

# A Simple Guide to Starting & Developing a Healthy Growing Project



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## Why Would You Start a Growing Project?

### Connecting with Neighbors to Make a Difference

Growing Projects create a unique opportunity for communities to come together around a shared mission: alleviating hunger through agricultural development. By working collaboratively, neighbors strengthen relationships, build a sense of shared purpose, and see the tangible impact of their collective efforts. This model fosters local engagement while addressing a global need, making a difference both near and far.

### Using Your Local Knowledge and Resources

Because Growing Projects are community-driven, they fit naturally into what people are already doing: farming, fundraising, and gathering as a community. This approach leverages existing resources and skills, making participation both practical and sustainable. It's about stewarding what we already have and using it to create lasting change. Growing Projects recognize that each person has unique talents to cultivate and share, much like how only a farmer can offer the gift of tending the land.

### Putting Faith into Action

Growing Hope Globally is a Christian response to hunger, and many participants see Growing Projects as a way to live out their faith by serving others. It's a tangible way to be a witness in the community, showing love, generosity, and care. The impact creates long-term change by equipping farmers in developing countries with tools and training for success. This investment helps communities interrupt cycles of hunger and poverty, fostering independence and resilience.



### Value of Being a Part of Growing Hope Globally

Being a part of Growing Hope Globally provides encouragement, resources, travel opportunities, visits from overseas guests, and shared stories of transformation. This engagement fosters collaboration and learning benefitting the Growing Project.

### The Multiplication Effect

A dollar invested in a Growing Project can have a greater impact compared to traditional giving. This is because donations—especially through crop-based Growing Projects—are leveraged and multiplied through partnerships and community-driven efforts. The principle of sowing and reaping applies not just in farming but in generosity, making every contribution go further.

### Charitable Giving

While generosity toward Growing Hope Globally stems from a desire to create a lasting impact, there are also financial opportunities for those involved with a Growing Project. Donors can typically benefit from tax deductions related to their charitable contributions. Moreover, certain types of donations, like the Gift of Grain, involve an ownership transfer that may affect income reporting and offer additional tax savings.

*Please consult your tax professional for advice applicable to your particular tax situation.*

# How Do You Start a Growing Project?

## What is a Growing Project?

Growing Projects are community groups including farmers, agribusinesses, churches, civic groups and others who come together around the common cause of helping people living in hunger help themselves. Together a Growing Project grows crops, raises animals or does other activities to generate funds. The whole community has the opportunity to get involved. Farmers till the land or raise the animals while businesses, churches and individuals cover the input and land costs so that, when sold, the entire profit can be used to support the Growing Hope Globally program(s) of their choice. With each one doing their part, the impact is multiplied beyond what any individual could do on their own.

## Determine what you will do to raise funds

Any commodity (corn, soybeans, wheat, beef, dairy cows/milk, fruit, etc.) can be the basis of a Growing Project. Some Growing Projects will utilize more than one commodity, as multiple farmers choose to get involved.

While most Growing Projects are built around such commodities, others have found other ways to raise funds including meals, special offerings, fundraising letters to the community, concerts, direct sales, and tournaments. The opportunities are endless.



## Find opportunities to minimize costs

Donations of land, inputs, labor, and cash reduce production costs and increase proceeds. Inviting other members of the community to contribute what they can gets them involved in the Growing Project.

Land can come from many sources:

- Farmers donating acres of their own farmland.
- Landowners forgiving rent on land farmed by a tenant.
- Organizations (churches, businesses, cemeteries) donating “buffer land”.
- Land secured at a reduced rental cost.

Inputs (seed, fertilizer, feed, vet services) are often donated by local dealers, agribusiness, or farmers.

Labor and machinery are provided by farmers.

Financial donations come from local churches, organizations, and individuals, sometimes through creative methods that strengthen community attachment.



## Growing Project Participants

- Farmers - Farmers bring expertise and a love for their work that no other entity can provide. They are an invaluable resource to find the land, other inputs, and connections needed to establish a Growing Project.
- Leadership Group - The Leadership Group provides structure and guidance and meets, as needed, throughout the year. While there is much room for flexibility, common roles include a Growing Project Leader, Treasurer, Communications (Internal & External) Person, Secretary, Event Planner and "Cheerleader." The Leadership team often includes others who are participating in the Growing Project - farmers, church members, and donors.
- Donors - People contribute through labor, finances, and creativity—anyone can use their gifts as opportunities to get involved.
- Churches - Churches often serve as the fiscal agent, hubs for community recruitment and celebration. Given that faith often motivates participants, churches provide essential community support and encouragement.
- Growing Hope Globally - The staff of Growing Hope Globally is here to help. They can offer guidance as your Growing Project gets established, resources throughout the year, and stories of "growing lasting solutions to hunger".

