



local food for **everyone**

Waltham Fields Community Farm

Strategic Plan 2012-2014

(Approved by the Board of Directors, Aug. 14, 2011)

**Waltham Fields Community Farm
Community Farms Outreach, Inc.
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WHO WE ARE

Waltham Fields Community Farm (WFCF) is the official business name of Community Farms Outreach, Inc., a 501c3 non-profit, whose Tax Exempt ID # is 04-3261186. Founded in 1995, our farming organization currently grows more than forty different kinds of vegetables using organic production methods on 11 acres of land. We lease 8 acres at the former Waltham Field Station owned by the University of Massachusetts (our main farm site) and another 3 at the Lyman Estate owned by Historic New England. Our programs include Food Access/Hunger Relief work (growing vegetables for distribution to people in need of food assistance), Learning Garden education (including multi-session offerings and workshops for children and adults), Service Learning opportunities (combining volunteering with educational guidance), a 450-share summer CSA, a 150-share winter CSA, and Farmer Training. We also offer several community events each year, enabling our supporters and the general public to engage with the farm in celebration and promotion of larger initiatives such as food security, environmental conservation, and open space and farm preservation.

OUR MISSION

Waltham Fields Community Farm promotes local agriculture and food access through our farming operations and educational programs, using practices that are socially, ecologically, and economically sustainable. We encourage healthy relationships between people, their food supply, and the land from which it grows.

GUIDING VISION FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS (2012-2014)

- Waltham Fields Community Farm (WFCF) will maintain frequent and engaged communications with administrators of the UMass College of Natural Sciences in Amherst, MA in order to help create a revitalization plan for the UMass Waltham site that features increased community benefits as well as the following organizational desires:
 - a lease arrangement longer than the current year-to-year contract,
 - the ability to build up infrastructure and public marketing operations, and
 - permanent agriculture protection for the farmable field acreage.
- WFCF will remain open to additional land lease or ownership opportunities. New opportunities will be assessed for production and programming based on a set of criteria established by the farm management team and approved by the Board of Directors.
- WFCF will maintain a diverse array of food access strategies to supply fresh vegetables to area residents.
- WFCF will focus the majority of our own programming on bringing the public to the farm as much as possible, with the exception of off-site organizational fundraisers, and two highly mission-related initiatives: the continued operation of our special Outreach Market for low-income customers, and a newly formed partnership to take over operation of and integrate educational programming into the Waltham Farmers' Market.
- WFCF will be an active partner in local and regional coalitions promoting local food security, sustainable farming, and farmer training.
- WFCF will have an active Board of Directors, committed to its mission, and bringing the skills and expertise necessary to oversee financial, legal and strategic responsibilities, and to contribute significantly to the fundraising efforts of the organization.
- WFCF will ensure its own sustainability as an organization through realistic program and funding strategies, and reliable public support from its membership and community partners, adequate to maintain satisfied and productive staff to implement WFCF's mission.

WFCF Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Expand access to local farm products to Greater Boston residents, regardless of socio-economic status.

- 1.1 Continue to engage in organic vegetable production, providing the foundation for our organizational programming.
- 1.2 Allocate and secure funding to provide 20% of total harvests for low-income populations through the following food access channels: donations to emergency food programs, half-price subsidized CSA shares, farm-to-school connections, and operation of the Waltham Fields Outreach Market.
- 1.3 Assume fiscal agency of the Waltham Farmers' Market and participation on the Waltham Farmers' Market Committee in preparation for possible full management of the Market by 2015 (as requested by the current Waltham Farmers' Market Committee).
- 1.4 Explore regular participation in the Waltham Farmers' Market through merging our Outreach Market with the larger Waltham Farmers' Market and/or creating a youth farmers' market initiative tied into our on-farm Learning Garden education program.
- 1.5 Develop capacity for distribution of our farm products to the general public at times other than CSA distributions, including spring seedling sales and winter produce storage.
- 1.6 Provide opportunities for our CSA customers to simultaneously access products from other farms during vegetable share distributions.
- 1.7 Seek approval from our landlord, the University of Massachusetts, and the City of Waltham Building Department and Zoning Board of Appeals for operation of a year-round farm store open to the general public at our main farm site (240 Beaver St.).
- 1.8 Explore options for leasing or purchasing additional land for increased vegetable production.
- 1.9 Lend time and resources to individuals, organizations and community coalitions looking to develop agricultural projects and increase food security within the region.

