



Summary Report of Findings

Community Planning Sessions — Farm & Garden Planning for Climate Justice

Frogtown Farm | CNCA Climate Justice Grant | March 31, 2026

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a six-part community planning series conducted between January 21 and February 25, 2026, as part of the CNCA-funded *Farm & Garden Planning for Climate Justice* initiative. This series fulfills the project's *Community Planning Sessions* deliverable and serves as the foundation for the Summary Report of Findings submitted to CNCA.

Facilitated by Lane Brown of Plant-Grow-Share (CANDO) and coordinated by Frogtown Farm staff, sessions were held virtually and engaged between 19 and 33 participants per session. Participants represented priority communities across Frogtown and the broader Twin Cities, including first-year growers, returning land stewards, herbalists, educators, and community organizers.

These sessions functioned as a core component of Frogtown Farm's Grower Incubation Program and were intentionally designed as participatory planning spaces, not only to share knowledge, but to shift how decisions are shaped. Participants engaged in collaborative dialogue around climate-resilient growing practices, land stewardship, and food systems, while also identifying barriers related to land access, physical capacity, infrastructure, and resource coordination.

Grounded in CNCA's commitment to power-sharing, the series moved beyond traditional consultation models by centering community expertise, lived experience, and collective problem-solving. Participants contributed directly to shaping priorities that will inform forthcoming policy recommendations and programmatic strategies developed in partnership with the City of Saint Paul.

Key themes emerging across sessions included the importance of mutual aid systems, cooperative resource sharing, and culturally rooted agricultural practices as essential components of climate resilience. Participants emphasized that sustainable urban agriculture is not solely a technical practice, but a relational one, dependent on trust, consistency, and interconnected community systems.

By integrating participatory planning with workforce development and land-based learning, this initiative advances CNCA priorities in food sovereignty, climate justice, and community-led governance. The findings captured in this report reflect both the immediate insights of participants and the broader shift toward community-driven climate solutions rooted in equity, collaboration, and long-term resilience.



Program Overview

Grant:	CNCA – Climate, Food Sovereignty & Green Workforce Capacity
Sessions:	6 virtual sessions, January 21 – February 25, 2026
Format:	Wednesdays 5:00–6:00 PM CST via Google Meet
Instructor:	Lane Brown, Plant-Grow-Share (CANDO)
Coordinator:	Michelle Miller, Frogtown Farm
Participants enrolled:	33 unique individuals; 19–33 per session

Timeline Note:

The original deadline for this report was November 30, 2025. Per an approved timeline revision, sessions ran January through February 2026 to allow participants to reflect on their full 2025 growing season before planning for 2026. This sequencing produced richer, more grounded outcomes.

Session Overview

Session	Date	Topic	Attendance	Key Focus
1	Jan 21	Orientation — Climate, Food Sovereignty & the St. Paul Climate Action Plan	20–25	Established shared vocabulary; reflected on 2025 climate impacts; introduced CNCA initiative and alignment with the City of Saint Paul's climate framework
2	Jan 28	Seed & Crop Selection — Seed Saving, Sourcing & Crop Rotation	22–30	Explored seed sovereignty; emphasized locally adapted seed sourcing; introduced crop rotation strategies by plant family
3	Feb 4	Succession Planting, Cover Crops & Intercropping	25–33	Focused on season-long planning; companion planting; use of cover crops to support soil health and climate resilience
4	Feb 11	Labor Scheduling & Production Estimates	18–24	Developed planting calendars; introduced USDA hardiness zones; applied SMART goal-setting; previewed Climate Justice Mini Summit
5	Feb 18	Shared Systems, Collaboration & Community Care	20–26	Examined cooperative farming models; resource and tool sharing; land access challenges; introduction to advocacy and systems-level thinking
6	Feb 25	Peer Sharing & Plan Review	18–24	Facilitated grower plan presentations; supported peer feedback; advanced early-stage policy recommendations; prepared for Mini Summit participation



Session Quality Ratings

Participants rated each session on a 1–5 scale in weekly check-in forms. Across all six sessions, average ratings were 4.50–4.85 out of 5, with Session 2 (Seed & Crop Selection) receiving the highest average (4.85/5). These ratings reflect consistently high engagement and participant satisfaction throughout the program.

Participant Demographics and Reach

Participation Overview

- 33 individuals registered for the program
- 24 participants were tracked across program records
- 19 individuals attended at least one live session
- Session attendance ranged from 19 to 33 participants, with a consistent core group engaging throughout

Community Representation

- Participants reflected priority communities central to Frogtown Farm's work, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)
- The cohort included immigrant and multilingual participants connected to Somali, Hmong, Liberian, Latinx, and other communities represented in Frogtown

Socioeconomic Context

- While formal demographic data was not collected through surveys, participants consistently shared lived experiences related to:
 - Financial barriers to land access
 - Limited access to resources and infrastructure
 - Time constraints and competing responsibilities
 - Physical capacity and health considerations

