Lansing Roots Farm Program Guidelines

Lansing Roots is a program of the Greater Lansing Food Bank (GLFB), designed to help beginning farmers from the greater Lansing area begin successful market gardening and farming enterprises through an incubator farm setting. Our primary purpose is to encourage beginning farmers to grow produce for sale in Mid-Michigan. Lansing Roots serves as a complement to the GLFB’s on-going support for community gardens by encouraging successful gardeners and interested entrepreneurs to develop farm enterprises, and by lowering the barriers to success.

We are not a farmer training program, though educational assistance is an integral part of what we offer. Participants are expected to have a base of knowledge, skills, and experience before joining our program.

Designed to host new farm businesses for 2-5 years, the plots for first year farmers are normally 100’ x 105’ (1/4 acre). With opportunities to expand in later years, participants will have the opportunity to scale up their farm production to support their new businesses. Lansing Roots is also home to a Demonstration Farm which provides an outdoor classroom for farmers, interns, and volunteers as it hosts workshops and showcases different styles of crop production.

Lansing Roots focuses on limited resource and historically under-served individuals; with an emphasis on refugee, immigrant, minority, low-income, and women farmers. We do accept applications from all beginning farmers. Applicants should have a background and strong interest in farming or gardening. Successful applicants will have participated in a farmer training program, apprentice or internship, will have an agricultural background from their country of origin, or have completed multiple seasons of community gardening.

Beyond knowledge about growing food, applicants should also consider if they have the following:

- An idea or plan outlining what type of farm business they will create and operate.
- Willingness to learn about or knowledge of business topics (accounting, enterprise management)
- An understanding of the costs, including: plot and tool fees, seeds/plants, marketing, equipment, storage, etc.
- The ability to work alongside others of diverse social, cultural, and economic backgrounds
- The ability to communicate questions, comments, and concerns about operations, farm policy, issues facing your farm business, potential conflicts, and/or other issues.
- The ability to provide for translation services when necessary for communication.
- The ability to get to the farm regularly (not accessible by public transportation)
- Willingness to seek out mentors and learn collaboratively with other farmers and Lansing Roots staff.
- Time to commit to the program. We estimate farmers will spend a minimum of 15-30 hours per week on their farm business. Beyond growing food, participants are required to attend workshops, regular meetings, trainings, and other program activities such as marketing and volunteering.

Farm Location – Der Happy Hallow at 1084 S. Hagadorn Rd., Mason, MI 48854

Application Due Date: Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and evaluated as they come in.

If you have any questions about the program or would like an application, contact:
Ben Sommers, Program Manager at 517.853.7813 or ben@glfoodbank.org
**Farmer Guidelines for 1st year Farmers**

**Facilities** – Farmers have access to the barn, hoophouse, wash station, cooler, and other facilities. Participants and volunteers who access facilities are expected to use them appropriately, record facility usage when required, and promptly clean spaces after use. Shared facilities are not to be used as storage areas by individuals. Shared tools and supplies may NOT be used off of the farm and should always be returned clean to their proper location. All participants are required to complete a safety and maintenance course with Lansing Roots staff and obtain staff approval before using any potentially hazardous tools supplied by Lansing Roots. In the event that a tool is damaged or is not operating properly, staff must be notified immediately.

**Fees and Services Provided** – Participants will have the opportunity to generate income through their own business, and as such, are responsible for their own costs. A key component of Lansing Roots is creating viable farm enterprises. It costs money and time to run a business and by charging a small fee for services, Lansing Roots will teach participants business planning, budgeting and time management. Fees also offset the costs of farm maintenance.

