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Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

2020 Urban Grant Program

Deadline: 7/1/2020

Sacred Heart Community Service **La Mesa Verde Program**

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\$ 39,900.00 Requested

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(Pacific)

Project Contact

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EIN 23-7179787

Project Description [top](#)

Applicant Type

1. What type of organization is this?

- Public Agency
- School or School District
- 501(c)3 Nonprofit
- Eligible organization acting as Fiscal Sponsor for another organization

2. Does the application include a fiscal sponsor?

If the project includes a fiscal sponsor, the fiscal sponsor must be the applicant.

- YES
- NO

Overview

3. Which type of grant are you requesting?

- Small (\$10,000 - \$39,999)
- Large (\$40,000 - \$250,000)

4. Grant category (check all that apply)

- Environmental Stewardship and Restoration
- Parks, Trails, and Public Access
- Environmental Education
- Urban Agriculture / Food Systems

5. Type of project (check all that apply)

- Capital improvement (Large projects only)
- Planning
- Program

6. 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 they Authority's jurisdiction.

1381 South First Street, San Jose, CA 95110

7. Project Location: Open Space Authority District (check all that apply)

A detailed map of the Authority Districts can be found under the Library tab, or online at <https://www.openspaceauthority.org/public-information/board-of-directors.html>.

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

8. Who does the project serve? Please indicate which Open Space Authority Districts are served (check all that apply)

A detailed map of the Authority Districts can be found under the Library tab, or online at <https://www.openspaceauthority.org/public-information/board-of-directors.html>.

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

9. Project Abstract

(Brief, 3-4 sentences)

Sacred Heart Community Service's La Mesa Verde (LMV) program is a network of urban gardeners that uses innovative solutions to build a sustainable food system in San Jose and the broader Bay Area. Our approach draws on agroecology to bridge knowledge, build an active community, and implement organic gardening practices. LMV is seeking a grant of \$39,900 to help cover the cost of purchasing materials needed for the urban gardens, staff time, and our community-building efforts.

Project Planning (20 points)

10. Describe the proposed project.

LMV is a network of urban gardeners that addresses food insecurity in San Jose. We ground our work in agroecology and focus on three main areas in our programming: organic gardening techniques, cultural diversity and values, and active member participation in the community. Agroecology is the study of agricultural systems through the lens of ecological principles. It emphasizes diversity, resilience, and sustainability in agriculture and in community building. As part of this initiative, LMV is building alliances with other organizations throughout the Bay Area that are also working on issues of food access, agroecology, and community organizing. LMV envisions a future where our members drive the movement-building effort.

LMV provides low-income residents of San Jose participating in our program with the necessary materials to grow an organic garden in their home. Through our "First-Year Introductory Garden Course", members receive up to two 4'x8'x1' raised garden beds, drip irrigation, and organic soil and compost. Each gardener also receives twenty organic seedlings, four different organic seed packets, and flowers for the fall and spring growing seasons. Aside from physical materials, LMV members participate in free, staff-facilitated educational and community-building opportunities.

LMV builds collective knowledge and power by providing the community with opportunities to share their experiences. We believe that all of our members have knowledge to share. Therefore, we structure our learning spaces to incorporate education methodologies that allow participants to connect with one another and with the facilitators. This structure challenges traditional teaching methods and facilitates the exchange of ancestral and cultural knowledge amongst participants. LMV promotes this dialogue by centering our monthly workshops on two main areas: food justice and organic gardening techniques. Through agroecology, our members not only learn gardening skills but become politically and socially conscious. They are committed to designing a food system that is ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable for all.

LMV uses a member-driven structure composed of allies, volunteers, and community leaders, to advance our work in San Jose and beyond. Participants can join one of the five committees that support our work. In these spaces, members lead recruitment strategies, design and implement educational workshops, and organize policy campaigns. In the past, LMV staff have participated in coalition-building groups like the Santa Clara County Food System Alliance, and most recently, the beginnings of a "South Bay Food Justice Working Group". We want to push ourselves to have actual member representation within these spaces. This year, we will utilize our political education and capacity-building work to build our members' leadership within the food justice alliance movement.

