

# ADVOCATES FOR URBAN AGRICULTURE

Annual Report 2022



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# About Us

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Advocates for Urban Agriculture is an advocacy organization centering growers, farmers, earth stewards, land and water. In partnership with and guided by growers, we provide funding, technical assistance, advocacy and education as resources to re-imagine our relationships to land and the local food system while honoring indigenous sovereignty, black liberation, and immigrants' rights.

# A Message From the AUA Team

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Dear Community Member,

The urban agriculture community in Chicagoland and beyond continued to guide and enliven AUAs work in 2022. Such guidance allowed us to reaffirm our ongoing commitments: we center growers, farmers, earth stewards, the water which sustains us, and the land that nourishes us while navigating continued challenges due to the effects of the pandemic, climate change, and ongoing racism.



We continued to reckon with the fact that our food system is founded on [settler colonialism](#), [white supremacy and racism](#), slavery, genocide, and land theft. The truth of this violence fuels our commitment to grow with our communities and transform our food system towards a just and dignified food system rooted in healing and hope.



In 2022, through intentional introspection and internal restructuring, we made the shift to operate as a BIPOC-led organization with more than two thirds of our staff and board being growers as well. We are proud to reflect back the identities of the farmers and earth stewards who are at the forefront of this work. This change in the organization enriched our praxis of horizontal and consensus-based leadership, accountability, and transparency with each other and our communities.



Our internal shifts also enriched our work and reflected our broader impact in 2022. Our regranting work such as the Capacity Building Grant (CBG) and Solidarity Funds, Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship Program, Technical Assistance via water and land access, Land Defense Panel, and pilot soil testing program deepened our relationships with growers and centered their expertise and knowledge. We also had three new board members join AUA and brought a part-time soil testing coordinator and two soil scientists to increase capacity and impact.

Our participation in [H.E.A.L Food Alliance's School of Political Leadership](#) and hosting the Land Defense Panel further developed a social justice movement framework. Our intention is to best leverage our resources and capacity to center those who are at the forefront of Black Land Ownership, Indigenous Sovereignty and other movements rooted in resistance and liberation.

Although the work continues to be complex and challenging, we are humbled daily by the love and warmth that's central to our relationships with growers and community members, like yourself. We hope the following pages offer a glimpse into the beautiful individuals and communities who continue to bring purpose and intention to this work.

With deep gratitude,

The AUA Team



# Our Staff

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AUA is a BIPOC and grower led organization who's work model incorporates accountability, transparency, and horizontal decision-making to create a more democratic and sustainable organization.



**Bea Fry**

Development & Strategic  
Partnerships Steward



**Liana Fu**

Digital Communications and  
Outreach Steward



**Jazmin Martinez**

Co-Operations Steward



**Yahdi Harris**

Soil Testing Steward



**Viviana Okakpu**

Co-Operations Steward



**Jasmine Barnes**

Events and Cultivation  
Steward

# Our Board

AUA's Board is representative of the urban agriculture and food equity work happening throughout the city of Chicago.



**President**

**Selma Sims**

Gardeneers



**Secretary**

**Rosie Fitz**

HEAL Food Alliance



**Vice President**

**Aasia Castaneda**

PGM ONE



**Treasurer**

**Pat Muench**

Bailey & Glasser, LLP



**Director**

**Elena Terry**

Wild Bearies



**Director**

**Akilah Martin**

US Army Corps of  
Engineers



**Director**

**Fawn Pochel**

First Nations Garden



**Director**

**Alex Franz**

Midwest Foods

# Our Values

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AUA acknowledges that the food system is built on a legacy of white supremacy, colonialization, exploitation, genocide and violence. It is a system that legitimized the enslavement of African descendants, the genocide of first nations and indigenous people, and continues to discriminate and exploit against people of color that are farmworkers, many of whom are immigrant workers and incarcerated people. With this as the background to our work, we are committed to dismantling these unreckoned legacies and putting into practice the following values to create a more just and equitable food system.