**PROGRAM Fee:** $50 deposit per farm, DUE UPON APPROVAL OF APPLICATION & NON-REFUNDABLE

**PLOT AND EQUIPMENT Fee:** $150 per 95’ x 105’ plot and 3’ x 25’ hoophouse bed

- Price adjusted for larger or smaller plots
- If selling through Lansing Roots Marketing Collective, this fee can be deferred and paid from sales
- This fee can be waived by completing general farm work above and beyond the 5 hour minimum general farm work commitment; based on a rate of $10/hr.
- Failure to pay fees in a timely manner will result in automatic termination from program

Includes: Access to standpipe for irrigation, farm perimeter electric deer fence, fall cover crops, workshops and trainings, shared use of facilities (barn, wash area, lanes, compost piles), and seasonal field preparation and other tractor services, including compost delivery. Use of basic hand tools (shovels, hoes, digging forks, trowels, etc.), specialized farm tools (multiple seeding implements, wheel hoes/cultivators, sprayers, broadfork, etc) and limited usage of power equipment (walk behind tiller, weed mowers, etc).

**Tractor Services** – Lansing Roots staff will prepare fields in the spring for planting and will cover crop fields in the fall. Examples may include: Mowing, additional tilling, laying plastic mulch, and making raised bed. Further tractor services will be agreed upon by staff and farmer prior to completion and charged at $50/hour.

**Power Equipment** – The plot and equipment fee covers limited use of the mower and walk-behind tiller. Additional use will be will be agreed upon by staff and farmer prior to completion and charged at $20/hour. Excess or unauthorized use will result in fines at the discretion of Lansing Roots Program Manager

**Lansing Roots Farm Store** - Organic Pesticides, Row Cover, Plastic Mulch, Organic Fertilizers and Other Supplies are far cheaper when purchased in bulk. Certain items will be available for purchase at Lansing Roots cost via our weekly schedule, to be determined by staff. Prices will vary by product.

**Other costs** – Farmers should anticipate costs. Remember to budget for other expenses, like: seeds and transplants, specialty tools not supplied by Lansing Roots, irrigation equipment, trellising equipment, organic fertilizers, organic pesticides, mulches, safety gear, harvest equipment, transportation costs, and any other costs not expressly covered by Lansing Roots program fees.
**Minimum** Time Commitments for ALL Lansing Roots Participants:

- **Farm Plot Work:** MINIMUM 2 farm visits weekly; 15 total hours April – October. Less in November – March.
- **1 Weekly Farm Walk with Lansing Roots Staff**
- **1 Monthly Individual Meeting with Program Manager to assess progress and address needs**
- **5 Hours per season General Farm Labor** – Additional hours can be worked towards program fee
- **5 Hours per season Marketing Collective Participation** – To be determined on an individual basis

We estimate farmers will spend at least 15-30 hours per week on their farm business. This includes time on your farm plot, recordkeeping, marketing, workshops, trainings, and meetings. Participants using joint marketing opportunities will be required to spend time on joint sales. Be sure to include travel time in your planning as well. If you volunteer for your plot fees, that time must be considered as well.

**Farmer meetings** – Farmers are expected to schedule and commit to weekly meetings with Lansing Roots staff. These check-ins will help growers identify pests, weeds, effectively manage production, and generate new ideas and growing strategies. Lansing Roots participants will also be expected to attend occasional all-farmer meetings to discuss policy, challenges, upcoming events, and to encourage collaboration and ongoing learning.

**Workshops, Farm Tours, Social Events**– Lansing Roots is a community. We provide a variety of educational opportunities, tours, and social events for farmers and the general public. Monthly workshops are free to participants and focus on a variety of topics directed towards small-scale agriculture. Roots farmers must commit to attending these as appropriate for their skill and knowledge level. Topics might include pest/disease management, weed strategies, tool maintenance, season extension, marketing, crop planning, business and enterprise planning, food safety and proper handling techniques. Additionally, we will schedule farm tours to see what other local farmers are doing, and host social events like potlucks, farm tours, and an Open House. Farmers are required to participate in these events, as well.

**Business planning** – Farmers who participate in Lansing Roots will be expected to create a business plan for their enterprise (with guidance and assistance from staff and workshops), and are encouraged to be innovative. Business plans should include a budget, crop plan, and marketing plan.

