

**Answer (Hanes):**

All right.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Thanks. We're just curious to hear about the farms that growing together is working with farmers on.

**Answer (Hanes):**

All right. Yeah, so just give a little context about all of our farms and specifically starting with growing together. So the growing together farm and program is actually a program that we inherited. So we inherited that program from an organization that no longer exists called CRIT. or that's their acronym, and I'm pretty sure that stands for the Center for Refugees and Immigrants in Tennessee. I will double check that and get back to you and confirm. But and this precedes my time at TNFP. But I think it was in 2017. I will also confirm that when all comes out, if I need to. They lost a bunch of Federal funding to support their immigrant and refugee funding, and we're at a brink where they were going to have to close the Growing Together program, and they approached the Nashville Food Project and asked if we would be the new homes for the Growing Together program, because we already had this garden department. And at the time our garden department was growing food for our kitchen. So Tamar, I don't know what you know about the National Food Project. But we have a community meals program where we currently we use recovered food from farms, grocery stores to make meals that feed our community. And so, in 20... earlier in the 2000s the the number of meals that we were making was much smaller. And so we had thought, oh, well, if we can grow the produce that our kitchens can use, that would be a win-win. So anyways, we had that garden program infrastructure, and so CRIT approached us and said, Given y'all's agricultural knowledge as well, will y'all become the new host of this growing together program. They also asked us to take on a staff member of theirs who is the program manager? Her name was Lauren Bailey. She's no longer an employee here, but we said yes. and when Growing Together, started, it was really started as a way to help address social isolation for people who were new residents in the United States, and it is a community of refugees from Bhutan and Myanmar/Burma. and they most of them were from agrarian backgrounds, and they were sort of really keen to reconnect with the land. When the program started, they were really just interested in kitchen gardens. So growing sort of like in a standard community garden style. And long story short, when we inherited the program, they production just started increasing production as they learned the climate and the soils invested in the site where the program currently is and we ended up hiring a person named Tallahassee May. who also is no longer with us, but is an incredible farmer, just an incredible CSA market garden farmer, and she deeply invested in helping the growing together farmers intensify their

production using sustainable agriculture practices. So we're not certified organic, but we use all organic methods, and that enabled them to get to the scale where they could each individual farmer have a CSA program that TNFP managed sort of between 2017 when we inherited it and now really investing deeply like 2019 to 2023, those farmers really pivoted towards production, style, agriculture, for... to make some of them it's primary income, some of them it's supplementary. But a bunch of these farmers are earning their primary income from growing produce on that site. So that's sort of the background context for that farm. The farm is located on a church property in South Nashville. The property is Christ Lutheran Church, and we have a renewable lease agreement with them to use that land for agriculture. It's just at an acre, and there are currently 5 farming families there growing. And most of the farmers have about a quarter of of an acre. A little less give and take. And there's a newer farmer who is an apprentice began as apprentice a year or 2 ago, and so she's just now sort of beginning. So we're sort of at a juncture where we're at max utilization of the space. And so starting to look like what is increased land access for those farmers if they want it, or new farmers who want to enter the program. How do we connect them to land given that that space is at its fullest use? I don't know if I'll save the weeds of how that lease agreement works for a little bit, so I'll put a pin in Growing Together. So that is, 5 farmers working on one piece of land growing for market. And then we have 2 other sort of what I'll call legacy site gardens. So those are gardens that have been under TNFP's management for many years. One of them, it's our biggest site is called the Community Farm at Mill Ridge, and that farm, I believe the correct date is, it began in 2019, through a license agreement with Metro Nashville Parks Department. So, it's on one of Metro Nashville's newest parks. It's called Mill Ridge Park. And when that park was conceptualized, the city asked the community what they wanted at that park, and one of the priorities was access to community agriculture. And so they approached us about helping them activate community gardening on the site. And so we did. We have a license to use 7 acres currently, at the site. There's a 20 acre field which we're a part of that's designated for that community agriculture production. But only 7 acres of it is currently allocated to us. So we're the first partner on that land. Currently 3 acres of that is under production. And we are actively, this year, creating the expansion plan to reach the full 4 acres at that site. At that site, it's in-ground community garden plots. And then we also have some production farming plots for small scale farmers who really, it's the first year that we've sort of expanded access, but are basically coming up under that Growing Together arm. So same type of support, production, style, land access, water access, access to the Growing Together farmers, market things like that. And then our other core site is called the McGruder Community Garden, and that is through a partnership with Catholic charities and Metro Nashville public Schools. It's at a old... It's at a family resource center. So it's located on the site at the McGruder Family Resource Center, which does like after school programming, all sorts of community programming for a historically black community in Nashville, in the 37208 Zip code. You'll hear that talked a lot about in Nashville. It's one of the most sort of rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods in Nashville, but it's also sort of a stronghold where there's a lot of resistance to that. And so the McGruder community garden is tucked behind this family resource center. It's quintessentially a community garden with multicolored raised beds, where we have gone back and forth between, you know, leading the growing of the

food ourselves, and then inviting community members into that, to this year, transitioning to more of a rental plot model. For many reasons. One. The community said that they wanted that, but also it supports our staff capacity and our ability to help support other gardens. And then the last thing I'll say— this is very long-winded answer— is that this year we shifted, We are still in pivot, but we shifted our sort of community agriculture model to what I call hub and spoke model. So we have realized that we, as an organization, have tremendous operational and administrative resources. So rather than us being the farmers, how can we help other community gardens and community farming sites have the resources and support that they need to thrive. And so we are working with other partner organizations, churches, other public offices, other nonprofits to help them bring to life community garden spaces that serve the community that they serve. So if y'all are familiar with Denver Urban Gardens in Denver, that sort of model is our inspiration, and they've been wonderful sort of mentors for us in that.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Thank you. That was really helpful to give us like a lay of the land. And I love Denver Urban Gardens. I used to live in Colorado so I got to, and I lived in Phoenix. The city of Phoenix was looking to them as a model, actually, because we were like a pilot city in Phoenix for urban agriculture, when USDA was investing a lot in Urban Ag. I am curious how long your lease and how safe your lease is with the Lutheran one acre site, and then I have some questions about Mill Ridge.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah. So, I have downloaded and can send all these agreements to y'all after the fact.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

