

A close-up photograph of several sliced okra (ladyfinger) vegetables. The slices are arranged in a grid-like pattern, showing the internal structure with large, pale, oval-shaped seeds. The outer skin of the okra is green and covered in fine, white, hair-like bristles (trichomes). The background is dark, making the green okra stand out.

# **FSLN COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS MENTORSHIP**

## **2026 PROGRAM INFO CALL**

February 5, 2026

# TODAY'S FLOW

About the  
FSLN & Our  
Mentorship  
Program

Meet the 2026  
Mentors

Application  
Information

What to  
Expect as a  
Mentee

Q & A



# GROUNDING IN PURPOSE

- A national peer learning community that
- **connects** current and emerging leaders
  - **strengthens** individual and collective leadership capacity, and
  - **fosters** collaboration across communities

To **accelerate** the realization of a just, equitable and sustainable food system that generates good food, health, and opportunity for all!



# OUR CULTURAL AGREEMENTS

Honor and celebrate our **collective wisdom** - together, we know a lot!

**Meet each other where we are.** Showing up is enough, and listening is participating

Honor **confidentiality** - lessons leave, stories stay

**Be mindful of our power,** privilege, and how much space we are taking up

**Give grace** to one another and approach conflict with curiosity

Take care of our own **physical, mental, and emotional needs**

**Take responsibility for impact,** regardless of intent

**Silence is not consent** - proactively seek permission

Challenge assumptions, respect our differences, and **speak from our own experience**



# COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

## Program Goals

- To **build relationships** of solidarity and support across the movement
- To **create space** for seasoned leaders to share their wisdom, knowledge, & expertise with others
- To **strengthen the capacity of food systems leaders** to catalyze social change through food

## Stats to Date

- Launched in January 2018
- 8 cohorts = **Over 200 mentees** total; 63% identify as BIPOC
- **100% of participants feel more confident in their leadership capacity** & 90% planned to make changes to their practices



# COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

## Mentee Focus

- **Organizational Leadership**
  - Developing accountability within an organization
  - Community engagement and transferring power
- **Personal Leadership**
  - Prioritizing where to direct your energy to be most effective
  - Addressing self doubt and imposter syndrome
- **Racial Equity**
  - Navigating white spaces in the food movement and within organizations as a person of color
  - Creating culturally relevant and responsive places in agriculture
- **Technical areas**
  - Community engagement, marketing and promotion, coalition building, urban farming, non-asset based distribution, food business and social enterprise operations, supply chain management.



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# 2026 MENTORS



**ANGEL MENDEZ**



**BEVELYN AFOR UKAH**



**KAMYAR ENSHAYAN**



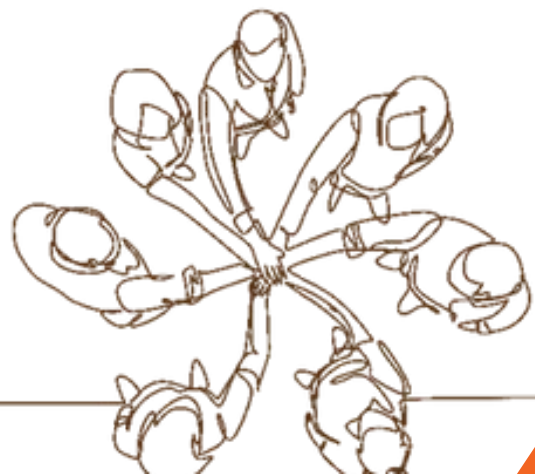
**RICH PIROG**



**KAREN LEHMAN**



**LYDIA VILLANUEVA**



# 2026 MENTORS, CONTINUED



**REV DELE**



**KAREN WASHINGTON**



**MILES GORDON**



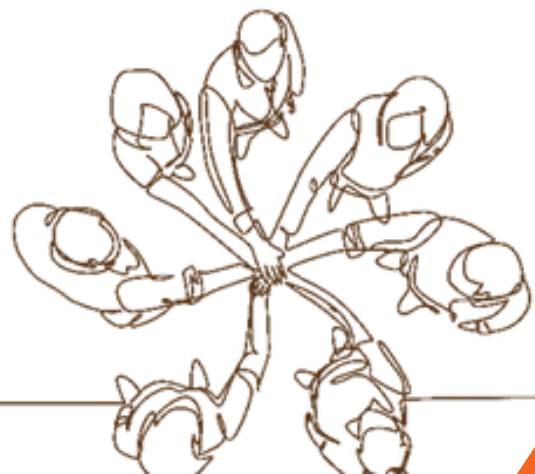
**ROWEN WHITE**



**NANCY CREAMER**



**SHARON THORNBERRY**



# WHAT TO EXPECT

## The 2026 Mentorship Program Includes:

- ✓ 8-hours of Direct Coaching Support from a Mentor over 4 months
  - **April 6 – July 17, 2026**
  - Create time for follow-up, prep, and action in-between calls - commitment is required!
  - Mentees set their own goals for the program, mentors support in finding the path
- ✓ Mentee Cohort Development
  - Kickoff, midway, and debrief/reflection connection points
  - Key Dates for 1-hour Mandatory Mentee Zooms:
    - Mentee Cohort Kickoff Call: Monday April 6, 3 CST / 1 PST
    - Mentee Cohort Midway Call: Monday, May 18, 3 CST / 1 PST
    - Mentee Cohort Wrap-Up Call: Monday, June 29, 3 CST / 1 PST



# MENTORSHIP VS. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Mentorship is based on relationship — a mentor's purpose is to support their mentee.
- Mentees consistently say their mentor was a sounding board.
- Asking for and receiving specific technical assistance may be *part* of the relationship, but it is not its primary purpose
- Answers/solutions ultimately reside within the mentee.
- Mentors are also learning — solidifying their own experience and expertise, and exchanging ideas with mentees.



