

## **NVC Social Impact Application Example**

### **Venture Name: Green Futures Initiative**

#### **1) What significant problem are you addressing?**

Over 35 million Americans faced hunger in 2022, with 19 million living in food deserts where access to fresh, nutritious food is scarce. This issue is pressing, as food insecurity leads to poor health outcomes, including chronic conditions like obesity and diabetes, while contributing to economic instability and deepening poverty.

The societal impact of food insecurity is profound. It negatively affects education, productivity, and overall quality of life, especially for children and vulnerable adults. Healthcare costs also increase due to preventable diet-related diseases, putting a strain on public health systems.

Rising food prices, climate change, and global supply chain disruptions have made this problem even more critical, highlighting the urgent need for a sustainable, long-term solution. The Green Futures Initiative aims to address both immediate food needs and the underlying causes by establishing urban farms and providing hands-on educational workshops in underserved neighborhoods. This approach not only provides fresh food but builds long-term community resilience, empowering individuals to take charge of their own food systems and improve their health and well-being. Addressing food insecurity now is crucial to break the cycle of poverty and create more self-sufficient, sustainable communities.

#### **2) Who are your target users/customers?**

Our target customers are low-income urban residents, particularly families with children and seniors in communities like Roxbury, MA, where 60% of the 5,000 residents live below the poverty line. These individuals face limited access to fresh produce, relying on processed foods that contribute to chronic health issues like diabetes and hypertension. Many struggle to afford nutritious meals, further deepening economic instability.

The market is significant, with food insecurity affecting millions of urban residents across the U.S. In Roxbury, over 3,000 individuals are impacted by limited access to healthy food. Our surveys and focus groups reveal strong demand for sustainable solutions, with 75% of respondents expressing interest in urban farming initiatives.

To ensure our solution meets community needs, we conducted in-depth surveys and focus groups. Residents have expressed a desire for urban farming programs and hands-on gardening workshops, which have shaped our approach. We've also partnered with local organizations to align our solution with the neighborhood's needs and ensure cultural relevance.

The demand for urban farming and sustainable food solutions is clear, and we're committed to addressing food insecurity while building long-term community resilience. By actively engaging with residents and adapting our solution based on their feedback, we are confident that our initiative will create meaningful, lasting impact.

### **3) Describe your solution and its unique value.**

The Green Futures Initiative tackles urban food insecurity by establishing sustainable urban farms in underserved neighborhoods. Our core offering is community-managed vertical gardens that provide fresh produce, coupled with workshops on gardening, nutrition, and sustainable cooking. This dual approach empowers residents to grow their own food and make healthier choices.

What sets us apart from food banks is our focus on long-term self-sufficiency. Instead of one-time relief, we work with communities to create sustainable, culturally relevant solutions. Our goal is to build skills that foster independence and resilience, ensuring lasting change.

We engage residents directly in shaping the initiative. In our pilot community of Roxbury, we conducted surveys and focus groups to understand their needs. 75% of residents expressed interest in participating in urban farming, validating demand for our solution. This collaborative approach ensures our programs are tailored to their preferences and evolving needs.

The impact of our initiative is significant. By providing fresh produce, we reduce reliance on processed foods and improve health outcomes. Additionally, our educational workshops teach gardening and nutrition skills, promoting healthier lifestyles. Over time, the program can expand to other neighborhoods, creating a scalable model for sustainable food security.

Our solution combines immediate food relief with long-term self-sufficiency, fostering resilient, empowered communities that can thrive despite challenges.

### **4) How will you validate the feasibility of your solution**

The Green Futures Initiative's feasibility has been tested through a three-month pilot program in Roxbury, MA, where we focused on validating several key assumptions. First, we assumed that urban residents in underserved areas would engage with sustainable food solutions. Second, we assumed that vertical gardening would be a cost-effective method for producing fresh food. Finally, we assumed that our solution could drive long-term behavior change, particularly an increase in fresh produce consumption.

During the pilot, we provided 20 households with vertical gardens and tracked their use and engagement. The results were promising: participants produced 200 pounds of fresh produce and reported a 90% satisfaction rate. Feedback from residents confirmed that they valued the hands-on learning component, particularly the workshops on gardening and nutrition. These insights validated our assumption about community interest and engagement. Additionally, the feedback provided us with valuable data on the potential scalability of our vertical gardening approach, confirming its feasibility in a low-cost urban setting.

Looking ahead, we plan to scale our solution by conducting larger pilot programs and collaborating with local stakeholders for iterative testing. We will continue to engage community members through surveys, focus groups, and feedback loops to ensure that our solution

remains effective and culturally relevant. By refining our methods based on direct community input, we aim to enhance both the feasibility and long-term impact of our initiative.

### **5) Who are your competitors, and what sets your solution apart?**

Our key competitors include local food banks, grocery delivery programs, and other short-term relief organizations addressing food insecurity. These solutions offer immediate aid but often fail to tackle the root causes of food insecurity or empower communities to achieve long-term sustainability. For instance, food banks distribute pre-packaged goods but don't teach residents how to grow their own food, while grocery delivery programs lack community engagement and local food production.

The Green Futures Initiative bridges this gap by combining sustainable urban farming with educational workshops that empower individuals to grow their own food, learn about nutrition, and build community resilience. Unlike traditional programs, we focus on long-term self-sufficiency, helping communities address the systemic issues of food insecurity. Our approach fosters local ownership of food systems, strengthens social ties, and provides valuable skills beyond food production.

