



**SPACES OF
OPPORTUNITY**

**FARMER
MANUAL**

Program Year:

October 1, 2025-
September 30, 2026



Growing food, Health and Community in South Phoenix



Welcome Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Farmers,

Welcome to Spaces of Opportunity! We are honored and excited to welcome you to our community of growers, leaders, and changemakers.

At Spaces, we believe farming is more than planting seeds it's about cultivating hope, nurturing community, and creating opportunity for future generations. Each of you plays a vital role in building a healthier, more sustainable food system rooted in Phoenix and beyond.

This manual is your guide and companion as you begin your journey with us. Inside, you'll find an overview of our shared responsibilities, the support you can expect from our team, and the values that guide our collective work. Most importantly, it reflects our core belief: when we support one another, we all grow stronger.

You are not just growing food, you are helping create a thriving space where health takes root, leadership flourishes, and community dreams come to life.

If you ever have questions, concerns, or ideas, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are here to support you and to celebrate every step of your farming journey.

Together, we are growing something truly beautiful. In partnership and community,

Sincerely,

Maria Valenzuela

Executive Director

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Purpose of Farmer Manual & Your Responsibilities as a Farmer

This manual was created to support you in your journey as a farmer at Spaces of Opportunity. It outlines important guidelines, expectations, and available resources to help you succeed while contributing to a safe, respectful, and productive shared environment.

As a farmer, you are not only responsible for cultivating your plot, but you are also a steward of the land and a member of a diverse farming community. This means:

- Respecting shared spaces, tools, and resources. Following safety and sustainability practices.
- Participating in required meetings and trainings.
- Communicating openly and professionally with staff and fellow farmers.
- Contributing to the positive spirit and collective success of Spaces.

We are here to support your growth, and in return, we ask for your commitment to these shared values and responsibilities.

Land Use & Plot Maintenance Policies

At Spaces of Opportunity, caring for the land is a shared responsibility. The land where our farm is located belongs to the Roosevelt School District and is stewarded by Spaces of Opportunity for the benefit of the community. Maintaining your farm plot and surrounding areas is essential for your success and for supporting a safe, healthy, and productive community farm environment.

Below are the land use and plot maintenance policies that every farmer must follow:

A. Plot Assignments and Usage

- Spaces of Opportunity does not lease or rent land. Participation in our programs requires a program fee that includes the use of assigned plot(s), which supports successful food production, foster community, mentorship and education.
- Plot assignments are for active cultivation only — no unused plots, storage-only plots, or subletting allowed.
- Farmers must begin actively planting and maintaining their plot within 30 days of acceptance or risk losing the plot.

B. Plot Maintenance Standards

- **Weed Control:**
 - Keep your entire plot free of invasive weeds and grasses, especially Bermuda grass.
 - Farmers are responsible for maintaining a 5-foot perimeter around their plot, including roadways, ditches, and tree lines.
- **Debris and Waste:**
 - Remove old crops, plastic mulch, stakes, and trash regularly.
 - Keep all pathways and shared areas clean and free of obstructions.
- **Structures and infrastructure:**
 - Make sure all approved structures are structurally safe, stable, and have regular maintenance. This includes but is not limited to Shade structures, irrigation, trellising, etc.
- **Soil Health:**

- Participate in cover cropping and soil-building practices as recommended by SOO staff.
- Follow all guidelines for organic compost and fertilizer use.

C. Structures and Improvements

- Farmers must request written permission before building or installing any structures on their plot, including Shade structures, fences, raised beds, storage bins or containers. Unauthorized structures may be removed at the farmer's expense.

D. Access and Safety

- **Farm Access:** Sunrise to sunset only. Overnight camping is NOT permitted.
- **Gate and Shed Access:** Farmers must lock all gates, doors, and storage sheds after use to ensure community safety and protect equipment.
- **Speed Limit:** 5 MPH on farm property. Drive only in designated areas and parking lots.
- **Road conditions:** Farm roads are lined with 6"-12" of woodchips. To reduce the risk of getting stuck. Only vehicles with a minimum tire clearance of 8" are allowed to drive on the farm roads.

E. Tree Lines and Shared Spaces

- Trees planted along roadways or ditches are part of Spaces' long-term community site plan. Farmers must irrigate and maintain trees within their assigned perimeter. Farmers are not allowed to cut down, transplant, plant, or remove any tree without explicit written approval from SOO staff. Damage, or removal of trees may result in probation or removal from the program.

