

**Project Title: Community Food Access Planning in East Salinas  
Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA)**

**Proposal Category:**

- **Planning Grant** · Education and Outreach Grant
- Research Grant · Graduate Student Research Grant – Food & Society

**Priority Area:**

- Agriculture, Resources and the Environment (ARE)
- **Food and Society (F&S)**
- Social Learning in Agriculture and Food Systems (SL)

**Topic(s) Addressed in Proposal:**

- Climate Change (ARE)
- Nutrients and Water in Agricultural Landscapes (ARE)
- Harnessing Ecosystem Services (ARE)
- Closing the Loop: Sustainable Waste Management in Agriculture (ARE)
- **Building Regional Markets (F&S)**
- **Community Food Security (F&S)**
- Food System Assessments/Policy (F&S)
- **Farmworker and Rural Community Wellbeing (F&S)**
- Social Learning in Agriculture and Food Systems (SL)

**Principal Investigator (main contact)**

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**Summary:**

This planning project will leverage recent and current work to expand access to fresh, healthy foods in low-income communities. With planning support, the ALBA and its partners will develop 3-year program and financing plans to expand our work in an unprecedented community planning process focused on health. As a result of this planning project, market channels for locally grown and culturally valued fresh foods will expand in East Salinas and fresh local foods will become a greater focus of inspiring diet-related health prevention strategies to enhance community health in East Salinas. This is a rare opportunity to engage community organizations to plan for improvements to past work while also scoping out plans for key program developments, including beginning farmers' marketing education and expanding a fresh foods incentive campaign to formally link it to local health care providers' program innovations.

**Total SAREP Support Requested: \$10,000**

### **Relevance to Priority Areas/Topics**

The Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA) proposes a Planning Grant to leverage significant ongoing community planning processes centered around health and well-being in East Salinas. The proposal focuses on the Food and Society priority area, in particular building regional markets for the 30+ beginning farmers with whom we work; and community food security, in the context of health and wellbeing in farm worker communities. Our project will address this priority by planning and scoping new initiatives to feature more diverse, culturally valued, locally grown and often organic fruits and vegetables. In spite of a vast leafy greens and brassica industry in our region, most of what is produced is not available to the farmworker community, nor is it as nutritious or of the quality enjoyed by patrons at farmers' markets accessing local farmers' freshly harvested crops.

Over the past few years however, farmers at ALBA have begun to successfully reach farm worker families through direct marketing of cultural crops commonly enjoyed in indigenous areas of Mexico. For example, Farmer Nuñez has successfully developed a market niche through his cultivation of organic epazote, various chiles, papaloquelites, nopales, verdolagas, squash tendrils and squash blossoms for farmers markets, flea markets and small retail grocery stores in the Salinas Valley and Santa Cruz County. These markets have in turn become more attractive to a growing customer base that can only find these specialty products in these market contexts. ALBA's role in this success story includes organic agriculture training, direct marketing education, and provision of land, water and technical assistance to farmers such as Nuñez. ALBA has expanded awareness of ethnic crop cultivation and marketing strategies for beginning farmers and played a vital role in the establishment of nine new farmers' markets and farm stands over the past 3 years throughout the Salinas Valley and Central Coast. Through our *FUNDamentally FRESH* incentive campaign and diverse partner collaborations, in 2010 we doubled food stamp spending in 10 farmers' markets and introduced the benefits of farmers' markets to over 700 low-income families. Our impact is threefold – improving the viability and livelihood of farmworkers-turned-organic farmers, the health of residents who are accessing fresh foods, and the strength of an emerging local food economy.

### **Relevance to Target Audience**

The target audiences of the project include beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers; low-income community residents, most of whom are farm worker families; and the numerous agencies involved in the Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative founded by the California Endowment. East Salinas is one of 14 communities statewide chosen to participate in the BHC. Over the past 12 months, ALBA has participated in numerous community planning meetings to understand their basic priorities within the BHC framework. Those priorities include: keeping children and families safe in their communities, focusing on and bolstering prevention strategies to improve community health and well-being, and assuring that all children have access to affordable and culturally competent health care.

It is very timely for ALBA to secure the planning resources necessary to focus our own community food systems program development in relation to bolstering prevention strategies and in relation to the BHC planning framework, ALBA's goals are long-term; to create affordable farmer-direct market access to fresh, culturally valued foods for farm worker families. Currently the vast majority of produce available in the region is anonymously grown, without any basis for

inspiring linkages among food producers and consumers. However, stronger alliances with producers will ultimately support the relevance and longevity of small-scale sustainable agriculture in health-distressed communities that have the greatest need for such change.