**Recordkeeping** – Successful farmers maintain detailed records. Participants are required to turn in a copy of their records each month. Each farmer should maintain:
- Farm time logs
- Planting schedules
- Input applications (soil amendments, pesticides, etc.)
- Harvest logs (pounds harvested for both sales and home use)
- Costs and income
- Maps and field history information

**Marketing Collective**– The Lansing Roots program is focused on building viable new farm enterprises. The intent of successful applicants should be to generate supplemental or primary income through their farm business. All food that farmers grow on their Lansing Roots plot is theirs, all money made from selling that produce is theirs. Farmers should have a marketing strategy before planting to ensure success. Farmers are encouraged to consider selling through our marketing collective but should be aware that we will not be able to market all produce that is grown. Separate Marketing Agreement regulations will be given to successful applicants.
Guests, Visitors, Children, and Pets – Families, guests, and visitors are encouraged and welcome at all times. They must follow all Lansing Roots Guidelines, and their actions are the responsibility of the Farmer they are representing. Pets are not allowed on-site. Registered service animals are allowed with proper documentation.

*Children must be SUPERVISED and accompanied by a Lansing Roots Farmer at all times to ensure safety and farm guidelines are followed. Damage to crops, equipment, and facilities will be charged to the appropriate Roots Farmer.

Operating hours - Participants will have access to the Lansing Roots Incubator Farm one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset. There are no electric lights at the farm site.

Vehicle use – Individuals driving vehicles on-site at the Lansing Roots Incubator Farm are required to have a valid driver’s license; parking is allowed only in designated spaces. Lanes and throughways should always remain clear. Only authorized individuals are allowed to use large rider-operated equipment like tractors on-site.

Sanitation – On-site porta-john restrooms are provided. Farmers, participants, and volunteers are required to wash their hands every time after using the bathroom.

Transportation – The Lansing Roots Incubator Farm is in a rural setting. Participants should make sure that they have adequate access to transportation. Carpooling is encouraged. CATA rural connection service is possible but service is not timely. Staff will assist in transportation needs as possible.

Plots and plot assignments – Farmers will be assigned plots; all decisions are final. Farmers who return for subsequent years will have first choice of plot location; with approval of Lansing Roots Staff. Assigned plots will only be entered by the farmer of that plot and Lansing Roots staff. Other individuals may enter farmer’s plots only with permission.

Plot maintenance – Farmers are responsible for maintaining their entire plot and the surrounding area. This includes keeping weeds under control, proper identification and management of pests and diseases, removing all trash, and being a conscientious neighbor. Farm space is shared with staff, volunteers, and other farmers so plots should have a clean appearance.

PLEASE NOTE: If Lansing Roots staff members are required to perform regular plot maintenance duties due to neglect or improper site management, you will be assessed a fee for that staff time.

Organic practices and chemical use – ANY proposed use of chemicals (i.e. seed treatments, soil amendments, pesticides, herbicides, or fungicides) requires prior approval from Lansing Roots staff BEFORE on-site application. Lansing Roots participants must follow organic guidelines as defined by the National Organic Program, but organic certification is not required for participants. Participants are required to complete training on proper storage, handling, and safety of potentially hazardous substances before they are allowed to apply any on their plots. Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment safety gear must be worn when applying any chemicals.

Irrigation – Participants are required to practice water management. Responsible watering technique, timing, and amount will be advised and monitored by Lansing Roots Staff. It is strongly encouraged to use drip irrigation whenever appropriate. Drip irrigation promotes even, efficient, and highly-manageable water usage.

End of season Plot Clearing – A date for Plot Clearing will be set by Lansing Roots Staff. All plant material, tools, equipment, hoses, rocks and garbage must be removed at the end of the season. Participants who fail to remove materials will be assessed fees for the costs of staff-time to remove them. Failure to remove end-of-season materials on time will limit participants’ access to the program for the next year. Participants who wish to maintain perennial or no-till style plots are encouraged to discuss this with Lansing Roots staff.