

A recipe for success

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With a \$100,000 “Investing for Good” grant from Capital One Bank, Grow Dat Youth Farm is sharing how to grow fresh produce with other organizations. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

In its first four years, [Grow Dat Youth Farm](#) has grown 25,000 pounds of organic produce. Now the urban agriculture nonprofit organization is planting seeds of a different kind and creating a recipe that gives other organizations the ingredients for success.

Using a \$100,000 “Investing for Good” grant from Capital One Bank, Grow Dat is showing other organizations how to repeat its business model to address the shortage of fresh produce options. Grow Dat, which has graduated 100 youth

leaders, is working to educate and inspire New Orleans youth with leadership and job opportunities.

“I think the program works because of our holistic response to a multitude of issues,” said Johanna Gilligan, director of the Grow Dat Youth Farm. “We are addressing a lot of problems ? from environmental to lack of job opportunities for youth ? with a single solution.”

Gilligan, who founded Grow Dat Youth Farm in collaboration with Tulane University and other organizations in 2011, says that Grow Dat's first partner is the local nonprofit organization [Bayou District Foundation](#). The action plan that they create will assist Bayou District in developing a similar program.

Funding from Capital One Bank, which operates more than 50 branches in greater New Orleans, will support the initial curriculum design as well as the launch of the new Bayou District program.

“Capital One Bank truly sees the value in our work and has invested in it,” Gilligan said. “We are creating a positive impact and taking it to the next level.”

Located on seven acres in New Orleans City Park, Grow Dat works with several high schools and youth organizations to recruit paid interns and teach them how to grow vegetables and fruit and prepare them for market.

Gilligan says Grow Dat's commitment to create healthy communities through urban agriculture has piqued the interest from other nonprofit organizations throughout the country. They plan to make Bayou District the first of many partnerships.

“Although there are other youth farms across the country, there is something that resonates about what we do here at Grow Dat,” said Gilligan.

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“When people are on the farm they are excited about the experience. It's almost intangible.”—Johanna Gilligan, Grow Dat Youth Farm