

MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT
Office of Grants Management
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

FY26 Resident and Community Gardening Grant Program Application

Program Summary: The Office of Food Systems Resilience (OFSR), in partnership with the Office of Grants Management (OGM), is soliciting grant applications for the FY 2026 Resident and Community Gardening Grant Program. \$200,000 in total grant funding will be available to support the scalability and sustainability of projects with demonstrated success in resident and community gardening program design and implementation, which are rooted in research and best practices and measurably increase the volume of fresh, edible food available to Montgomery County residents experiencing food insecurity.

The grant performance period is anticipated to cover a seventeen (17) month period, from on/about June 30, 2026 to November 1, 2027, with the opportunity for renewal for one additional year (12 months) contingent on performance, continued need, and availability of funds. Individual awards are expected to range from \$25,000 to \$100,000. Final award amounts may be lower than \$100,000.

Key Program Dates:

- **NOFO Available:** Tuesday, April 7th, 2026
- **Program Opens for Grant Applications:** Wednesday, April 8th, 2026
- **MS Teams Live Grant Information Session (link to join below):** Tuesday, April 14th, 2026 at 11:00 AM EST
- **Submission Deadline:** Wednesday, May 6th, 2026 at 11:59 pm EST
- **Anticipated Award Notification:** on/about May 27th, 2026

Key Program Resources:

- **Program Page:** https://gn.ecivis.com/GO/gn_redir/T/ebs3zk293sdf
- **Information Session:** [Click to join the Information Session OR for an event recording](#)
- [Grant Program Budget Template](#)
- [Reporting and Evaluation Requirements](#)
- [OGM Board Race-Ethnicity Reporting Template](#)
- [OGM's Resources for Applicants Webpage](#)

Grant Program Details, Submissions, and Support: Application details can be downloaded and application may be submitted through the Online Grants Application Platform through the links above. Applicants requiring an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation should

contact OGM to discuss alternative submission options. Applications that are incomplete, do not meet legal requirements, or are submitted after the deadline will not be accepted. For alternate ADA submission options please contact the Office of Grants Management using the contact information below:

Greg Weissman

Program Manager II, OGM

(240) 773-3384

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For any technical questions related to the application, please contact the OFSR using the contact information below:

Catherine Nardi

Program Manager II, OFSR

(202) 816-9083

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About the Office of Food Systems Resilience: Bill 20-22 established the OFSR as a non-principal office of the County's Executive Branch. The OFSR works to make the County's food system more resilient and equitable to improve the health of residents, the economy, and the environment. The Office serves as the liaison between County agencies and community partners with the goal of addressing the conditions which lead to food insecurity for residents. The OFSR will partner with the OGM to administer the FY26 Food as Medicine Grant Program.

About the Office of Grants Management: As charged in Bill 36-19, the OGM provides a central point of contact regarding the grants that the County receives or awards. The OGM also develops countywide policies and procedures regarding grants management and ensures these are consistent with racial equity and social justice goals and performs outreach regarding grants offered by the County and other grants functions.

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SECTION I – GRANT PROGRAM INFORMATION

A. Background

The OFSR is soliciting grant applications for the County’s FY 2026 Resident and Community Gardening Grant Program from qualified nonprofit organizations in Montgomery County that demonstrate capacity to expand resident and community food production activities and outputs as a means of increasing local food security.

This grant program was initially developed in response to recommendations of the County’s COVID-19 Food Security Task Force, and expanded through the passage of [Special Appropriation #24-37](#) to support the implementation of the [Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger](#). The Strategic Plan includes 14 recommendations to address food access barriers and reduce food insecurity across all childhood age groups, and includes the expansion of community gardens and/or indoor gardens to make fresh produce more accessible to children and families experiencing food insecurity, as well as to promote food/agriculture education opportunities throughout the County.

Previous cycles of the Resident and Community Gardening Grant Program have demonstrated the positive effect community gardens have in promoting food sovereignty amongst residents who have been historically and disproportionately impacted by food insecurity, poor health outcomes, and barriers to land access, by facilitating opportunities for residents to engage in gardening activities that produce fresh, local, and nutritious food and for residents to gain direct access to culturally relevant crops that may be hard to find or unaffordable in traditional retail settings. The FY24 Resident and Community Gardening Grant Program awarded \$210,559 to seven grantees for a 15-month grant period. The funded projects engaged more than 2,000 County residents, and produced more than 4,000 pounds worth of crops for donation to the County’s food assistance network. These efforts are underscored by recent research conducted by the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection through the Climate Ambassadors Program, which indicated that residents often rely on their own or community gardens to provide food for their families.