F. Leaving Your Plot or Exiting the Program

- Farmers who choose to leave or have been removed from the program must:
 - Remove all personal equipment, fencing, and materials.
 - Clean the plot of weeds, debris, and old crops.
 - Notify SOO staff at least 30 days in advance when planning to leave. Failure to properly exit may result in loss of eligibility for future participation.
 - Farmers leaving the program will be given no longer than 14 days to remove all property and plants from their plot. After said period SOO staff will dispose of any remaining items and the plot will be tilled and reset.

G. Reinstatement to Spaces of Opportunity

- Farmers and community gardeners who have either:
Abandoned their plot (no activity or communication for more than 30 days), or have been asked to leave due to violations of the Farmer Manual or signed MOU, may apply for reinstatement under the following conditions:
 1. **12-Month Waiting Period** – Farmers may apply for reinstatement at the start of the following fiscal year cycle (October 1) or no sooner than twelve (12) months after the date of termination or abandonment, whichever is later.
 2. **Case-by-Case Consideration** – In special circumstances, Spaces leadership may consider an application earlier than 12 months. Such decisions will be made thoughtfully, taking into account the nature of the original issue, the farmer's readiness to comply with policies, and the overall impact on the community.
 3. **Written Request** – The individual must submit a written request to the Executive Director explaining their interest in returning and how they will comply with all of the current policies.
 4. **Review Process** – Requests will be reviewed by Spaces staff and, if necessary, the Board of Directors. Approval is not guaranteed.
 5. **Completion of Required Steps** – Reinstatement may require participation in an orientation, payment of outstanding fees, or other corrective actions before approval. **6. No Guarantee of Same Plot** – Returning farmers may be assigned a different plot, depending on availability.
 6. **7. One-Time Reinstatement** – Reinstatement may be granted only once. A second termination or abandonment will make the individual permanently ineligible for future participation.

Remember:

Keeping your plot clean, healthy, and productive is part of the commitment you make when joining Spaces of Opportunity. Together, we create an environment that honors the land, strengthens our community, and ensures everyone's success.

Water Use and Irrigation Guidelines

Water is a precious resource here at Spaces of Opportunity. All farmers are expected to use water responsibly, follow scheduled irrigation practices, contribute to water conservation efforts on the land, and communicate timely and effectively about any water issues.

A. Irrigation Schedule

- Spaces use a **flood irrigation system** supplied by the Salt River Project (SRP).
- **Irrigation schedules** will be provided to all farmers by SOO staff.
- The final watering schedule is tentative until confirmed after **3:00 PM** the day before irrigation.
- Farmers must adjust their plans based on last-minute schedule changes when necessary.
- In **RARE** instances, farmers may request additional irrigation at the farmers' expense.

B. On-Plot Water Management

- Farmers are responsible for:
 - Maintaining (or sometimes creating) crop beds, mounds, or rows that support efficient flood irrigation.
 - Avoid using any structures that block or damage irrigation channels.
 - Monitoring water use on their plot to prevent runoff, waste, or erosion.

C. Water Storage Tanks

- Farmers may install water storage tanks or IBC totes, for on-site use **only with prior approval** from SOO staff.
- Tank Requirements:
 - Maximum size: 2,500 gallons.
 - Tanks must have a secure lid (no open ponds or containers allowed).
 - Tanks must be installed on a gravel base no more than 16 inches high.
 - Tanks must be placed within the assigned plot and not block irrigation paths.
 - Farmers are responsible for acquiring the necessary equipment to fill their own tanks.

- Farmers may fill their tanks using water designated for their plot during the predetermined irrigation schedule.
- Farmers are fully responsible for purchasing, installing, and maintaining their own tanks.
- Spaces will not be liable for any damage to farmer-owned tanks.
- Water tanks that are not approved or do not meet SOO standards will be removed at the farmer's expense.

D. Conservation Practices

- Farmers are encouraged to:
 - Utilize mulching to retain soil moisture.
 - Adopt drip irrigation systems (with SOO approval) to reduce water use.
 - Plan crop layouts that minimize water loss and maximize efficiency. •
- Wasting water may result in probation or corrective action.

E. Protecting Irrigation Infrastructure

- Farmers must protect SRP water gates, ditches, pipes, and flood valves from damage.
- Do not modify or interfere with shared irrigation systems without approval.
- Any accidental damage must be reported immediately to SOO staff.

Efficient and respectful water use protects our farm, supports healthy crops, and models sustainability for our broader community.