That'd be amazing.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, so I'm just pulling this up. So I tell you the right thing. I you know it's hard to keep track of all the license agreements. Let's see here. I'm just misremembering because my brain is tired, but I think it's a 3-year renewable lease agreement, so we renew it and revisit it every 3 years. I think we're set to renegotiate. I mean, it's not usually a renegotiate, terms of the lease agreement next year. But actually, it's a very secure lease. So the church... We are beloved to the church, and the church is obviously beloved to us. It's a really interesting congregation. So

there are multiple congregations that meet in that church: multilingual, interdenominational. The church is in Nashville's sort of international corridor. So it serves just a really diverse community of folks, and we have seen that through the partnership the garden... the farm has actually helped bring some sort of attention and foot traffic to the to the church that you know, churches are struggling to keep congregation numbers up. And so it's been a mutually beneficial relationship. We have been there, I mean approaching 10 years. So it's a long-term agreement. And we had actually, when I first began this job, although it's been sort of put on hold, although it may very well come back on to conversation. They we were beginning to explore the possibility of them granting that land to us through like, in perpetuity, through like a conservation agricultural easement, and we were going to work with the Agrarian Trust on that, and then the Agrarian Trust sort of restructured, and so that got tabled. But, it is all to say that the church is open to exploring a long-term sort of transference of that land to community agriculture, and those farmers. Such that most of the farmers, all save one, are elderly folks. They're later in life, and so, you know, some of them may stop farming in the next 3 years, some of them in the next 7 years, and we and the Church want to ensure that that space continues to be utilized for urban agriculture. When that happens, the really cool thing and Colleen, you know this because you visited. But, that site is right in the middle of Nashville, and to have a model of what's possible for agriculture like that in the heart of the city is really cool. So yeah, the lease agreement is quite secure. We basically pay... what it looks like is we pay a land fee to the church, and the farmers pay a portion of that land fee to us. And so we sort of subsidize the land access fee. I think it's like around \$6,500 a year or something like that. It's in the lease agreement. And so in the grand scheme of things, that's relatively affordable, considering what other people are paying for land access by the acre in Nashville. And then how water works is the site is on city water. And so we in the past we just paid a percentage of the water bill. But due to some exorbitantly high water bills, we transitioned to starting to meter our water specifically, and so now we pay the water fee to the church. They manage the account, but the farmers pay. That water fee is split between the farmers who pay a percentage of the water fee based on the percentage of land that they are using at the site. If that makes sense. So it's sort of cumbersome. It's a little bit laborious to manage. It's not explicitly standardized. But that's just what it is. Yeah, and we are... The ultimate goal is to... We had tried to dig a well there and fell short. It's actually a little bit difficult to dig wells in Nashville. The water table is really really deep. And so we are... We have talked to Christ Lutheran Church about pulling off a separate water line, an irrigation water line off the church down to the farm. That will cost probably around \$20,000. So we just haven't done that yet. But the problem currently, And it's a broader sort of policy- Urban agriculture thing we're trying to... We're beginning to work on at the city level is that we pay the sewage and the storm water fee, and so our water costs are actually twice as high as they should be because if we could pull off a second line and demonstrate we're not using it for sewage, we would just pay the irrigation fee, which is just the water. We wouldn't have to pay sewage and storm but currently you have to have a separate line pulled off the original meter, which is just a mess.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Okay, yeah. City water. It's expensive. yeah. And for the Mill Ridge Park, could you talk us through like, what is that arrangement? How long? And how did you navigate that? And then, also curious. I've seen the infrastructure on site at the one-acre. But if you could talk us through like the infrastructure of the 2 different sites, and how easy it was to work with the city at Millridge.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, so Mill Ridge is interesting. And I... So how it all came to fruition precedes me, and so I know some of it. But I can provide more details after this. So The park did this community survey. They said. The community said, We want community agriculture, and I will triple-check this. But I'm fairly certain that the city... Friends of Mill Ridge Park and Parks approached TNFP about being the potential... The first partner to help activate community gardening at that site. And so I don't want to misspeak here, but I'm pretty sure that that the passing of that agreement and the establishment of that MOU did have to go through City Council because it was a new sort of partnership with the public office. But let me get back to you on that either. Can you take a note and remind me? Okay, so with that license is a 5 year renewable license. So we renew that license agreement every 5 years. we don't currently have any indication that there's any risk to that. And yet, city priorities can change all the time. So really, if I'm being explicitly honest, we invest a lot of resources in that. We're really doing Parks of service. So they did not give us a waterline. We are... currently the 3 acres that are there are served by a highly mediocre well. and water catchment. And so the well water has, like a very large intermediate storage tank, so that it constantly refills, so that water access is readily available in drier spells. and that water is primarily reserved for the production gardeners at the site, because, you know, they need drip irrigation and stuff like that.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Sorry you all put that well in, or did the city fund it? You found it.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, we installed the well. And then community gardeners are using water catchment. And this is something that we... you know, every year water is an issue with this year being the extreme outlier. None of us have had to water our gardens, probably a single time which is insane. But we have for the past 2 years since I've been here, it has been a conversation with Friends of Mill Ridge Park, which is like the nonprofit fundraising entity for that park, have been trying to negotiate with one another. Who is going to pay for the water line? From—there's a house at the

front of the site an old farmhouse, so it's an old family farm that the last sisters deeded to the city for a city park. And so the farmhouse that's just a hundred yards from the garden has water access. But we would have to pull that water line all the way down into the community agriculture field, which it's estimated that's probably going to cost between 75 and \$100 thousand. And, to be honest, it is while it's a good and very friendly partnership and feels secure, the tone has generally been that. Oh, well, TNFP is going to invest in the agricultural infrastructure that's needed. and our board of directors, smartly so, is like we're not doing that unless we have a much longer term lease agreement. Because if we invest this and then you say, 5 years later, oh, we're just kidding, that's you know, all this money down the drain. We are responsible for all mowing at the site. We have been responsible for building all the tool sheds and storage sheds at the site. And so really we were given a field and said, Go. And we have gone. And we're now... You know, I mentioned at the start of this conversation that we currently have 3 acres under production. the 4 acres that remains, there's a lot of interest in having more of those quarter to 1/3-acre plots for small scale farmers, because land is so expensive here, and we have sort of a growing community of new and beginning farmers in our city. But we cannot activate that until we get water access. And so we're sort of trying to find that balance and negotiation with the city. because really we see it as essential that the city also invests in this if we're going to make that sort of long term commitment. So you know, it's sort of... it's delicate.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

How does that work? like it was so... we had our state you know, come and start conversations with us about licensing land. But it was like, there was no electric, no water, no like cold storage like, and we thought it'd be a huge bottleneck for farmers to be driving to us for cold storage from all over the area. So, yeah, how do those like conversations work? Or do you have any advice for orgs like us who are also getting enthusiasm around licensing state land. But maybe you know, how do you get it to work for both parties, all parties? And are your farmers going back to cold storage at your main site?

