What is your innovation?
G.R.O.W.I.N.G is a dynamic job placement program which offers culturally appropriate opportunities to refugee farmers and entrepreneurs who may otherwise be unemployable in San Diego. We are investing in the community of refugees from Burma living in San Diego by offering them culturally appropriate job opportunities, and helping to promote health and well-being by offering a healthy, natural alternative to the processed foods that have become a part of their diet after resettling to San Diego.

Who gains the most?
Our refugee farmers gain the most, having access to job and entrepreneurial opportunities that will help them become self-sufficient. The community of refugees from Burma gain as well, creating access to natural produce appropriate to their native cuisine and diet, and replacing processed foods which increase rates of childhood obesity. Our customer segments also enjoy fresh produce and the intrinsic value of supporting self sufficiency in refugee farmers from Burma living in their neighborhood.

Who pays?
With seed money to build infrastructure, we’d be able to sustain the program in partnership with: The Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program, USDA Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Program, International Rescue Committee’s Food Security Program, and the USD Social Innovation Challenge. Once our program launches, we will be working towards sustaining it with income earned by selling our produce and partnerships with outlets from which our farmers can sell their harvest.

What is your success?
Connecting refugee farmers with arable land and infrastructure to support their self sufficiency as farmers and entrepreneurs. Success would be measured by the number of JOBS CREATED and INCOME GENERATED in our community. Also measurable would be the impact that G.R.O.W.I.N.G. will have on the health and wellbeing of the community of refugees from Burma by creating access to natural produce that is native to their diet, and replacing foreign and processed foods readily available around San Diego.

How will you do it?
With an initial financial investment we’d be able to dig irrigation, build a wash station, tool shed, and cooler, purchase an initial investment of layflat, driptape, fencing and soil amendments, and offer a training program to more than 30 refugee farmers. We’d then create avenues for them to sell their produce at farmers markets and CSA programs in San Diego. Once underway, we’d be able to secure an investment from our ready partners and be able to start G.R.O.W.I.N.G!