

Program Application: 81119027

Linked Pre-Application Form - DO NOT DELETE

Accessible Urban Gardening for Food Security and Environmental Stewardship

Grant Amount Requested

\$70,000.00

Organization Name

Valley Verde

Urban Grant Program Application Questions

Overview

Type of project (check all that apply)

Grant category (check all that apply)

Environmental Education, Urban Agriculture / Food Systems

Project Location: Address / Neighborhood

What is the physical location of the project? If there is no physical location, please enter "N/A." If the project will be in multiple locations, please list all. Note: project location(s) must be within the Authority's jurisdiction.

Some of the project elements will take place at Valley Verde's greenhouses and demonstration gardens, located at 691 W San Carlos St., San Jose (OSA District 3), adjacent to two of OSA's Deep Engagement Communities ("Understanding our Community, Phase II). Much of our programming takes place in families' backyards and in collaboration with schools serving a large percentage of low-income students in downtown and east San Jose, i.e., Deep Engagement Communities 3 & 4. We also plan to begin offering the services described below to residents of Morgan Hill in Deep Engagement Community 6. All proposed project locations are within OSA's jurisdiction. For privacy, and because there are over 30 locations, we are not listing residential addresses here. Our project takes place in locations that are in all 7 OSA Districts and serves people living in all 7 Districts.

The schools/organizations we currently partner with are:

Fammatre Elementary School: 2800 New Jersey Ave., San Jose, CA 95124

Summerdale Elementary School: 1100 Summerdale Drive, San Jose, CA 95132

Stonegate Elementary School: 2605 Gassmann Dr., San Jose, CA, 95121

Veggielution: 647 S King Rd, San Jose, CA 95116

Sacred Heart Community Service: 1381 S First St, San Jose, CA 95110

La Mesa Verde: 1381 S First St, San Jose, CA 95110

Project Location

Open Space Authority District of Project Location(s)(check all that apply)

Authority District 1, Authority District 2, Authority District 3, Authority District 4, Authority District 5, Authority District 6, Authority District 7

Who does the project serve? Please indicate which Open Space Authority Districts are served (where do the people served by the program live) (check all that apply)

Authority District 1, Authority District 2, Authority District 3, Authority District 4, Authority District 5, Authority District 6, Authority District 7

Project Abstract

Valley Verde's San Jose Food Sovereignty Project supports urban agriculture and environmental education in underserved neighborhoods by providing families intensive support to learn to grow fresh, healthy, culturally relevant produce. In collaboration with residents and schools, we create and maintain vibrant urban gardens, provide a curriculum based on environmentally sustainable gardening methods and nutrition, foster community building and environmental leadership, and increase access to urban green space. Families participate for a minimum of six months, which gives them a strong foundation in growing their own food for the long-term and, ultimately, builds a local food system that supports healthy ecosystems. The project will expand on Valley Verde's successful ongoing work by making the programs more accessible for seniors and people with disabilities.

Project Planning

Describe the proposed project.

Valley Verde is requesting a grant to enhance access to healthy foods and environmental education in San Jose and Morgan Hill by providing families and schools with intensive year-round support to learn to grow fresh, healthy produce. Valley Verde's unique program offerings (described in detail below) offer a continuum of urban gardening and environmental education from beginner to advanced levels, along with all the supplies and resources needed to successfully grow organic produce at home and/or at school. Participants typically begin with the Shared Garden program, which provides a minimum of six months of garden education workshops, along with garden beds at home (or school) and mentorship. After completing the Shared Garden program, participants can continue with more advanced workshops through the Deep Roots and Composting programs. Meanwhile, Community-Based Workshops support food sovereignty, economic empowerment, and environmental education in the broader community. The Seed to Succeed apprenticeship program and Homeland Nursery fulfill the need for culturally specific seedlings and economic opportunity in our area's diverse communities.

Valley Verde's programs have always been notable because of the high level of support that participants receive over the long-term, which gives them a strong foundation for growing their own food and, ultimately, building a local food system that supports healthy ecosystems. Our programs have been designed by and for our diverse multiethnic community. Throughout our work, we uplift the cultural heritage of our participants by growing culturally preferred crops (e.g., bok choy, bitter melon, chayote, etc.) and highlighting traditional, sustainable growing methods.

A grant from the Open Space Authority will support the continued implementation of Valley Verde's urban agriculture and environmental sustainability programs and will also allow us to enhance our existing programs by making them more accessible to seniors and people who use wheelchairs and other assistive devices. The accessibility aspect of the project will include consulting with members of the disability community and organizations serving people with disabilities to help design modified garden beds and gather suggestions for other program modifications to improve accessibility. Based on community input, Valley Verde will modify the existing Shared Garden and Deep Roots programs to serve the needs of people with disabilities and will begin implementing the improved programs.