## Justice

We believe that justice is necessary to reimagine our current food system. Justice means that all people are given equitable access to resources, wealth, well-being, and opportunities while simultaneously repairing the harm done upon communities historically disenfranchised by a legacy of white supremacy and violence. We strive for justice by creating and advocating for the redistribution of access, wealth, income, and economic opportunities to historically disenfranchised communities and creating accountability processes with directly affected people to repair harm.



## Centering BIPOC Communities

We believe that those directly affected by issues should be at the forefront of creating and leading solutions. We work to make space and focus on BIPOC leadership to shift power towards those directly impacted. We do so by creating accountability processes to center BIPOC leadership and make our work more accessible.



## Sustainable Economic Development

We work to advance policies, facilitate programs and funding opportunities, and foster collaborations that support sustainable economic development for Chicagoland farm businesses and the regional food system as a whole. We primarily work to support small, independent food producers whose growth will contribute to the advancement of food sovereignty and the sustainable economic development of local communities.



## Community Centered

We take action to reinforce our individual values of trust, respect, and responsibility by advocating for community development and awareness. We believe that all people should have access to health, wellbeing, wealth, justice and opportunity. We demonstrate the interconnectedness of urban agriculture to encourage participation and understanding of others.



## Accountability

We strive to take ownership of how our collective and individual actions permeate into our relationships with the community we serve. We hold not only one another, but ourselves responsible for acting in such a way which fosters a Chicago food system prioritizing honesty and integrity.

## Self Determination / Sovereignty



The process by which an individual, community, or other entity controls their own life or lives. The right to make your own decisions without interference from others. Particularly around issues directly affecting your life; Sovereignty- the full right and power of a governing body over itself, without any interference from outside sources or bodies.

## Respect



Chicago is part of the traditional homelands of the Council of the Three Fires: the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi nations. Many other tribes—such as the Miami, Ho-Chunk, Sac, Fox and Menominee—also called this area home. The land is also a site of trade, gathering and healing for countless other Native nations throughout time immemorial. By making a land acknowledgment, we recognize that Indigenous peoples are the traditional stewards of the land we now occupy. In all that we do, we honor the history of this region, the traditional stewards of the land, and demonstrate a profound care for Earth.

# Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship

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AUA's Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship Program seeks to match beginning urban farmers with experienced urban farmers to share in their wealth of knowledge and foster mutually beneficial relationships. This program seeks to: expand educational opportunities for growing food, flowers, medicine, farming animals and insects in Chicago; provide access to quality and safe food; build skills for environmental conservation of soil and water in our region; and foster solidarity amongst Chicago area farmers.



# Elements of the Farmer-to-Farmer Program

- **16 beginning and experienced growers** to participate in this program throughout February - December 2022.
- **Mentors are compensated** for sharing their knowledge.
- **Free groups trainings** led by farm mentors and other leaders in the Chicagoland urban agriculture community.
- Events and **gatherings to build community!**

## Farmer-to-Farmer Co-Facilitators

In 2022, Dulce Morales and Tucker Kelly facilitated the Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship program and provided mentors and mentees with guidance and support.



Dulce Morales



Tucker Kelly

### Impact:

- 60% returning rate from last year.
- 100% of participants build a relationship with their mentee/mentor. 70% plan to keep in touch with each other after the program.
- 90% of participants became more aware of emerging food businesses after their participation in the program.
- 80% of participants interests in working in the local food sector/growing sector increased by participating in this program.
- 100% of participants would recommend this program to other growers!

"[AUA does] a wonderful job helping young people and farmers connect and learn from each other to help grow healthy food to share with their neighbors, friends and family."

Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship Participant



"The F2F program highlights the strength and diversity of our local food system. I felt a deeper sense of community through my participation in the F2F program."

Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship Participant

# Capacity Building Grants

8  
Chicagoland  
Grantees

The Capacity Building Grant (CBG), brought to Chicagoland by Advocates for Urban Agriculture and Food: Land: Opportunity, seeks to contribute to the construction of a stronger and more equitable local food system in Chicagoland by funding farms which are working to expand and scale up their operations, while centering BIPOC, queer, and disabled farmers.

