

# Real Food Challenge

## Field Organizer Fellowship Program

### ***Overview:***

The Real Food Challenge Field Organizer Fellowship Program is a unique opportunity for recent college graduates to get first hand experience as part-time organizers and food movement leaders. Through this 14-month program, Fellows engage in intensive student organizing projects on a regional and national level while also honing their leadership skills and food systems knowledge through our participatory learning curriculum and engaged Fellowship community.

Fellows come away with direct campaign experience, new professional and movement networks and a toolbox of relevant non-profit, food movement and grassroots organizing skills. At the same time, they support important student-led efforts to shift millions of university dollars away from industrial agriculture and toward just, sustainable food enterprises.

### ***What is the Real Food Challenge?***

The Real Food Challenge is a national network made up of national staff, regional organizers and student leaders. We work to leverage the power of youth and universities to create a healthy, fair and green food system. Our primary campaign is to shift \$1 billion of existing university food budgets away from industrial farms and junk food and towards local/community-based, fair, ecologically sound and humane food sources—what we call “real food”—by 2020. We also provide opportunities for networking, learning, and leadership development for thousands of emerging leaders.

### ***Field Organizing Project:***

The Fellowship is centered on the core experience of student organizing on a regional basis. Each Fellow, however, will be assigned a unique field-organizing project, the breadth of which may include:

- Leading a multi-campus, statewide campaign to get a public university system’s chancellors to sign our Real Food Campus Commitment.
- Developing a new regional network in previously un-engaged states by outreaching to active student groups, hosting networking events and trainings and instigating new campaigns.



- Providing direct coaching, training and on-the-ground support to a small group of institutions where highly advanced real food campaigns are already in progress.

Through these organizing projects Fellows will be given a level of exposure and responsibility usually reserved for experienced professional organizers. Fellows will be expected to take a great deal of initiative, problem-solve on the fly and work with a diverse, and often geographically distributed team.

*What does it look like?* Phone calls or video-chats with student leaders multiple times a week to coach them through the organizing process. Team meetings with other Fellows and a Regional Coordinator to strategize and prioritize work. Once- or twice-a-year road trips to visit target schools, put on workshops, and meet with key players. And plenty more!

### ***Other Fellow Opportunities:***

Many Fellows take on special projects in addition to their field organizing project. Often, Fellows join one of our national Working Groups—helping to plan our annual national conference or assisting in the development of our real food standards, for example.

Past Fellows have also volunteered to take a more active role in our annual fundraising appeal, our work with key partners (such as farm-to-school groups or worker organizations), or putting on workshops at conferences and other external events. These special projects are not required but are meant to provide additional opportunities for growth, based on Fellows' stated learning objectives.

### ***Curriculum:***

As part of the Field Organizing Fellowship, the Real Food Challenge is committed to Fellows' growth and development as professional organizers and as leaders in the food movement. Our curriculum is explicitly action-oriented and participatory in approach. That means Fellows' organizing project is seen as the core "textbook" for their learning. Other curricular pieces are meant to intersect with and enhance that learning-by-doing experience. These supplemental learning opportunities include:

- Intensive in-person, experiential workshops and trainings
- Regular distance learning sessions, including webinars and online discussions
- Reading & writing assignments
- "Just-in-time" mini-trainings on necessary and timely skill sets
- Periodic self-assessment, peer-evaluation and reflection exercises
- Intensive coaching from a coordinator

Learning modules are broken, roughly, into two categories: 1) Organizing and Leadership and, 2) Food Systems. Topics covered include the following (subject to year-to-year variation):

Organizing and Leadership	Food Systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storytelling &amp; Public Narrative</li> <li>• 1-to-1s / Relational Meetings</li> <li>• Campaign Planning</li> <li>• Recruitment and Base-Building</li> <li>• Power-Mapping</li> <li>• Group Facilitation</li> <li>• Leadership Development</li> <li>• Coaching and Agitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Corporate Food Service Industry</li> <li>• Farm-to-Institution Basics</li> <li>• Distribution and Supply Chains</li> <li>• Food &amp; Labor Intersections</li> <li>• Cooperatives Food Enterprises</li> <li>• Fair Trade, Direct Trade</li> <li>• Small Farms, Liability &amp; Food Safety</li> </ul>