Detailed Program Descriptions:

Shared Garden: The Shared Garden Program is a multigenerational approach to building the food security of entire neighborhoods. Valley Verde partners with schools and other organizations to recruit families in low-income neighborhoods. We provide participants with garden beds and gardening supplies along with 6-12 months of group gardening workshops and individual mentorship. Families learn all the basics of how to grow their own organic produce, plus nutrition and ecology principles. Environmental sustainability is built into the curriculum through composting, water-saving irrigation methods, drought-tolerant plants, avoiding chemical pesticides and herbicides, and more. We also provide local schools and/or after-school programs with our garden education curriculum, which was designed specifically for our local climate and multicultural community. We construct garden beds at the schools, as needed, and we provide seeds, seedlings, and other gardening materials in addition to the curriculum. In this way, entire neighborhoods of children and adults learn to grow food at school and at home.

Deep Roots: Deep Roots teaches advanced gardening skills to alumni of the Shared Garden program. Over the course of six months, Deep Roots participants dig deeper into concepts such as seed saving, growing seedlings, composting, and water conservation with the goal of building self-sufficiency and environmental leadership.

Compost Program: During the 6-month-long Compost Program, Valley Verde supplies interested low-income families with the materials and education to compost in their own homes. Community members who do not have space to compost in their own homes can exchange food scraps for compost at our Community Composting Hub in downtown San Jose.

Seed to Succeed (formerly Super Jardineros): Through this two-year-long apprenticeship program, low-income adults learn to grow commercial-quality vegetable seedlings in home greenhouses. They can then earn income by selling their seedlings to Valley Verde for use in the Shared Garden program or for retail sale. The long-term goal is to support economic growth and develop sustainable local food systems that include expert gardeners and culturally relevant seedling vendors in every neighborhood. During the grant period, the program curriculum and design will be revised to better serve the needs of our community, and the program will re-launch.

Community-Based Workshops: Valley Verde offers a variety of urban gardening and environmental education workshops at our greenhouse and demonstration garden in downtown San Jose. These workshops are open to the general public and include topics such as composting, beekeeping, healthy cooking, and water-wise gardening.

Homeland Nursery: Valley Verde grows thousands of organic, food-producing seedlings for use by program participants and for sale to the local community. Our seedlings fill a unique market niche, reflecting the cultural preferences of our county's largest ethnic groups. The Homeland Nursery strengthens the economic sustainability of Valley Verde and the food sovereignty of our communities.

Alignment with OSA's Mission and Objectives:

Valley Verde's proposed project directly aligns with the mission of the OSA, the objectives of Measures Q and T, and the purpose of the Urban Grant Program in the following ways:

Supports local agriculture and creates/enhances access to healthy food through urban farms and gardens: Valley Verde supports low-income families, many of whom are food-insecure, by providing the supplies and support needed to build and maintain food-producing gardens at home and at school. With a minimum of 6 months (and up to 18 months) of organic gardening education workshops and mentorship, Valley Verde directly builds food sovereignty in our communities.

Conserves the natural environment and develops environmental education programs, including hands-on youth engagement projects: All of Valley Verde's programs are rooted in environmental education and sustainability. We teach families to grow food organically, make their own compost, conserve water, and grow drought-tolerant, pollinator-friendly plants. Our school-based garden education curriculum was designed to teach environmental education through gardens at the pre-K and elementary school levels.

Connects people to nature: Valley Verde's participants live in highly urban areas. The gardens we help them build and maintain are oases of green space where families can connect with nature. This project will expand those connections by revising Valley Verde's programs to be more accessible to seniors and people with disabilities.

Benefits for generations: Many of the families we serve live in multigenerational households where the gardening experience is being shared between seniors, adults, and children. Our collaborations with schools reach a large number of students, building a connection with nature and urban agriculture at a young age.

The project also meets the goals of the Santa Clara Valley Greenprint by:

Protecting water resources: All Valley Verde programs incorporate water-saving measures, such as drip irrigation and rain water harvesting. The curriculum emphasizes the importance of water conservation and teaches participants how to manage water usage at home.

Sustaining the economic and environmental viability of agriculture in the County: Valley Verde's work contributes to food sovereignty by helping to create and sustain urban gardens and develop local agricultural products, namely the seedlings grown and sold through the Homeland Nursery and Seed to Succeed.

Provide opportunities for nature-based recreation and education for all residents: Valley Verde works in OSA's Deep Engagement Communities to create vibrant green spaces in many neighborhoods; including spaces open to the public (schools and Homeland Nursery) and in backyards across the region. The accessibility aspect of this project will increase opportunities for our community's most vulnerable residents to access nature-based recreation and education.