Develop a culture of invitation and find recurring ways to get people involved with your Growing Project through sharing your story in local publications, in church settings, and throughout the community.

## Handling Finances

Most Growing Projects utilize a local church or community organization (e.g. FFA Alumni Chapter) that can receive donations and write checks.

Remember, everything is sold here in the United States and the money raised is used to support Growing Hope Globally's Overseas Agricultural Development Programs. Visit <https://www.growinghopeglobally.org/programs/> for a list of all current programs and their financial needs. All proceeds, along with a completed designation form, are sent to Growing Hope Globally. It is helpful if they arrive as soon as possible, but no later than March 1st, as Growing Hope Globally's fiscal year ends on March 31st.



## Developing a Growing Project

This worksheet is designed to help you and your community brainstorm and organize your thoughts around creating a Growing Project with Growing Hope Globally. Consider inviting a staff member from Growing Hope Globally to help facilitate the process. Collaborate and share your ideas!

**Why do we want to have a Growing Project?**

**What unique gifts, opportunities, and resources do we have as a community?**

**Keeping in mind our unique gifts, opportunities and resources, what do we want to do to raise funds as a Growing Project?**

**Who else do we need to invite to join us in order to make this Growing Project a success? Who else would benefit from being included in this Growing Project?**

**What is our next step, when will we gather, and who will organize the time together?**

## Planting New Ideas for Your Growing Project

Below are ideas that current Growing Project Leaders have shared regarding how they have enhanced their Growing Projects. This is a small sample of the ways that Growing Projects are innovating and expanding. We hope you will find them inspiring as you continue to develop your own Growing Project.

The resources mentioned in each section can be found in this folder:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1\\_OzbHsN-XBLRGJMGJf6uPX1CsYvyVacJ?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_OzbHsN-XBLRGJMGJf6uPX1CsYvyVacJ?usp=drive_link)

### Offering a Blessing of the Seed Service and a Harvest Celebration

“I can’t imagine starting out [the year] without the Blessing of the Seed!”

- Patty Hurwitz, Field of Hope - Myersville, MD Growing Project

- Benefits: A Blessing of the Seed provides fellowship to kick off the Growing Project year and invite God’s blessing on the shared work. A Harvest Celebration is for celebrating, giving thanks to God, and recognizing donors. Both events serve as a reminder to donate.
- Encouragements: Invite participating churches, farmers, and community members. Promote using social media, local flyers, and media outreach. Invite Growing Hope Globally staff and guests to attend.
- Resources: *Blessing of the Seeds Guide* and *Harvest Celebration Guide*



### Connecting with an Overseas Program

“It was really motivating to meet in person those who are benefitting from these Growing Projects.”

- Ann Snipes, Sharing the Harvest - Yakima, WA Growing Project

- Benefits: Overseas trips, guest visits, and webinars allow Growing Projects to see their impact, hear first-hand stories to share, and provide motivation to expand their efforts.
- Encouragements: Trips are safe, well-planned learning experiences that offer a better perspective on Overseas Programs. An Overseas Guest visit offers an easy way to hear about the supported work without traveling, and lets the guest experience your community.
- Resources: Visit <https://www.growinghopeglobally.org/get-involved/> for information about upcoming learning visits or to watch a recent webinar.



## Securing Donated Inputs

“When the inputs to grow a crop are donated, together they turn into a much larger donation at the end of a growing season.”

- Burt Keefer, Thumb Area Hunger Relief Project - Pigeon, MI Growing Project

- Benefits: Receiving donated inputs has the ability to impact your Growing Project, minimizing costs and leading to more resources that your Growing Project can raise. It raises the profile of your Growing Project and leads to new relationships and involvement.
- Encouragements: Donations can come from a multitude of individuals, businesses, and organizations. Growing Hope Globally has partnerships with some national agribusinesses, but local businesses are often the best. You may find there is leftover seed from local dealers who might be able to share it.
- Resources: A list of sources of *Agribusiness Support for Growing Projects* is available in the resources folder. However, keep in mind that local relationships and donations often make the greatest impact.



## Expanding your Growing Project Within Agriculture

“You have to keep thinking of new ideas all the time!”

- Steve Seif, Byron Center, MI Growing Project

- Benefits: A diversity of commodities, fundraisers, and pieces of land to be utilized (often from unexpected sources) helps sustain and expand the opportunities for resources to be raised through a Growing Project.
- Encouragements: Make an effort when you meet to engage in creative brainstorming. Develop new ideas and actively seek new participants, specifically including non-farmers. Focus not only on fundraising, but also on community building. Diversify your approach and be creative. Consider reaching out to your local FFA Chapter to join in your efforts.
- Resources: Use the Developing a Growing Project worksheet earlier in this document, learn about FFA Resources at <https://www.growinghopeglobally.org/get-involved/ffa-resources/> Learn about gifts of grain and download the appropriate forms at <https://www.growinghopeglobally.org/get-involved/gift-of-grain/> Visit <https://www.growinghopeglobally.org/growing-projects/start-a-growing-project/> to explore different types of Growing Projects.