**Answer (Hanes):**

So, we have invested in cold storage at our sites. So, Growing Together farm has currently a coolbot and then we got the USDA Community Food Projects grant last year, thank God that was not withdrawn from us, and we had a second coolbot written into that grant. That they're at capacity at their coolbot cool storage so we're adding more storage capacity there, especially with the farmers market there, we need more cool storage. and then at the Growing Together site, they will have 2 cool bots there. And then, as you saw, they also have that large production scale greenhouse which was made possible through a partnership with Tito's vodka and at the Community Farm at Mill Ridge, we also have cool storage. But again, we raised the capital for that. So we... all the infrastructure that exists at the sites we have installed that through our

own fundraising, corporate partnerships, things of that nature. It has not happened in partnership with the land granting partner.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

And there's wash-pack at Mill Ridge also?

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, I mean, it's rudimentary. So we have wanted to invest in like a high-quality standard, more permanent wash-pack infrastructure, both at Growing Together and the community farm at Mill Ridge, but haven't at this point. That is more so the priority at Growing Together farm because they're at that production scale. But thinking about the expansion to that four acres at Mill Ridge that is an essential component is making sure that all of the agricultural infrastructure that's needed for a small scale. Farmer is at the site so cool storage, dry storage, greenhouses, tool sheds, tractor that all of that stuff is there so that the farmer can focus on what they do, which is growing food. Also recognizing the barrier to entry to a farmer when they have to invest in that infrastructure themselves.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

And yeah, that's really interesting. And I'm curious to see, like, as time goes on, how that relationship maybe changes with the land grantor in terms of investment or lease terms. Or, yeah, I'll be really curious to follow along and see how it evolves over time. Yeah, and the water line project, because that is a hefty capital investment. So it'd be good to get multiple you know, stakeholders committed to it.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah. And I think what we are learning... So TNFP has never really had sort of a policy advocacy priority. Obviously, we're part of the conversation. But we haven't really, beyond getting that license agreement set up at Mill Ridge, we've never really advocated for sort of like a citywide shift in policy that would support community agriculture, for example. But as a city, last year we had this feedback Nashville initiative, which was about, you know, sort of identifying and activating like these, food system change priorities through a community engaged food systems diagnosis and like futures-visioning process. And one of the six sort of transformational pathways that was identified through that is activation of community agriculture spaces and the Nashville thinks of itself as having 4 quadrants, like very clear North, South, East, and West quadrants, and

that community agriculture is supported and activated through a city priority in that. And so it's that shift is beginning to happen. But we're right at the start of it. So with TNFP and a couple of other community gardens and other organizations really saying, Oh, this doorway is opening. How do we make the case more known that the city... it is advantageous for the city to invest in changing water access policy, land use policy to support community gardens and community agriculture in the city? So this is, this is sort of a tangent. But what we're yeah, we're just seeing that emergence. So when I first started this job, we were approached by an office in the city that manages back-tax properties. And a back-tax property, as y'all probably know, is like a property where somebody's lapses on their property taxes, and the city takes ownership, and most of these properties are reserved for like schools, or public housing or parking lots or whatever, but some of them are so small, or in a random location that they cannot be used for anything else. And so the city was interested in us helping figure out, how can we activate these parcels, which are a good fit for community agriculture? And so the city's starting to think about this, but we're just very much at that early day of what this might look like.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Now, going back to like the farmers at your the production farmers at the two sites where they're located. You know, the structure, from my understanding, is a 5 01 c3. And you all have the main like lease to the land, and then are the farmers LLC/Sole proprietors. And why was this sort of chosen as the structure as opposed to maybe a cooperative?

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, yeah, that's a really good question. So we do not require we have not required that growers incorporate their farm businesses in any way, shape or form. And so I can almost guarantee you that The Growing Together farmers are not incorporated as formal businesses. We have tried to make the case that it might be more advantageous for them in terms of market access, CSA programs to, you know, coordinate their crop production or have an aggregated CSA. And also for our staff capacity in some ways, that...managing one CSA is a lot different than managing 6 CSAs, 5 CSAs. which is what we currently do. But there are some internal preceding coming to the United States, class and caste differences that have made it such that while those while the farmers are cordial with each other, they will not coordinate with each other. And again, we have never, as an organization, taken the stance that says. this is the way that this program sort of needs to run for it, to make sense for our capacity. The Growing Together program really has a I mean, it's really evolved pretty organically based on sort of the needs and the interests and the wants of the farmers rather than us. And I think there's a lot of benefit in that. And it has brought some unique challenges in terms of scalability. Or staff capacity needs and things like that. Slightly different because they're new, the farmers who are at Mill Ridge: One is a new farmer. She's been farming 3 or 4 years. She does have an LLC and is incorporated.

And then the other production growers, there is actually more cooperative. So it's a community of Congolese families who grow at scale together for their family and their community. But they're interested, I believe, in beginning to sell. And they're growing varieties that they can't find that stuff in markets here. which is also true for many of the Growing Together farmers. They're growing stuff that is culturally significant to them. They also grow things that you know Southerners in the United States want to eat all the time like tomatoes and okra. But it's really interesting to watch these sort of cultural food ways and traditions play out on the land, too.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

So. because I know there's farming families. How many estimated farmers at each site Mill Ridge and the Lutheran site, would you say?

**Answer (Hanes):**

So that one moment okay at Growing Together. it's Nar and Tach, so there are a couple. Roy, Pavitra, Chandra and then...Okay. Oh, 7 farmers at Growing Together. But that's 5 farms, 7 farmers, 5 farms. If that makes sense. And then at Mill Ridge, Bridget is a single person. So that's her, and she has her LLC. And I think it's 8 to 10 Congolese families. all growing together at 8 to 10 individuals who represent that many families.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

That makes sense. Thank you. I'm wondering in terms of decision-making. Are there any formal governance or management practices in place at either site to like help manage, you know, just farming with others in on the site? And how decisions are made. Yeah, what's that look like?

**Answer (Hanes):**

So very much, so at we have treated and still treat Growing Together as a program. And so they have always had a dedicated staff, a program manager or director who really is, sort of the glue for the farms functioning across all these farmers. So, all of these farmers, they sign a land and program agreement, sort of MOU contract, which outlines the expectations and the program managers, we'll call it plural set and communicate all the expectations around and they manage like acquisition of program fees, water fees, land allocation. They also set the irrigation schedule. So, I can't tell you how much conflict we've had in past years about so and so is using my irrigation day, or you know so and so took more wheels of compost than they are supposed to. And so we have learned that you need a, especially at that site where there's sort of this subtle

conflict between people, program managers that set irrigation schedules. We assign the farmers their CSA customers. So, they set the number of CSAs that they're striving for, and then we assign them their customers, and so we also assign their distribution days. So it's like Chandra, Your distribution day is Wednesday afternoons, Nar and Tech, Yours is Saturday mornings at the market. So we're managing the delegation of all that sort of scheduling and structure. At the Growing Together farm, because none of these farmers speak English, their children might, but they don't, and some of them don't read and write in their own their native language. So we also manage all the procurement of seeds. Drip tape, row cover trays for the greenhouse. We purchase all that stuff through what we call a garden store, and then the farmers buy it back from us. And so you know, that also enables us to get... use our purchasing power because we can buy that stuff in bulk, and the farmers are able to then buy it from us at cost, and save a bit of money.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

And then do you all also have like systems in place for collective pest management? And what do communication channels look like around that?

