Mandela Partners - Farm Partnerships Coordinator

About the organization
Mandela Partners (MP) is a non-profit organization that works in partnership with local residents, family farmers, and community-based businesses to improve health, create wealth, and build assets through food enterprises in under-resourced communities of color. Our approach is based on a systems model that addresses issues of economic disinvestment, food insecurity, and health inequity, building on local assets to cultivate thriving communities.

Key Areas of Responsibility
The Farm Partnerships Coordinator is a key team member of Mandela Produce Distribution (MPD), a community-based food hub located in West Oakland that exists to build the economic power of small local farms. Since 2016, MPD has been connecting farmers of color to customers who are committed to local and sustainable sourcing. Reporting to the Food Hub Operations Manager, the Farm Partnerships Coordinator is responsible for 1) sourcing and pricing fresh produce from local farmers of color and ensuring produce meets MPD’s quality standards; 2) coordinating the Harvest to Market forward-purchasing loan program; and 3) connecting farmers to resources such as grants and technical assistance opportunities through partner organizations and local farm-supporting institutions. The Farm Partnerships Coordinator will also work closely with the Food Access Program Manager to strategize market channel opportunities via Mandela Partners’ subsidized food access programs and engage in local policy initiatives to uplift the needs and perspectives of limited-resource farmers of color.

This is a remote/hybrid role with regular farm visits located in Salinas Valley and Hollister. Requires in-person workdays at MPD Oakland office 1-2 times per month.

Produce Sourcing and Pricing (35%)
- Communicates daily with farmers to develop MPD’s produce availability price sheets and monitors produce industry price trends.
- Supports Food Hub Operations Manager in developing quality guidelines for all produce varieties, and when necessary, provides onsite support to farmers to ensure they are meeting MPD’s quality standards.
- Works closely with Food Hub Operations Manager and Food Access Program manager to develop a purchasing strategy that expands access to sales channels for local farmers of color, including: bridging farmers to values-driven customers and communicating customers’ preferences to farmers.

Communications and Evaluation (35%)
- Develops clear and consistent communication channels about produce availability and distribution logistics between farmers and MPD’s customers.
- Build out assessment tool(s) that accurately captures farmers’ needs and access to sustainable market channels; determine whether and to what extent MPD could fill existing gaps.
● Ensures farmers have necessary documentation to access MPD's market channels, including organic certification, producer certificates, crop plans, lot labels, and food safety SOPs and certification, among others.

● Identifies sales channels for non-certified sustainable growers (e.g. farmers who grow without chemical pesticides but are not certified organic).

● Works closely with Food Hub Operations Manager to develop a technical assistance pipeline for farmers interested in accessing wholesale markets channels.

**Harvest to Market Loan Program (20%) -** The Harvest to Market loan program is a 0% financing program created in partnership with California Farmlink. MPD pays farmers upfront for fresh produce and farmers pay down loan balances via produce sales to MPD over the course of the loan term.

● Develops sales projections and forward purchasing agreements with participating farmers, including a list of agreed upon produce items and pricing held throughout the loan term.

● Tracks and submits monthly purchase order statements to California Farmlink.

● Works with Food Hub Operations Manager and Food Access Program Manager to maintain consistent sales channels for participating farmers.

**Resource Mapping and Advocacy (10%)**

● Keep track of relevant funding opportunities and local policy and advocacy initiatives, and support the team in determining the level of support we can offer to farmers based on current staffing capacity and resources.

● When possible, connect farmers to capacity building and technical assistance resources, including food safety planning, quality standards and control, capital, and grants.

● Cultivate relationships with local farm-supporting organizations and initiatives, particularly those based in regions where MPD’s partner farmers are located, e.g. Salinas Valley, Hollister, Gilroy, etc.

**Who You Are + Keys to Success:**

● **Attentive, empathetic relationship-builder:** Enthusiasm for meeting and engaging with farmers, most of whom are either immigrants, monolingual Spanish-speakers, and/or experience socio-economic hardships. Able to connect with people in an authentic way, especially when there are lines of difference. Listens closely to understand needs or concerns, and takes steps based on that input. Maintains strong, collaborative working relationships with a diverse team, and does so with a positive attitude towards helping others. Excited to represent both Mandela Partners and Mandela Produce Distribution to farmers and community partners.

● **Manages a high volume of work with efficiency:** Has, or can create, a system for keeping tasks from slipping through the cracks. You are skilled at prioritizing and setting boundaries so that you can focus on each project with clarity and a sense of accomplishment. Plans backwards to make deadlines. Asks for help when needed. You are able to integrate work and personal life with attention to your self-care, so that your work schedule is not depleting. You find ways to feel restored and rejuvenated so that you can best contribute to our organizational goals and mission.
• **Clear, precise, and compassionate communication**: Speaks confidently on behalf of the organization and food hub, and advocates for/with community members. Communicates well with others, including sharing context and asking questions to understand others’ perspectives. Gets back to people in a timely manner. Takes pride in providing clear, helpful information.

• **Attention to detail**: Notices and fixes errors that others might overlook. Acknowledges mistakes and turns them into learning opportunities. Has a track record of leaving things better than they found them.

• **Other required qualifications**: Bilingual Spanish speaker.

This is a full-time exempt position with a starting salary range of $56,000 - $60,000, depending on experience, and includes the following benefits: 7 days of paid vacation, 1 week off between Christmas Eve and New Years Day, 10 paid holidays, and 12 sick days during the first year of employment, and health/dental/vision benefits. Employees are eligible for 401K plan enrollment after 6 months. Partial to majority remote work may be considered, depending on location.

Mandela Partners is an equal opportunity employer: LGBTQ, people of color, women and lifelong Oakland residents are encouraged to apply. Please send your resume and cover letter to Ciara at: ciara@mandelapartners.org. Applications will be accepted until **January 10, 2022**. Expected start date is early to mid-February.