



The Food Project

SEED CREW IMPACT STUDY

SUMMER 2019



Analysis & Report by
SEEDImpact.org



The Food Project's nationally recognized approach to leadership development combines agriculture, enterprise, and service to create a rigorous, practical, and integrated experience. As young people move through Seed Crew (summer), Dirt Crew (academic season), and Root Crew (year-round), they gain skills and knowledge to be leaders in their communities.

Seed Crew provides the first opportunity for young people to get involved with The Food Project. Each summer, high school students between the ages of 14 and 17 across racial, socio-economic, gender identity, and geographic differences come together to work on our urban and suburban farms in Boston, Lincoln, Lynn, and Wenham, MA. During this six-and-a-half-week paid summer internship (July through mid-August), youth work with staff to grow vegetables and distribute thousands of pounds of produce, while developing leadership, teamwork, workplace, and civic participation skills.

After working on our farms each morning, Seed Crew members spend most afternoons in workshops learning about sustainable agriculture, food access, social justice, and more. Seed Crew members see the impact of their work when they prepare and serve the food they grow at hunger relief organizations, and by staffing The Food Project's SNAP-accessible farmers markets. Youth in Seed Crew are held to high standards of performance and behavior and earn a stipend of \$275 each week, paid bi-weekly.

"My knowledge grew sooooo much! I didn't realize how present food insecurity is in my life and in my community."

"I have become more comfortable with stepping up. I learned that I have to take the initiative a lot, both in the field and workshops."

"This experience made me feel like I was doing so much and that I really could make a difference."

KEY FINDINGS

Our study encompassed two parts.

Part 1. OBSERVING OUR PARTICIPANTS.

At the start and end of the Seed Crew experience, Crew Leaders rated the competencies of 66 Crew members on a scale of 1 to 5, in five program areas:

Overall Crew Leaders observed youth competency gains at 71%.

Average Stage in July

Average Stage in August

Average Gain

Sustainable Agriculture: Learning basic farming tasks, growing food, and developing a strong connection to the land

2.3

3.8

65%

Working Across Difference: Forging deep connections with others from different backgrounds

2.2

3.6

64%

Communicating Powerfully: Developing the tools to have open and honest communication and to use the power of their voice to create social change

2.3

3.8

65%

Workplace Skills: Developing strong workplace practices in order to approach all work with rigor and responsibility

2.4

4.0

67%

Local Food Systems Change: Building an understanding of disparities in accessing healthy food and a commitment to sharing that knowledge

2.0

3.8

90%

As can be seen above, the greatest gain in ratings among the five program areas was for Local Food Systems Change. (Participants began in July with lower ratings for Local Food Systems Change than for the other four program areas; parity was achieved by August.)

"I'm more able to give and receive feedback. It's a good skill."

"I learned how to get along with people who have very different opinions to my own."

"Hearing many new perspectives reminded me to always listen and be aware of how different everybody's lives are."

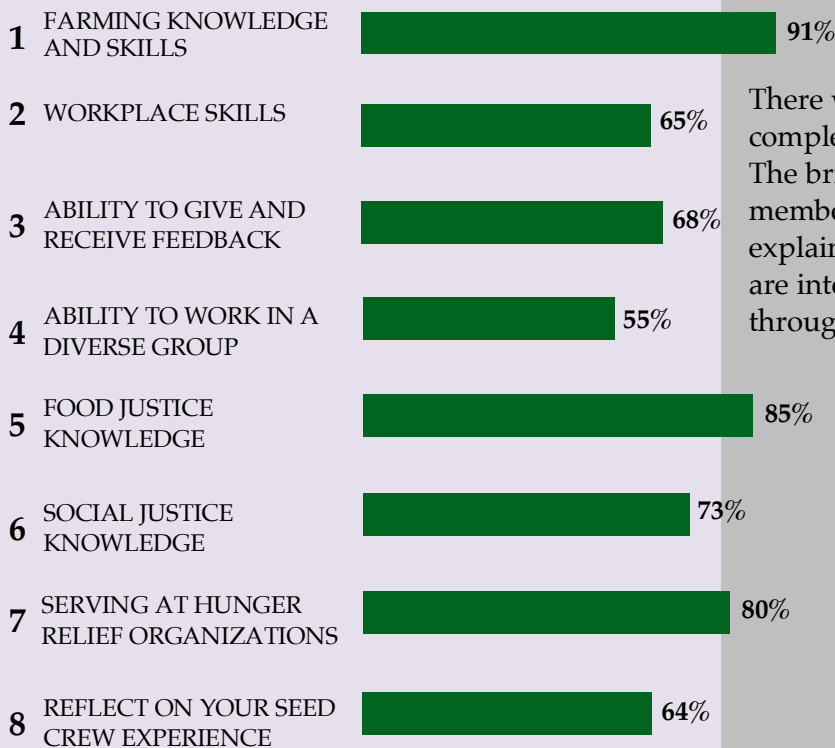


PART 2. PARTICIPANT SELF-RATINGS.

HOW MUCH HAS YOUR KNOWLEDGE, ABILITY OR INTEREST CHANGED SINCE YOU BEGAN IN SEED CREW?

At the end of the program in late August, Seed Crew members self-rated their change in learning over the summer. They used a slider rating scale ranging from “Not a Lot” to “a Lot” considering eight practices:

Across all eight practices, 73 percent of Crew members indicated “A Lot” of change.



There were 66 complete responses. The brief narratives members included to explain their ratings are interspersed throughout this report.

As shown at left, Crew members indicated they changed the most in **Farming Knowledge and Skills**. Significant change was also self-reported for **Food Justice Knowledge** and interest in **Serving in a Hunger Relief Organization**.

The least change, still quite high, was self-reported for **Working in a Diverse Group**. A significant number of members said they had prior experiences working with diverse youth.

“Working here has helped me embrace, rather than ignore the differences in people.”

“I have grown so much in Seed Crew and only imagine how much I could learn in Dirt Crew.”

See Appendix for detailed findings on crew leader ratings, learning stages, correlations and conclusions.