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah. So every week we have a farmer meeting throughout the growing season. And there's sort of you know, it's not a formal farmer training program. I think in time it may very well... could evolve into that. We're sort of at this juncture where we're thinking. Do we go that way, or do we just go you know, lean into the market access pathway? anyways, that's an aside. But at those weekly farmers meetings there what Peter and Rebecca, the 2 staff that work there cover are all right. Here is the CSA schedule for the week, and any changes that have happened there. Here are the wholesale contracts that are happening this week that you need to be aware of. Hey! A reminder. This is a good time to plant sweet potatoes. So tips on, you know, planting or seed starting schedules. These farmers know that, but just to keep it fresh and top of mind. Also, if there is. I mean, we don't have a pest management problem there. In the MOU, it is clearly stated that the sort of pest mitigation practices that are allowed, and not. But if there is an outbreak of, say, harlequin bugs, you know it's a collective time at that meeting to say, Hey, y'all, the farm is seeing a whole lot of harlequin bugs. Let's cover all of our brassicas or whatever. And so those weekly farm meetings are that place to come together as a collective and sort of work. Cooperatively. You know, you're collectively saying these are the issues of the week, or though for some reason something's going on with irrigation, and we are not irrigating this week. All of that happens in that weekly meeting.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

And do the Mill Ridge farmers also attend and participate? Or there is there 2 parallel site managers and meetings happening?

**Answer (Hanes):**

So full disclosure, The Mill Ridge farmers that's new this year. That's brand new. Until this year, that land that those farmers are using had been production gardening that our staff were doing with volunteers to give that food away to the community. And then we did a lot of thinking and realized for the level of investment in the staff, that wasn't really the best use of our staff's time. We know there's a lot of land access needs. What if we open up this prime agricultural land to the small-scale farmer? And so we are piloting, using the model from growing together. But it looks slightly different because these farmers, they first of all, they speak English, and so they knew, coming in, that they would be responsible for like purchasing their own seeds, transplants, things like that. However, like Growing Together, they can have free use of all the tools on site and the equipment on site. There's a greenhouse on site. There's cool storage, there's dry storage. There's a machine shed, so like Growing Together, they have designated access to those things. So like Bridget, you have these shelves in the coolbot. Congolese farmers y'all have this. They also, now we luckily haven't needed it, but have...

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

I'm sorry you all lay that out like, for...? You all communicate how the use of the shared infrastructure works? Are there sign out logs?

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yes, so we We are building that. Because it's just, two this year, we are able to pilot without the full... We have MOUs that all this agreement is written down. but by the end of the year we will have that full SOP written. That outlines... But yes, there is a designated greenhouse calendar, a designated irrigation schedule and expectation. And you know, yes, the water was turned off at the end of the shift so that you're keeping all of that tight and accountable. They also pay a very modest land use fee. It's like \$250 for the year. for basically a quarter-acre plot.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

And is that like is the land use fee the only fee that farmers are paying to the organization, or they also paying cold storage/greenhouse?

**Answer (Hanes):**

So currently the infrastructure like cool storage/greenhouse that's free. And I think as much as we can, because the barriers to entry to agriculture are so high we would like to keep that access free or extremely low cost. but it has historically been free. I will say that with the CSA program and the farmers market...So, like Bridget, who grows at Mill Ridge, she sells at our Growing Together farmers market. So we do take a minor percentage of vendors fees at the market as sort of like a market fee. and because that market is at Christ Lutheran we then give a percentage of that fee to Christ Lutheran Church each week. And then with CSAs, TNFP takes 10% of the CSA sales from any given farmer as sort of a CSA service fee.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

This is actually a great segue, because I'm thinking about like how the organization is funded and revenue distribution.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Is... what do those percentages look like? Have they fluctuated over time?

**Answer (Hanes):**

So do you mean like, what percentage of the budget is like the garden department versus community meals or expenses within the program.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

No. More like, for the two farming sites with production farmers, you all are investing in a lot of infrastructure and program time. How are you funding that? And like, how does your financial

situation look? For example, New Entry is 80% grant funded and majority Federal grants. And then we have, you know, a very small percent that's philanthropy. And then we have, probably 20% that is from our food hub sales. So yeah, just an example.

**Answer (Hanes):**

I'm gonna get back to you on these exact numbers. But I will say that our garden department has experienced— I'm trying to say this diplomatically— decent scrutiny From our board of directors for just being like a a sink, we're pouring money into and that has shifted. I think we finally moved beyond that but generally our garden programs, and like they have not been revenue generating. And we really started to look at this last year and the year before, in terms of how do we start to at least make our community agriculture programming partial cost recovery, like our community meals program? Our community meals program is designed to be partial cost recovery. But overwhelmingly, our Growing Together program and our community garden programming has been funded almost entirely by grants, individual donations and corporate. So like contributed revenue, with the sort of exception being the marginal 10% program fee that we get through the sale of CSAs. Now, that is changing with the launch of the the Growing together Farmers Market. So we see the growing together farmers market model as a revenue-generating opportunity for the organization while also benefiting small-scale farmers and vendors. The market access manager that we have is wildly talented and has sort of launched and managed all the farmers markets in Nashville at some point in her career. And so while we're starting with this one location, we are... our goal is to have multiple farmers markets in each quadrant of the city. and so in time that will be a decent source of revenue for the organization through those, like marginal vendor fees. It will never fully cover our costs. We also this year are launching... We've overhauled like our education offerings. And so our education programming is now sliding scale. Pay what you can. And so, starting to see, some revenue will start to come in through that. We also are exploring... like have had some increasing success with corporate volunteerism. So corporate groups who want to bring 30 people out to a garden to volunteer growing together farm, and we say, cool. That's a lot. So, can you either invest in an infrastructure project that we need? Or would you be willing to donate \$25 a person For that? And so that is another sort of creative way to generate revenue through corporate interest in our work. But yes, that is a long way to say that these programs have not been revenue generating, but our Board has really asked us to think about how we can at least start to think, how do we, you know? In the next 3 years cover 25% or 10% of the budget like make methodical progress towards offsetting that fundraising burden.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

For the Mill Ridge and for the Growing Together program at the Lutheran site. Do you mind sharing for each like what the budget looks like? If a program is wanting in an urban area? I

mean, obviously it would vary greatly, depending where you are in the US. But just ballpark of what your budget is for each site, and what your major costs and expenses.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah. So here, I'll just share my screen real quick, and I'm happy to send this to you. Can you turn? Yeah, turn on my sharing.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Should be on. Let me know.