Intended Audience: The intended audience is low-income families and individuals living in San Jose and Morgan Hill, specifically in Deep Engagement Communities #3, #4, and #6. While we serve anyone who meets our income and geographic requirements, our program emphasizes serving low-income people of color and immigrants who tend to face more challenges to obtaining healthy, culturally-appropriate fresh produce and whose neighborhoods tend to have more pollution and less green spaces. In addition, the new initiative to make the programs more accessible is intended to serve low-income seniors and people with physical disabilities.

The project will serve approximately 400 individuals in San Jose over two years. We anticipate that the demographics of the families served will closely align with our current program participants. Based on self-reported data:

100% of our participants are low-income, as defined by HUD Income Limits for San Jose, and 19% of participants earned \$25,000 or below annually in household income.

The racial/ethnic breakdown of participants is: 52.5% Latinx, 25% Asian, 10% Black or mixed race, and 12.5% Caucasian.

7% of participants are children ages 0-5. All of the children and youth served participate with their families (i.e., the entire household together).

54% of adult participants report their highest level of education as high school or less.

54% of participants report money as a barrier to cooking and eating healthy meals.

81% of participants report that at least one household member has one or more of the following health conditions: diabetes or obesity.

Location: Valley Verde's headquarters are located at 691 W San Carlos St., San Jose. The site is open to the public and is the location of some of the program elements: the Homeland Nursery, demonstration gardens, Community Composting Hub, and Community-Based Workshops. The Shared Garden and Deep Roots programs take place either in participants' yards, at schools, or in the demonstration garden (if they don't have gardening space at home). We currently serve residents in all seven of OSA's Districts, with the heaviest concentrations in downtown and east San Jose.

Common Core and NGSS: The school Shared Garden curriculum has been reviewed and implemented by teachers. The program meets several of the standards for science and health at the elementary school level.

Describe key project deliverables and estimated completion dates.

The following are our key project deliverables and estimated completion dates, based on a 2-year, spring 2026-winter 2028, grant period:

By the end of Year 1 of the grant period, we will have:

Built relationships with at least 2 organizations serving low-income seniors and people with disabilities as outreach partners.

Consulted with 5 stipended seniors and people with disabilities on the proposed accessibility modifications to the garden beds and curriculum.

Created modified versions of the Shared Garden, Deep Roots, and Seed to Succeed curricula to serve the needs of people with disabilities.

Built 30 gardens in the homes of low-income families in San Jose and Morgan Hill, including provision of all the necessary infrastructure and supplies for a year of gardening.

Delivered 21 Shared Garden program workshops. These are monthly 60-minute workshops where families build community while learning about environmentally sustainable gardening practices, basic organic gardening skills, and nutrition. There are two workshops per month (one in English and one in Spanish) 11 months of the year, from January-November.

Delivered 6 Deep Roots program workshops. From June-November families in the Deep Roots program attend monthly group workshops where they learn advanced sustainable gardening practices.

Delivered 6 Compost program workshops. From January-June families in the Compost program attend monthly group workshops where they learn about food waste and how to generate compost at home.

Developed and/or sustained partnerships with 3 schools or afterschool programs as schools-based Shared Garden participants. Valley Verde provides seeds and seedlings for the school gardens each spring and fall and builds garden beds, as needed. We also provide curricula for school/after-school garden education. Throughout the year, Valley Verde's staff meets with school administrators and/or after-school program staff to help coordinate the Shared Garden program and to recruit families to participate in the home gardening portion of the program. School garden support; including forming new partnerships, building garden beds, providing seedlings and curricula; will happen mainly in August-November each year.

Provided 60 mentorship visits: Valley Verde staff visit Shared Garden participants at home and at schools 2-3 times a year to provide individualized advice, encouragement, resources, and problem-solving for their home gardens.

Led 2 free seedling distribution events: Twice a year, Shared Garden program participants pick up seedlings, grown by Valley Verde, to plant in their gardens.

Led 6 Community-Based Workshops: Valley Verde offers a variety of urban gardening and environmental education workshops for the general public at the Homeland Nursery in downtown San Jose.

Grown and distributed or sold 8,000 seedlings: Valley Verde grows organic, culturally relevant seedlings in the Homeland Nursery greenhouse for use in the Shared Garden program and for retail sale to help subsidize the programs.

Conducted annual evaluations of the programs' impacts, successes, and challenges.

Revised to the Seed to Succeed program model to ensure it's meeting the community's needs.

By the end of Year 2 of the grant period, we will have: (Please see Year 1 above for descriptions of each activity)

Served 5-10 people with disabilities in the Shared Garden and Deep Roots programs.

Built 30 more gardens for a total of 60 for the 2-year period.

Delivered 21 more Shared Garden program workshops, for a total of 42 during the grant period.

Delivered 6 more Deep Roots workshops, for a total of 12 during the grant period.