11. Describe key project deliverables and estimated completion dates.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, LMV has made temporary modifications to our program to keep our community healthy. We are using online video conferencing and social media platforms to build community and host our workshops. When we can hold gatherings in person, we will resume our normal processes. As part of our program, we will accomplish the following during the grant period (from January 2021 to December 2021):

Quarter 1 (January to March)

-Host "New Member Orientation" to welcome 50 new gardeners

- Organize and recruit volunteers for 10 garden bed installation events
- Lead 2 bilingual educational workshops
- Host monthly meetings for the five LMV committees
- Provide members with educational resources on the food system

Quarter 2 (April to June)

- Distribute seeds and seedlings for the spring plant distribution
- Install 45 garden beds for community members
- Host 2 bilingual educational workshops
- Continue hosting monthly committee meetings
- Identify 2 members to serve as LMV representatives in the food system alliance

Quarter 3 (July to September)

- Host 2 bilingual educational workshops
- Organize the annual "Summer Garden Tour"
- Continue hosting monthly committee meetings
- LMV representatives attend food system alliance meetings

Quarter 4 (October to December)

- Distribute seeds and seedlings for the fall growing season
- Host 2 bilingual educational workshops
- Launch recruitment for the new gardening cohort
- Organize "LMV Retreat" with committee members to discuss member feedback and plan for next year.
- LMV representatives continue attending food system alliance and join key project

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

N/A

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

For LMV, it is critical that we operate a sustainable program so that our community can continue to access these resources they rely on. LMV accomplishes this by building relationships with our community partners, strengthening volunteer engagement, and securing diverse funding. For the last six years, LMV has been a committed partner of the Santa Clara County Food System Alliance, which brings together organizations that are passionate about creating a more equitable food system. Through the Alliance, LMV has had the opportunity to discuss best practices and to collaborate on projects with other organizations.

LMV's sustainability plan also involves increasing our members' leadership in the program to build our capacity. LMV members contribute approximately 2,358 hours per year serving as garden mentors in our program, leading workshops, installing raised garden beds for new community members, and executing community-wide events. We will continue inviting our members to serve on our committees where they can lead program design and implementation.

LMV's strategy also includes continuing to secure diverse funding from individual donors, corporate partners, and foundations. We are also working closely with SHCS' Community Resource Development team to fundraise individual donations and to build new relationships with potential donors. CRD has demonstrated immense success in raising approximately \$3 million annually in private donations.

14. Describe the project's readiness for implementation.

Since 2009, LMV has worked to address the need for greater food access in San Jose. Over time, we have developed strong program infrastructure and are prepared to implement and grow this project for another year. As part of our program infrastructure, we have created a robust curriculum for our education

component and key events that build community. LMV has also developed various methods to assess our work and collect information on participants' experiences.

Furthermore, LMV's staff have a wealth of experience in developing sustainable food systems and building leadership. Jacky Rivera, the Organizing Manager, joined LMV in 2013. In this role, she oversees programming and ensures that LMV is actively working towards our long-term goal of building community power. Jacky has a background in nutritional sciences and public health. Fernando Fernandez, the current Organizing Coordinator, joined LMV in 2019. In this role, he uses his experience with agroecology to implement these principles in our program.

Lastly, LMV's work is supported through our committee structure. Committee members meet monthly to discuss the current projects they are working on and share any challenges they are experiencing. In these spaces, our members support one another and work together to make collective decisions that strengthen our program. All committees receive facilitation and other capacity-building training pertinent to the projects they lead in the network.

Project Budget (15 points)

15. Budget Summary - Grant Request

This is a budget summary only; a detailed Project Budget must be submitted using the Documents Upload tab. Please enter dollar amount. Note: after the application is submitted, the software will automatically add a TOTAL.

<input type="text" value="27,900"/>	Grant request: Personnel
<input type="text"/>	Grant request: Contracted Services
<input type="text" value="11,850"/>	Grant request: Supplies / Materials
<input type="text" value="150"/>	Grant request: Other Direct Costs
<input type="text"/>	Grant request: Indirect Costs
<input type="text" value="39,900.00"/>	TOTAL

16. Budget Summary - Matching Funds

This is a budget summary only; a detailed Project Budget must be submitted using the Documents Upload tab. Please enter dollar amount. Note: after the application is submitted, the software will automatically add a TOTAL.

<input type="text" value="138,469.32"/>	Total Matching Funds
<input type="text" value="138,469.32"/>	TOTAL

17. Budget Narrative

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

LMV is requesting a grant of \$39,900 from Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority. The grant will support the labor cost associated with this project. These costs include the Organizing Manager's time spent supporting team members, overseeing two committees, and developing key relationships with partner organizations. LMV's labor costs also include the Organizing Coordinator's time spent training members to facilitate workshops, modifying the educational curriculum, and developing leaders through our committees.