**Answer (Hanes):**

There it is. Yeah, I got it. Can you see this.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Yeah, I can see. It would be great if you could send.

**Answer (Hanes):**

You want me to zoom in? Okay, So I'll sort of walk you through this. You'll notice some things up here that are designated expenses. So last year we won the McKenzie Scott Guild Giving Award-that 1 million dollars unrestricted funding from McKenzie Scott. and the yield giving expense, basically new initiatives can apply to use our internal yield-giving fund to launch something new. And so this yield-giving funding is basically supports the pivot of the community agriculture programming to this network model. So that's what that is growing together. Market pass-through... We put that in designated expense. That's the CSA fees. And we put it there because it comes in, and then it goes right back out to farmers. So that's how we manage that. But this is really, I think, what you're asking about. So community gardens entail Mill Ridge and Mcgruder, and in time, partner gardens, the support we provide to partner gardens of the community agriculture network. And so this doesn't include personnel. But the total budget for community gardens this year is just under \$150,000.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Is personnel covered under like your organization budget?

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Do you have a rough idea? Because I feel like labor can be the most expensive part?

**Answer (Hanes):**

It is.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Yeah, like, how much you're spending percentage wise for staff on these?

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, and I'll if you want, I'll pull it up after this.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Oh, yeah, that'd be awesome.

**Answer (Hanes):**

And then USDA CFP, we lumped all the expenses that are going to be tracked under that budget on its own line because of compliance with budget tracking. But you know, \$88,000 of our budget this year comes from that USDA grant and then Growing Together, because it's sort of its own separate program, has its own separate budget. And the programmatic expenses for growing together are really not actually that high. They're only about \$37,000. But again, there's basically one and a half personnel allocated to that site. So that increases quite a bit. And then these are just some cross-expenses. Total gardens between community gardens and Growing Together is

about \$280,000, and our total revenue is only here you go: \$34,000. So we're not doing great. But you know it's an improvement from what it was last year. Which is what our board is asking for. so that's that. Do you want to look at personnel? Do you have questions about this.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

No, this is super helpful. Would love if you could send it to us. And Tamar can send a follow up email just asking for these things, and then with a reminder, for you. So yeah, this is great. Thank you.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Great, and let me just pull up personnel.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

While you're pulling that up, do you have, like a business plan or strategic plan for the farmers market and the Growing Together program that you work on with your board?

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yes, and I actually have by the end of this week... so we sort of have, We have, like a strategic roadmap document that has sort of programmatic goals for '25 and '26. But by the end of this week I have to put down on paper the next 3 years, Sort of strategic priorities and goals for garden department. So hang on. Well, you know, sometimes Google Drive search... Oh. it's horrible! Here it is, all right. Okay. hang on here. All right. Well, so total gardens our salary line is around just over \$300,000. So the total budget this year for gardens is, you know, around it's close to \$600,000. Yeah. And this is the full team that we have, granted, we haven't yet hired the Community Orchard Coordinator because some Federal funding freeze. But that's what that looks like.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Thank you for sharing that's helpful.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Helpful to help us like, get a sense. So you know, there's some programs to come to us, and they want to know if it's possible to do this and have it sustained without philanthropic funding. And my inclination is always no. But I like to always ask and see if anyone is doing it.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, I mean. the Nashville Food Project is interesting. I as chief program officer, really sort of say, we're managing a nonprofit inside of a nonprofit. Like the garden, it's really its own organization. I mean, with the full staff. And it's just yeah. It just sort of looks like that.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

And are you solely responsible for, like, updating the strategic plan and getting that like fine-tuned with your board? Do you bring farmers into those conversations? Like, what does that process look like?

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah. So we have historically, it's just been on hiatus this year, but is coming back next. have had community advisory councils. And community advisory councils in our gardens, really, have been instrumental in shaping what like infrastructure and programming is offered at different sites. And then we use that to build out budget and priorities, especially for like site development. but also workshops, you know, types of education that folks want. What kind of support do people expect on site? Like, how often do they want to interact with staff? Or is that not a priority? So that has really... I mean, I would say, that our Garden department has largely been shaped by the communities' self-defined sort of needs and interests in those spaces.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Very cool. Do you... You mentioned workshops a couple of times like how many of these are you offering? And the sliding scale is new. Were they free to attendees prior?

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, so we have... education and workshops has always sort of been an afterthought. And yet our community really wants it. And so this year we decided to begin investing with that yield, giving money and building out a sort of off-the-shelf Educational and Workshop Series and so we set our bar low this year. to just create and host 3 workshops. So we're hosting, for example, a... And they're not all like explicitly agricultural, but all related to like growing, or, you know, ecosystem health. So, we're having a native plant pollinator workshop, composting workshop, and Then sort of like an over-winterization workshop this fall. Next year the goal will be to have at least one workshop a month in the growing season as well as community events, so like potlucks, things that bring people into the space that are maybe less so about gardening, but about cultivating interest and relationships. So in the past those workshops have always been free. And we have heard from, like, organizational allies, that they have found that attendance and participation has increased as they set sort of a suggested donation or sliding scale, because when people invest even a little bit in a workshop they're more likely to attend. We will never turn anyone away from the ability to attend. If they cannot pay, they can still come. Also, Doug told us that they actually found that their workshop revenue increased when they went to suggested donation, because a lot of people contribute more than the suggested donation, which is really interesting. The other shift for us is in the past, prior staff really only thought about those workshops as being available to gardeners at the site so internally focused. We have shifted that, to say, all of our workshops are open to the public. So anyone can come who's interested in learning whatever is on offer.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

That's really interesting that people pay more with suggested donation. Going back to the farmers, how is equity being built, or is it being built without sort of ownership of land?

**Answer (Hanes):**

That's a really good question. You know, I think that's one of the things that we reckon with... is that— or I do, I think about. It's like, you know, in an ideal world we would be able to, you know, create a path to ownership on some of this land. That is not...The closest that we have gotten is with Christ Lutheran Church considering granting that land to us through like agricultural easement. and then us being able to potentially parcel that out. But we... I wouldn't... I don't... I can't say that farmers are building equity in the land, unfortunately, because our license and lease agreements aren't set up to do that. Yeah. you're muted.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Thank you. I'm wrangling... have a cat who like is trying to wrestle onto screen. So I'm wrangling him away.