Developed and/or sustained partnerships with 2 more schools or afterschool programs as schools-based Shared Garden participants for a total of 5 partnerships.

Provided 60 more mentorship visits, for a total of 120 visits.

Led 2 more free seedling distribution events, for a total of 4 seedling distributions.

Led 6 more Community-Based Workshops, for a total of 12 workshops.

Grown and distributed or sold 8,000 more seedlings, for a total of 16,000 seedlings.

Relaunched the Seed to Succeed program.

Conducted annual evaluations of the programs' impacts, successes, and challenges.

Does this project require permission, permits, or other approvals? If so, please describe the status of these.

In the Shared Garden program, participants are responsible for ensuring that they have permission, if needed, from their landlords for home gardens. School and after-school partnerships are agreed to by school administrators, and no additional permissions are needed. We currently have agreements with all of the partners listed. If new partnerships are formed, we will obtain agreements and permissions from school administrators prior to starting any work with them.

What is the lifetime of this project? If applicable, describe plans for operating and maintaining the project in the future.

The programs described in this proposal are the core of Valley Verde's work, and we intend to continue offering them beyond the grant period. The programs are ongoing throughout the year and will continue to operate indefinitely, although we make modifications to improve the program model every year. New participants are recruited each year, and we also build new/additional school partnerships when it makes sense to do so.

Describe the project's readiness for implementation.

The project is ready for implementation immediately. The bulk of the work is a continuation of the programs that Valley Verde is already implementing. Staffing and infrastructure are already in place for all of the project elements, including the new accessibility initiative and the process of revising the Seed to Succeed program.

Project Budget

Budget Summary - Grant Request & Budget Summary - Matching Funds

Grant request: Personnel

\$55,625.00

Grant request: Contracted Services

\$375.00

Grant request: Supplies / Materials

\$0.00

Grant request: Other Direct Costs

\$0.00

Grant request: Indirect Costs

\$14,000.00

Total Matching Funds

\$293,400.00

Total Budget

\$70,000.00

Please upload a detailed version of your budget by accessing the link below:

Valley Verde UGP Project Budget 2025.pdf

Materials and Budget Template (item #9) found here: <https://www.openspaceauthority.org/programs/grant.html#Materials>

Provide a brief budget narrative to explain the expenses listed in each of the budget categories (e.g. Personnel).

Personnel: Funding from OSA will partially cover the wages of the program staff who will work directly on this project to plan, coordinate, and carry out all project elements. Positions include: the Shared Garden and Deep Roots Manager, the Shared Garden Coordinators, the Deep Roots and Composting Coordinator, the Greenhouse Coordinator, and the Executive Director.

Stipends: Senior citizens and members of the disability community will be stipended to consult on accessibility for this project.

Indirect Costs: 20% of the request will go toward indirect costs, which include insurance, utilities, facility maintenance, telecommunications, and a portion of administrative staff salaries.

Award Amount: The Board reserves the right to award partial funding on projects. If your project were to receive partial funding, what would this mean for your project?

The requested grant amount will partially fund Valley Verde's core food sovereignty and environmental education programs. The number of families that Valley Verde can serve varies each year depending on the amount of funds raised. So, if OSA provides a partial award amount, the project would continue, as described, but the scope may be reduced.

Valley Verde fundraises year-round and has a good track record of securing funding from a wide range of private, corporate, and government funding sources. In addition, Valley Verde has a strong entrepreneurial spirit and has diversified its fundraising through earned-income ventures, such as the Homeland Nursery, which grows and sells organic, culturally-relevant, food-producing seedlings.

Project Goals

Describe the specific problems, issues, or unserved needs the project will address.

Valley Verde was founded in 2012 to address the needs of low-income families of color who were largely being left behind in the urban gardening movement despite being the ones who most urgently needed better access to affordable, fresh produce. A lack of affordability, language barriers, and stereotypes about who is interested in organic gardening meant that many low-income BIPOC families did not have the learning opportunities and resources that would enable them to grow food in their own backyards. Over the past 15 years, Valley Verde has addressed this need by helping more than 800 low-income community members learn to grow food at home and share that knowledge with others. This project will build directly on Valley Verde's history of building food sovereignty in underserved neighborhoods by giving hundreds of residents the skills, support, and resources needed to grow their own food and be leaders in environmental sustainability in our communities.