Monterey County's population suffers high incidences of nutrition-related illness and obesity. According to a recent Monterey County Health Department report, more than 70% of men and 52% of women in the county are overweight or obese, higher percentages than the state averages.<sup>1</sup> Vast research shows a correlation between obesity and many other ailments – including cancer, cardiovascular disease, osteoarthritis and hypertension.<sup>2</sup> Heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes kill more than 60% of Latinos in California.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, type-2 diabetes, typically caused by poor diet, is 1.5 times higher among Latinos than among other ethnic groups in California.<sup>4</sup> These statistics are troubling for health care professionals in Monterey County where the census indicates more than 64% of residents in Salinas consider themselves of Hispanic descent – the actual percentage is likely much higher due to underreporting. Local farm worker communities have large numbers of youth, many of whom are in schools that will benefit from this work. For example, East Salinas families are larger and younger than in neighboring communities. The average family size is 5.0 people compared to 3.65 for all of Monterey County. Roughly 21% of all the County's children aged 5 or under live in East Salinas which is home to only 15% of the County's population and roughly 37% of East Salinas residents are under 18. (US Census, 2000).

The target audiences will be involved by sustaining our connections to the ongoing community planning around specific health goals in East Salinas. Current examples include modeling and emphasizing health resources in a geographically targeted manner in the community, expansion of soccer and recreational activities, development of innovative child and parent learning programs in the public libraries, and focusing on developing culturally competent health professionals. These specific foci reflect the urgent needs of the community, while ALBA's plan is to sustain its focus on growing affordable and accessible markets for healthful, locally grown and culturally valued foods systems.

### **Goals and Objectives**

This project will leverage ALBA's award-winning programs and community dialogue and planning processes to generate resilient economic models that link beginning and limited-resource farmers with diverse markets to serve health-distressed and financially-disadvantaged people in the Salinas Valley and East Salinas in particular. In order to expand consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables we will focus on culturally appropriate specialty crops that can be grown locally and marketed in ways that may expand consumer demand for such crops. Moreover, we have the opportunity to continue innovating with fresh foods purchasing incentives in ways that are unprecedented in farm worker communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Monterey County Health Department, Epidemiology Unit. Health Profile 2004: Women and Men. March 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> California Department of Health Services, Center for Health Statistics, Office of Health Information and Research. (2004). *Ten leading causes of death, percent of deaths, death rates, and age-adjusted death rates by sex – Hispanic – California, 2002*. (Table 5-10A) [Data Table]. Retrieved June 22, 2005, from <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/hisp/chs/OHIR/tables/datafiles/vsofca/0510a.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> American Diabetes Association. (n.d.) *Diabetes statistics for Latinos*. Retrieved June 22, 2005, from <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-statistics/latinos.jsp>

Goal 1: Market channels for locally grown and culturally valued fresh foods will expand in East Salinas as a result of increased planning and direct marketing by beginning Latina/o farmers.

Objective 1.a. ALBA staff will learn more about community needs and opportunities for collaboration resulting from continued participation in the Building Healthy Communities process.

Objective 1.b. In cooperation with ALBA staff, beginning farmers will participate in market assessment interviews with at least four (4) retailers, two (2) farmers' markets and one (1) large food service operation to explore access to markets for locally grown foods.

Objective 1.c. Farmers will act upon at least three (3) of the market channels noted above to establish regular sales relationships resulting in low-income families' greater access to local foods.

Goal 2: Fresh local foods will become a greater focus of inspiring diet-related health prevention strategies to enhance community health in East Salinas.

Objective 2.a. ALBA staff will interview at least six (6) health-related agencies in the community to determine how we can most effectively utilize fresh foods purchasing incentives to expand direct markets for fresh fruits and vegetables.

Objective 2.b. In cooperation with *Clinica de Salud del Valle de Salinas* (Health Clinic of the Salinas Valley), ALBA will conduct program planning for a three-year "veggie prescription program" that offers farm worker families a voucher as an incentive for the purchase of fruits and vegetables from local farmers.

Objective 2.c. Test the incentive with 100 pilot vouchers worth \$20 each, and plan for securing the resources necessary to sustain fresh foods incentive programs for at least a three-year period. The pilot vouchers include monitoring their utilization over time, including net additions of local foods accessed by local low-income families.

### **Methods/Activities/Timetable**

The methods and activities for this project involve intensive discussion and piloting of ideas to better integrate beginning farmers and their fresh foods as health resources in a community seeking to generate long-term, health-related outcomes. The timeline for this work is April 2011 – December 2011 in order to inform plans for 2012.

Objective 1.a. ALBA staff will learn more about community needs and opportunities for collaboration resulting from continued participation in the Building Healthy Communities process. (April – December 2011) Each 6-8 weeks, the Building Healthy Communities – Alisal Hub organizes community meetings to seek input from residents about their priorities and involvement in initiatives related to the 10-year BHC process started by the California Endowment in 2009. ALBA staff members have attended most of these meetings over the past year, and will continue to participate. As per the BHC Hub strategy, as an agency we take a back seat to assure that the residents' opinions and ideas are the central focus of discussions which will inform our own planning to strengthen local food efforts.

