

# Warren J. Baker Endowment

*for Excellence in Project-Based Learning*

# Robert D. Koob Endowment *for Student Success*

## **Title: Prado Community Garden Project**

### **I. Abstract**

The Prado Community Garden Project will work to reclaim food justice for the homeless participants in San Luis Obispo. This project focuses on the problem of unbalanced diets in food insecure households, and specifically targets the inadequate consumption of fruits and vegetables in the diets of the homeless population. Drawing upon literature from the Alternative Food Systems Movement and chronic homelessness it became clear that a community garden could be significantly beneficial for this population. This could increase food security by making edible and nutritious produce available to be consumed by growers on site. The gardening process has also been shown to positively change attitudes, behaviors and social relationships of gardeners. This project will give members of the homeless community opportunity to participate in long a term project that will directly benefit their personal health. The implementation of this project is crucial because no other organization or individual is stepping up to make it a reality for this underserved community.

This project will utilize raised beds to build a community garden at the Prado Homeless Services Center. The man-power behind the construction of the planters and the installation of the garden will be volunteer based. This grant would function to fund raw materials required for project production and implementation. It is expected that this project will produce a long-term community garden that provides healthy food options and opportunities for homeless individuals to build a stronger community, which the organization and its members are capable of sustaining for years to come.

### **II. Objectives**

Homelessness is a prevalent issue in cities and towns across the globe, leaving many hungry and food insecure. The USDA describes some of the top characteristics of food insecure households as frequently worrying that their food would run out, food bought going bad, and not being able to afford balanced meals (USDA, 2018). This is an additional stress on what is already a day-to-day life full of hardship. San Luis Obispo County is no exception to this problem. The current homeless services system in San Luis Obispo is capable of providing three meals a day to its participants. However, these meals are almost always lacking essential nutritional components, particularly those found in fresh fruits and vegetables. It can be challenging for individuals with limited income to eat a well-balanced diet because most fruits and vegetables in grocery stores are expensive. Conditions of homelessness make it extremely difficult to work towards changing one's situation, especially if bare minimum nutritional needs are not being met. This illustrates that for the greater community to decrease the problem of homelessness, it is crucial to address obstacle of food insecurity within this population.

This project aims to bring together literature from the Alternative Food Systems movement and chronic homelessness research, effectively integrating ideas from the disciplines of botany/plant science and political science. The Alternative Food Systems literature focuses on finding new ways to achieve food justice and security for all communities often through the localization of food systems. This can materialize in many ways, but one of the most common and successful is through the creation of community gardens. Studies of chronic homelessness demonstrate some consensus that gardening can have beneficial outcomes for homeless individuals in regards

to their mental health, attitudes and behavior patterns. Building a community garden at Prado combines ideas from both sectors of the literature and puts them into practice to empower this population and help improve their standard of life. Numerous other community gardens in homeless services centers set a successful precedent for this type of project. This project is crucial because it seeks to increase food security for this significantly underserved and generally resource poor community in San Luis Obispo, where no other party is stepping in to do so. Further, the Prado Community Garden Project already has full approval from the Homeless Services Director at the center, who has granted me full autonomy and authority to head this project. Listed below are the three central objectives of this project:

1. Consistently make nutritious vegetable and/or fruit options available for homeless participants at the Prado Homeless Services Center at least 1-2 times a week.
2. Teach homeless individuals and the community how to grow their own food so they can continue to keep the project running after I graduate.
3. Provide a safe space for homeless individuals and members in the community to interact, share their culture, and stories with one another.

### **III. Methodology**

To organize this project, I will make a plan for the amount, type and location of edible plants in the community garden. In this process I will be the communication channel between interested homeless individuals and a gardening expert advisor, botany professor Dr. Yost, along with some of her students. This is to ensure voices of the homeless community are present in the development/ planning process, and to get professional advice on the best types of plants to grow in the circumstances the community garden provides. Once the plan is solidified and approved by all stakeholders in the project, I will move to gather the supplies needed to create the garden. This requires getting materials for planter boxes, tools, soil, seeds and starters. Simultaneously, I will set up a meeting with the head of homeless services at Prado, Mychael, to narrow down a specific date for building the boxes and for planting.

After a date is approved, I will approximate the amount of human forces needed for the installation of the garden. To ensure that there will be enough people volunteering during installation I will make two signup sheets, one for community members and student volunteers and one for homeless participants at Prado to volunteer. This sheet will go out a month in advance of installation to guarantee that there is plenty of time to lock down the appropriate number of volunteers. A week prior to installation I will use the sheets to reach out to all volunteers and secure their participation. At this point I will also let them know which planter and plants they will be working with.