## Expanding Your Growing Project Outside of Agriculture

“A ‘no’ to something you don’t have is not a loss.”

- Jerry Lundein, Somonauk, IL Growing Project

“We have more money coming off the letters to farmers than we do the crop.”

- Duane Graber, Mt. Pleasant, IA GP

- Benefits: Diversify your Growing Project by involving non-farmers who believe in the mission, bringing new energy and support.
- Encouragement: Maintain an expansion mindset, leveraging available local interests and resources. Growing Projects have successfully raised funds by:
  - Athletic Events: Organizing walks, runs, bike rides, or pickleball tournaments.
  - Sales: Holding garage sales, selling items online (e.g., Facebook Marketplace), selling sweet corn or honey, or selling Hope Blend Coffee.
  - Business Partnerships: Working with local restaurants for percentage-of-sales donations.
  - Direct Outreach: Sending letters to local farmers and community members inviting donations
  - Community Events: Hosting community fundraising meals or hunger dinners.
  - Creative Ideas: Selling photo calendars; involving FFA in providing lunch at grain elevators; reaching out to local businesses and service clubs.
- Resources: Use the Developing a Growing Project worksheet earlier in this document to brainstorm. Find a *Growing Project Donation Request Letter Template* in the resources folder.



## Promoting Your Growing Project to Your Community

“We do a big write up in the newspaper...it’s a big promotional thing for our Growing Project!”

- Joy Hershey, Waterloo, IA Growing Project

- Benefits: Sharing about your Growing Project can expand the knowledge of what your Growing Project is doing and invite others to be a part of the work.
- Encouragement: Sharing the word about your Growing Project builds support and community participation. Utilize opportunities within your churches, community groups, and local media.
- Resources: Some Growing Projects have put together their own brochures. Two examples are available in the resources folder as well as a *Sample Press Release* you can use to alert local media about your project’s events and accomplishments. You can also collect donations using your own giving website (see next page for more information). Contact your Regional Director for help creating your own brochure or website. Growing Hope Globally Sunday materials can help you share your Growing Project with your local church. Find materials at <https://www.growinghopeglobally.org/growing-hope-globally-sunday/>

## Organizing a Leadership Group for Your Growing Project

“We meet throughout the year and that helps us stay organized.”

- Linda Carstens, Corner of Hope - Waukon, IA Growing Project

- Benefits: Occasional meetings keep your Growing Project informed, organized, and engaged in outreach and celebration. Organization becomes vital as more individuals and churches get involved.
- Encouragement: Meet a few times annually, aligning the schedule with the seasonal focus and opportunities of your Growing Project. Consider developing an agenda tailored to your specific needs.
- Resources: You can find an example of a *Growing Project Meeting Agenda* in the resources folder.



## Designating an Overseas Program to Support

“We select [Overseas Programs] that need the most money.”

- Hayley Bunselmeyer, Decatur, IL Growing Project

- Benefits: Be intentional about how you donate to Overseas Programs. The benefits of designating funds differ based on the method and timing chosen.
- Encouragement: Each designation method offers unique opportunities:
  - Pledge: Helps with early marketing and reaching new supporters by clarifying where funds are intended to go.
  - Post-Harvest Designation: A natural time, after funds are collected, for the Growing Project to gather, decide on allocation, offer gratitude, and promote the next year.
  - Creative Selection: Allows supporters to “vote” (using money) on programs, fostering ownership and excitement at a public event (e.g. harvest celebration, worship service, etc.).
- Resources: Visit <https://www.growinghopeglobally.org/programs/> for a list of the current programs in need of funding. Check out *Choosing Where to Designate* in the resources folder, and when you’ve made a decision, download a Designation Form at <https://www.growinghopeglobally.org/growing-project-resources/>

## Collecting Donations through a Giving Website

“Having the giving website has been a lifeline for collecting donations in an easy and transparent manner. Our members can see their gifts reflected right away and know that it’s in the care of Growing Hope Globally.”

- Karli Moore, Prospect, NC Growing Project

- Benefits: A website that collects donations offers another avenue for people to donate to your Growing Project.
- Encouragement: Growing Hope Globally can establish a dedicated giving website for your Growing Project to offer a streamlined, modern way for people to donate via debit or credit card or digital wallet. This flexible platform can facilitate acre sponsorships or manage all project finances as a fiscal agent, while allowing Growing Projects to retain freedom in selecting Overseas Programs.
- Resources: Contact your Regional Director who can help you set up a simple website. Check out this example from the Prospect, NC Growing Project: [give.growinghopeglobally.org/ProspectNC](http://give.growinghopeglobally.org/ProspectNC)