LMV is also requesting funds to support our programmatic expenses. This includes purchasing the items needed for new members to establish their backyard gardens. Key items that we purchase annually include lumber, drip irrigation, soil, and compost. In addition, we work with local vendors to acquire the seeds and seedlings that we distribute to members in the spring and fall planting seasons. Garden beds are a key component of our program. Cohort members apply the skills they learn in our workshops to their backyard

garden beds to have a successful harvest and improve their access to fresh produce.

A portion of our request will also cover the cost for guest speakers to lead some of our workshops. This will allow LMV to deliver workshops on new topics that our community is interested in. We are also allocating funding to cover the cost of childcare for our members during large events, meetings, and weekend workshops. By providing free quality childcare, we remove a critical barrier for involvement in our program.

Project Goals (15 points)

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

Individuals and families experiencing poverty often struggle with accessing nutritious food due to inequities in their food system. San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR) found that approximately "15%" of low-income households "report that they can only sometimes, or never, find fresh [or affordable] produce in their neighborhood". (San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association, Healthy Food Within Reach, 2015) In San Jose neighborhoods like Washington/Guadalupe residents live further away from a "full-scale grocery store" than the county average, but have a greater number of fast-food outlets per square mile (4.3) than Santa Clara County (2.8) (Santa Clara County Department of Public Health, Guadalupe/Washington Profile, 2016).

Communities experiencing poverty commonly face disenfranchisement and social exclusion. Individuals in these communities face discrimination on the basis of their class, gender, immigration status, and race. Their concerns are often not taken into account by legislators and local elected officials who construct crucial policy changes. The Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative found that low-income communities have "less meaningful representation and political power to improve the conditions [they face]". (2013 Health Equity Report).

LMV's program aims to address these pervasive issues that continue to affect our community. Our program helps new gardeners cultivate their own gardens, ensuring that they have a sustainable source of food. For families that do not have their own backyard, we have established community growing spaces where members can garden together. In one year, LMV gardeners grew over 11,000 pounds of organic produce. However, our impact extends beyond our member-base; LMV members share 29% of their produce with family, friends, and neighbors, helping others access fresh food. LMV works with 125 average households each year, impacting about 500 adults and children.

LMV's program model also creates an environment that fosters true representation and helps build social connections amongst participants. Our educational workshops serve as spaces where members can hold critical conversations about the challenges their communities are experiencing. Members can also effect change by joining one of our committees. In these spaces, members will develop their leadership skills and make key decisions that improve our program. Approximately, 80% of participating gardeners shared that they felt a stronger sense of belonging in the community since they started gardening with LMV.

Throughout the years, LMV has learned that people are more invested in our work when they understand how to navigate systems, and have confidence that their efforts can result in meaningful changes in their lives and communities. Therefore, we also work with the community to develop policy campaigns that are centered on the issues they consider priorities.

19. How does this project serve the community?

These metrics are required for all projects. Project-specific metrics can be added under Question 20 below. Note: after the application is submitted, the software will automatically add a TOTAL that will not be used.

360	Number of people served
140	Number of youth served (under 18 years)
1	Number of programs provided

501.00 TOTAL

20. In what other ways does the project serve the community? Please list the project-specific goals (both social and environmental).

Please list any additional goals and how they will be measured (e.g. surveys, field measurements, attendance sheets, etc.).

Goals

Organic Gardening:

-Enrolling 50 new gardeners and providing each gardener with the materials necessary for an urban garden. As a result, LMV will have an active base of 120 gardeners composed of new and returning participants.

Collective Knowledge:

-75 % of participating gardeners will increase vegetable consumption and will increase their confidence in growing their own food.

-75% of participating gardeners will feel a stronger sense of belonging in the community since they started gardening

Active Community:

-60% of participating gardeners will feel that they can influence decisions that build food access, by working collectively with others in the network.

-Provide at least 5 co-learning opportunities for LMV members to visit other food justice organizations.

Assessments

To measure the total number of new gardeners and active members, LMV will keep a record of program sign-up sheets and attendance sheets. In addition, we will administer pre-and post-surveys to assess these three key areas. Staff supplement these surveys by holding focus groups where participants can discuss their experience in the program. LMV will also use our new evaluation tool, the Mentor Garden Report. The report will evaluate the following areas: crop quality, quality of garden environment, quality of care, community-building, innovativeness in garden practices, and mentor and mentee collaboration.

Impact (15 points)

21. Describe the lasting impact of the project.

Our model uses gardening as a vehicle for deeper engagement by unifying members under a common practice and building solidarity around systemic issues. LMV members who know and trust each other, share food together and who have gained a deeper understanding of injustice within our food system are more capable of holding discussions or leading campaigns that center their community's needs.