Objective 1.b. In cooperation with ALBA staff, three (3) beginning farmers will participate in market assessment interviews with at least four (4) retailers, two (2) farmers' markets and one (1) institutional food service operation to explore access to markets for locally grown foods. (May – July 2011) Our work to foster greater market outlets in the Alisal community cannot be done in isolation of the marketing aptitudes we seek to develop among farmers. Thus, as we assist in targeted sales outreach, the farmers must play central roles: promoting the value of their products, clarifying crop plans and future inventories, and expressing the value of supporting farm-direct sales to retail and other outlets. With larger potential customers, as with food service, the farmers will likely be joined by *ALBA Organics*, a licensed produce distributor operated by ALBA with extensive experience in food service sales. The interviews will be structured to elicit general market information, including: 1) what products would be most desirable, 2) what price points are necessary for success, 3) what incentives might be used to expand sales, and 4) what kinds of promotional tools can be developed to communicate the value of fresh, local foods.

Objective 1.c. Farmers will act upon at least three (3) of the market channels noted above to establish regular sales relationships resulting in low-income families' greater access to local foods. (July – November 2011) Ultimately the farmers must secure a sales relationship, and with advice and technical assistance from staff, the growers will seek to sustain those relationships. The results will be monitored based on the market information received in conducting Objective 1.b. – and analyzed to identify the specific factors that advance or hinder a sales relationship. Thus, the result will be an assessment of how the plans developed for market access were successful or not, and what specific factors contributed to that result.

Objective 2.a. ALBA staff will interview at least six (6) health-related agencies in the community to determine how we can expand the 2010 fresh foods purchasing incentives to expand direct markets for fresh fruits and vegetables. (April – May 2011) Over the past five months, ALBA has offered the *FUNDamentally FRESH* farmers' market incentive for families using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or "CalFresh") dollars at selected farmers' markets. When a family allocates \$10 of their SNAP benefit for fruits and vegetables at markets, they receive an additional \$5 to expand their purchase of those foods. During 2010 we have proven the success of the model and carefully tracked our progress in growing SNAP usage at markets – helping nearly 700 families with more than \$3,500. In April-May 2011, we will meet with health-related agencies to identify the near-term plans for promoting this incentive in summer and fall of 2011. We seek to gain a better understanding of the ways that health-related agencies can promote and expand access to this innovative market incentive.

Objective 2.b. In cooperation with *Clinica de Salud del Valle de Salinas* (Health Clinic of the Salinas Valley), ALBA will conduct program planning for a three-year "Veggie Prescription" that offers farm worker families a voucher as an incentive for the purchase of fruits and vegetables from local farmers. (June – September 2011) In order to more directly relate our market incentives to health outcomes, ALBA seeks to emulate the Whole Wave Foundation's Veggie Prescription Program in the Salinas Valley. The planning process with *Clinica* will define at what scale it would be ideal to start the program. In addition, we will also determine the pace at which we will work together to ultimately expand the program among *Clinica's* 11 health centers in the Salinas Valley.

Objective 2.c. Test the incentive with 100 pilot Veggie Prescription vouchers worth \$20 each, and plan for securing the resources necessary to sustain our fresh foods incentive programs for at least a three-year period. The pilot vouchers include monitoring their utilization over time, including net additions of local foods accessed by local low-income families. (September – November 2011) Based on planning for implementation, we will establish a monitoring and evaluation framework to track the performance of an initial 100 vouchers distributed to low-income families. The process will involve farmers’ markets and Clinica health practitioners measuring redemption rates and documenting clients’ perceptions of the program – ultimately allowing ALBA to get an initial estimate on the potential for expanding and continuing healthy food incentives in 2012 and beyond. The following is a proposed 9-month work plan:

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1.a. BHC Planning	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1.b. Market Assessment		X	X	X					
1.c. Market Access				X	X	X	X	X	Eval
2.a. Agency Interviews	X	X							
2.b. Veggie Prescription Planning			X	X	X	X			
2.c. Pilot Prescriptions						X	X	X	Eval

### Products

The result of this project will be distinct data points that ALBA needs in order to sustain its community food systems outreach and organizing in the Salinas Valley. The data will chronicle new collaborative potential with community agencies, factors impacting local market access, feasibility of a longer-term collaboration with *Clinica de Salud*, and how these efforts may integrate into a ten-year BHC process in East Salinas. These results will be utilized by ALBA in its ongoing program fundraising efforts which secure at least \$1,000,000 annually in grants and contracts – roughly \$100,000 of which is for the community food systems program.

