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Nonprofits Creating a Replicable Blueprint for Nonprofits to Establish a Farmer Training Program for Transitioning Veterans

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Abstract

This capstone project is a replicable business plan for nonprofits nationwide to start a training program to help transitioning Veterans and others learn how to establish their own regenerative farms. Participants follow a sixteen-month curriculum designed to teach them about and give them hands-on experience with more than twenty-four income streams. Upon completion of the program, each new farmer selects eight to ten enterprises to incorporate into their farm plan, creating diverse and sustainable businesses. The new farmers learn production methods, business essentials, infrastructure needs, marketing and sales, risk assessment, and time management. The blueprint has three components; a self-sufficient demonstration farm that encompasses all twenty-four streams of income and support systems included in the curriculum, the sixteen-month curriculum that provides internships, apprenticeships, and an entrepreneurial incubator, and the philanthropic side or funding component of finding tuition scholarships, equipment package sponsorships, targeted fundraising, and grant proposals. The accompanying business plan included industry analysis, management, marketing, sales plans, first-year budgets, and financial projections. A sixteen-month curriculum was developed that combined learning platforms, classroom instruction, hands-on projects and farm visits. Servant leadership is integral to our Veterans' lives and serves as the foundation for the blueprint and curriculum. A review of the relevant literature was performed, and servant leadership was compared to transformational leadership and authentic leadership. The protocols for the program are grounded in the framework of Self Determination Theory and incorporate the nutriments of autonomy and autonomy-support, competence, and relatedness. Intrinsic motivation and its impacts on nonprofits and the millennial generation were explored. Design thinking shaped the framework for a collaborative tool to help the participants with the enterprise selection process. SMART goals for the capstone project process were established, and suggestions for improvement were noted. Academic support is provided for each theory and framework. A SWOT analysis is included. Real-world implications and impacts for the participants, the sponsoring nonprofit, and the community served are presented.

Keywords: servant leadership, veterans, farmer training, self determination theory, intrinsic motivation, millennials, nonprofits, design thinking, business plan, curriculum