Thank you for helping Spaces of Opportunity be a leader in responsible water stewardship!

Soil Health, Organic Practices, and Compost Use

Spaces of Opportunity is committed to organic, regenerative farming practices that protect our soil, our food, and our community health. As a farmer at Spaces, you are expected to follow these soil management and organic guidelines:

A. Organic Growing Standards

- Spaces follow the general guidelines of the National Organic Program (NOP) even though the site is not officially certified.
- Farmers must not use chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, or genetically modified seeds.
- All fertilizers, pest controls, and soil amendments must be approved by SOO staff before use.

B. Soil Testing

- Spaces of Opportunity conducts annual soil tests and irrigation water analysis.
- Test results and soil health recommendations will be shared with farmers.
- Farmers are expected to participate in any soil health improvement activities recommended by SOO staff.

C. Fertilizers and Compost Use

- Approved soil amendments include:
 - Certified organic composts
 - Organic-certified fertilizers
 - Green manures and cover crops
- Farmers must Record all soil amendments used in their farm records. Follow any **waiting period requirements** after applying raw manure (typically 90-120 days before harvest, (USDA recommendations)).
- Use only **pre-approved compost** or compost produced through SOO-approved methods

D. Cover Cropping and Soil Health Practices

- Planting cover crops is encouraged, especially during off-seasons or plot rest periods. Cover crops prevent erosion, build soil health, and reduce weed growth. If a farmer chooses not to actively plant market crops for a season, they are required to plant and maintain a cover crop to protect soil health.
- Plants included on the “Invasive weeds” list are not acceptable cover crops.
- Please check with SOO staff for a list of approved cover crops.

E. Crop Rotation and Planning

- Farmers must practice crop rotation to:

- Prevent soil depletion.
- Minimize pest and disease buildup.
- Improve soil structure and fertility.
- Keep a crop map each season showing where each crop was planted.
- Submit your crop rotation plans to SOO staff annually.

F. Tree Care Responsibilities •

- The trees that are planted throughout the farm are part of the Spaces community design. As co-stewards of the land farmers are responsible for all trees within 5 feet of their plot. This includes keeping the basins free of weeds as well as irrigation plans. Trees may NOT be cut down, transplanted, or removed without written permission from SOO staff.
- No new trees are allowed to be planted without explicit written permission of SOO staff.

G. Weed and Pest Management

- Control weeds through **mulching, hoeing, hand-pulling, or mowing**. Use **physical pest control methods** like row covers, traps, and beneficial insects whenever possible. Any pesticide use (even organic-approved) must: Be pre-approved by SOO staff. Must be recorded in the farm record book. Consistent failure to control weeds or pests may result in corrective action.

Our Goal:

Healthy soil creates healthy plants, healthy food, and a healthier community. Thank you for practicing good stewardship of the land.

Together, we grow stronger!

Farm Equipment Use and Safety Procedures

Spaces of Opportunity provides access to shared farm equipment to support your farming activities. Using the equipment safely, responsibly, and respectfully is critical for your success and the safety of everyone on the farm.

Below is the equipment use policies and safety guidelines:

A. Equipment Access Requirements

- Training First:
 - You must complete official SOO equipment training before using any shared machines or tools.
 - Training covers equipment operation, basic maintenance, and farm safety protocols.
- Approval Required:
 - Only farmers who have completed training and demonstrated safe handling may use shared equipment.
 - **Use of tractors and large machinery (e.g., 4-wheel tractors) is restricted to SOO staff only.**

B. Sign-Out Procedures

- Always sign out equipment in the designated logbook before use.
- Record:
 - Your name
 - Date and time of use
 - -Equipment used
 - Any issues, damages, or needed repairs

C. Proper Equipment Use

- Operate equipment safely, cautiously, and only for its intended purpose.
- Limit machine use to **two hours** if others are waiting.
- Before operating:
 - Walk to your field to clear rocks, debris, irrigation pipes, and other obstacles.
 - Inspect the machine for leaks, loose parts, or missing safety guards.
 - Ensure you are wearing appropriate safety gear (e.g., boots, gloves, eye protection, no loose clothing).

D. Cleaning and Returning Equipment

- Clean all equipment after use (remove dirt, plant material, etc.).
- Refuel small engines if needed.
- Return all equipment to the proper storage shed.

- Farmers remain responsible for equipment until a SOO staff member has officially signed off on its return.

