

Tips for Developing a Labour Plan for the Community Farmer Application Form

The Community Farmer Application Form asks each applicant: **How much time have you set aside per week to grow and sell?** It asks if you are working alone, working with a partner, or are part of a larger team that will be working collectively on a shared micro-farm business.

Before deciding what you are going to grow and how you are going to sell whatever you grow, it is very important to seriously consider how much time can be realistically dedicated to running the proposed micro-farm business. The time available will have a significant impact on what and how much food can be grown and sold.

How much time will Community Farmers need to dedicate to running their micro-farm business? The answer to this question is that there is a range. Based on the experience of other micro-farm businesses in Toronto, *the minimum amount of time that Community Farmers can expect to spend working in their plot is at least 15 hours per week from May through October.* Once harvests begin, then there will also be time spent selling the food. Before May, there will also be some time spent getting ready for planting by planning the details of your micro-farm business.

The amount of time Community Farmers spend in their plot can easily be more than 15 hours per week. It all depends on the skill and experience of the growers, the number of different crops being grown, and the growing methods chosen.

- Those who have experience growing on a plot the size of a Community Farmer plot or larger will likely spend less time caring for their plot than those who are new to growing on this scale.
- Those who chose to grow small amounts of many different crops will likely spend more time caring for their plot than those who grow larger amounts of only a few different crops.
- Those who use growing methods that are focused on getting the most harvested out of every square foot of a garden (even if it requires a lot of work) will likely spend more time caring for their plot than those who use growing methods that are focused on reducing the work required (even if it means yields per square foot are less).

So, the Community Farmer who spends the least amount of time working in their plot is likely to be someone who already has experience growing at a similar or larger scale, is only growing 6-12 different crops, and who focuses on growing methods that are focused on efficiency. The Community Farmer who spends the most amount of time working in their plot is likely to be someone who only has experience growing on a smaller scale, is growing 40 different vegetables & herbs, and is focused on maximizing their yield per square foot, even if it requires more work. Of course, there could be Community Farmers who have experience growing on this scale, but are choosing to grow 40 different crops, and have lots of spare time to spend growing with a focus to maximize their yield per square foot. Or there could be Community Farmers who do not have experience growing on this scale, but who are only planning to grow 10 different crops, and who will learn and adopt growing techniques that will reduce their labour. There are many potential scenarios.

Conclusion

Each Community Farmer and each micro-farm plan is unique, so the amount of time they can expect to spend working on their plot will vary. There is no “perfect” or “correct” way to run a micro-farm business. Each Community Farmer will need to consider the time they have available, the goals they have for their plot and themselves, and make their own decisions about how they would like to run their micro-farm business. The purpose of this Tip Sheet was not to provide answers, but to help you think about how to arrive at your own answers. A good place to start is with a consideration of how much time you can dedicate to the plot.