Project Brief
Central Iowa Shelter & Services
Mulberry Farms and Food

Summary

We’d like to focus on our Mulberry Food & Farms program and creating a marketing plan with the end goal of purchasing a profit center in West Des Moines, Iowa.

You’ll have a large amount of creative control and can deliver the final product as a .psd.

Elements

The mission of Central Iowa Shelter & Services (CISS) is to provide low-barrier shelter, meals and support services at no cost to adults experiencing homelessness and to facilitate their move toward self-sufficiency.

Currently, CISS serves 5000 individuals during the year. Through a training program at Mulberry Farms & Food, residents at the shelter are provided the opportunity to gain skills which they can apply in an employment setting. One of the programs teaches residents the basics of food production. As of last growing season, CISS provided over 3,000 pounds of food for our kitchen and other meal sites throughout the Des Moines metropolitan area. The program engages individuals who are trained in soil preparation, seeding, transplanting, lawn care, water, mulching and harvesting. CISS’ garden volunteers, trainees and staff planed the first apple orchard in October, 2016, that was part of a 28-acre expansion along MLK Parkway. This will create an edible forest that will be available to anyone who needs food. CISS planted tomatoes, bok choy, and cucumbers in four spaces on the west side of our property which is open to the public.

Trainees attend off-site learning at various facilities across the county including the Des Moines Botanical Gardens, Des Moines Greenhouses, Des Moines Art Center Rose Garden and they visit local nurseries and greenhouse operations including the three, public gardens maintained by the Polk County Master Gardeners and the PCMG Greenhouses in Altoona. Trainees are given the opportunity to meet people in the industry through personal introductions as well as attend seminars that focus on food insecurity, improved growing methods and transportation of food to those in need.

Partners

CISS has partnered with local area farms to continue our job training in other parts of Iowa. The first farm is Central Iowa Organics and is located in Winterset, Iowa, with Scott Veach as the lead farmer and manager. Scott’s goal is to grow 500,000 pounds of food which he will then generously donate to the Food Bank of Iowa for distribution to its 56 partner agencies. Scott sells the balance of his crop to HyVee and local farmers markets. Scott has been in this business for five years and his farm is 52 acres.

The second farm is Gardening4Good in Madrid, Iowa with Tracy Blackmer as the farmer and manager. Tracy contributes all of his harvest to the Food Bank of Iowa and grows product on nine acres.

Venture

This will be the first time that CISS has looked into retail sales. Unfortunately because of that we do not have sales data at this time. We hope to sell not only our plants, herbs and food but also hand-made items by our clients (such as ceramic pots, clay hands/feet, dream catchers, re-purposed jewelry, etc.).

More info from CISS:

# of clients available to work

1.       Ideally we would be open 7 days a week from 8am – 8pm so we would be looking at 3 people to cover a four hour shift plus 1 manager.

If we had more money, we would be able to have more people.

wage rate

2.       We would pay 3 people minimum wage and the manager a bit more – maybe $10/hr.

# of hours worked

3.       4 hours each person per day – except the manager who would work an 8 hour day (5 days a week)

Have you sold anything in the past? If yes, where, e.g., farmers' markets, etc?

4.       We have sold at the VA Farmer’s Market and will be working with a farmer and selling one-time at the downtown Farmers’ Market.

Ability to grow other plants, such as flowers or ornamentals?

5.       Yes – we are open to growing anything.

Addresses of farmers/greenhouses and contact info?

Gardening 4 Good – Tracey Blackmer -  2191 340th St., Madrid, IA

Central Iowa Organics – Scott Veach - 50 acre organic farm located 3 miles north of Winterset Iowa – will get you the exact address.

Will students be able to interview farmers? In person, phone or by email?  Yes – they are all available to interview – phone works best.

Capacity & number of greenhouses?  Winterset is 33x96 and Tracey’s Farm is a covered bulding with lights and heat lamps.  There is no greenhouse currently on Herndon’s property (the property we’re looking to acquire).