**Answer (Hanes):**

I understand.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

But I'm curious how the groups of farmers at both sides came together, and what values they share or don't share, like you mentioned some caste and class issues.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, I don't. You know. That might be a question I want to get back to you on so that I answer it correctly. Because, like Peter and Rebecca know a lot more about sort of the interpersonal stories. and like the the depth and the nuance of you know that the farmers and their relationships with one another. So yeah, can I Maybe table that question? I think that what I can say is that across all of the farmers. There is a deep value of like stewardship of the land, and like a really... I mean, you walk into these spaces, and you can just tell the care that all of these growers have for these spaces, and I think that is one of the biggest values. You also see, for sure, a value of abundance. So all of these farmers are... Yes, they want to make money, and all of them are also extraordinarily generous in what they give away. So if you walk onto the growing together farm to visit, you're not going to leave without an armful of mustard greens and turnips, because they want... There's sort of a value of hospitality, and wanting to share the abundance that comes out of the fields. And so those are the like two of the first two that come to mind. Yeah.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Yeah. And Tamar, would you mind just noting the follow up items? And we can follow up after. So you have time to like, talk to folks and digest, reflect, and we appreciate the thoughtfulness and intentionality behind that.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah. And I think just the interesting thing, like with the historical context of Growing Together is like these farmers didn't set out with an intention of making money. They set out with an intention of reconnecting to the land because it was good for their emotional well-being, and some of the farmers, I mean pretty much all the farmers there will tell you that when I found this farm I found Bhutan or I found home. And I think that is one of the, really it that gets lost in translation when you're just selling vegetables at a market is that these farms are so much more than agriculture. They're actually about a sense of belonging and connection to a place that is not, is maybe a home now, but is not like home, home. And really like treating the land as home. I think that gets overlooked a lot in its significance.

**Question (Tamar Stollman):**

I'm curious, Yeah, how is it that portrayed, or is it portrayed? And how do far? How are farmers interacting with those sentiments at the farmers market, and with their CSA customers?

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, so that's a great question. So I, I mean Growing Together And this specifically has always sort of been beloved. And this is a story that we've really tried to allow the farmer create a platform for the farmers to tell that story for themselves. So we do not in any way, shape or form, tell the farmers what they have to grow. So if they want to grow 7 different kinds of mustard and 4 different kinds of turnips and radishes because that is what represents their foodways, and that's what excites them, they can do that. Now, over time, that has changed and they have adapted what they grow because they have come to realize. Oh, my CSA customers like some of this! But they don't want all of that. But so every week, when the CSA goes out, we record the farmers with sharing a little video about what's growing and what that means, and why they're excited about that. We have a newsletter that goes out to CSA Customers, you know, talking about sort of, Here's this thing you've maybe never seen before. This is what it is. This is what it means to you know the farmers who grew it. These are some, you know, recipes you've maybe never heard of that you could use. And so like creating that cross-cultural bridge and connection through the CSA program. The market is really interesting. So we did not realize... So we started the market really to connect, Growing Together farmers with another market pathway. Because if you don't speak English, then you cannot get into one of the many markets in Nashville. And so we thought we were like, there's got to be a way around this. We believe we can have a market that doesn't do that. What we didn't expect or anticipate was the number of food vendors from the Nepali, Bhutanese, and Burmese communities that would become vendors. So you go to this farmers market, and it is like, I don't know if you've ever been out of the country and been to like a street food market. It is like that. And so you can... You walk in and you get these wildly diverse vegetables. But you're also getting like all these noodles, dumplings, like foods that you're not seeing anywhere else in Nashville. And, that has been a tremendous

draw to the market for people, because they're like, oh. I can't get this anywhere else. And so I think it's really helped sort of bring to the surface this story of this very vibrant, thriving community in Nashville that really hasn't had a platform to share itself until more recently.

**Question (Tamar Stollman):**

So there's both like food producers, vegetables being sold and prepared food?

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, and this is a whole other can of worms to open. I don't know if y'all want to open it. It seems slightly related to your case study to share it. What we have quickly learned is that just as the farmers are not LLCs, a lot of these food vendors do not have formal food businesses, and so many of them are— and commissary kitchens in Nashville are pretty terrible. There's like one or 2 but they're not very accessible. And so there's like the Health Code Department consideration. And how do we manage that? And we're starting to think about already, Christ Lutheran Church has this massive basement. There's a kitchen in there. It's pretty much unutilized. Is there an opportunity to turn this space into a proper like food hub with a commissary kitchen, food entrepreneurship development, additional cool storage, things like that? So that right there on the Growing Together site, you have a wraparound support network for all these different types of food entrepreneurs who otherwise can't access those resources to have those types of businesses.

**Question (Tamar Stollman):**

Is there any interaction between the farmers and these prepared food producers like are selling wholesale?

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yes! So well, they're all friends and family. So the interactions are like they all... they came through each other's networks. The people who are buying wholesale from these from the Growing Together farmers are I mean, they're sort of, there's restaurant partners who are like cooking sort of more Asian inspired foods, and they can't find this stuff, like, We have a wholesale partner that uses Cilantro root and you can't buy cilantro root anywhere. Well, you can come to the Growing Together farm, and you can buy all the cilantro root you want. And so I think that's the interesting thing about wholesale out of those spaces.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Very cool. I am very interested in the food vendor piece. I lived in New York City for a little bit, and it was a very similar landscape, especially in like... well all over the city. But in Jackson Heights, where I was, that was something I was working on with like, economic-small business development-justice work. So yeah. fascinating. And I'm curious, like friends, family, all farming and at this market together, how do you all navigate conflict and like, what does that look like?