We believe that by developing collective leadership among LMV members, through producing our own food and organizing for policy change, we can improve access to good food in San José and create a strong, sustainable community committed to food justice. The impacts of this project can be captured by the work that happens through gardening. Gardening helps members gain important life skills and health benefits. Gardening also allows LMV to build programming around political education and capacity building.

LMV members' involvement extends beyond addressing inequities in our food system. Many program participants have joined SHCS' committees, like Sacred Heart Housing Action Committee (SHHAC) and Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ), where they address issues of displacement in Santa Clara County. As they become more involved in these spaces, we hope that they will grow comfortable leading campaign strategies to create a more equitable society for future generations.

Community Engagement / Stakeholder Support (10 points)

22. Describe the community support and/or community engagement process.

Please submit letters using the Documents Upload tab.

LMV works with many organizations in the Bay Area to build a more equitable and sustainable food system. One of our core partners is the Santa Clara University Department of Environmental Science. The Department of Environmental Sciences conducts research examining the relationship between agricultural policy and social equity. Together, we work to further research on how these issues affect local communities. LMV is also a member of the Santa Clara County Food System Alliance. As a part of this collective, LMV helps address the lack of access to healthy food and the loss of agricultural land in the Bay Area.

Some of LMV's other partners include the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Master Gardeners and the San Jose Garden Club. As one of our partners, UCCE Master Gardeners help lead our education workshops, serve as mentors for our new gardeners, and propagate seedlings for our program. LMV has also worked closely with the San Jose Garden Club, which focuses on increasing access to gardening resources. As a longtime partner, they have supported LMV's program financially, helping maintain this critical resource.

Our program was created with the help of the community. We cannot operate without their involvement and support. Members commit to contributing a minimum of 15 volunteer hours a year. They invite their friends to our workshops and events and leverage their experiences to develop key approaches that have helped our program succeed.

Leadership & Innovation (10 points)

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

If there are project partners, please upload partner letters on the Documents Upload tab.

Few organizations in the Bay Area are conducting both direct service and systems-change work in the realm of food justice. LMV is unique in this aspect. We provide raised garden beds and gardening knowledge free of cost to low-income families and organize around issues affecting the community. LMV achieves this by utilizing an agroecological framework to strengthen our network of gardeners. Agroecology's emphasis on diversity, resilience, and sustainability informs how we grow food and build a strong community. By recognizing the diverse sources of knowledge and ancestral practices our members hold, agroecology and LMV foster an environment ripe for collaboration.

As part of this approach, LMV actively encourages members to think of their personal networks in correlation to our work. They bring in their connections and experiences from other affiliations, like schools, churches and other community groups, to amplify LMV's reach in the community. This has taken many forms, from members utilizing their children's school events to recruit new gardeners to members advocating and obtaining permission to establish gardens on school property for families that do not have growing space at home. Members also contribute new ideas from successes in other spaces like fundraising strategies they have implemented at their churches. Being member-led opens LMV to many opportunities for collaboration.

Organizational Capacity (15 points)

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

If the applicant is a Fiscal Sponsor, please describe both the Fiscal Sponsor and the sponsored organization.

SHCS is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1964 as a grassroots movement to address hunger and homelessness in San Jose, California. Today, SHCS is one of Santa Clara County's largest providers of essential services and self-sufficiency programs, with 12 programs serving 60,000 individuals annually. In

2008, the State of California selected SHCS to serve as the Community Action Agency for Santa Clara County, further expanding the agency's role in financial assistance provision and leadership.

SHCS has strong organizational leadership. As a Community Action Agency, our Board of Directors is comprised of members representing government, private industry, and low-income residents. Our Board Members help set policy guidelines and approve the annual budget and operating plan. Our Executive Director, Poncho Guevara, leads the day-to-day operations of our agency. Mr. Guevara has over 19 years of leadership experience, including experience in nonprofit executive management. He is dedicated to creating systemic approaches to eliminating poverty through a combination of investments in human services, advocacy, and grassroots organizing for wider public policy solutions.

SHCS has a long history of working with diverse communities throughout Santa Clara County. Therefore, SHCS implements training to ensure that each staff member can provide culturally competent and trauma-informed services. Through meetings and retreats, staff have learned how to de-escalate conflict, implement trauma-informed practices in their programs, and address racism at SHCS. SHCS recognizes the role language capacity plays in ensuring our organization is culturally competent. So, SHCS has also increased the number of staff members with appropriate language and cultural skills to better serve people whose first or only language is Vietnamese, Cantonese or Mandarin.