What sets us apart is our co-design process, ensuring solutions are culturally relevant and tailored to each community's needs. Residents are active participants in shaping the program, increasing engagement and success. Feedback from our pilot programs supports this model, with 75% of residents expressing interest in participating in urban farming initiatives. This demand, along with positive feedback on empowerment, highlights our competitive advantage in creating lasting impact.

### **6) What is your intended impact, and how will you measure success?**

Our intended impact is to empower residents in underserved communities to become more self-sufficient through sustainable urban farming, improving food security, health, and community resilience. Per user, we aim to increase access to fresh produce by 50 pounds annually and teach practical skills like gardening and nutrition. We will also measure improvements in health outcomes, such as reduced incidences of diet-related diseases like diabetes and hypertension.

Broader societal benefits include addressing systemic food insecurity, reducing reliance on food banks, and fostering local food production. This contributes to both environmental sustainability and economic resilience by reducing food transportation costs and creating new local jobs in agriculture.

We will measure success using specific metrics: the number of households served, the pounds of food grown, improvements in participant health, and satisfaction rates. We will also track community engagement levels, such as the number of residents trained in farming and nutrition.

Data will be collected through surveys, focus groups, and health assessments before, during, and after participation. This will provide both quantitative and qualitative insights into the program's effectiveness. Quarterly data reviews will allow us to make adjustments to our programs based on feedback, ensuring continuous improvement and scalability.

## **7) How will your venture sustain itself and create lasting impact?**

To sustain our venture, we will rely on a mix of revenue streams to ensure both financial stability and long-term impact. Our primary sources of funding include grants, individual donations, and revenue generated through paid community workshops on urban farming and nutrition. We will also explore corporate sponsorships and partnerships with local businesses that align with our mission.

Key expenses include staff salaries, program materials (e.g., gardening tools and seeds), marketing efforts to engage the community, and operational costs for maintaining our urban farm sites. To ensure sustainability, we will build a diversified funding model, which will include a blend of public and private funding, allowing us to reduce reliance on any single source.

We plan to establish a robust donor program and offer membership benefits for those who want to invest in our mission. Additionally, by developing a social enterprise component (e.g., selling excess produce or offering paid consultancy on urban farming), we will create a steady stream of income that can be reinvested into the program.

To measure financial health and ensure long-term viability, we will track revenue, expenses, and fundraising efforts. We will also adjust our offerings to ensure they are financially sustainable while maintaining their social impact, such as offering low-cost or sliding-scale fees for services, based on the community's ability to pay.

By balancing financial sustainability with mission-driven work, we will ensure the Green Futures Initiative remains an impactful and sustainable resource for the communities we serve.

## **8) What is your growth strategy?**

Our growth strategy centers on customer acquisition, retention, and expansion. To acquire new customers, we will leverage social media, community outreach, and partnerships with local organizations to raise awareness. We will offer free introductory workshops to attract potential participants and demonstrate the value of our urban farming programs. Retention will be driven by providing consistent, high-quality educational content and fostering a strong sense of community. We'll offer follow-up workshops and create a network where participants can share experiences and advice, ensuring they feel supported and motivated.

Key resources for growth include expanding our staff with experienced trainers, marketing professionals, and community engagement specialists. We'll also need more urban farming equipment, space, and an enhanced digital platform for virtual workshops and resources.

For expansion, we plan to extend into nearby neighborhoods and cities facing similar food insecurity challenges. We will conduct pilot programs to tailor our approach to local needs. Once established, we aim to grow regionally and explore national partnerships and digital solutions to reach a broader audience.

By focusing on engagement, leveraging key resources, and expanding strategically, we aim to sustainably scale our impact in addressing food insecurity and empowering communities.

### **9) Who makes up your team, and how are they contributing to your venture's success?**

Our team consists of passionate professionals who each play a crucial role in driving the success of our venture. I, Nina Jones, serve as the Executive Director, focusing on program strategy, fundraising, and partnerships. John Doe, our Program Manager, oversees the operations of our urban farming initiatives and educational workshops, ensuring smooth implementation. Jane Smith, our Marketing Coordinator, leads outreach and digital engagement to build awareness and attract participants. Emily Johnson, our Finance Director, is responsible for managing budgets and ensuring financial sustainability.

We are also supported by an advisory board, including Dr. Michael Roberts, an expert in nutrition, social impact, and agriculture, who provides valuable guidance on our program's development and impact measurement.

To address skill gaps, we recognize the need to enhance our data analytics capabilities. We plan to bring on a Data Analyst to help evaluate program effectiveness and track key metrics. We will seek candidates through industry networks and local universities.

With our combined expertise in program management, marketing, finance, and nutrition, and the strategic support from our advisory board, we are well-positioned to scale and sustain our venture, ensuring lasting impact in the communities we serve.

### **10) What progress has your team made so far?**

We have been working on The Green Futures Initiative for the past 12 months, starting with the development of our urban farming program. A key milestone was the successful completion of a three-month pilot program in Roxbury, which resulted in 200 pounds of fresh produce being distributed to 20 households. The positive feedback from participants—90% reported an increase in fresh produce consumption—confirmed the viability of our approach.

Additionally, we have established strong community partnerships with local organizations and secured initial seed funding through grants and donations. We've also developed a sustainable

business model, incorporating both fundraising and revenue-generating activities like paid workshops.

One of the most significant lessons we've learned is the importance of co-designing solutions with the community. Early feedback helped us refine our approach to ensure it aligns with local needs and preferences.

Currently, we are expanding our program to reach additional neighborhoods, planning large-scale pilots, and preparing to scale our digital resources. With these successes and insights, we're positioned to continue growing our impact and further solidifying our presence in the communities we serve.