing project funding, grant funding and/or crowd funding
- Five or more years experience of working on organic farms