BONUS POINTS: Underserved Communities (10 points)

25. 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 a Deep Engagement Community (DEC).

This question is optional; please answer if applicable, otherwise enter "N/A." A map of the DECs can be found by clicking on "Apply" at <https://www.openspaceauthority.org/urban>.

Since 2009, LMV has worked with the Deep Engagement Community (DEC) in area three of San Jose. Neighborhoods like Washington/Guadalupe, part of the DEC, have little park space available for families and youth to enjoy. The parks that are available often are unsafe for the general public to visit due to a higher amount of gang activity in the area. LMV's program connects residents to green space by establishing urban gardens for our community members. LMV has helped build urban gardens at residents' homes and has established community gardens at local elementary schools like Franklin Elementary School. To date, LMV has built over 1000 raised garden beds.

As part of our relationship building and active community goals, LMV also connects members to existing green spaces in the area via community hikes at Open Space preserves and workshop collaborations at places like Veggielution and Martial Cottle Park.

Furthermore, LMV's network has advocated for local policy to transform blighted, vacant land in their neighborhoods into safe community spaces. In 2015, LMV participants successfully launched a community organizing effort to create Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones (UAIZs) in San Jose, under AB551. This law would provide a tax incentive to property owners who allowed urban agriculture on their unused, vacant land. In November of 2017, San Jose passed an ordinance supporting UAIZs in unincorporated areas, expanding green spaces throughout the city.

BONUS POINTS: Community Building (10 points)

26. Describe how this project actively encourages community building by engaging or accommodating local residents in novel and creative ways.

This question is optional; please answer if applicable, otherwise enter "N/A."

At SHCS, we believe strongly that we must engage our community in order to achieve our goal: dismantling unjust systems that allow for poverty to exist. To achieve this, SHCS focuses on strengthening our

community's commitment, mobilizing individuals to take action, and empowering our community to serve as leaders. Across the organization, all programs have developed community engagement elements into their strategies.

In LMV, we use our committee structure as a key method to deepen members' involvement, beyond gardening, and encourage them to take action for greater social change. We invite the community to join our five committees: the Advisory Committee, Social Activities Committee, Build Committee, Mentorship Committee, and Organizing Committee. In these spaces, our members are at the forefront of program design and implementation. They also support one another and work together to make collective decisions for the program. Approximately 45% of participants remain involved in our network through the committee structure.

LMV also uses our community-building events, like our Plant Distribution Days, to strengthen member relations. Each event incorporates activities that are family-friendly and educational. We also build into our programs an opportunity for our members and allies to join together for a communal meal. These opportunities allow individuals of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to connect over the common goal of food justice.

BONUS POINTS: Climate Resilience (5 points)

27. How does this project enhance and/or raise awareness about climate resilience?

This question is optional; please answer if applicable, otherwise enter "N/A."

Organic gardening, in and of itself, is a form of climate resilience. However, not everyone sees it this way; oftentimes they do not recognize the sociopolitical knowledge and context of organic gardening. For LMV, it is important that our members and allies understand the power of organic food production, especially when it pertains to disadvantaged communities like those we work with.

We accomplish this through our educational resources. Program participants attend monthly bilingual garden skill-based workshops taught by staff and LMV members, which includes both sustainable garden practices and political education on our food system. In these spaces members learn, share, and connect the ecology and balance of life in their gardens to that of our broader community and to the systemic issues underlying food injustice.

In our workshops, LMV also discusses the disproportionate impact of climate change on underrepresented communities and its connection to the socioeconomic burdens members mention in their personal testimonies. Most importantly, we discuss the impact of our conventional food system on our planet and community health, emphasizing the need for change. By utilizing gardening as a metaphor for our community struggles, we are able to build consciousness and urgency for community-crafted solutions that center climate resiliency.

Documents Upload [top](#)

Documents Requested *

Financial Statement

Project Budget

[download template](#)

Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement

[download template](#)

Site Control Documentation

[download template](#)

Required? Attached Documents *

✓ [SHCS Audited Financials FY18-19](#)

✓ [LMV Program Budget](#)

[CEQA Compliance Certification Form](#)

[download template](#)

[Letters of Support](#)

[Letter of Support: UCCE Master Gardeners](#)

[Letter of Support: LMV Advisory Committee](#)

[Letter of Support: Food System Alliance](#)

[Letter of Support: Santa Clara University](#)

[Letter of Support: SJ Garden Club](#)

[Project Partner Letters](#)

[Maps and Site Plans](#)

[Photographs](#)

[Other](#)

[LMV Program Newsletter](#)

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