\$100k  
distributed  
to growers!



"Funds supported the launch of [youth] Programming. Through this programming, young people can re-imagine the design of their neighborhood and living spaces using permaculture and traditional ecological knowledge."

Capacity Building Grant Recipient

# Advisory Committee Members

Capacity Building Grant recipients are chosen by AUA's Advisory Committee, a group made up of local earth stewards, food leaders, and past grantees. This decision-making body holds AUA's values and commits to supporting and strengthening local farm operations. The committee is responsible for co-creating the grant application process, providing resources for applicants, and making final funding decisions for the Capacity Building Grant. Below are the four Advisory Committee members who made funding decisions for the 2022-2023 grant cycle.



Tucker Kelly



Chef Mel Carter



Azizah Ashraf-Ali



Sara Cortes

## Capacity Building Awardees for 2022-2023 Farm Season:

- **\$20,000 Awardees:** Green Lots Project, Oriana's Orchard, Archer Urban Farms Initiative
- **\$10,000 Awardees:** Shyler Harmony Farms, Multiple Harvest, Bee-utiful Honey and Candles
- **\$5,000 Awardees:** Arcoiris Alliance, Zafra Farm

"I was able to secure licenses, insurance, and equipment that was sorely needed. This will be something that we will not have to focus on for the upcoming season, and enable us to get a head start on prepping the land."

Capacity Building Grant Recipient

# Solidarity Funds

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Solidarity Funds were part of the Chicago Region Food System Fund's regranting initiative with Advocates for Urban Agriculture, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization, Chicago Food Policy Action Council, H.E.A.L Food Alliance, Faith in Place, and Illinois Stewardship Alliance. Funding was designed to support growers who are at the forefront of food justice and food sovereignty work in their communities, centering those who experience historic processes of exclusion and funding inequity. Recipients received \$10k or \$5k grants.

## Solidarity Fund Awardees for 2022 Farm Season

- Chi-Nations Youth Council/First Nations Garden
- Bee-utiful Honey
- Free Movement Farm
- Run-A-Way Buckers Club Inc
- Shavon L. Dean Memorial Garden
- OTIS Fresh Market
- Mercado De Colores
- B.S.R.R. Youth Center & Academy/Farm LLC
- Bronzeville Neighborhood Farm
- Contemporary Farmer, Inc.
- Pembroke Environmental Justice Coalition
- Finding Justice A Flower and Vegetable Garden
- Ujamaa Co-op
- Freedom Fighter Herbs
- Earl's Garden Mae's Kitchen (EGMK)
- Anonymous
- Anonymous
- Anonymous



18  
Chicagoland  
Grantees



\$175k  
distributed  
to growers!

# NRCS Soil Testing

In late summer of 2022, AUA launched a free soil testing program with the support of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Through this program, AUA assisted growers in the Chicagoland area to test and rebuild their soil health. This program addresses key fundamental issues such as soil quality for growers cultivating food in an urban setting. At the end of 2022, Chi City Foods, LLC and La Villita Community Farm have participated in the test pilot for the program.

**Improving soil health means improving community health!**



# AUA's Technical Assistance Specialists



Dr. Akilah Martin

Dr. Akilah Martin is first and foremost in partnership with soil and water. She earned her BS degree in Soil Science from Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University and her Doctorate from Purdue University in the area of Agricultural and Biological Engineering.



Dr. Shemuel Israel

Dr. Shemuel Israel has practiced chiropractic for 37 years. He is actively engaged in promoting health through the growth and ingestion of quality food, teaching soil health, and is a member of the Bio nutrient Food Association.

## Elements of the Soil Testing Program

Analysis and interpretation of the **comprehensive soil tests** and the NRCS Conservation Planning Process.



Implementation support of the conservation practices related to soil and water using the **9-step NRCS Conservation Planning Process**.



Support the identification of locations and placement of **soil moisture meters** and identify the common soil contaminants in our urban soils



Generate a **compendium of resources to address common urban soil contaminants in growing mediums for edible crops** to provide recommendations to growers.