### ***Year-long Schedule:***

The Fellowship runs from July 2012 - August 2013, a total of 14 months. While each Fellow’s experience will be unique, an average year includes these major milestones:

- **July: National Training**—Fellows join RFC staff for a comprehensive 5-day orientation and training
- **August: Regional Trainings**—Fellows work with veteran RFC organizers and Alumni to lead a 3-day leadership institute for local students
- **October: Food Day**—Fellows recruit and support student coordinators as they plan for this national day of action
- **December: Winter Appeal**—Fellows learn about grassroots fundraising through our holiday drive
- **February: National Summit**—Fellows recruit for and facilitate workshops at our national gathering
- **April: National Retreat**—Fellows engage in the reflection and annual planning process with RFC leadership
- **August: Regional Trainings**—Fellows plan and execute a leadership institute for students alongside a new Field Organizer Fellow.

### ***Program Structure and Support***

Fellows work in teams of two or more and are supervised by a Regional Coordinator. Regional teams have at least once-weekly check-in meetings. All fellows gather for monthly discussions, in addition to periodic online distance learning modules. Every two months fellows engage in structured peer feedback



sessions called “Real Talk.” Fellows also engage in a Quarterly Review process, focused both on campaign outcomes and Fellows’ personal development goals.

### **Compensation**

Fellows are provided a \$1,000 stipend and reimbursed for all pre-approved Fellowship-related expenses and travel.

### **2<sup>nd</sup>-year Fellowship:**

We are piloting a second-year fellowship program, which we hope to expand in coming years. Select Field Organizer Fellows, who demonstrate excellence in their first year and express a interest in continuing in their organizing projects will be invited to apply for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year position. 2<sup>nd</sup>-year Fellows will be given added organizing and team management responsibilities and will be provided new opportunities for networking and professional development in the context of the food movement. 2<sup>nd</sup>-year Fellows will be compensated at a higher level.

### **Who we’re looking for:**

Real Food Challenge seeks a special type of young leader who’s ready to make a big impact on the world. Our Fellows generally exhibit the following qualities:

- *Self-motivated* – Fellows can work independently and remotely without constant prods or reminders. They take initiative to address problems as they arise and share new ideas and learnings along the way.
- *Passionate* – Fellows understand the urgent need for change in our food system and are able to motivate those around them.
- *Relational* – Fellows have strong people-skills, are good at relationship building and have a good sense of humor.
- *Strategic* – Fellows have the ability to identify and prioritize goals and think systematically about how to accomplish them.
- *Self-aware* – Fellows are committed to their own learning and able to reflect on and learn from their experience.

### **Qualifications:**

- Ability to work 15 hrs a week for Real Food Challenge
- In-depth knowledge of the politics and practice of student activism and/or student-run groups, preferred
- Commitment to economic justice, anti-racism, student power and social movements
- Experience with group facilitation, teaching, public speaking, and networking
- Recent college graduates preferred
- Familiarity with Word, Googledocs, Facebook, and other online and social media tools, preferred
- In-depth knowledge of university food systems, issues surrounding small farms, fair trade cooperatives, regional distributional or similar issues a plus



**>> We strongly encourage people of color; queer, trans, and gender variant folk; and working class activists to apply!**

### ***Past Fellow Testimonials***

The Real Food Challenge is an incredibly dedicated, nurturing, and inspirational group of people, and I've learned so much in my time as an RFO. This work is really important and challenging, and I would highly recommend it for an aspiring organizer who wants to sink their teeth into a strategic, relationship-based, national campaign for food justice.

- Jon Berger, Mid-Atlantic Field Organizer, Class of 2012

With RFC, I built strong friendships and gained important professional connections. I learned skills that help me as a community activist today - how to facilitate meetings, plan events, collaborate and communicate. I left feeling confident that we can change the food system.

- Sue DeBliek, Midwest Field Organizer, Class of 2009

The three words that best describe my RFO experience are connection, challenge, and mentorship. Before RFC I had been active in several environmental groups where I had felt disconnected and disempowered. In RFC, however, I found hundreds of other students just like me, connected to the food wheel by different spokes but all sharing the same central purpose. I was challenged to build new skills, such as organizing a network, planning and executing large events, and training other students. Most of all, the RFO experience provided mentorship: the reflection and constructive feedback processes enabled powerful personal growth in skills and character.

- Melissa Tinling, Southeast Field Organizer, Class of 2011