The FY26 Resident and Community Gardening Grant will support continuity and/or expansion of programming to promote food sovereignty, land access, and increase community-based food production through gardening activities by extending \$200,000 in total grant funds to successful applicants. The OFSR will prioritize proposals that demonstrate significant volumes of food production through gardening activities and those with a plan for long-term financial sustainability not dependent on ongoing County investment.

B. Target Population

The target population that will benefit from the activities and outputs associated with this grant are individuals and households in Montgomery County who have been historically and disproportionately impacted by food insecurity, poor health outcomes, and land access barriers. Through this grant program, County residents will have increased access to locally produced, culturally relevant foods that are supplied directly through their engagement with grant-funded

activities, and/or via food assistance partnerships, and will gain greater sovereignty to participate in the local food system through access to opportunities for growing and harvesting fresh, local, and nutritious food.

C. Funding Priorities

The goal of this program is to fund gardening projects that significantly increase local food production and availability in Montgomery County, Maryland. Priority in awarding funding will be given to proposals that demonstrate a strong performance history of (1) increasing culturally relevant food production and access through community gardening activities, and (2) leveraging additional resources that will support the continuity and growth of this program during and beyond the 17-month performance period, including in-kind contributions, non-County public dollars, and secured outside grant funds.

Additionally, the OFSR will prioritize funding for projects that successfully implemented FY 2023 and/or FY 2024 Resident and Community Gardening Grant Programs and subsequently built upon that County investment to secure additional external funds for maintenance or expansion.

The OFSR will prioritize proposals that:

- **Expand Local Food Access & Production**
 - Demonstrate three (3) or more years of experience in community garden-based food production;
 - Demonstrate annual production of 1,000+ pounds of edible crops;
 - Increase square footage and/or enhance use of secured community gardening property (including public, nonprofit, or institutional land) dedicated to food production by a minimum of 25% during the initial one-year program period;
 - Demonstrate actionable, well-researched plans to produce substantial quantities of edible, nutrient dense crops suitable for household consumption (minimum projection of 1,000 pounds of food grown/harvested during the grant period);
 - Prioritize production of crops aligned with community dietary patterns and cultural food preferences; and
 - Distribute food to County residents either directly or through established food access partners such as food hubs, pantries, schools, or community markets.
- **Demonstrate Sustainability & Scalability**
 - Present a defined plan for utilizing grant funds to expand existing programming, as well as realistic plans to sustain operations long-term beyond the grant period;
 - Develop a project implementation plan and budget proposal that allocates grant funds at approximately \$10-\$20 per square foot of new gardening area;
 - Outline staffing, volunteer, and/or workforce development strategies that demonstrate sufficient relevant expertise, dedicate in-kind support, and ensure continuity of programming;
 - Demonstrate established or emerging partnerships within Montgomery County, including with institutional, government, and/or community-based organizations including shared use agreements for land and/or grant-funded infrastructure; and

- o Outline thoughtful, realistic strategies to diversify operational funding sources including commitments or prospects from philanthropy, corporate partners, individual donors, and/or earned revenue, **demonstrating secured sources of external funding that comprise at least 25% of the total project budget** (up to 10% of which can be in-kind).
- **Align with the OFSR’s core values:**
 - o Equity: all efforts should address social injustice and racial disparities to build equity and food sovereignty in our community.
 - o Systems-based: strategies should focus on identifying, maximizing, and addressing the interconnections of food issue areas, simultaneously contextualizing their benefits and their impacts on production, access, natural resources, education, and economy.
 - o Innovative: to transform our food system, novel approaches, creative ideas, and best practices models from other jurisdictions are critical.
 - o Data-driven: strategic policy and investment decisions require intentional and reliable data collection and analysis, and solutions with clearly defined success metrics and measurable impact.

D. Eligibility Conditions

Applicants may only submit one application and must meet **all of the following Grant Program and Montgomery Eligibility Conditions** outlined below:

Grant Program Eligibility Conditions*:

- The organization must be a Federal 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status organization or a collaboration between two or more organizations in which one holds 501(c)(3) status.