**Answer (Hanes):**

So we haven't had any conflict yet. Which is amazing. I think partially because we're not forcing people to work together who don't want to work together. They all have their own booths. They have actually really enjoyed getting to interact more intimately and regularly with customers. So through the CSA program, you're not actually getting much face-to-face contact with a wide diversity of customers. And so the farmers and the food vendors have come- been coming to us and saying, Oh, my God! I'm learning so much about customers here, what people want. And so that's been a really interesting thing that I don't think we knew would happen or be a positive outcome of the market, is like customer discovery. and farmers are already starting to talk about, Oh, well, next year I want to try growing this thing because a lot of people have asked for it at the market this year. When we maybe have been trying to tell them, Hey? You might want to grow that thing, but there's something different when you hear it directly from your customer. Same with the food vendors, are pivoting weekly. really, sort of based on what they're seeing. People are drawn to be it noodles or dumplings, or something in between.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

On the farms, the Mill Ridge, and the Growing Together site, is there any conflict there with farmers over shared space or shared resources

**Answer (Hanes):**

You asked a question earlier about shared pest, like pest management or weed management. I think the challenge at Mill Ridge is that you have 70 plus families with individual plots there. So you've got these 2 production farmers. And then you got a bunch of people with like 500 square foot plots. and some of those people abandon their plots or have different standards of care. And it's something that we're really sort of wrestling with and trying to lean into right now is like that does sometimes create conflict. Because Gomez over here, being like Jason, is totally he's

my next door neighbor in my plot, and his plot is just putting ragweed seed all over my plot. And so that actually, you know, we are thinking about we're launching this sort of garden lead program, like lead gardeners who sort of cultivate this community responsibility and rolling out like every gardener has, sort of, a certain number of hours over the year that they have to dedicate to communal management of the space because and staff support. I mean, we're still facilitating volunteer groups out there every week. But you we do see some, it's not extreme, but some conflict about the quality of care and plots.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Not specific to Mill Ridge, but like you've never had to bring a mediator in for the Growing Together farms?

**Answer (Hanes):**

I don't think we've ever had to call a mediator, but there have been a few times where things are a bit tense for a few weeks. Yeah.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Great and means good systems are in place, so.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

What would you say are the benefits and challenges to this like collective agriculture?

**Answer (Hanes):**

In terms of managing it, or in terms of what I perceive as the experiences of the growers?

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

For what you perceive for the growers and community at large.

**Answer (Hanes):**

I mean... Honestly, I think the biggest challenge is like proper resource and infrastructure access. You know, that you need to grow well. Be it, You know, water access or not having enough cool storage like getting that right sized for a space with a lot of different people with a lot of different needs takes some iteration, and it takes management by staff. I think why we don't have conflict is because we are managing that resource access well, with a clear standard. For why things are the way that they are. I think there's that, I think. You know, when you're talking about smaller community garden plots, you know, the opportunity is that gardeners learn from each other. They share knowledge with each other and skills. You know people at Mill Ridge love to host a potluck. They love to eat together. And so you're building relationships and community with people you otherwise wouldn't. At the same time you do have to deal with neighbors who don't clean up their stuff. and that can be really frustrating. Earlier this year we got a call from a gardener saying there's gardeners out here using chemicals on their plots, so like non-organic, synthetic pesticides, or whatever. And they're really up in arms. And so, luckily, we have this culture of trust where people will bring that to us. But you know, when it's a common space, people are going to do things that other people don't like, and it is our responsibility to as an organization and staff to tend to those things when they are brought to us and then I guess the last thing I'll say I think this is true for most small-scale farmers, but especially small-scale farmers who, you know, don't speak English is, you know, finding the outlets for all the produce that you're growing, and that's something that we reckon with every year is like how to balance our capacity as an organization to market farmers produce, while simply being unable to have full responsibility for moving all of it. And so like. How do we then build some capacity or confidence within the farmers themselves to sell their excess or rehome it in some way, which is one of the reasons we started the Growing Together Farmers Market, because it teaches more autonomy. It gives more autonomy and agency over farmers selling produce. Even with what little English they may know they can still manage that transactional relationship which builds confidence. Which we've been seeing. As they get to trade money as they get to, you know, they get more confident, saying, you know, carrots are \$5, which they all speak this, you know, basic transactional English. It's just, I think inviting them to think. Oh, maybe I could actually go to that international market down the road and see if they might be interested in selling some of my produce, or something like that. So, I don't know if that answers your question at all. But those are some of the things that we see.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

That's great. And I guess, going back to the partnerships that you all have had. So, you mentioned you've had some Federal grants, Tito's helped with the hoop house which I was like,

that's so cool when I heard about that. And you are partnering with the city and City Council. What have been like... Are there technical assistance providers that you're partnered with? what have been really the most helpful partnerships of all the partnerships? And am I missing any on the list that I just rambled off?

**Answer (Hanes):**

No, no, yeah, that's great. I mean, honestly, we can and should lean a lot more heavily into like technical assistance. There are a number of like pretty solid, like farmer development programs in and around Nashville. Also, like the NRCS. Natural Resources Conservation Service, you know, has... Tennessee Department of Agriculture have a lot of support services for new and beginning farmers and small-scale gardeners, and have wanted to partner with us, and we have not fully closed that loop. And I think that's that would be beneficial to growers in our space. I think probably, you know, our relationships with volunteers, I mean, are instrumental in terms of partners like the volume of work that they help us accomplish in our spaces that we otherwise could not accomplish. We have multiple volunteer opportunities a week in our garden spaces. So, Growing Together, We haven't really touched on this. They have a volunteer day every Friday, where volunteers come out and help move compost for farmers, they might help harvest, they might help wash-pack. And so volunteers are adding capacity to the farmers. And Bridget, a grower out at Mill Ridge, she also is able to post a volunteer opportunity for her little farm on our organizational platform. So like using our platform to connect small-scale farmers with additional free labor is something cool that we really didn't know was going to be an outcome. But so.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

For volunteers like, what platform are you using? And do you have the same group of volunteers, or like, what's that look like?

**Answer (Hanes):**

So we use a platform called Point And on point, you know, you can upload a volunteer event. So, it's like Wednesday morning at Mill Ridge with Zeis' Garden. So that's Bridget's LLC. Name. and so it'll say, 0 or 4 slots open, and people can just sign up, and they can be 0/4, so they can be, you know, one of those people. So all volunteer opportunities are logged as sort of an individual event, and we really strive to not overlap opportunities or create competing opportunities. But what we've realized is that different people have an affinity and a connection to different sites. And so we haven't really seen a problem so like people who are loyal and dedicated to Growing Together are going to go to Growing Together. People who are loyal to Mill Ridge are going to go

to Mill Ridge or Bridget. But we, our responsibility, is posting the opportunity. And then at Growing Together, we do facilitate those volunteers because the farmers, they're there, but our staff are facilitating it. But, Bridget, she has her login, and she checks volunteers in and manages them herself. So yeah. And then honestly, for like activating infrastructure at the sites, I would say, corporate groups. Corporate investment has made some of our biggest infrastructure projects, if not all of them possible.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Do you have those relationships already in place? Are you cold calling these corporate partners? Are you doing like potlucks that they find out about you at? How does that happen.

