



Organizational Values and Commitments

SUSTAINABILITY

We maintain our land and our organization in a way that ensures they remain productive over the long term.

- We grow food and manage land in ways that increase the land's health and biodiversity.
- We maintain an inclusive, supportive, joyful and rigorous organizational culture that fosters long-term engagement of our Grow Dat community
- We make organizational decisions with environmental and social impact in mind.
- We use an entrepreneurial mindset and diversify our revenue streams and strive to be as financially self-reliant as possible.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

We build relationships between youth and adults to engage youth in a process that challenges and supports them as they sharpen their leadership skills.

- We invest our organizational resources in youth to build leadership skills to apply at Grow Dat and beyond.
- We challenge young adults to develop critical thinking skills and introduce them to concepts such as food justice and food sovereignty, which inspire them to question the existing food system.
- We create leadership opportunities, primarily through paid roles, for alumni within the organization whenever and wherever possible.
- We create opportunities for alumni to educate the broader public about food justice, farming, and other aspects of our mission.

EQUITY & INCLUSION

We model the world we want to see by learning together across difference, communicating directly and honestly, and identifying and undoing oppression together. We strive to create a safe, supportive, and accountable space where all people can thrive.

- Our community is a diverse space where people build relationships that bridge intersectional differences and learn from each other's experiences. This space of ongoing mutual education equips us to work together to challenge oppression.

- Through our VISIONS training, we maintain a cooperative community that holds abundance and responsibility as guiding principles. Using VISIONS guidelines and tools, we engage in direct, respectful, and honest dialogue in order to grow individually and organizationally.
- We engage in a process of continual reflection and revision of our educational methods to foreground diverse knowledge and expertise, and strive to make our curriculum accessible to all learners.
- We practice consensus-based decision making and work to include the voices of those who are impacted by a decision in the decision-making process.
- We define equity as “the elimination of privilege, oppression, disparities, and disadvantage by historically-included and excluded group membership.” Through continual collaborative revision of our organizational practices and policies, we work toward an organization and society where “one’s societal or cultural group memberships do not act as the most powerful predictor of how one fares in terms of successful outcomes and life chances” (VISIONS, Inc.)

FOOD JUSTICE

We believe a just food system is one in which equity, community control of resources, ecological health and transparency are what we value most. We think these values would foster a food system in which:

- No one goes hungry and all people are able to eat food that supports their health and celebrates their culture.
- There is community control, not corporate control, over land, the production, distribution and sale of food, and what kind of food is served in public institutions. Land is in many hands, not a few.
- There is public investment and support for people to grow, distribute and sell food at affordable prices.
- Food is grown in a way that is regenerative, not destructive, to the land and environment.
- People demand clear and honest information about what is in our food which leads to transparency in our food system.
- We all acknowledge the historical trauma of slavery and land theft in our food system. We work together to address that trauma by making our current food system equitable.
- We continuously deepen our critical analysis of how the food system is reflective of broader systemic oppression in our society and how we can challenge that oppression.
- We model innovative and often entrepreneurial approaches to providing fresh food to communities that are marginalized in the current food system.

- We stand in solidarity with other organizations to collectively create a more just and sustainable food system. As part of this, we provide mutual aid to individuals and organizations by sharing part of our harvest.
- As we work towards greater food justice in our city, we listen to and prioritize the voices of those most deeply impacted by systems of inequity.

LOVE OF LAND

We “enlarge the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land”^{} and cultivate among youth and adults a sense of accountability to and care for this larger community.**

- Our work directly connects youth and adults to land, and fosters a love for land.
- We maintain our non-productive land in ways that increase biodiversity and provide habitat for a range of species.
- We commit to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community.

SOLIDARITY

We commit to collective action with and mutual support of the many other organizations working to make our city a more just place for all.

- Recognizing we are only one organization, we work in partnership with other organizations through complimentary, responsive, and supportive strategies.
- Through partnership with community-based organizations, we elicit and listen to a shared vision for food justice and are responsive to that vision.
- We support the work of POC-led and native New Orleanian-led organizations and institutions working to create a more just food system.
- Through political education, we raise public awareness of the intersectional nature of food justice, developing an understanding that, “When we talk about food justice, what we are really talking about is social justice, using food as a powerful lever to achieve it. If we are successful, we won’t just change the way we eat, we will change the way we live and treat each other.”^{***}

* Aldo Leopold

**Anim Steele, Real Food Challenge Founder