



AmeriCorps Member Position Description



Member Position / Title: Teaching Garden Coordinator

of Member Slots in this Position: 1

Member Immediate Supervisor Name: Tricia LeBlanc

Days / Hours of Service: M-F, 9-5

Member Immediate Supervisor Title: Director, Wetland Park & Nature Trail

Partner Organization Name: Sankofa Community Development Corporation

Address: 5200 Dauphine St. **City:** New Orleans, LA **Zip Code:** 70117

Orleans Fax number: **Website:** www.sankofanola.org

Organization/Agency Mission and/or Goals:

Sankofa CDC is a 501(c)3 that leads programs to combat systems which cause health disparities and impact the quality of life of vulnerable populations in the Greater New Orleans Area. The organization was started as an effort to initiate preventive health services and promote a culture of health in New Orleans’ Lower 9th Ward following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. To support food equity in the Lower 9th Ward, Sankofa operates a fresh produce market and food pantry. In addition, Sankofa has created a green infrastructure drainage project which also serves as an ecological land restoration project. Other work by Sankofa includes healthy cooking and gardening classes as well as cardiovascular health education work.

Program Mission and/or Goals:

Sankofa staff has been developing a plan to create a sustainable teaching garden that would address some of the food equity and health needs of the community through sustainable gardening and healthy eating educational programs. The goal of creating this teaching garden is to extend Sankofa’s mission, and extend our outreach into the community with regards to building healthier communities.

Community Need:

Many of the health disparities in the Lower Ninth Ward are attributed to socio-economic situations and a lack of available resources that result in environmental justice issues for residents of the area. The New Orleans Data Center states that the Lower 9th Ward population is comprised of African American residents (91%) with a third of households living in poverty (33.4%), higher than the poverty rate of the entire City of New Orleans (26.2%), as well as the United States (15.1%). High School graduation rates of the Lower Ninth population state 18.9% of residents left high school without receiving a diploma, which is higher than the City of New Orleans rate (10.5%) and the United States (8.5%). Lower 9th Ward residents also have a lower average household income (\$30,035), when compared to New Orleans’ average household income (\$60,599), and the average U.S. household income (\$77,866). In addition, the Lower 9th Ward is currently a “food desert”, having no grocery stores in the area that sell fresh produce and other healthy food items.

Member Position Summary:

The Teaching Garden Coordinator would be responsible for the design and development of an educational garden, including the schedule and implementation for planting as well as maintenance schedule for the garden. In addition, the coordinator would be responsible for the development of curriculum that could be used in a variety of programs and for a diverse population of learners.

A typical day for the Teaching Garden Coordinator would entail spending time developing the garden planting plan and curriculum, working with Sankofa staff on planting and maintaining the garden, conducting garden classes for students and other groups, and meeting with Sankofa Staff for updates, training, and other important communications.

Member Impact:

Sankofa's mission of combating health disparities is driving its interest in creating a teaching garden. In creating curriculum for the sustainable teaching garden, the corps member would help Sankofa address some of the food equity and health needs of the community. Learners of all ages would be engaged in programs that allow them to explore the benefits of sustainable agricultural practices. Beneficiaries to the program would be program participants including: students visiting during field trip programs, scouts participating in a badge program, families learning how to garden together, and adult learners engaged in gardening classes.

Sankofa would implement its program with an integrated garden plan as part of a sustainable agricultural curriculum, designed to teach school-aged children and others the benefits of gardening and sustainable living. The garden would include: raised beds, hoop house, bee hive, aquaponics tank, and chicken coop. Teaching children and adults sustainable agricultural practices supports both sustainable education and an important cultural and historical practice of the community. The program would focus primarily on students and schools located within the Lower 9th Ward neighborhoods, an area that has struggled with food equity issues and high poverty rates for years.

The corps member's implementation of the curriculum to schools and other learners would allow Sankofa to track how many students and other participants were reached by this program, and track the effectiveness of the curriculum developed through teacher evaluation surveys.

Measurable short-term goals will be the delivery of a completed curriculum, as well as the completion of a garden planting and maintenance plan. Measurable long-term goals would be determining the effectiveness of the curriculum. This would be accomplished through the collection of teacher evaluation surveys. Feedback provided by teachers will inform Sankofa's decisions in making any needed adjustments to the curriculum and/or program delivery. The garden planting and maintenance plan will be evaluated by Sankofa staff. Criteria for this evaluation will include, success of plant yields, efficiency of resource usage and staff time in garden management, and effectiveness of garden as an educational space.

Essential Functions of Position:

- Develop standards-based teaching garden programs for use with students of all grade levels and abilities
- Coordinate and implement teaching garden educational programs
- Develop and implement planting schedule and plan for garden
- Maintain and manage garden

Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- Knowledge of plants, gardening, and animal husbandry practices
- Knowledge of how to create and deliver environmental education programs to a variety of grade levels
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Effective classroom management & instructional abilities and methods
- Must be willing/able to work outside in all weather conditions for a majority of the work day.
- Must be enthusiastic about environmental education, and working with children, plants, and animals.
- Must be able to lift 50lbs.

Required Academic and Experience Qualifications:

- High School Diploma
- Background or experience in environmental education or informal education preferred