# Land & Water Access

In 2022, AUA was invited to co-lead the Urban Ag Working Group part of the Food Equity Council in Chicago. In year 1 of the 3 year federally funded Council, the group co-created an updated pathway for growers to obtain, garden, and farm heretofore city-owned land.

The Working Group has also been charged with stewarding a process for the creation of a new urban agriculture business license. AUA had the privilege of working closely with Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, Grow Greater Englewood, Chicago Food Policy Action Council, and NeighborSpace to provide land and water access support to urban agriculture community.

*With help from community partners, AUA...*  
provided **34** rain barrels to gardens and farms struggling with water access and stewarded hydrant applications for **33** sites



Graphic: Sunshine Cahill

## Defend the Land Panel

AUA hosted a Defend the Land Panel elevating how Black and Indigenous organizers and land stewards across occupied Chicago, Hawai'i, and the Philippines are resisting colonialism, racial capitalism, and militarism while transforming and healing their communities through land defense. The panel was a discussion between **Adrien Pochel (of Chi Nations Youth Council and First Nations Garden), Bweza Itaagi (Grow Greater Englewood, and Sistas in the Village), and Punahale (Hawaii Dissenters).**



## Food Sovereignty Action Days



AUA organized multiple Food Sovereignty Action Days (FSADs) that connected community-based urban growing projects with people power and strengthened Chicago's urban agriculture community and networks by forging new relationships across the city. This year, AUA supported **Earl's Garden Mae's Kitchen, Shavon L Dean Memorial Garden, and A & P Paradise Gardens.**

# Growers Directory

**Below are the 2022 participants of AUA's key signature programs: NCRS Soil Testing Program, Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship Program, Capacity Building Grants and Solidarity Funds recipients.**

**We also recognize and deeply appreciate the many growers and farmers not listed here who have shaped the Chicagoland food system and have supported AUA over the year!**

<b>Entity or Individual</b>	<b>AUA Programs and Support</b>
Dr. Akilah Martin	NCRS Soil Testing Program
Green Lots Project	Capacity Building Grantee
Oriana's Orchard	Capacity Building Grantee
Herban Produce	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship, NCRS Soil Testing Program
Gardeneers	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Bronzeville Neighborhood Farm	Solidarity Funds Recipient
A & P Paradise Gardens	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship & CBG Advisory Committee
Multiple Harvest LLC	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Gary Comer Youth Center	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Run-A-Way Buckers Club Inc	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship, Solidarity Funds Recipient
Sistas in the Village	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
GlennArt Farm	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Archer Urban Farms Initiative	Capacity Building Grantee

<b>Entity or Individual</b>	<b>AUA Programs and Support</b>
Shyler Harmony Farms	Capacity Building Grantee
Contemporary Farmer, Inc.	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship, Solidarity Funds Recipient
Cedillo's Fresh Produce	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Shavon L. Dean Memorial Garden	Solidarity Funds Recipient
Ujamaa Co-op	Solidarity Funds Recipient
Earl's Garden Mae's Kitchen (EGMK)	Solidarity Funds Recipient
Forrest (Ọhĩa) Parks	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Gaby Garay	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Kuumba Tre-Ahm Community Garden	Solidarity Funds Recipient
Multiple Harvest	Capacity Building Grantee
Isra	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Chi-Nations Youth Council/First Nations Garden	Solidarity Funds Recipient
Jennifer Johnson	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Pembroke Environmental Justice Coalition	Solidarity Funds Recipients
Dusable City Ancestral Winery	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Earnest Earth	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
B. S. R. R. Youth Center & Academy/Farm LLC	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship, Solidarity Funds Recipient
Finding Justice, A Flower and Vegetable Garden	Solidary Funds Recipient