The three weekends before installation will be allotted to planter building on site. This way the planters will be finished by garden installation weekend. The week before installation I will transport all of the supplies and tools needed to Prado in order to increase efficiency and be prepared for the weekend. The day of installation I will gather up all volunteers and organize a demonstration so everyone is prepared with the knowledge to plant seeds and starters correctly. I will also ensure that at least one plant science/ botany student is present in each planter group to help with any questions and facilitate proper techniques and practices. After the demonstration, groups will be divided up numerically by planter box number and by types of vegetables they are planting. Throughout the process I will be supervising, answering questions, offering support to volunteers and planting vegetables.

After the installation I will write a list of daily gardening chores to be carried out at Prado by homeless participants in exchange for bus tokens (a process that is already streamlined and required in their system). This will keep the garden healthy and ensure longevity of it by systematizing the upkeep process. More resources from this grant will go to seasonal purchase of seeds to plant throughout the year in the garden in order for it to continually produce edible, nutritious foods for the homeless community.

#### **IV. Timeline**

December 2nd 2018: Make Garden Development Plan with all stakeholders

December 12th 2018: Solidify community garden installation weekend, finalize materials list

January 14th: Start gathering hard materials (seeds, tools, planter box raw materials)

February 4th: Send out volunteer list to community, students and homeless participants

February 9-10th, 16-17th & 23-24th: Build planter boxes on site

February 25th: Contact volunteers to ensure participation and assign groups for the weekend

February 25th- March 1st: Transfer materials for installation to Prado

##### **March 2-3rd: Garden installation weekend**

March 4th: Turn in and implement garden chore list at Prado

April 1st: Begin weekly checkups on garden

May 27th: Find a student to take on the upkeep and improvement of this garden as their senior project

December 1st 2019: Turn in final report to Baker and Koob endowments coordinator

#### **V. Final Products and Dissemination**

There will be two forms of the final product for this senior project. The first is a literature review and project proposal that will be turned into my advisor for this project, Professor Jean Williams, by December 10th 2018. The second and more significant outcome of my senior project is to build a community garden at the Prado Homeless Services Center. This will include 12 planter boxes with a variety of edible foods that can be used directly on site in meals for the homeless. The community garden will achieve my objectives by teaching homeless participants how to grow their own food, increasing the nutritional component of food security experienced by this community, and hopefully by bonding individuals closer together through communal work on the garden.

#### **VI. Budget Justification**

After speaking with multiple local businesses, I've established a rough estimate for the costs per planter bed for this project. The cost of the materials, soil, and seeds required for one bed is estimated at \$167.00. The wood selected, Douglas Fir, is estimated to have a lifetime of 7 years and is the best affordable option. The Prado community garden project is projected to have 12 raised planter beds that are 4x5ft and 18 inches deep. This brings the total to about \$2,000. I am requesting \$2,500 because these projects always have unexpected costs that arise in the process of construction and implementation. Further, some of the additional money will be used throughout the year to purchase more seeds to plant at the beginning of each season to ensure the continual food production of the garden.

### *References*

United States Department of Agriculture. (2018, September 5). Definitions of Food Security. Retrieved October 28, 2018, from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx#characteristics>

## PROPOSAL BUDGET

<b>Student Applicant(s):</b> Johanna Cogen	
<b>Faculty Advisor:</b> Jean Williams	
<b>Project Title:</b> Prado Community Garden Project	<b>Requested Endowment Funding</b>
<b>Travel</b> <i>subtotal</i>	<b>\$ 0</b>
Travel: In-state	<b>\$ 0</b>
Travel: Out-of-state	<b>\$ 0</b>
Travel: International	<b>\$ 0</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b> <i>subtotal</i>	<b>\$ 0</b>
Non-computer Supplies & Materials	<b>\$ 2,500.00</b>
Computer Supplies & Materials	<b>\$ 0</b>
Software/Software Licenses	<b>\$ 0</b>
Printing/Duplication	<b>\$ 0</b>
Postage/Shipping	<b>\$ 0</b>
Registration	<b>\$ 0</b>
Membership Dues & Subscriptions	<b>\$ 0</b>
Multimedia Services	<b>\$ 0</b>
Advertising	<b>\$ 0</b>
Journal Publication Costs	<b>\$ 0</b>
<b>Contractual Services</b> <i>subtotal</i>	<b>\$ 0</b>
Contracted Services	<b>\$ 0</b>
Equipment Rental/Lease Agreements	<b>\$ 0</b>
Service/Maintenance Agreements	<b>\$ 0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 2500.00</b>