Montgomery County Eligibility Conditions*:

- The organization must be currently registered and in Good Standing with the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT);
- The organization must have a “Current” standing with the Maryland Secretary of State OneStop – Charities Public Registry;
- The organization’s principal place of business must be located in Montgomery County; if a national or regional organization, it must have a location in Montgomery County through which it provides related services;
- All activities and expenditures under this grant program must be provided in Montgomery County and/or be exclusively for Montgomery County residents. Any services or activities taking place outside of Montgomery County must be exclusively benefiting Montgomery County residents;
- All successful applications must clearly state the following and activities and expenditures funded through this grant program must:
 - o Be provided free of charge (this includes a prohibition on requesting donations and use of County resources for fundraising);
 - o Not be provided in promotion of a particular religion, political party, etc. or with a requirement of service or program attendance; and
 - o Be open and available to all Montgomery County residents, regardless of race, color,

religious creed, ancestry, national origin, age, sex, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, family responsibility, genetic status, presence of children, or source of income.

- Current Montgomery County contract or grant award winners must be current on all reporting obligations for other awards and those reports must reflect substantial progress towards the goals of their awards; and
- Proposed expenses must be for a new activity, expansion of existing activities, or a combination of both. Grant funding **cannot** be used for any purchase which has already been made; purchases or activities unnecessary to accomplish grant purposes as determined by Montgomery County; prior obligations of and/or fines; debts and penalties imposed on the grantee; lobbying expenses; alcoholic beverages; or supplanting (replacing) other funds.

*Co-applicants or named partners in the proposal, such as community-based organizations providing food assistance services or Montgomery County-based food producers or retailers must also be registered and in Good Standing with the Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation (SDAT) as well as current on any reporting obligations to Montgomery County.

Grant funding cannot be used for:

- Any purchase which has already been made;
- Purchases or activities unnecessary to accomplish grant purposes as determined by Montgomery County;
- Prior obligations of and/or fines;
- Debts and penalties imposed on the grantee;
- Lobbying expenses;
- Alcoholic beverages;
- Pet food;
- Supplanting (replacing) other funds; and
- Providing services that wholly occur outside of Montgomery County.

E. Award Amounts and Duration

The initial grant performance period is anticipated to be seventeen (17) months. Expected final awards will likely range from a minimum award of \$25,000 to a maximum award of up to \$100,000. While award amounts are expected to fall within that range, the County reserves the right to make awards outside this range based on proposal quality, program scale, and available funding.

Awards will be eligible for renewal for one additional one-year performance period, contingent upon satisfactory program performance, compliance with grant administration and reporting requirements, continued programmatic need, and appropriation of funds by the Montgomery County Council. Renewal awards are not guaranteed and are subject to County approval. The County reserves the right to modify funding amounts, performance expectations, or program requirements in any renewal year.

Applicants will be required to meet graduated match requirements over the course of the grant term renewal. For the initial grant performance period, applicants must provide a minimum 25% match (up to 10% in-kind). For a renewal year, if awarded, applicants may be funded at 25% of the initial grant award and must meet an increased match requirement of 75% (not including in-kind).

Example: FY26 Award of \$60,000 would require \$15,000 match, up to \$6,000 in-kind. If renewed, this award would be funded at a maximum of \$15,000 and would require an \$11,250 match.

Applicants may secure required match funding within the first seven months of the grant period, as further described in the grant requirements.

F. Examples of Eligible Project Models and Activities

Project expenses that will receive funding through this grant program include, but are not limited to:

- **Infrastructural investments** such as raised beds or a greenhouse that expand the square footage or provide seasonal extension of food production, or that support land use viability such as electrical hookups, water access, etc.
- **Tools and supplies**, including equipment, seeds, etc. needed to plant, cultivate, and harvest increased quantities of edible crops
- **Community resources and materials**, including costs associated with delivering trainings, community events, print materials, etc.

Community gardening project models and purposes that align with the goals of this grant program include, but are not limited to:

- Community food production for distribution to residents experiencing food insecurity;
- Community or population-specific food production with nutrition, agriculture, and/or health education elements;
- Community food production to support access to culturally relevant foods and/or agrarian practices that may not be widely accessible.

G. Award Reporting Requirements

Award winners will be required to submit two programmatic and financial reports during the grant's implementation (a mid-cycle report seven months after the grant agreement start date, and a final/end-cycle report following the seventeen month performance period) as well as participate in regular check-ins with the Grantor on the progress of the grant. Reporting and Evaluation Requirements can be found in Section II.