**Answer (Hanes):**

You know, I think, God bless our director of community engagement. But we... I think, because of the legacy of the organization and the visibility that we built through our community meals program, The Nashville Food Project is on like corporate groups' radar as a place to volunteer. And often, they come through wanting to volunteer in our kitchens, and then we're like, Hey! we can't take a group of 30 people in our kitchens, but we've got these awesome garden sites. We can take you at our gardens. And so, you know, we recently hosted a group from Marriott. They had their annual conference here. It was one day and they helped us activate a new community garden. They brought 30 volunteers, and we built all these raised beds, and you know, they invested about \$2,000 in the project, and off we went. Last year or a year and a half ago, the International Bridge Tunnel and Transit Association had their national conference in Nashville. They reached out. They invested \$60,000 in Mill Ridge and brought like 70 volunteers. It was one day. We just, the volume of work that got done in one day was insane. Messer Construction, you know. A volunteer, a regular volunteer, was like, Hey, I work for this company called Messer Construction. We have this like internal corporate grant program, y'all want to apply? They funded our dry storage shed. They built it. So it just, I think the visibility of the organization as a good place to volunteer brings corporate interests, because corporations love to send their staff to volunteer. Some of these relationships, we do go out and cultivate like our development team will. But a lot of them, just they come to us, which is very lucky.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Yeah, that is really nice to have, especially in these turbulent times.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Absolutely. Yeah. Do not take it for granted.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

I guess it's like a final reflection, and I'm gonna pass it off to Tamar to see if she has any questions that we didn't get to, but what challenges has this model faced over time, and are there any that could have been prevented if the structure or governance documents or other aspects of program management were approached differently?

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, it's a great question. That is probably the best question for Growing Together. I think the level of staff capacity that has been required to support 5 farming families is notable, and when you're looking at, everything is not the bottom line. But when you have a board that says we're investing 2... How they see it is we're investing 2 staff. And you know, \$50,000 program budget to support 5 farmers? How do we justify that? And I think for me, I'm like, well, that's a narrow way of thinking about it, right? Like you're supporting all the people that are getting the CSA, you're supporting, you know, like that is very narrow. But the reason why that program required that staff capacity... One of the reasons is because we really, I mean explicitly— it's not saying this is a bad thing or a good thing—but catered to the exact needs and desires of the people in the program, which meant, Yeah, we said, yes, we will manage the CSA individually, for all of you, rather than saying our boundary is, this has to be aggregated. or, you know, set the expectation early on that, Oh, we'll, you know, move all your compost for you, and so like, when you create a sort of expectation that this level of support is offered, it takes delicate care to sort of create something different. And so I think... I think that's just it. It's like, and we're working and we're evolving on it. But sort of just the volume of staff time that it takes to run that program like that with like the language access challenges and things like that. It's really difficult to scale it. And we're learning. But I think what we're learning and have decided is that there are some parameters for the next generation of farmers, and participation that we will require, or expectations that we will set. That will be different from sort of the legacy Growing Together farmers and I could say more about that and follow up is helpful. But yeah. I don't know if I answered your question.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

No, it does. It does like setting expectations. It'd be really helpful to have that like differentiation in follow up.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, yeah, you know, we... I just was laughing yesterday because we're starting this new community orchard program with the Giving Grove and you know, the Giving Grove has really created the same model for community orchards nationwide that we're striving to create for community agriculture in our city. And long story short, we were on a meeting with them yesterday, and they just like we're reiterating the importance of having a set of boundaries for what you will and will not or just can't do capacity wise for partners or program participants. And because our garden department evolved so organically out of the community and out of the community's needs, We were yes... we were a Yes organization. And so we didn't set those parameters. And now we're like, Oh, we could actually have more meaningful impact if we set some better boundaries and parameters. and it's slightly hard to do that retroactively. It takes more care and nuance to manage that transition. but, we're leaning into it, and it is working. It just takes time.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

That's all of my questions. I want to pass it off, Tamar to you. If you have any lingering questions to ask.

**Question (Tamar Stollman):**

yeah, I'm curious about just because you mentioned sort of transitioning farmers. So, have you had the same group of farmers at the Growing Together Plot for a long time? and have you had anybody leave?

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, what is, do you have a process for when people exit? Yeah, so pretty much, we've had a few of the original farmers transition out, decide they didn't want to do that anymore. But those Noor, Tech Chandra... 3 of the farming families, I mean, they've been there upwards of 9, 10 years. So they've been there a long time. Roy is a relatively, I mean, I think she's been growing there 5 years, and then the newest farmer came through the apprenticeship program maybe 2 years ago. We paused the apprenticeship program this year to sort of work on some of this change management stuff and set some boundaries. But yeah, I mean, That is something that we're actually just now starting to think about because the farmers are aging. What does it look like to transition out of the program? And then what does the like follow on of land access? Who fills that space? Because that's a new part of this journey for us. Yeah.

**Question (Tamar Stollman):**

Yeah. And it will be really interesting to see how that plays out.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, totally. And I think it goes back to that point I made earlier is like part of pausing the apprenticeship program is really trying to get clear on are we going to choose to be an explicit farmer development training program? Or are we really going to focus on the market, land, market and resource access for farmers who sort of already are experienced enough to manage it on their own. Because those are different things.

**Question (Tamar Stollman):**

Yeah, I think that's all of my questions. But a note about following up...?

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Yeah, thank you so much.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, absolutely.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

We'll follow up for Documents with you Tamar is excellent, and I'm sure has amazing notes. So we'll follow up with the notes that you commented on to reflect on, and we're just grateful for your time and sharing with us and your openness.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, absolutely. And I'll send you like our MOUs, our our budget. And I'll sort of note what things are. It may raise some other questions or provide some context to what I shared here. And then, if, as y'all compile this like photographs or anything from our sites would be helpful, we have some really good photos now, and we'll be happy to share those as well.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

That'd be amazing. So before I forget, if you have any interest at all in presenting on your farmers market as a revenue at field school. We have those. The request for proposals open through August first, st and I feel like that in particular, would be really of interest to other programs. I just dropped it in the chat.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Right.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Yeah, I'm just thinking, like, everyone is interested in this earned revenue and also helping market pathways. And there are a lot of programs that work with folks who might not have, like, you know, complete English literacy. So that confidence piece that you touched on is so valuable.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Yeah, yeah, I think, Rebecca. She would be amazing. So let me talk to her and see if she'd be up for it. And if it works with the schedule, but I think we'd love to do that if we can make it work.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Awesome. Yeah, well, thanks, so much.

**Answer (Hanes):**

I'll see interest. It means a lot to us.

**Question (Colleen Hanley):**

Yeah, we're really excited to pull it together and share with you. And that's it from me.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Awesome. Well, thanks, y'all, and we'll just be in touch as as we go forward.

**Question (Tamar Stollman):**

Thank you so much. It was awesome hearing about National Food Project and growing together, and and all of the awesome things that you're doing so. Thank you for your work and for sharing to meet you.

**Answer (Hanes):**

Absolutely likewise. I'll talk to you both soon.

**Question (Tamar Stollman):**

Alright, take care!