E. Reporting Damage

- SOO staff are responsible for repairs and maintenance of our equipment.
- Immediately report any equipment issues or damage to SOO staff.
- Do not attempt repairs.
- Farmers may be responsible for repair costs if equipment is damaged due to improper use or negligence.

F. General Equipment Safety Rules

- Only the SOO farmer who has checked out the equipment may be permitted to use said equipment while it has been checked out.
- Never allow untrained individuals (family members, visitors, volunteers) to use farm equipment.
- You must always wear appropriate PPE while using powered equipment: safety glasses, ear plugs, gloves, etc.
- Stay alert and avoid distractions when operating machines.
- Keep children and bystanders at a safe distance when using equipment.
- Always follow manufacturer safety instructions.

Our Goal:

Shared equipment is a valuable community resource. By using it properly and respectfully, you help ensure that it stays safe and available for all farmers at Spaces.

Thank you for being a responsible and respectful farm operator!

Storage Container Policy

Farmers who wish to place their own storage container on the farm must follow the approval process outlined below:

- **Written Request:** A written request must be submitted to Spaces of Opportunity. The request must include:
 - Type of container

- Size/dimensions
- A map or description of the proposed placement location
- **Approval Process:** Land Manager will review the request and issue an official approval or denial letter.
- **Access Requirement:** If approved, the farmer must provide Spaces of Opportunity with a key and/or lock code to the container. This is required for safety and emergency access only.
- **Agreement in Writing:** Farmers must sign a written agreement acknowledging the conditions of approval before placing the container on site.

Cold Storage, Wash Station, and Ice Machine Use

Spaces of Opportunity provides access to shared post-harvest facilities to help farmers safely wash, store, and handle their produce. Maintaining cleanliness, safety, and respect for shared spaces is critical to protecting your crops and our community's reputation.

Below are the guidelines for using these facilities:

A. Wash/Prep Station Guidelines

- Use for Produce Only:
 - Wash station sinks and counters are for produce washing only, no personal food preparation, eating, or drinking allowed.
- Clean After Each Use:
 - Rinse down sinks, counters, and work surfaces after use.
 - Remove all plant debris and dispose of waste in designated compost bins.
 - Dispose of all unused plant material into the compost hopper.
 - Remember to completely turn off all water faucets or hoses after use.
- No Trash Left Behind:
 - Discard all trash in designated trash bins.
 - Never leave discarded produce, boxes, or bags on the ground or in work areas.
- Report Problems:

- Notify SOO staff immediately if you notice plumbing issues or damage to the washing facilities.

B. Walk-In Refrigerator (Cold Storage) Guidelines

After using the storage container, you must close the doors and lock them immediately. It is essential to secure the containers every time they are used.

- Assignment of Space:

- Each farmer will be assigned a designated shelf space or section in ONE of the cold storage units. Store your produce only in your assigned space.

- Labeling Required:

Clearly label all stored items with:

- Your farm name.
- Date of storage.
- Customer name (if applicable).

- Storage Rules:

- Keep doors closed unless you are actively loading or unloading produce.
- Lock the cold storage unit after use.
- Do not remove produce, crates, or packaging that does not belong to you (SOO staff may for emergency management).

- Removal of Spoiled Items:

SOO staff will dispose of any produce that:

- It is decaying or leaking fluids.
- It is contaminated with mold, bacteria, or pests.
- It is improperly labeled or stored for more than one week.
- Has been placed on a shelf that is not assigned to that farmer.

C. Ice Machine Use

- Purpose:

- The ice machine is intended for cooling harvested produce, especially during hot weather.
- **Not for human consumption.** Use the ice only to cool produce.

- Use Respectfully:
 - Take only what you need.
 - Share resources fairly with other farmers.
 - Wash produce after ice usage to maintain food safety.

Important Reminders:

- Misuse of the wash station, cooler, or ice machine may result in probation or restricted access.
- Always report maintenance needs immediately to SOO staff to avoid equipment failure.

Our Goal:

Maintaining high food safety standards protects your crops, your customers, and Spaces of Opportunity's good standing in the community.

Thank you for using shared resources with care and respect!

Farmer's Market and Sales Participation (Spaces Co-op)

Spaces of Opportunity farmers have a unique opportunity to participate in cooperative marketing through the **Our Harvest / Nuestra Cosecha Cooperative**. Working together strengthens market access, supports fair pricing, and builds a resilient food system.