H. Review Process

1. **OGM Administrative (Admin) Review** - OGM will assess all applications for Montgomery County Eligibility Conditions listed above as well as confirm that the applications submitted are complete and meet minimum standards. If minor errors are

found in an application, OGM will give applicants a brief window (usually two business days) to resolve the issue. Applicants generally will not be given the opportunity to resolve any issues with Montgomery County Eligibility Conditions or major issues with their applications. Organizations and applications that do not meet these requirements will be disqualified while those that do will move on to the next stage.

2. **Programmatic Eligibility Review** – The OFSR will also conduct a second review assessing whether applicants and their proposals Grant Program Eligibility Requirements cited above to ensure all submitted applications are within the intended scope of this Grant Program. Organizations and applications that do not meet these all of these requirements will be disqualified.
3. **Subject Matter Expert (SME) Review** - The OFSR will recruit an independent Review Committee that will develop and submit recommendations for funding. The Review Committee will be composed of neutral, qualified individuals from Montgomery County Government, and possibly the broader Montgomery County community, selected for their experiences in the grant program’s subject area, grants administration, project management, and/or ability to analyze programs from a Racial Equity and Social Justice lens. The panel members will review and score proposals based on the criteria outlined in this program and submit recommendations for awards. Final decisions will be made based on the scores and such other factors and considerations as the County deems relevant at the time of award. These may include the expert opinion of grant administrators with prior experience with applicants, updates to priorities, or other factors.

I. Award Notification

Award notification letters are expected to be released roughly three weeks after the application deadline via email. For successful applicants, the Grant Agreement will contain the total amount awarded and funding restrictions; programmatic, administrative, and policy requirements; reporting requirements; and payment terms.

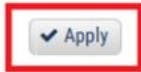
J. Submission Guidelines and Support Resources

1. **Log into the Euna (eCivis) Portal to create an application profile** <https://portal.ecivis.com/#/login>
2. **Access the FY26 Resident and Community Gardening Grant Program Solicitation Page** and click the “Apply” button to create an application.



Montgomery County MD

FY26 Healthy Communities Fund Grant Program



Overview	Eligibility	Financial	Contact	Files
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3. Review the Euna (eCivis) applicant user guides for assistance and other support resources

OGM Developed Instructional Videos (Youtube videos):

1. [How to Create an Euna Application](#)
2. [Euna Budget Tool Instructional Video](#)

Euna Applicant User Guides (PDF downloads):

1. [Logging into Your eCivis Portal Account](#)
2. [Reviewing and Submitting your application](#)
3. [Transfer Application Ownership](#)
4. [Guide for Applicants](#), including Budget Tool assistance on pages 13 to 20

Applications must be submitted through the Montgomery County Office of Grants Management - Grants Application Platform through the links posted on the first page of this document. Once the applicant clicks on the link, they will be prompted to create a Euna Grants account, select the Grant Program, and then will be able to access the grant application. Applicants requiring an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation should contact the Office of Grants Management (contact listed on the first page of this document) to discuss alternative submission options.

Applications are due no later than May 6, 2026 at 11:59 PM. All applications will be recorded upon receipt. Applications received after the deadline will be disqualified and will not be forwarded to the Review Panel for funding considerations. Any additions or deletions to an application, unless requested by the Office of Food Systems Resilience, will not be accepted after the deadline. Applications with incomplete, illegible, or corrupted digital materials will not be considered. Please note that technical assistance for applicants will not be available outside of normal business hours.

K. Information Session

An FY26 Resident and Community Gardening Grant Information Session will be held on Tuesday, April 14th, 2026 from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM. The link to participate in the Information Session live or to view an event recording afterwards can be found on the first page of this

document or on the FY26 Resident and Community Gardening Grant application page.

L. Terms and Conditions

- The County reserves the right to accept or deny any or all applications if the County determines it is in the best interest of the County to do so. The County shall notify the applicant if it rejects that applicant's proposal. The County reserves the right to suspend or terminate an outstanding Grant Program;
- The County reserves the right to issue addenda and/or amendments subsequent to the posting of a Grant Program;
- The County shall not be liable for any costs incurred in the preparation of applications in response to the Grant Program. Applicant agrees that all costs incurred in developing the application are the applicant's sole responsibility;
- The County may conduct pre-award on-site visits or request additional information to verify information submitted in the application and to determine if the applicant's facilities are appropriate for the services proposed; and
- The County may enter into negotiations with an applicant and adopt a firm funding amount or other revisions for the applicant's proposal that may result from negotiations. The County shall provide the citations to the statute and implementing regulations that authorize the grant; all applicable federal, State, and County regulations; payment provisions identifying how the grantee will be paid for performing under the award; reporting requirements, including programmatic, financial and any special reports required by federal, state, or County law and/or the granting department; and compliance conditions that must be met by the grantee. If there are any conflicts between the terms and conditions of the Grant Program and any applicable federal, State, or County law or regulation, or any ambiguity related thereto, then the provisions of the applicable law or regulation shall control and it shall be the responsibility of the applicant to ensure compliance.