### Evaluation/Lessons Learned

The evaluation framework will dovetail into an existing monitoring and evaluation plan for the community food systems program, established with the assistance of evaluation consultants. The key quantitative outcomes include **three new market channels** in low-income communities (1.c.) in terms of consumer access (indicator: sales) and long-term feasibility (indicator: value to farmer) and **100 pilot prescriptions** (2.c.) in terms of distribution (indicator: prescription records), redemption rates (indicator: reports from markets) and ultimately changes in dietary behavior, which are beyond the scope of this project. The qualitative outcomes include insight we gain from community meetings (1.a.), market information received by farmers/staff (1.b.), ideas documented for increased bonus outreach (2.a.), and clarity and feasibility of veggie prescription plans (2.b.). All of these outcomes and knowledge will be used to make the case for additional, ongoing grant support for our community food systems program, in particular the collaboration with *Clinica* to sustain longer-term (3+ year) vegetable prescription incentives.

## **Capabilities of Investigators and Cooperators**

### Deborah Yashar, Community Food Systems Program Manager

Role: Deborah is the project leader, who will be the primary partner working with farmers, agency partners and the BHC planning process. She has planned and implemented the *FUNDamentally FRESH* campaign in 2010, and will continue to coordinate and plan for building upon that work with this project.

Capabilities: She is working to support the viability of small farmers by helping them to develop their branding and identity in the marketplace while generating new sales opportunities. She has helped to establish 9 certified farmers' markets and farm stands in both urban and rural communities and is leading policy work to improve the affordability of farmers' markets through food stamp accessibility and education. Prior to ALBA, Deborah helped fuel the beginnings of the Community Agroecology Network (CAN), supporting rural communities in Mexico and Central America to develop self-sufficiency and sustainable farming practices as well as the Multinational Exchange for Sustainable Agriculture (MESA), an international organic farming apprenticeship program. With a B.A. in Environmental Studies and Sustainable Agriculture from UC Santa Cruz, Deborah currently serves on the Board of Directors of Santa Cruz Community Farmers' Markets and as an alternate member on the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Certified Farmers' Market Program advisory board.

### Gary Peterson, Deputy Director

Role: Program oversight and planning, including long-term resource development and financial planning necessary to earn support from individual donors, foundations, hospitals and other prospects/stakeholders interested in community health.

Capabilities: Gary joined ALBA in May 2004 with ten years' experience in family farm and sustainable agriculture advocacy. His role as deputy director includes program oversight for community food systems and farmer education, as well as communications, financing and fundraising activities. Before joining ALBA, Gary worked at the Community Alliance with Family Farmers in Davis, California, where he diversified its funding sources and program strategies throughout California. Previously, he was at the Center for Rural Affairs in Nebraska, where he helped grow its donor base by 50% and organized a \$7 million endowment campaign. Gary has a BA in Political Science from Moorhead (MN) State University and a Masters of Public Administration from the Monterey Institute for International Studies. At ALBA, Gary is working to diversify sources of support, build new partnerships and programs and broaden public recognition for its work. He serves on the boards of the Coastal Watershed Council and the Granary Foundation, a support corporation of the Center for Rural Affairs.

### Patricia Carrillo, Business Education Program Manager

Role: As a lifelong resident of East Salinas, Patricia will continue to attend BHC community meetings, support outreach and partnership with agencies and provide occasional 'reality checks' about the planning process.

Capabilities: Patricia began working at ALBA in September 2006 assisting in office administration and executive duties. She has since started working as ALBA's Business Education Coordinator. In her new role, Patricia is helping to create and sustain economically viable farm and food processing businesses that generate opportunities for wealth creation and contribute to local economic development and community empowerment. She works with more than 80 socially disadvantaged business clients annually. Patricia grew up in and around the Salinas area, and also provides ALBA with native Spanish skills in interpretation and communication with non-English speaking public, staff and participants. Patricia is a graduate of Hartnell Community College with an A.S. in Business Administration, and also has a B.S. in Business Administration from San Jose State University, with a specialization in Business Management.

**Budget (9-Month Grant Period: April – December 2011)**

	Requested Funds	Matching Funds	Source of Match
Personnel			
Yashar @ 10% FTE	3,525		
Peterson @ 5% FTE	2,575		
Carrillo @ 5% FTE	0	1,631	National Rural Funders Collaborative (NRFC)
Benefits	2,135	571	NRFC
<b>Total Personnel</b>	<b>8,235</b>	<b>2,201</b>	
Supplies/Expenses – Office Supplies \$200, Printing \$100, Telephone \$200, Postage \$50, Occupancy/Utilities \$1,015(pro-rated)	1,565	0	
Permanent Equip.	0	0	
Travel – 400 Local Miles at \$0.50/mile for 10 staff trips averaging 40 miles	200	100	NRFC
Subcontracts	0	0	
<b>Total Funds Requested</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>2,301</b>	