Below are the guidelines for farmer participation in the Co-op:

A. Purpose of the Cooperative

- Help farmers sell their crops collectively.
- Access larger markets (CSA programs, food hubs).
- Ensure fair, transparent pricing for farmers.
- Strengthen our community food system and customer relationships.

B. Farmer Member Responsibilities

- Crop Planning:
 - Work collaboratively with SOO staff and fellow farmers to develop seasonal crop plans.

- Commit to growing agreed-upon crops for cooperative sales.
- Harvest Deliveries:
 - Delivery assigned harvests to the Co-op on time, in good condition.
 - Label produce accurately with your farm name and harvest date.
- Food Safety:
 - Complete required food safety training.
 - Follow all wash, storage, and transport guidelines to ensure safe handling.
- Meetings and Communication:
 - Attend Co-op planning and evaluation meetings at least twice per year.
 - Reply to communications about orders, delivery times, and market needs.
- Recordkeeping:
 - Keep accurate records of crops delivered to the Co-op, quantities sold, and payments received.
- W9 Submission:
 - Submit a current IRS W9 form to SOO staff to ensure timely payment processing.

C. Sales and Payment

- Farmers are **paid a fair market** price for crops delivered to and sold through the Co-op.
- Payments are typically made **within 30 days** of produce delivery and sales reconciliation.
- Farmers should communicate with SOO staff immediately if there are any payment concerns.

D. Minimum Participation Requirements

- Participation levels may increase in future seasons based on community market demand.

E. Benefits of Participation

- Easier access to multiple markets without having to secure sales individually.
- Consistent income streams throughout the growing season.
- Opportunity to contribute to a stronger, more visible local food movement.

Our Goal:

Cooperative marketing gives small farmers a powerful voice in the marketplace and helps feed our communities with fresh and local food.

Thank you for growing with us and strengthening our shared success!

Training Requirements and Farmer Development

At Spaces of Opportunity, we believe that building strong, knowledgeable farmers strengthens the health and success of our entire community. All farmers are expected to complete the required training and actively participate in professional development opportunities.

Below are the training and development expectations:

A. Mandatory Trainings

Spaces of Opportunity hosts and facilitates workshops and training throughout the year. Many of these are free and open to anyone. However, specific training is mandatory for Apprentice and/or Incubator farmers.

- Food Safety: Participate in approved food safety training to ensure you can legally and safely handle, wash, store, and sell produce.

B. Optional Workshops and Technical Assistance

Spaces of Opportunity will offer additional workshops throughout the year, which may include:

- Basic recordkeeping and farm business planning.
- Advanced crop production techniques.
- Soil health and organic inputs.
- Cooperative marketing and sales strategies.
- Tours of other farms and marketplaces.

One-on-one technical assistance is also available on request to support your individual farm goals.

C. Participation Expectations

- Required Attendance:
 - Farmers must attend all mandatory training courses before being fully authorized to farm or sell produce through the Co-op.
 - Missing more than two mandatory training courses without prior approval may result in probation.
- Quarterly Farmer Meetings:
 - Farmers are encouraged to attend monthly farmer meetings to stay informed about irrigation schedules, market opportunities, safety updates, and upcoming events.
- Ongoing Learning:
 - Farmers are strongly encouraged to continue building their skills by attending additional workshops, farm tours, and educational events.

Our Goal:

By investing in your growth, you are investing in the success of your farm, your family, and our entire Spaces of Opportunity community.

Thank you for your commitment to continuous learning!

Land Use Fees, Payment Schedule, and Financial Policies

Participation in the Spaces of Opportunity Farmer Program includes a fee that helps cover irrigation, soil improvements, shared infrastructure, and technical support. All farmers are expected to pay their fees on time and communicate with SOO staff if any issues arise.

Below are the details regarding land use fees and payment policies:

A. Annual Land Use Fees

- Incubator Farmers: \$650.00 per plot per year.
- Apprentice Farmers: \$325.00 per plot per year.

Note:

If a farmer has more than one plot, they are responsible for paying the fee for each plot individually and on scheduled time.

B. Payment Schedule

Fees may be paid in full or in four equal quarterly payments:

- October 30, 2025
- January 30, 2026
- April 30, 2026
- July 30, 2026

Quarterly Payment Amounts:

- Incubator Farmers: \$165.00 per quarter per parcel
- Apprentice Farmers: \$82.50 per quarter per parcel

C. Payment Options

- Online
- **Acceptable forms:** Check or money order only.
- **Payable to:** Spaces of Opportunity
- **Memo line:** Include “**Land Use Fee**”, your farm name, and the quarter (e.g., “Land Use Fee – Green Roots Farm – Q1”).
- **Alternate wording in the memo line will not be permitted.**

Receipts are available on request.

