

# Small-farm business development incubator for refugee farmers

**Abstract:** Beginning farmers who also are recent U.S. immigrants face a steeper learning curve due to language and cultural challenges. This project devised training and marketing education programs for these new farmers, while making accommodations for the unique challenges they face in establishing their operations.

## Investigator:

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*Providing farmers with a wide variety of marketing opportunities was important in helping them to decide which strategies were best-suited to their skills and abilities. Helping farmers understand the unique challenges and opportunities of each market as well as evaluating the resource inputs and outputs of each is important in helping them decide on the best marketing strategies for their businesses.*



**MARKETING**

## What was done and why?

Lutheran Services in Iowa's (LSI) Global Greens Program has been working to offer opportunities for immigrants to become re-engaged in agriculture in their new communities. A network of gardens has been established in Des Moines neighborhoods where many families are concentrated. These gardens offer access to land where individuals can grow food for their family's own consumption. Additionally, the Global Greens Farm has been established in West Des Moines to provide access to larger plots of land, shared infrastructure, and training for individuals who are more interested in farming for an income.

This project focused on developing the appropriate marketing tools, training and strategies best suited for this type of incubator farm and the beginning farmers it serves. The project objectives were to:

1. Provide training and exposure for a minimum of two marketing options for 8 to 12 Advanced Market Farmers (AMFs) as they explore which marketing avenue is best suited to their skills, abilities and business development needs.
2. Offer training on proper recordkeeping to establish a baseline on first-year profits.
3. Help each participant establish a savings account and develop a pattern of saving at least 20 percent of the profits to be utilized for expenses in subsequent years of training.

## What did we learn?

As a result of the project there are beginning farmers who previously lacked land, market, and training access who are now contributing to the availability of sustainably grown produce in their local communities. They also enhance the agricultural diversity of Iowa produce offerings by growing many of their native vegetable varieties. The project offers a model for assisting farmers with limited English proficiency to establish and grow their farming enterprises in communities throughout the state by providing tools and market strategies that have proved useful in the Des Moines area.