

**Q1** Please provide your contact information below.

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**Q2** Please describe your company or organizations overall goals and mission.

Services for the UnderServed (S:US) drives scalable solutions to transform the lives of people with disabilities, people in poverty and people facing homelessness: solutions that contribute to righting societal imbalances.

We envision a city where everyone has a roof over their head, is healthy, productive and can enjoy the social connections that create a life of purpose. We're a nonprofit with a staff of 2,400 that provides \$200 million in services. Our efforts are supported by various local, state and federal government entities as well as foundations, corporations and individual donors. Most importantly, our vision allows us to deliver the same quality of services to one individual or to thousands. No challenge is beyond our scope.

Our uniqueness lies in our ability to take what we learn on the ground and use it to change systems and impact policy. By delivering high quality services that address the complex circumstances of each person, we help transform lives, improve neighborhoods and boost future generations.

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**Q3** Please indicate which category your organization falls under.

**Community Based Organization** ,

Other (please describe below: 150 character maximum):

Social Services Provider; Supportive Housing Provider

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**Q4** Innovation Executive Summary. Please describe the innovation, and how it addresses the social determinants of health. Please identify how the innovation addresses the 6 innovation criteria (i.e. ROI, scalability, feasibility,

evidence based support for innovation, relevance to the Medicaid population and speed to market).

SUS Urban Farms provides therapeutic horticulture, nutritional programming, and employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities through workshops, field experiences, and a network of community farms and garden spaces. Urban Farms functions as an innovative supplement to the support services we offer to our individuals, using horticulture as a tool in improving wellness outcomes and in helping our clients to achieve their personal and professional objectives. SUS Urban Farms programming reaches over 500 clients each year. These services clearly address social determinants in both the Neighborhood and Environment and Economic Stability categories.

Participants act as the primary stewards for 39 Urban Farms growing spaces in four boroughs, including 7 community farms that collectively produce more than 5,700 lbs of food each year. From plant propagation in 3-season greenhouses, to honey cultivation at our beehives, Urban Farms engages clients in a wide variety of activities.

These activities include part-time employment created for up to 30 individuals with disabilities each year as farm supervisors, landscaping servicers, beekeepers, farmers' market coordinators, and peer educators. SUS Urban Farms also offers curriculum-based professional and personal development workshops throughout the year on topics ranging from botanical art to Integrated Pest Management, with ongoing job coaching to support participants' employment goals.

Urban Farms has improved access to healthy food for our participants, with approximately 90% of the food grown at our farms and gardens being distributed directly and free-of-charge to clients. Participants also lead seasonal planting planning, creating unique and culturally sensitive community food distributions. Urban Farms has leveraged this impact to further improve food security through outreach on food use (such as cooking classes and peer-led healthy eating workshops) and local food security tools (such as workshops to understand the use of SNAP/Food Stamp benefits at farmers' markets).

Urban Farms also has generated stronger social cohesion within participants, one of the social determinants of health in the Social and Community Context category. As part of a formal Health Outcomes Demonstration Project, surveyed participants stated a higher likelihood to visit neighbors and join community activities and events, identified as having commonalities with their neighbors, spoke of trusting their neighbors, and saw themselves as part of a group of friends and having people with whom they feel close (as measured versus surveyed residents at non-participating locations).

This innovation uses similar evidence-based supports to inform the evolution of its programming. Urban Farms is entirely scalable, operating successfully at smaller locations with minimal outdoor space through community partnerships that allow for off-site programming, as well as innovative designs (such as vertical gardening containers and rooftop terrace installations) that provide horticultural opportunities to any interested site. Urban Farms is equally functional in larger spaces that can grow physically over time through long-term collaborative participant design and scalable programming that can match client engagement rates. The fully scalable, participant-directed format for Urban Farms allows agencies to implement the innovation with minimal resource investment, with a quick speed to market for an initial structure with immediate impacts.

The diversity of Urban Farms programming also makes the innovation feasible for introduction to any population and tailorable to specific interests (for example, some participants with less interest in hands-on gardening instead act as sales leads for our farmers' market participation, serve as peer educators in cooking or food use workshops, or provide support in carpentry, masonry, and equipment maintenance).

As a service to individuals within the Medicaid population, the innovation has a dual return on investment. Firstly, in reducing associated healthcare costs through physical/behavioral wellness impacts (for example, acting as a component of holistic service plans that can include obesity reduction or diabetes management, with decreased incident and hospitalization rates for participants). Secondly, as a pathway to competitive employment for individuals with disabilities, reducing public costs while building their participation in their local economies (including contribution to the tax base).

**Q5** Was your innovation implemented? If so, please explain when, the number of people impacted, and the results.

Yes (please specify when and the estimated number of people impacted):

Yes, Urban Farms was implemented at SUS in 2013. The innovation currently impacts approximately 500 people annually (524 people in 2017).

**Q6** Please identify the SDH Domain that your innovation addresses. (Select all that apply.)

**Social and Community Context** ,

**Health and Health Care** ,

**Neighborhood and Environment** ,

**Economic Stability**

**Q7** I give the Department of Health the right to share the information submitted in this application publicly (for example: on the DOH website). I understand that there is no monetary reward/reimbursement for my submission or for attending the summit should my innovation be selected.

**I consent to have my innovation shared**