While Santa Clara County's median income is among the nation's highest, many working low-wage families struggle to survive here, and there is widespread food insecurity. According to kidsdata.org, 17.2% of Santa Clara County's children live in food insecure households. These numbers are even higher among Latinx families, which comprise a high percentage of Valley Verde's participants. As demonstrated in the "Understanding our Community: Phase II" report, the neighborhoods where most of Valley Verde's participants live are "Deep Engagement Communities" with high numbers of CalFresh beneficiaries and often a low mRFEI index, i.e., less healthy food retailers. The neighborhoods we serve are also listed in the CA Healthy Places Index, which maps social determinants of health, as areas with "less healthy community conditions." These findings are echoed by other research, such as El Camino Health's "Community Health Needs Assessment," which has identified diabetes and obesity as top health needs in Santa Clara County, particularly among Latinx, Pacific Islander, and African American people. Contributing factors include poverty, prevalence of fast-food restaurants, lack of grocery stores, and physical inactivity.

Valley Verde also serves the neighborhoods with the highest numbers of people with ambulatory difficulty, according to "Understanding our Community: Phase II." Our new accessibility initiative, which is part of the proposed project, will directly help connect people with ambulatory difficulty with healthy food and green spaces by making our signature urban gardening programs more accessible to seniors and people with disabilities. In fact, this project was inspired by feedback from a long-time participant and supporter of Valley Verde who now uses a walker. She reached out for help to request a modification of her bed to make it taller. Over the years, the garden has become an integral part of her mental and physical health, but she can no longer reach the low garden beds that Valley Verde helped her install many years ago. The conversation led to a discussion within our team about modifying our approach to make our workshops and garden beds more easily accessible to people with physical disabilities.

How does this project serve the community?

Number of people served

400

Number of youth served

200

Number of programs provided

600

Other Grantee Goal #1 (optional)

To enhance access to healthy food and green spaces by supporting the creation of urban gardens in Deep Engagement Communities and providing the materials and mentorship needed for families to successfully grow their own healthy, fresh, culturally relevant produce in the long term.

Valley Verde anticipates building 60 gardens in the homes of low-income San Jose families during the grant period and supporting at least 5 schools in creating/maintaining their school gardens. We will grow and distribute approximately 16,000 organic, food-producing seedlings during the grant period.

Other Grantee Goal #2 (optional)

To increase the accessibility of environmental education in Deep Engagement Communities by creating and delivering workshops that are accessible to seniors and people with disabilities, culturally relevant, specific to our local ecosystems, and available in multiple languages.

Valley Verde anticipates leading 66 workshops for adults during the grant period and partnering with at least 5 schools to support garden-based environmental education with children.

Impact

Describe the lasting impact of the project. Please include whether the program is open to the public and whether any materials developed will be available to the public.

Our work is guided by the principles of food sovereignty, where local communities form a just and participatory food system that honors the relationship between the people and the land, builds generational knowledge and skills, and recognizes food as sacred and a right for all. As we build critical mass in the communities we serve, whole neighborhoods will be better equipped with the knowledge, resources, and support necessary to positively impact our environmental sustainability and food security for future generations.

Our programs are free, and registration is open to any low-income residents or schools serving high percentages of low-income students in the neighborhoods we serve. Our greenhouses and demonstration gardens in downtown San Jose are open to the public. We host community workshops there and grow thousands of organic seedlings that are provided to our program participants free of charge and are for sale to the general public. We accept EBT payments to support equitable access.

Valley Verde has developed its unique program offerings and curricula over 15 years. The urban gardening and environmental education we offer is tailored to our local climate and ecology and is focused on growing and cooking foods that are culturally relevant for San Jose's largest ethnic groups. The modified curricula we develop as a result of this project will be available through our programs to any qualifying community member.

The lasting impact of our program is that we are building food sovereignty and environmental sustainability in underserved neighborhoods.

Specifically, our impacts include, increasing:

Food security

Urban agriculture skills

Awareness of and leadership on environmental issues

Access to and interactions with urban green spaces

Consumption of vegetables

Physical activity levels

Use of drip irrigation and rainwater catchment

Home composting

Access to culturally-relevant, drought-tolerant seedlings

Climate Resilience

How does this project enhance and/or raise awareness about climate resilience? Please include any metrics that can be used to help quantify or understand the climate benefits of the project.

Valley Verde's work centers the communities that are most impacted by environmental injustices, i.e., low-income communities of color, as leaders in building sustainable, local food systems. Our communities are highly motivated toward food sovereignty and environmental sustainability because their health and safety are directly at stake.

All of our workshops and school curricula are centered around environmental sustainability and climate resilience. This is the explicit focus of lessons on drought-tolerant plants, rainwater catchment, composting and reducing food waste, and avoiding synthetic pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers. We also directly provide resources to support these efforts, such as rainwater barrels, composting systems and compost, and drought-tolerant varieties of seedlings. Metrics that could be used to quantify these efforts include: cubic yards of compost provided, number of rainwater catchment systems installed, seedlings grown, and pounds of food waste composted at our central facility.

Community Engagement / Stakeholder Support / Community Building

Describe the community support and/or community engagement process. Please upload any community support letters in the Documents Upload section below.