D. Late Payment and Prorated Fees

- **Late Payment:**
 - Late payments may result in probation and, if unresolved, removal from the program.
 - If you are unable to pay on time, you must contact SOO staff before the due date to discuss payment options.
- **Prorated Fees:**
 - Farmers who join the program after the start of the year will pay a prorated fee based on the number of quarters remaining.

E. Fee Use

Land use fees help cover essential operational costs, including:

- Flood irrigation water through SRP
- Soil fertility management
- Sanitary facilities and potable water access
- Shared equipment maintenance and small repairs
- Technical assistance and farmer training support
- Facility utilities and improvements

Our Goal:

Affordable access to land is central to our mission. Your land use fees support not only your plot, but the entire farming community at Spaces of Opportunity.

Thank you for fulfilling your financial commitment and helping Spaces grow!

Insurance Requirements for Farmers

All farmers participating in the Spaces of Opportunity Farmer Program are required to maintain appropriate insurance coverage. Insurance protects you, your farm business, your customers, and the broader Spaces community.

Below are the insurance requirements and guidelines:

A. Required Insurance Policies

All farmers must carry the following:

- **General Liability Insurance**
 - Minimum coverage amount: \$1,000,000 per occurrence.
 - Protects against injury or property damage claims made by third parties.
- **Product Liability Insurance**
 - Minimum coverage amount: \$1,000,000 per occurrence.
 - Protects against claims related to illnesses or injuries caused by consuming your produce.
- **Workers' Compensation Insurance (if applicable)**
 - Required if you employ workers (even part-time or seasonal employees).
 - Covers medical expenses and lost wages for workers injured on the job.

B. Proof of Insurance

- Submit copies of your insurance certificates to SOO staff before beginning any farming activities or selling produce.
- List Spaces of Opportunity as an additional insured party whenever possible.

C. Workers' Compensation Notes

- If you hire employees, even temporary workers, you must obtain workers' compensation insurance in compliance with Arizona law.
- Sole proprietors without employees are not required to carry workers' comp for themselves but may elect to purchase it for additional protection.
- You must submit the names and contact information for all employees or volunteers working on your plot.
- Temporary workers or assistance may NOT reside on your plot, or any other plot, or anywhere on the property. It is your responsibility to ensure that any workers or helpers you engage do not reside on the property.

D. Insurance Support

- Spaces of Opportunity staff can provide sample insurance contacts or referrals if you need help securing coverage.
- Some insurance providers offer affordable plans specifically for small-scale farmers and market growers.

E. Non-Compliance

- Farmers who fail to maintain active insurance coverage may face probation, suspension of farming privileges, or removal from the program.
- Spaces of Opportunity reserves the right to request updated proof of insurance at any time.

Our Goal:

Insurance protects you, your customers, and the farm community.

Thank you for taking this important step toward building a safe, professional, and sustainable farm business.

Safety, Harassment, and Community Conduct Policies

Spaces of Opportunity is committed to creating a safe, welcoming, and respectful environment for all farmers, staff, volunteers, and visitors. We believe that every individual deserves to work and grow in a space free from harm, harassment, or discrimination.

Below are the expectations for behavior and community safety:

A. General Safety Guidelines

- Always be aware of your surroundings.
- Report any unsafe conditions, suspicious activity, or maintenance concerns to SOO staff immediately.
- Follow all posted signage regarding farm operations and equipment use.
- Always supervise children and guests.
- Follow evacuation plans if a dangerous situation arises (e.g., violence, fire, medical emergencies).
- Do NOT work on the farm outside of our operational hours.

B. Harassment and Discrimination Policy

- Spaces of Opportunity has a zero tolerance for harassment, discrimination, or bullying based on race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other protected status.
- Prohibited conduct includes:
 - Verbal harassment (e.g., slurs, jokes, derogatory comments)
 - Physical harassment (e.g., unwanted touching, intimidation, blocking movement)
 - Visual harassment (e.g., offensive gestures, posters, drawings)
 - Sexual harassment (e.g., unwelcome advances, requests for favors, inappropriate comments)
- All reports of harassment will be taken seriously, investigated promptly, and addressed appropriately.

