

Local Food Value Chain VISTA:

Play a key role in growing the local food economy in the Appalachian rust belt. Join Grow Ohio Valley, a nationally-recognized and innovative non-profit food hub, in achieving our vision of regional food security. GrowOV seeks an AmeriCorps VISTA to build the capacity of Ohio Valley farmers and food producers, specifically targeting outreach in counties with the least developed agricultural production networks. Enhance the local food value chain at every step, from increasing production capacity to developing value-added products that preserve the Appalachian harvest. Analyze and improve GrowOV's unique aggregation, distribution, and sales channels to help local and healthy food travel the last mile to reach consumers in the Ohio Valley.

Position Responsibilities:

This VISTA member will develop partnerships with farmers and producers, evaluate infrastructure, and think critically and creatively about new value-added products and sales channels. These duties will be conducted with the goal of making local food accessible to the entire Wheeling community and helping farmers reach and maintain profitability. Activities conducted alongside our core leadership team may include but are not limited to:

- Manage communications with farmers, producers and wholesale customers
- Research and evaluate current agricultural infrastructure needs in the region, especially transportation networks and food processing facilities
- Plan and map routes for efficient delivery of product to and from Grow Ohio Valley's market outlets
- Develop a relationship between Grow Ohio Valley and suitable food processing facilities with the goal of developing value-added retail products and bulk wholesale products
- Coordinate branding, packaging, and marketing of value-added products
- Assess financial feasibility of value-added and bulk goods production
- Coordinate trial-runs of retail and wholesale products
- Explore partnerships and markets for value-added goods in the Ohio Valley
- Recruit additional producers to supply Grow Ohio Valley's food hub and Public Market store
- Plan and participate in sales promotion in order to drive and assess demand for agricultural goods throughout the Ohio Valley
- Assist farmers and producers in demand-driven production planning

- Assist farmers and producers in achieving retail-readiness through assistance with business management, product packaging, and marketing
- Survey farmers and producers in order to assess the success of Grow Ohio Valley's agribusiness development initiatives

Qualification Requirements:

- Passionate local and/or natural food enthusiast
- Knowledge of or experience in food systems and/or agriculture—seasonality, crop and agricultural product knowledge, food safety, post-harvest handling, pricing, marketing, and merchandising
- Ability to coordinate and conduct successful outreach across diverse populations
- Strategic marketing, branding and retail merchandising experience
- Strong verbal and written communication skills
- Culinary or food production experience (optional/preferred)

About Grow Ohio Valley:

Grow Ohio Valley is nationally recognized nonprofit, building thriving communities through local food. In the coming year, we are launching an innovative local and natural foods market in a food desert, as well as actively expanding groundbreaking programs like the FARMacy, garden-in-every-school, and more. We are seeking a passionate and committed person with relevant skills to help us launch and expand these exciting projects -- projects that have potential to re-shape our town and be a model for community development through local food.

Our core operations consist of:

Five farm sites, including an urban apple orchard, two high tunnel greenhouses, and a geothermal hothouse, all on urban vacant lots in a hard-up neighborhood.

A range of creative sales-models to bring this locally grown product to food deserts, with a focus on building economic opportunities for local family farms.

Complementary educational programs that teach community members gardening skills, how to prepare healthy meals, and the importance of eating fresh produce.

To Apply:

Qualified applicants should send their resume with a cover letter explaining interest to employment@growov.org . No calls please.