Valley Verde is a grassroots, women of color-led organization. Our staff and Board members live in the communities we serve. Nearly all of our staff are from underrepresented multiethnic communities, which gives us intimate insight into the struggles faced by our respective communities. We offer various pathways for community members to take leadership in our work, including by mentoring newer participants and applying for jobs within the organization. We are currently recruiting additional Board members and are specifically seeking new Board members from within the communities we serve.

To support community leadership, we have worked with our partners at the Urban Growers Network for the past three years to create and sustain a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) where community members gain valuable leadership skills. CAC members, including a participant from Valley Verde, have helped create the structure of the program and are implementing projects to meet local food security and environmental goals.

We are in constant communication with our participants to ensure that our programs are centered in their life experiences, meet their needs, and respect their cultural heritages. We gather feedback from our participants in a variety of ways and use this information to shape our programs on an ongoing basis to better serve our communities. Feedback mechanisms include: a survey about their preferred varieties of produce, pre- and post-program evaluations, and informal discussions with participants throughout the year during monthly workshops and mentorship visits.

Underserved Communities

Describe how the project addresses open space needs for sensitive populations such as residents of park-poor neighborhoods, underserved, or disadvantaged communities, youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, or is located within an under-resourced community.

As stated in previous sections, Valley Verde's greenhouse and demonstration gardens, school partners, organizational collaborators, and the residences where we support home gardens are all either located in or directly adjacent to Deep Engagement Communities 3, 4 and 6. These areas are, by definition, the places where demographic factors and existing community leadership present the greatest opportunities for highly-impactful partnerships with the Open Space Authority. The neighborhoods we serve are also listed in the Healthy Places Index as areas with "less healthy community conditions." Valley Verde's long standing experience in the community and the self-reported demographic data that we collect from participants via our program intake form support these assumptions. According to our most recent intake surveys (2025):

100% of our participants are low-income, as defined by HUD Income Limits for San Jose, and 19% of participants earned \$25,000 or below annually in household income.

The racial/ethnic breakdown of participants is: 52.5% Latinx, 25% Asian, 10% Black or mixed race, and 12.5% Caucasian.

7% of participants are children ages 0-5. All of the children and youth served participate with their families (i.e., the entire household together).

50% of participants are elementary-age children.

54% of adult participants report their highest level of education as high school or less.

54% of participants report money as a barrier to cooking and eating healthy meals.

81% of participants report that at least one household member has one or more of the following health conditions: diabetes or obesity.

Organizational Capacity

Briefly describe the organization and its ability to successfully implement this project. This might include successful past projects, key staff qualifications, financial resources, etc.

Valley Verde has served Santa Clara County, with focus on San Jose, since our inception in 2012. We have built relationships of trust with the multiethnic communities and neighborhoods we work with; and we have developed connections to local schools, libraries, and community-based organizations rooted in the region. Since our founding, over 800 people have participated in our programs.

We have more than a decade of evaluation data demonstrating our impact in the communities we serve. A comparison of pre- and post-program surveys shows that Valley Verde consistently improves the food security of our participants and equips them with the knowledge and resources to build food sovereignty through productive, culturally-relevant, ecologically sustainable gardens.

Furthermore, studies published in peer-reviewed journals have found a significant impact of Valley Verde's program model on the health of the communities we serve. For example, research published in the Journal of Nutrition and Health Education, based on interviews with Valley Verde participants, found that program participation increased their food access and consumption of fresh produce and improved their physical activity, mental health, and stress management. ([https://www.jneb.org/article/S1499-4046\(19\)30915-7/fulltext](https://www.jneb.org/article/S1499-4046(19)30915-7/fulltext))

With the demonstrated success of our programs, partnerships, and decades of learning and growing with our community, we are well-positioned to continue our work in advancing environmental justice and food justice in Santa Clara County.

Valley Verde is fully staffed to carry out the work described in this proposal. Executive Director Lovepreet Kaur has been leading Valley Verde since 2022 and served as Valley Verde's Operations Manager for three years before being promoted into this position. She is highly dedicated to Valley Verde's mission and has helped shape the organization's current program offerings. Each of our program areas has a manager and coordinator. We also have an Strategic Partnership Manager who works with the Executive Director on developing partnerships and advancing Valley Verde's mission.

Valley Verde has a strong track record of securing funding from a wide range of private, corporate, and government funding sources. With a strong entrepreneurial spirit, Valley Verde has diversified its fundraising through earned-income ventures, such as the Homeland Nursery. Valley Verde has a longstanding relationship with a fundraising consultant who provides support for the accurate, timely completion of grant reports.

Leadership & Innovation

Describe how this project employs innovative approaches or encourages collaboration and partnerships.

