



is a youth development program that uses sustainable agriculture as a means to effect lasting change for youth participants and nourishes East Austin residents who have limited access to healthy foods.

What East Austin Youth Think About Urban Roots

To ensure that youth are engaged in Urban Roots at every stage of program development, we conducted strategic planning sessions with over 120 students at all the public and charter high schools in East Austin.

Job Skills and Life Skills

82% of these students did not have jobs. They cited the following barriers as keeping them from employment: age, lack of work experience, and lack of transportation.

Farm and Marketing

One of the biggest draws for young people was the prospect of learning entrepreneurial and business skills. We explained that in both our spring and summer programs, youth will sell the produce they harvest at local farmers' markets and on-site farm stands. After the season, they will crunch the numbers and analyze the costs and benefits, and decide at which locations to continue selling. They also liked the idea of being entrepreneurs by creating and marketing value-added products such as salsa or hot sauce from the produce they will have grown.

Community Service

Youth Interns will grow produce for people in need and will donate and serve that food in soup kitchens. They will also serve their community by selling fresh, organic produce at affordable prices to residents of East Austin. 58% of the students that we talked to were volunteering or participating in community service. Part of our curriculum will involve discussing the interns' experience in soup kitchens and facilitating workshops about hunger so that young people are able to make deeper connections to service.

Health

The health component generated the most serious discussion among the groups. When we talked about obesity-related diseases, over 3/4 of the students said that they knew someone with diabetes. As 33% of babies born in Texas are projected to develop Type II Diabetes due to obesity, Urban Roots will work to educate the community about what everyone can do to change that trend.

Overall

Both students and school faculty expressed an interest in and a need for a program like Urban Roots. 79% of students surveyed said that they would apply to be an Urban Roots Farm Intern if the opportunity was presented to them. The information we collected from these strategic planning sessions has been a critical tool in the development of the Urban Roots Farm Project. Youth participants gave us great feedback about the program structure and let us know what aspects of the program pique their interest and would meet their needs.

"This program would be good because it would bring the community together. When everyone comes together, more gets accomplished."

- Reagan High School Student

"If you give young people responsibility, most of the time they will try their hardest to live up to your expectations."

- LBJ High School Student

Urban Roots is a program developed by YouthLaunch, an Austin nonprofit providing young people with long-term, meaningful service as a way to improve their own lives.

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