Experience Levels

- Beginning growers: Individuals new or near-new to growing food
- Experienced growers: Participants with 1 to 20+ years of growing experience
- The mix of experience levels supported peer learning and knowledge exchange

Growing Contexts

- Participants represented a wide range of growing environments, including:
 - Frogtown Farm plots
 - Backyard and community gardens
 - School-based growing spaces
 - Balcony and container gardening setups

Program Environment

- The diversity of backgrounds, experience levels, and growing contexts contributed to a collaborative, peer-driven learning space
- Participants actively shared knowledge, cultural practices, and strategies for navigating challenges in urban agriculture



Key Findings

Finding 1: Climate Change Is a Lived Reality for Frogtown Growers

Participants consistently described climate change not as an abstract concept, but as a direct and ongoing force shaping their growing practices. During Session 1, growers reflected on the 2025 season and identified multiple climate-related disruptions that impacted crop production, planning, and labor.

Key climate impacts reported by participants included:

- **Excessive rain and flooding**
 - Growers experienced crop losses due to saturated soils and delayed planting windows
- **Poor air quality events**
 - Wildfire smoke and air quality alerts disrupted outdoor work schedules and limited time on the land
- **Drought and water stress**
 - Inconsistent rainfall patterns contributed to stress on root vegetables and fruiting crops
- **Unpredictable frost timing**
 - Shifting seasonal patterns required greater flexibility in planting schedules and crop selection
- **Changes in pest behavior**
 - Participants observed unusual patterns, including rabbits consuming crops such as mint and sage plants historically avoided signaling broader ecosystem disruption

These observations highlight the increasing need for adaptive, climate-resilient growing strategies tailored to urban environments. Growers emphasized that traditional seasonal expectations are no longer reliable, requiring ongoing experimentation, knowledge-sharing, and flexible planning approaches.

Finding 2: Seeds as a Foundation for Climate Resilience and Food Sovereignty

- Participants demonstrated a strong understanding of seeds as both a practical and cultural tool for climate resilience. Across sessions, growers emphasized that seed saving is not only a cost-saving strategy, but a critical method for adapting to changing environmental conditions.
- Several participants shared that seeds saved from previous growing seasons, particularly those that endured drought or extreme weather are better adapted to future conditions. This reflects an emerging practice of localized climate adaptation, where growers intentionally select and preserve seeds based on performance in specific environmental contexts.



- Growers also demonstrated awareness of and engagement with regional seed networks and culturally relevant sourcing. Frequently referenced sources included Seed Savers Exchange, Albert Lea Seeds, Midwest Farmers of Color Seed Library, and the Hosmer Library Community Seed Library, highlighting the importance of accessible, locally adapted, and community-based seed systems.
- Seed selection was also deeply connected to cultural identity and food sovereignty. For example, participants from the Growing Aunties (Frogtown Farm growing group) collective shared plans for their 2026 growing season that included Hopi Blue Corn, Ojibwe Strawberry Pink Popcorn, Hidatsa Yellow Beans, and Mandan Bride Corn. These selections reflect the intentional preservation and cultivation of Indigenous seed varieties, reinforcing the role of urban agriculture as a space for cultural continuity and sovereignty.
- Overall, this finding underscores that seed stewardship is both a climate strategy and a form of community empowerment, supporting biodiversity, strengthening local food systems, and sustaining culturally rooted agricultural practices.

Finding 3: Climate-Smart Growing Practices Actively Applied

Participants demonstrated strong engagement in applying climate-smart growing practices throughout the program, translating workshop content into tangible farm plans and planting strategies.

A total of 17 participants submitted Week 1 homework, including farm maps and 2026 growing goals—representing the highest completion rate across the series. This level of participation indicates both commitment and the accessibility of early-stage planning tools. By Week 3, 8 participants submitted detailed planting timelines, incorporating succession planting and soil health strategies into their seasonal plans.

Submitted materials reflect active use of climate-resilient practices, including:

- **Succession planting**
 - Staggered plantings of crops such as radishes, cucumbers, dill, garlic, and beans to ensure continuous harvests and reduce risk from climate variability
- **Companion planting**
 - Intentional pairings such as tomato/basil, pepper/cilantro, brassicas/nasturtiums, and marigolds as border plants to support pest management and ecosystem balance
- **Cover cropping and soil health practices**
 - Use of oats and peas to build organic matter
 - Clover for nitrogen fixation
 - Radish and turnip for improving soil structure and aeration

These practices demonstrate that participants are not only learning climate-adaptive strategies, but actively integrating them into real-world growing systems. The ability to translate knowledge into applied planning suggests that the program is effectively building practical skills that support long-term resilience.



This finding highlights the importance of hands-on planning tools, peer learning, and structured assignments in supporting behavior change and reinforcing climate-smart agriculture in urban contexts.

Finding 4: Climate Justice as Personal Experience and Collective Action

Participants engaged with climate justice not only as a concept, but as a lived and actionable framework connecting land, health, and policy. Across sessions, growers articulated a clear understanding that climate impacts are unevenly distributed and directly tied to systemic inequities.