Valley Verde is unique in that we work with participants intensively for six months or more, an investment that allows us to truly build a strong foundation of gardening and healthy cooking knowledge for the long-term. We serve many multigenerational households and coordinate services with school garden programs to build lifelong healthy habits for the whole family and whole neighborhoods. Our approach is also unique in its emphasis on culturally-specific crops, which helps make organic gardening relevant to our highly ethnically diverse community.

Valley Verde has a strong, growing network of partnerships with local organizations and institutions whose missions align with or complement our work. Program participants are recruited through partnerships with the schools and organizations where we offer our services, as well as through public libraries and community outreach events. Our key elementary school collaborators include Summerdale, Stonegate Elementary, and Fammatre.

Valley Verde is a founding member of the Urban Grower Network, a collaboration of local community-based food and environmental organizations to form resilient connections, coordinate on shared projects, and grow our collective impact. Members include: The Forge Garden, Guadalupe River Park Conservancy, La Mesa Verde, Plant and Soul California, Our City Forest, Garden to Table SV, and Veggjelution. We collaborate with Santa Clara University, San Jose State University and Stanford University to host student interns who bring expertise and enthusiasm to our work. Rent for Valley Verde's office and Homeland Nursery site is contributed in-kind by Google.

Documents Section

Document Uploads (please combine into one file if possible)

Letters of Support for Valley Verde.pdf

Additional files (if needed)

Additional files (if needed)

Submitted Date - Internal

Summary Field:

Name: Average Score (no bonus)

Form: Staff Review

Summary Type: average

Field: Base Score Total

Decimal: 2

Currency: No

Description/Help Text: NONE

Short Name: NONE

Field Purpose: NONE

Filter:

- ALL:
 - isComplete | is | true

Summary Field:

Name: Total Count of Submitted Reviews

Form: Staff Review

Summary Type: count

Field: NONE

Decimal: NONE

Currency: No

Description/Help Text: NONE

Short Name: NONE

Field Purpose: NONE

Filter:

- ALL:
 - isComplete | is | true
 - Folder | is | Submitted

Program Application: File Attachments

Please upload a detailed version of your budget by accessing the link below:

Valley Verde UGP Project Budget 2025.pdf

Document Uploads (please combine into one file if possible)

Letters of Support for Valley Verde.pdf

Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority | 2025 Urban Grant Program

PROJECT BUDGET

Highlighted cells are automatically calculated.

PROJECT	
Project Name: San Jose Food Sovereignty Project	
Organization: Valley Verde	

PERSONNEL				
Estimate employee and volunteer time <u>directly related</u> to the project. Hourly rates for employees can include salary plus fringe benefits, payroll tax, etc, but can not include indirect costs. Note: please list position titles only.				
Position Title	Description of Budget Item	Grant Request (\$)	Matching Funds (\$)	Total
Shared Garden and Deep Roots Manager	363.64 hours @ \$33/hr. Manages and directs the Shared Garden and Deep Roots programs, leads/facilitates modifications for accessibility, leads community workshops at Homeland Nursery	\$ 12,000.00	\$64,480.00	\$ 76,480.00
Shared Garden Coordinator 1	346.15 hours @ \$26/hr. Coordinates and delivers the Shared Garden program, leads community workshops at Homeland Nursery	\$ 9,000.00	\$49,920.00	\$ 58,920.00
Shared Garden Coordinator 2	360 hours @ \$25/hr. Coordinates and delivers the Shared Garden program, leads community workshops at Homeland Nursery	\$ 9,000.00	\$49,920.00	\$ 58,920.00
Deep Roots & Composting Coordinator	285.71 hours @ \$28/hr. Coordinates and delivers the Deep Roots and Composting Programs, leads community workshops at Homeland Nursery	\$ 8,000.00	\$54,080.00	\$ 62,080.00
Greenhouse Coordinator	185.18 hours @ \$27/hr. Cultivates seedlings and the demonstration gardens	\$ 5,000.00	\$52,000.00	\$ 57,000.00
Executive Director	238.21 hours @ \$53/hr. Revise the Seed to Succeed program model	\$ 12,625.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 15,625.00
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TOTAL PERSONNEL		\$ 55,625.00	\$ 273,400.00	\$ 329,025.00

CONTRACTED SERVICES
Labor, supplies, and materials to be provided by consultants/contractors for project implementation.



October 9, 2025

Board of Directors
Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
33 Las Colinas Lane
San Jose, CA 95119

Dear Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority:

The Guadalupe River Park Conservancy proudly writes to support Valley Verde in their San Jose Food Sovereignty Project application. Through our long-standing collaboration and mission-aligned allyship, we recognize the incredible value of their programs. Valley Verde's strategy of using unique, culturally relevant approaches to address environmental education, sustainability, and food security is vital. This work directly complements our mission to connect communities to nature through local food access, open spaces, and an increased appreciation for ecological systems and community health. This funding will enable them to enhance their existing programs, making them more accessible to seniors and people who use wheelchairs and other assistive devices.

