

Determining a “Good Fit” for New Growers

An Overview of Global Growers’ Intake Process



[Global Growers](#) is a garden and incubator program located outside of Atlanta, GA which offers a range of opportunities to New American farmers. The project has expanded over time, and as work spread onto multiple sites -it became necessary to-- distinguish the different opportunities available to prospective farmers and develop a process to identify which opportunity is the best fit based on criterion related to a farmer’s personal circumstance and level of commitment. While new farmers often approach opportunities to access land with the idea that the biggest available site is the best site, this isn’t always the case. A number of factors, detailed below, can help determine which site is the most appropriate for a new farmer. Global Growers’ intake process is intended to match farmers with the opportunity most suited to their abilities and needs, and set the tone for participation in the program.

Global Growers’ intake process was largely designed with refugee and immigrant farmers in mind, and while there are components that specifically serve working with this population, much of their approach applies to working with any type of farmer. This process can be adapted or selectively adopted to suit your program’s and participant’s needs.

Site Criteria

Garden 1 day a week; walking distance for

Market Garden 1-2 days a week, bus or drive

Incubator 3 days a week, need to have a car, past farming experience, including at least 3 years in food production (can be in another country, large scale gardening, selling a little to friends, etc., or can be work experience on someone else’s farm)

Global Growers has three site options:

1. Garden
2. Market Garden
3. Incubator Farm

Decisions related to which of these sites are the most appropriate are determined by three factors:

Time: How much time can a farmer spend on site? How many days per week are you available to be on the farm?

Transportation: How will a farmer get to the site? What is the distance from your home? Can you walk there? Take a bus? Do you need a car?

Space: How much space does the farmer need? Garden: 100 sq ft, Market Garden: 600 sq ft, Incubator: 1/8 acre – 1 acre

In order to access these sites, prospective farmers must:

- × Meet Site Criteria
- × Attend Orientation
- × Complete an Intake Application

Orientation

In order to assist farmers in self-selecting the correct site, Global Growers hosts a series of meetings at their community space. Staff shows farmers how much land they will have access to at the different sites by drawing plots with flour on the ground. This allows prospective farmers to visualize their options, and self-select and group based on the amount of land they feel is most appropriate to their needs.

For garden and market garden sites, the intake process is fairly simple: intake form is completed, plot is assigned, and orientation to garden management rules is provided.

If the incubator site is selected, prospective growers complete a much more intensive intake process:

Prospective farmers must attend a two-part (i.e., 2-day) “Intro to Farming in the United States” workshops, held on consecutive Saturdays. These workshops are intended to give participants enough information to ensure that the incubator is a good fit for them. Saturdays were selected because ongoing Global Growers workshops take place on this day, and weekend availability is important for full program participation.

During these workshops, prospective farmers are provided a **high and wide overview of farming in the US**. They are shown what farming in the US looks like through **pictures of farms, explanation of the kinds of crops that grow, discussion of what markets are available**, etc. They also receive information about how the Global Growers incubator farm program works (schedule of classes, site management expectations, fee schedule, etc.) An important component of the two day workshop is **hands on work** (some project involving physical activity, example: digging a trench). This reinforces that farmers need to be able to do hard physical work to succeed, and gives Global Growers staff a chance to observe how people work.

These workshops are an opportunity to talk about the incubator program and what to expect, including:

- What are farmers responsible for?
- What does the program provide?
- What is expected of participants?

Completing an Application

After orientation is completed, prospective farmers are eligible to submit an application. The application process includes:

- **Scheduling, and showing up for, an in person appointment.** This is done at the completion of the “Intro to Farming in the US” workshop.
- **Completing an intake form** which includes: contact info, everyone who is farming on the site, a chart of the farmer’s weekly schedule, including other commitments and how farm work can fit in. Must demonstrate that they can be on site 3 days a week including Saturdays. **The scheduling piece is typically the crux of a decision to participate on the incubator. If people don’t have the time, they are referred back to the market garden. This conversation allows for the realization that things won’t work if farmers don’t have enough time, and encourages self-selection out of the incubator.**

To connect with Global Growers, please complete an Intake Form, linked [here](#). For more information on the National Incubator Farm Training Initiative, please visit nesfp.org/nifti or e-mail brianna.bowman@tufts.edu. NIFTI is a project of the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project.