Participant reflections captured this perspective in their own words. One participant defined climate justice as: *“People impacted by climate change — justice for the land,”* highlighting the connection between environmental conditions, community well-being, and accountability.

Session 5 deepened this understanding by explicitly linking urban agriculture to local policy and structural barriers. Participants engaged in discussions around:

- **Garden lease programs and land access**
- **Hydrant permitting and water access for growers**
- **Industrial impacts, including air pollution from the foundry adjacent to the farm**
- **Anti-displacement strategies for BIPOC farmers and residents**

These conversations were grounded in local context. Frogtown/Thomas-Dale is identified in the City of Saint Paul’s Climate Action and Resilience Plan as a high-risk urban heat island area, reinforcing participant experiences of disproportionate climate exposure.

Importantly, this learning translated into civic engagement. A total of 13 formal policy recommendations were submitted to the City of Saint Paul through the post-program survey, reflecting participants’ ability to connect their lived experiences to actionable policy solutions.

This finding demonstrates that participants are not only adapting their growing practices, but are also developing the knowledge and confidence to advocate for systemic change, positioning urban growers as key stakeholders in climate policy and neighborhood resilience planning.

Finding 5: Mutual Aid and Cooperation Function as Core Climate Strategies

Participants consistently demonstrated that mutual aid and cooperative practices are not supplemental, but central to how they adapt to climate challenges. Across sessions, growers described active systems of sharing resources, knowledge, and labor as essential strategies for resilience.

These practices were already in motion and included:

- **Tool sharing and resource access**
 - Use of shared infrastructure such as the Minnesota Tool Library and Frogtown Farm equipment
 - Informal peer-to-peer lending of tools within neighborhood networks



- **Seed and plant exchanges**
 - Participation in winter sowing workshops, seed library contributions, and neighborhood plant swaps
 - Ongoing circulation of locally adapted seeds within the community
- **Labor sharing and collective support**
 - Volunteer harvest days and community mobilization during peak labor periods
 - Reliance on informal networks to meet physical demands of growing
- **Cross-cultural knowledge exchange**
 - Shared practices and teachings across Indigenous, Liberian, Latinx, Somali, and Hmong growing traditions
 - Sessions enriched by diverse agricultural knowledge systems and lived experiences

These systems reflect a community-based approach to climate resilience that prioritizes cooperation over individualization. Rather than relying solely on external resources, participants are building interconnected support networks that increase flexibility, reduce costs, and strengthen collective capacity.

This finding highlights that mutual aid is not only a social value, but a practical and effective climate adaptation strategy, one that should be recognized, supported, and integrated into broader urban agriculture and climate planning efforts.

Post-Program Survey Results (n=13)

Outcome Measure	Result
Feel more confident growing food sustainably (agree or strongly agree)	100% — 13 of 13
Better understand how climate change impacts food systems (agree or strongly agree)	92% — 12 of 13
More prepared to share voice about food, land, or climate (yes or somewhat)	100% — 13 of 13
Program met participants at their level of experience (yes or very well)	85% — 11 of 13
Program allowed space for ideas and interests (yes)	100% — 13 of 13
Most useful topics (top 2, tied)	Soil health / regenerative practices and Climate & food systems — 12 of 13 each
Mini Summit helped think beyond own growing space (agree or strongly agree)	9 of 10 Summit attendees
More prepared to share ideas after Summit (yes or somewhat)	10 of 10 Summit attendees

Participant Voices

"I've found strength and resilience in urban farming that I can pass down to my children. My children have found passion in growing food and medicine that has taught them discipline, consistency and independence."

— Post-program survey respondent



"It was especially meaningful to cross-pollinate knowledge, techniques, and traditions with neighboring farmers. That exchange felt like a powerful reflection of resilience, collaboration, and the collective wisdom needed to grow through uncertainty."

— Post-program survey respondent

"There are a lot of us out here working with similar projects and struggles. We're all leaders, and we're all teammates."

— Post-assessment respondent

Conclusion

Six community planning sessions engaged 33 registered participants, with 19 attending live sessions and all contributing to a growing body of knowledge through homework submissions, check-ins, surveys, and completed grower worksheets. This collective input reflects both active participation and sustained engagement beyond live sessions.

The winter timing of the program proved effective in supporting forward planning, resulting in actionable 2026 farm plans that integrate succession planting, companion planting, cover cropping, and climate-informed growing strategies. Participants demonstrated the ability to translate learning into practice while also engaging with broader concepts of climate justice and community resilience.

Participants leave the program with shared language, strengthened technical skills, and deepened relationships across a diverse network of urban growers. These outcomes position participants not only as growers, but as collaborators, knowledge carriers, and emerging advocates within their communities.

These findings directly inform subsequent program deliverables, including policy recommendations, the Climate Action Mini Summit, and the ongoing development of Frogtown Farm's Grower Incubation Program. Collectively, they demonstrate a scalable, community-rooted model for advancing climate resilience, food sovereignty, and urban agriculture in the Twin Cities.