Goal 2: Provide high-quality educational experiences that engage participants in local food production and consumption and promote environmental responsibility.

- 2.1 Keep the majority of our educational programs focused on bringing people to the farm and directly engaging them with organic food production and land stewardship.
- 2.2 Maintain and build the infrastructure of our Learning Garden space to facilitate group gardening activities, farm-to-table food preparation and programming in inclement weather conditions.
- 2.3 Tailor public education offerings so they have the highest impact with regard to filling untapped niches (others not already doing the same thing locally) and serving populations which otherwise would not have the opportunity to participate.
- 2.4 Maintain a strong scholarship program to enable participation from low-income individuals and families.
- 2.5 Prioritize the development of new initiatives that create enough revenue to be self-sustaining with potential surplus to help support the educational programs that are not self-sustaining.
- 2.6 Offer volunteer opportunities for all ages according to a schedule that allows staff to accomplish production and program goals while still being able to offer engaging and rewarding service learning experiences.
- 2.7 Operate a farmer training program that provides the skills training necessary to foster future generations of organic farmers.

Goal 3: Participate in the exchange of resources and knowledge to strengthen local food systems.

- 3.1 Maintain a leadership role in EMassCRAFT (Eastern Massachusetts Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training) to foster farm-to-farm networking and skill sharing.
- 3.2 Maintain membership in the Farm Based Education Association (FBEA) and active participation in their local tours and workshops.
- 3.3 Continue to designate a staff member to serve on the Steering Committee of the Healthy Waltham coalition.
- 3.4 Operate a viable farm that contributes to the body of knowledge guiding farming systems development.
- 3.5 Designate staff and/or board time for consultation around organizational structure and farm operations.
- 3.6 Participate in public forums and events addressing farm-community connections.
- 3.7** Engage in on-farm research to promote best practices for organic vegetable production in the region.

Goal 4: Secure and manage land with a commitment to environmental stewardship in order to sustain food production and preserve future agricultural use.

- 4.1 Work closely with the University of Massachusetts to develop a plan for revitalizing their Waltham property that includes a commitment to our long-term use of 8 acres or more of farm fields and the permanent protection of all arable land on the site.
- 4.2 Develop and seek board approval on a decision tree for evaluating new opportunities to lease or purchase additional farmland; criteria needs to include consideration of site location, agricultural production factors, and current staff capacity.
- 4.3 Continue to manage our growing practices in ways that allow for maximum production without compromising long-term environmental health of the land we farm.
- 4.4 Build and strengthen our relationships with community members, land-trust organizations, and local government to build a strong base of support for current and future agricultural endeavors.

Goal #5: Grow our organizational capacity and operational infrastructure to achieve program goals.

- 5.1 Develop board capacity for effective governance and fundraising, including board composition that matches organizational priorities and anticipates future needs.
- 5.2 Develop a board that participates in public outreach and represents community interests.
- 5.3 Attract and retain high quality staff by providing ample compensation, a positive work environment, and opportunities for growth and development.
- 5.4 Ensure that all existing and new programs have adequate staffing, work space, and financial support.
- 5.5 Prioritize infrastructure improvements that aid improved organizational efficiency and effectiveness, including upgraded facilities, updated technology, and new field equipment.
- 5.6 Expand fundraising capacity to support current operations and plan for growth.

Goal #6: Enhance financial stability to support organizational effectiveness.

- 6.1 Enforce strong fiscal policies to maintain programs and staff, and maximize return on our savings without assuming a high amount of investment risk.
- 6.2 Expand our membership and donor base through diverse cultivation efforts, including a focus on creating broader public awareness of our charitable work, engaging as many people as possible in our public programs, and increasing board member involvement in direct fundraising.
- 6.3 Pursue income-generating activities that successfully advance our mission.
- 6.4 Manage our farm sales initiatives to fully cover their own expenses and generate profit to benefit other organizational efforts.
- 6.5 Target fundraising strategies and program choices to initiatives that provide the greatest return without compromising accessibility or the ability to achieve our mission.