

We see possibilities.

Rural
Enterprise
Center

strengthening communities
through **ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

Poverty is a significant barrier to participating fully in community life. People with limited income and those who are working multiple jobs to provide for their families find it challenging to engage with their children's education and activities, much less participate themselves in creating solutions to shared community challenges.

Main Street Project's Rural Enterprise Center takes an economic development approach to poverty reduction and community capacity building: bringing together the support infrastructure, resources, systems and programs that rural community members, and specifically, Latino entrepreneurs need to succeed.

building on strengths of
**CULTURE and
EXPERIENCE**

When thinking about the future of rural communities, there are several things to understand about the Latinos that live there:

- At heavily-attended community meetings we've hosted, more than 70 percent of Latino attendees indicated that they either came from rural areas in Latin America where they were directly involved in agriculture, or have worked as laborers directly involved in production of livestock, fruits and vegetables.
- Nationally, Latinos are more than twice as likely to become entrepreneurs than established populations of previous immigrants.
- A cooperative, family-focused agricultural systems model is culturally familiar

the **AGRIPRENEUR
TRAINING** model

The Rural Enterprise Center has created an innovative scalable model that capitalizes on strengths, and addresses challenges often tied to structural racism: the lack of access to land, working capital, marketing and business support infrastructure, and focused training. The model is designed to require minimum investment / inputs and maximum return / outputs, moving through three phases:

Phase 1: Discovery

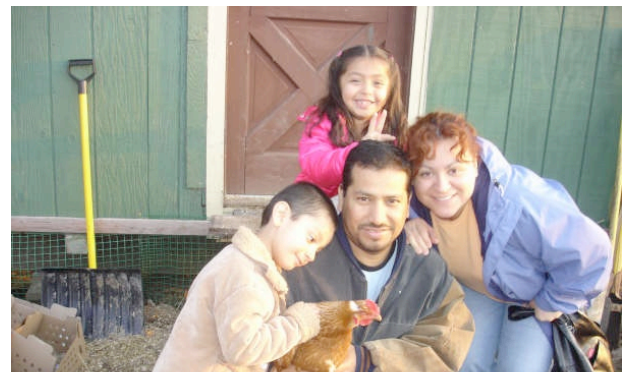
Building community support infrastructure (Anglo and Latino), identifying opportunities based on community assets, involving interested Latinos and families in community farming ventures such as community gardens; offering bilingual business training courses

Phase 2: Development

Learning and participating in an Agripreneur Training Center or incubator of specialized small-farm training units that replicate actual farming conditions

Phase 3: Launch

Matching Phase 2 graduates with farm mentors, financial resources and support to buy or rent their own agriculture operation or become involved in local food product processing as a member of a cooperative structure; providing ongoing help with marketing and sustainability principles



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what CHANGES?

The Agripreneur Training Model has the power to transform – the way food is produced and distributed, and the quality of lives of community members. Here are three exciting outcomes we expect to see in communities that put the model to work:

Community Asset Building

The model supports local ownership and partnership at multiple levels of the agricultural process: land and resources, financing, growing, processing, distribution. Income generated through a successful cooperative network can remain within the community and contribute to its long-term economic vitality.

Note: Latino and Anglo farmers involved with the model in southeastern Minnesota have formed the Hillside Farmers Cooperative to collectively share resources and risks.

The model also has the capacity to attract and re-engage youth in food and agriculture in a way that row crops and the need for high-priced machinery do not. Retaining educated motivated young people is critical to the long-term vitality of rural community life.

Better Health

The model is focused on growing natural, healthy food products and begins to address the negative impact of a U.S. processed food diet on the health of Latino immigrant families. Consider these facts:

- After living in this country for five or more years, Latino immigrants are one and a half times more likely to have high blood pressure than when they first arrived.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control, Latino children obesity rates are nearly double those for whites.

Sustainability

Finally, the model is focused on using natural resources in a sustainable, efficient way to protect the local environment. This taps into consumer demand for local, whole/natural food options – one of the fastest growing industry sectors in the country.

why POULTRY?

Producing free-range chickens fed natural feed without antibiotics is at the core of the Rural Enterprise Center's current project to help Latino farmers succeed. Here's why:

Turnaround – Poultry has a short life cycle and a concurrent cash flow. That means it's possible for a low-income family to begin raising poultry without having to disrupt their current situation significantly.

Culture – Most immigrant Latino families already have experience and knowledge around this kind of poultry farming (never to be confused with conventional poultry farm methods).

Sustainability – In sustainable farming systems, biological activity needs the presence of livestock. For example, chicken manure is nature's fertilizer, and will help the farmers grow more nutritious products more efficiently, such as vegetables, nuts, fruits and honey. Plus they reap the benefits of soil protection through permanent root systems, extraction of beneficial minerals found deeper in the soil, carbon sequestration, reduced carbon emissions and more.

"Over the years, we've tried many different ways to secure a piece of land and achieve our farming dreams. The training and the cooperative have given us a renewed sense of opportunity."

-- Maria and her family

Reginaldo (Regi) Haslett-Marroquin

directs the Rural Enterprise Center based in Northfield, Minn. More than just a successful entrepreneur and business coach/consultant, Regi is a catalyst for community building. A Guatemalan native, Regi began working on economic development projects with indigenous Guatemalan communities in 1988, and has served as a consultant for the United Nations Development Program's Bureau for Latin America. He was also a founding member of the Fair Trade Federation and created Peace Coffee, a successful fair-trade coffee company.