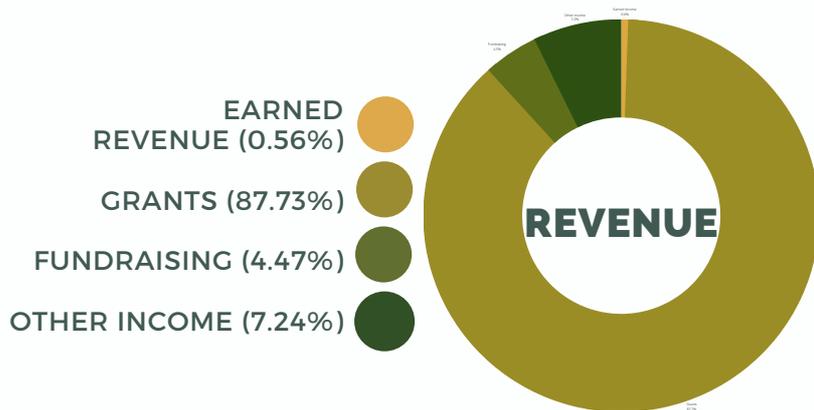
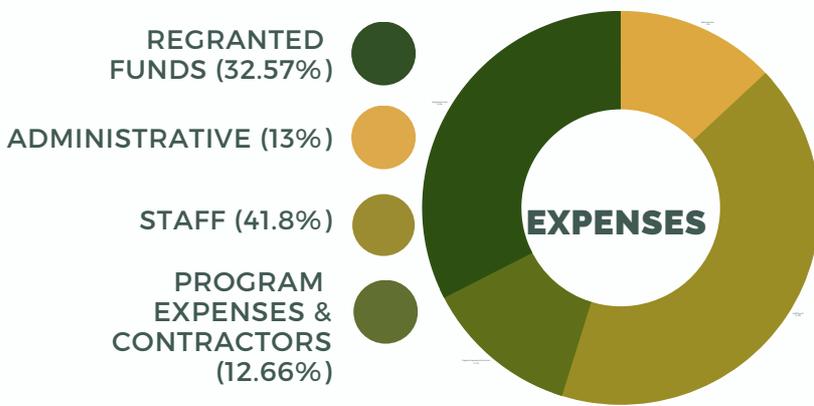


<b>Entity or Individual</b>	<b>AUA Programs and Support</b>
Leann Ngo	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Bee-utiful Honey and Candles	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship, Solidarity Funds Recipient
Meghan Mohn	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Mercado De Colores	Solidary Funds Recipient
Sunflower Soule Farm	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship, CBG Advisory Committe
Cicero Community Farm	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
UIC Heritage Garden	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Freedom Fighter Herbs	Solidarity Funds Recipient
OTIS Fresh Market	Solidarity Funds Recipient
Hinata Farms	Solidarity Funds Recipient
Sara Cortes	CBG Advisory Committe
North Lawndale Greening Committee	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship, NRCS Soil Testing Program
Just Roots Chicago	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Videnovich Farms	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship
Arcoiris Alliance	Capacity Building Grantee
City Foods LLC	NRCS Soil Testing Program
Free Movement Farm	Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship, Solidarity Funds Recipient
Zafra Farm	Capacity Building Grantee

# Our Funders & Financials

## Expenses & Revenue

## Institutional Funders & Corporate Supporters



- Apologue Liqueurs
- Byline Bank
- Chicago Region Food System Fund
- The Builders Initiative
- CHIditarod Foundation
- Food: Land: Opportunity
- Food Farm Communications Fund
- J.R. Albert Foundation
- Kirin and Beth Donor Advised Fund at Common Counsel Foundation
- Loyola's Institute of Environmental Sustainability
- Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
- Option Realty Group
- Pitchfork Music Festival
- Pritzker Family Foundation
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Division (NRCS)
- Walter Mander Foundation
- Anonymous Family Foundation

Special thanks to the individual and institutional donors who gave anonymously and generously!



# Thank You!

Thank you for supporting Advocates for Urban Agriculture (AUA) to continue supporting urban growers, and foster thriving communities through sustainable agriculture and equitable food systems. As always, we appreciate any financial contributions to help us continue doing this work.

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## Email

[outreach@auachicago.org](mailto:outreach@auachicago.org)