C. Community Conduct Expectations

- Treat fellow farmers, staff, volunteers, and visitors with respect always.
- Communicate in a courteous and constructive manner.
- Cooperate and collaborate — help build a positive, supportive farm culture.
- Respect the property and tools of others.
- Address conflicts respectfully or bring them to SOO staff for mediation support if needed.

D. Prohibited Behaviors

The following behaviors are strictly prohibited at Spaces of Opportunity and may result in immediate removal from the program:

- Use of illegal drugs, alcohol, or firearms on farm property.
- Theft or destruction of farm property or fellow farmers' property.
- Violence, threats, intimidation, or aggressive behavior.
- Persistent disregard for safety protocols, farm rules, or community agreements.

Our Commitment:

At Spaces of Opportunity, we grow food, community, and leadership — and that can only happen in an environment rooted in respect, safety, and dignity for everyone.

Thank you for helping us cultivate a farm community where everyone can thrive!

Complaint and Grievance Procedure

At Spaces of Opportunity, we believe in open, respectful communication and timely resolution of concerns. If you experience a problem, safety concern, conflict, or unfair treatment, you have the right and responsibility to report it.

Here's how we will work together to address concerns:

A. Filing a Complaint or Grievance

- You may file a complaint or grievance if you experience or witness:
- Unsafe working conditions
- Harassment or discrimination
- Theft, property damage
- Misuse of shared resources

- Conflicts with fellow farmers, SOO staff, or volunteers.

Complaints may be made **verbally or in writing** to SOO staff or the Executive Director. If possible, file your complaint **within 7 days** of the incident.

B. What to Include in a Complaint

- A description of the concern or incident should be provided to the Spaces of Opportunity Executive Director.
- Date(s) and time(s) of occurrence.
- Names of any individual or individuals involved.
- Any witnesses, if applicable.
- Any steps you have already taken to resolve the issue.

C. Investigation Process

- The Executive Director will review the complaint promptly and confidentially.
- You may be asked for additional information during the investigation.
- If the issue involves safety, harassment, or criminal behavior, additional steps may be taken immediately for protection.
- Every effort will be made to resolve concerns fairly, respectfully, and in a timely manner.

D. Resolution and Follow-Up

- After the investigation, the Executive Director will:
 - Communicate findings and decisions to those involved.
 - Recommend the next steps, which could include mediation, corrective action, or formal disciplinary action.
 - Follow up to ensure the issue has been fully resolved.

E. No Retaliation Policy

- Spaces of Opportunity strictly prohibits retaliation against any farmer, staff, or volunteer who files a good-faith complaint or participates in an investigation.
- Anyone who engages in retaliation may face removal from the program.

Our Commitment:

We are committed to maintaining a healthy, transparent community where all concerns are heard, valued, and addressed.

Thank you for helping to build a farm environment rooted in communication, fairness, and respect!

Farmer Grievance Procedure Regarding SOO Staff

If a farmer has a concern or complaint regarding a staff member of Spaces of Opportunity (SOO), the following process must be followed:

1. Initial Report to Executive Director:

The farmer must first bring the concern directly to the Executive Director in writing or through a scheduled meeting.

2. 24-Hour Resolution Period:

The Executive Director will make every effort to address and resolve the matter within 24 hours of receiving the complaint.

3. Escalation to the Board:

If the issue is not resolved to the farmer's satisfaction within the 24-hour timeframe, the farmer may escalate the complaint by contacting a member of the SOO Board of Directors.

4. Respectful Communication and Confidentiality:

Farmers are expected to follow this internal grievance process. Directing complaints to individuals or organizations outside of SOO — including through social media or public forums — without first attempting resolution internally is considered a breach of SOO's grievance policy.

Publicly sharing unverified claims, disparaging remarks, or defamatory statements about SOO or its staff may result in legal consequences, including defamation action, and may affect a farmer's participation in SOO programs.

We believe in open communication, transparency, and accountability — and we are committed to resolving concerns fairly and professionally.

Acknowledgment of Farmer Grievance Procedure Policy

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the **Farmer Grievance Procedure Regarding SOO Staff**. I agree to follow the steps outlined for reporting and resolving any concerns related to SOO staff and understand the importance of maintaining respectful communication and confidentiality throughout the process.

I understand that failure to follow this procedure, including public dissemination of grievances or defamatory statements about Spaces of Opportunity or its staff, may result in consequences up to and including removal from participation in SOO programs and/or legal action.