# KEY DATES

- Applications open through **March 8th**
- Mentees notified: week of March 25th
  - Survey to confirm participation
- Mentee kickoff call: Monday, April 6th
- Mentee midway check-in call: Monday, May 18
- Mentee closeout call: Monday, June 29
- Mentorship runs: April 6 – July 17, 2026



# ELIGIBILITY

## Who Should Apply

- Anyone from nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations, fiscally sponsored projects under a 501(c)3, and mission-driven food and farm businesses, extension staff and public servants who identify as food system professionals.
- Program staff to Executive Directors. Food systems leaders from all identities and levels of experience.
- Applicants and their supporting organizations must both be verified members of the FSLN

*Consider your time and availability to engage with a mentor and follow-up between calls.*



# APPLICATION TIPS

## When Filling Out The Application

- Be thorough. Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Read the website carefully, especially the descriptions of the mentors, who you want to mentor you and why.
- Be honest about your current status and your leadership journey.
- Deeply consider why you are seeking mentorship and what you want to get and give from this relationship.
- Select your 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3rd choice for mentor on the application.
- Complete the provided Organizational Capacity Assessment Matrix.



# APPLICATION PROCESS

## How We Evaluate Applications

- FSLN screens applications for completeness. If incomplete, it will be discarded.
- FSLN then screens complete applications and passes them on to selected mentors.
- Mutual matching process.
- Mentors review applications and select who matches with their background.

*If selected, mentee will be notified and must confirm by the deadline.*





**QUESTIONS?**

# SHARE YOUR SHOUT-OUTS!

Reflections | Appreciations | Encouragements | Concerns

Take yourself off mute or type in the chat

# BREAKOUT TIME

*“What’s a time when you felt a **deep sense of belonging** to a community?”*

*“What were the **conditions** that allowed for that sense?”*

15 minutes total (3-4 minutes per person)

# MEMBER ACTIVATION PROCESS

**Q1 2026**

## MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Harvest hours

Survey

1:1  
Interviews

Member  
feedback  
summary

**Q2 2026**

## STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Visioning  
retreat w/LC  
and Core Team

Draft  
framework

Member  
feedback  
session

**Q3 2026**

## STRATEGY REFINEMENT

Virtual refinement  
sessions

Internal  
workplan

Public  
deliverables

**Q4 2026**

## IMPLEMENTATION

Workplan  
implementation

Ongoing  
tracking and  
evaluation

# WHERE WE'RE HEADED - 2026

## Resourcing Leadership

- Community Food Systems **Mentorship** Program
- Food Systems Leadership **Retreats**
- **Virtual trainings** / capacity building opps

## Resourcing Collaboration

- **Communities of Practice**
- **Policy Advocacy** to secure permanent funding for LFPA
- Network & Coalition Stewards **Gathering**

## Resourcing Network Infrastructure

- Backbone **staff** team
- Network **governance** & leadership pathways
- **Member activation** & priority setting



# FSLN MILESTONES

**2017**  
Initial  
Research  
and Design



**2018**  
FSLN Launches

**2019**  
Food Systems **Mentorship Program** reaches 100 mentees  
**Systems Leadership Retreats** for 130 members

**2020**  
**COVID pivots**  
Support to understand + leverage unprecedented federal funding  
Researching **COVID's impact on food systems**

**2021**  
Merged with National Good Food Network  
Deepened commitment to **advancing racial equity** across the network

**2022**  
Inclusive **strategic planning** process  
**2,700+** individuals receive capacity building support  
Over **1000** in Communities of Practice



**2023**  
Launched **F2FA Learning Lab**  
Strengthened **advocacy partnership** with NSAC  
Expanded work in **Value Chain Coordination & Federal Resource Mobilization**

**2024**  
**Largest Mentorship Cohort** to Date  
Hosted **first state-level fellowship** (AR)  
**FSLN Evolution Process Kicked Off**

# Accelerating Impact

A resource-enriched approach that deepens support for projects through direct acceleration of mission-driven impact.



## Core Acceleration Services

Multiplier's seasoned team provides efficient, cost-effective administrative and operations support that is core to our work:

- Finance and accounting services
- Grants and contracts management
- HR and payroll administration
- Fiduciary oversight and IRS compliance
- Risk management and business insurance



## Program Impact Acceleration

An accelerator team brings additional senior nonprofit expertise including:

- Strategic planning and capacity building
- Program design and outcomes measurement
- Fundraising and donor relations support
- Team recruitment and team development
- Strategic partnership development

# WHAT WE'RE CURRENTLY ASKING

"What does it mean to **belong** to FSLN?"

"How can FSLN **show up for its members** in this uniquely challenging moment?"

"What **powers** and **responsibilities** should FSLN members hold?"

"What is FSLN's **ideal niche** in the ecosystem of national food systems groups?"