We are currently partnering with Valley Verde through both our organizations participation in the Urban Growers Network, a committed and evolving collective of grassroots urban agriculture and environmental education agencies in Santa Clara County. Our shared vision is that by forming connections with each other through the land and food, Santa Clara County residents restore a food system that delivers justice to under-resourced communities while protecting our soil, water, air and biodiversity. This funding will directly support Valley Verde in their ongoing efforts to further that mission.

We deeply appreciate and support Valley Verde's crucial role in our shared community, particularly their efforts to build a more equitable and sustainable local food system. We have seen firsthand the need for their work: engaging families and schools with intensive year-round support to learn to grow fresh, healthy produce while offering a continuum of urban gardening and environmental education from beginner to advanced levels.

Given their demonstrated impact and our shared values, we enthusiastically recommend Valley Verde and encourage the Open Space Authority to support their work through the Urban Grant Program.

Regards,

Jason Su, Executive Director
Guadalupe River Park Conservancy



October 7, 2025

To the Open Space Urban Grant Program Review Committee:

On behalf of **Veggielution**, I am pleased to express our support for **Valley Verde** and their work to advance environmental education, sustainability, and food security in our region. Veggielution has had the privilege of collaborating with Valley Verde, and we deeply value their culturally relevant and community-centered approach to empowering families through home gardening, climate resilience, and healthy food access.

At Veggielution, our mission is to connect people from diverse backgrounds through food and farming to build community and promote environmental stewardship. Valley Verde's programs directly complement this mission by helping low-income and immigrant families gain the skills, confidence, and resources to grow their own fresh, culturally significant produce.

Currently, Veggielution partners with Valley Verde to support outreach and recruitment for their home gardening and education programs, as well as to participate in collaborative networks that strengthen our shared regional food system. Through these partnerships, we have seen firsthand how Valley Verde's work addresses critical needs in our community — building leadership, increasing food sovereignty, and advancing climate resilience in an equitable way.

We highly value Valley Verde's contributions and leadership in this field and strongly encourage the Open Space Authority to fund their efforts through its Urban Grant Program. Their programs have a proven impact on community well-being, environmental sustainability, and local food equity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Gerth", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Shawn Gerth
Executive Director
shawn@veggielution.org
408-203-0168

GARDEN TO TABLE SILICON VALLEY

GROWN BY THE COMMUNITY. FOR THE COMMUNITY.



October 9, 2025

Dear Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority:

I am writing on behalf of Garden to Table Silicon Valley to express our support for Valley Verde's work. We have collaborated with Valley Verde in various ways for more than a decade and have found that they offer a unique and culturally relevant approach to environmental education, sustainability, and food security. Their work complements our own efforts to provide inclusive educational experiences rooted in connections to nature, community, and regenerative food systems.

Our partnership with Valley Verde has been both collaborative and deeply impactful. Their team has provided invaluable technical assistance and guidance as we've expanded our own community programs, including the development of our community compost hub. Valley Verde's expertise in community engagement and sustainable food systems has helped us strengthen our outreach strategies and improve program implementation. We are currently partnering with Valley Verde to support outreach and recruitment of families for their programs, and we continue to work side by side in local networks dedicated to building a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable food system. Through this partnership, we have seen firsthand the critical role Valley Verde plays in empowering low-income, food-insecure families to grow their own fresh, culturally relevant food and to become local leaders in climate resilience and community health.

We value Valley Verde's role in our community and encourage the Open Space Authority to fund their work through its Urban Grant Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Trinity Tomsic". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Trinity Tomsic

Executive Director
Garden to Table Silicon Valley

October 9, 2025

Dear Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority:

I am writing on behalf of the La Mesa Verde/Sacred Heart Community Service program to express our support for Valley Verde's work. We have collaborated with Valley Verde in various ways for over a decade and have found that they offer a unique and culturally relevant approach to environmental education, sustainability, and food security. Their work complements our own efforts to fighting against food injustice].

We are currently partnering with Valley Verde to assist with outreach and recruitment of families for their programs, and we work together in collaborative networks to build a more equitable, sustainable local food system. We work closely with them to strengthen community led food access and empowerment efforts. We have seen the need for Valley Verde's work in our community to engage low-income, food-insecure families in growing their own fresh, culturally-relevant food and building local knowledge and leadership in climate resilience.

We value Valley Verde's role in our community and encourage the Open Space Authority to fund their work through its Urban Grant Program.

Sincerely,

Lucia Garcia,
La Mesa Verde Organizing Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lucia Garcia', written over the typed name and title.