Farmer Name (Printed): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Consequences, Probation, and Removal Process

Spaces of Opportunity values every farmer's participation and strives to support everyone's success. However, to maintain a safe, productive, and respectful community farm, consequences are necessary when guidelines are not followed.

Below is the process for addressing non-compliance:

A. Reasons for Probation

You may be placed on **probation** if you:

- Fail to pay land use fees on time.
- Miss more than two mandatory training courses, workshops, or farmer meetings. Neglect your plot (e.g., major weed overgrowth, abandoned crops, debris accumulation).
- Consistently disregard equipment use or farm safety protocols.
- Fail to maintain required insurance coverage.
- Violate harassment, safety, or community conduct policies.
- Remove, cut down, or damage trees without SOO staff permission.

B. Probation Process

- **Meeting:**
 - The Executive Director or Land Manager will meet with you to explain the concerns and set clear expectations for correction.
- **Written Probation Terms:**
 - You will receive a written probation agreement outlining the specific issues, expectations for improvement, and a timeline for compliance (typically 30–60 days).
- **Support:**
 - SOO staff will offer reasonable support to help you meet the probation terms (technical assistance, flexible payment plans, etc.).

C. Removal from Program

You may be **removed** from the Spaces of Opportunity Farmer Program if you:

- Do not meet the terms outlined in your probation agreement.
- Engage in violent, threatening, harassing, or discriminatory behavior.
- Steal from or intentionally damage other farmers, staff, or SOO property.
- Consistently and significantly neglect your farm plot without communication.
- Refuse to cooperate with SOO staff after multiple attempts to resolve issues.

D. Immediate Removal

In rare, serious situations (such as violence, harassment, threats, theft, or illegal activity), you may be immediately removed from the program **without probation** for the safety of the community.

E. Appeals

Farmers who are removed may request a review of their removal in writing to the SOO Executive Director within **7 days** of notification. Final decisions rest with ONLY Spaces of Opportunity leadership and Board of Directors if needed.

Our Commitment:

Our goal is always education, support, and second chances when possible — not punishment. Consequences are only used when necessary to protect the safety, sustainability, and success of the entire Spaces of Opportunity community.

Agreement to Participate — Summary of Responsibilities

By participating in the Spaces of Opportunity Farmer Program, you agree to:

- Review and follow all policies outlined in the Farmer Manual.
- Actively maintain your farm plot and participate in scheduled trainings.
- Follow all safety, organic farming, and irrigation guidelines.
- Maintain current insurance coverage as required.
- Pay all land use fees on time.
- Treat staff, volunteers, and fellow farmers with respect.
- Communicate with SOO staff to resolve any issues or concerns.

Your signature confirms your understanding of these responsibilities and your commitment to the mission of health, sustainability, and community leadership at Spaces of Opportunity.

Signature Page – Agreement to Participate

Farmer Information

Farm/Business Name (if applicable): _____

Farmer Full Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Agreement Signatures

Signature Date Farmer _____

Farm Delegate (if any) _____

SOO Staff Representative _____

Farmer Readiness Checklist

(Effective October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026)

Before beginning work on your plot at Spaces of Opportunity, please make sure you have completed the following:

- I have read the Spaces of Opportunity Farmer Manual carefully.
- I have signed and submitted the Agreement to Participate.
- I have submitted proof of general liability and product liability insurance.
- I have completed or scheduled the following required trainings:
 - Communication and Conflict Resolution
 - Pest Management
 - Equipment Safety
 - Food Safety Certification
- I have selected and designated a Farm Delegate (if different from myself).
- I have arranged to pay my land use fee (either full payment or by quarterly plan).
- I have developed an initial crop plan for the upcoming season.
- I understand the irrigation schedule and my water use responsibilities.
- I have reviewed the rules about equipment use, cold storage, wash station procedures, and market participation.
- I know how to report concerns or file a grievance if needed.
- I understand the policies around probation, consequences, and removal.

Ready to Grow!

When all items on this checklist are complete, you are officially ready to start farming at Spaces of Opportunity.

Thank you for your commitment to building a strong, sustainable, and community rooted.

For assistance with farmland, plots, farmer trainings, farmer programs, cold storage, and safety, please contact **Sowan Thai, Land Manager**, at **Sowan@spacesofopportunity.org** or **602-459-0624**

We're here to support you! Don't hesitate to reach out. We want every farmer to feel supported, informed, and successful.

Disclaimer:

This handbook was revised in September 2025. The policies, guidelines, and information it contains are subject to change at any time. The most recent version of this handbook supersedes all previous editions.



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