

NEWS RELEASE

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Agricultural Institute of Marin Named Bank of America’s 2023 Neighborhood Champion®

Nonprofit Will Receive a Multi-Year Grant and Leadership Training to Advance Economic Mobility in the North Bay

SAN RAFAEL, CA – Bank of America today announced Agricultural Institute of Marin (AIM) as the 2023 Neighborhood Champion® awardee for its work creating access to equitable local and regional food through California farmers markets. Now, AIM can apply the Neighborhood Champion \$50,000, multi-year grant funding and leadership training toward hiring additional employees and lowering operational costs to help get its new Center for Food and Agriculture headquarters one step closer to being built.

Neighborhood Champions is part of the bank’s [Neighborhood Builders](#) program -- one of the largest philanthropic investments into nonprofit leadership development in the nation. As a Neighborhood Champion, AIM also will receive leadership training for its executive director and an emerging staff member delivered by experts in the nonprofit sector on topics like human capital management, increasing financial sustainability, and storytelling.

For 40 years, AIM has been a champion for farmers, food, and education. The San Rafael-based organization runs nine Bay Area certified farmers markets, serving more than 400 farmers, food purveyors, and artisans from over 40 California counties. This Neighborhood Champion grant funding will help support AIM’s food access equity programming, including EBT/Market Match financial incentives and racial equity funding for beginning BIPOC farmers and food makers. Bank of America has also partnered with AIM to support pandemic response food programs, like the Bounty Box. AIM plans to house its food access and education programs at its future Center for Food and Agriculture, located at the Marin Civic Center. With a target opening date of 2025, the Center for Food and Agriculture will be a state-of-the-art, zero-waste Marin Farmers Market. The facility will service 600,000 households in a three-county area.

“The rising cost of food combined with climate-related challenges impact small-scale and underserved farmers, as well as threaten the long-term viability of our local food systems and nutrition safety net,” said Andy Naja-Riese, chief executive officer of the Agricultural Institute of Marin. “Thanks to Bank of America’s partnership, we can help more low-income families and older adults stretch their food dollars while incentivizing small farmers and small food business owners—especially farmers of color who have historically been marginalized to access farmers markets.”

The invitation-only Neighborhood Champions program is highly competitive, and nonprofits are selected by a committee comprised of community leaders and past awardees. Five nonprofits have been selected as Champions in the North Bay since 2019, with the bank investing \$250,000 into these local nonprofits.

“Nonprofits are vital to solving social challenges, improving communities, and promoting economic advancement,” said Jason Foster, president, Bank of America North Bay. “Providing Agricultural Institute of Marin with flexible funding and leadership training not only positions the nonprofit for sustainable, long-term success, but demonstrates our commitment to creating real change in the places where we live and work. AIM does a remarkable job of connecting our Bay Area communities through food.”

Bank of America

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