SECTION II – APPLICATION TASKS

Applicants are required to follow the content requirements and submission instructions listed within the online application platform and NOFO document. Please submit your proposal, as broken out by each of the Tasks, by filling out the data fields or uploading documents where applicable. Uploaded documents should have clearly titled sections and sub-sections. Document uploads should ideally be submitted as PDF documents with budgets uploaded as MS Excel file. The application platform cannot read Mac formatted documents (i.e. Pages, Numbers, and Keynote). **Applications will be considered incomplete if any part of any section is missing.**

Please note that Review Committees have historically preferred concise narratives focused on the funding priorities, questions asked, and scoring themes rather than long narrative descriptions.

A. Applicant Information Form

Organizations must provide the following information and documents using data entry fields or uploads. The document uploads will be used to assess legal eligibility for the Grant Program and data fields will be used to populate any resulting grant agreement. Applicants should fill out this information as if they were drafting a contract using specific and exact information.

- Legal Name of Applying Lead Organization as registered with the Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation (SDAT)
- Organization’s Maryland SDAT Department ID Number
- Organization’s Federal Tax Identification Number
- Lead Organization’s confirmation of current SDAT standing
- Lead Organization’s confirming of current Maryland Charities Database status
- Montgomery County Supplier Number, if known (optional)
- Organization’s website (optional)
- Upload: Most recent IRS 990 Form for Nonprofit Organizations or an explanation of why your organization is exempt from filing 990s
- Contact Information for the Organization’s point-of-contact (POC)
- Contact Information for the Organization's Legally Authorized Signatory
- Type in board chair (or equivalent position) names, organization title, email, and phone number

The County is required to check applicants’ status of Good Standing (or equivalent status) with the Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation (SDAT) at the time of application review, finalization of grant agreements, and for payments during the life of a grant agreement. Although proof of Good Standing is not required as a component of the application, it is critical that Lead and Support organization applicants remain registered and in Good Standing with SDAT as applicants will be disqualified from a grant competition, delay or even lose a grant award, and/or face delays in grant payments if they are not in Good Standing.

Applicants can verify their status with SDAT via this link: <https://egov.maryland.gov/BusinessExpress/EntitySearch>

The County is now checking the Registration Status of potential and current grantees with

the **Maryland Secretary of State OneStop – Charities Public Registry**. A grantee with Montgomery County is required to comply with state laws and therefore, have a Registration Status of “Current” (or “Exempt”). The Office of Grants Management (OGM) will verify the status of an applicant. Although proof of a current registration is not required as a component of the application, it is critical that Lead and Support organization applicants remain registered and Current with Maryland OneStop as applicants will be disqualified from a grant competition, or even lose a grant award, and/or face delays in grant payments if they are not Current (or provide evidence of being “Exempt”).

Applicants can verify their status with the Maryland Charities Public Registry via this link: https://onestop.md.gov/list_views/62f3e1797f7e3200016a3dab

B. Applicant Background Task

The Office of Grants Management collects data through this Task for post-award analysis to understand application and award trends as well as how to support the diverse communities in Montgomery County. Data collected through this Task will not be visible to Review Committees and will not be used in evaluation and scoring of applications.

In line with Montgomery County's Racial Equity & Social Justice goals, the Office of Grants Management is collecting the racial and ethnic information on the leadership of nonprofit organizations. The structure of this portion of the survey is based on the new [federal standards for collecting this data](#). Note that the information entered should be based on how the person identifies themselves.

Lead Organization estimated staffing size serving Montgomery County in a given year

- Lead Organization estimated budget, including by funding source, for Montgomery County programs, services, and other initiatives in a given year
- Lead Organizational leadership, including CEO or Executive Director and Board Members (if applicable), race and ethnic information

If choosing to provide race and ethnicity information for their board, applicants must use the [OGM Board Race-Ethnicity Reporting Template](#) and upload it into application. Responding to these questions is optional and will have no impact on application reviews.

C. Project Strategy

Organizations must provide the following information and documents using data entry fields or uploads.

- **Project Title** – If awarded, Project Title will become the grant agreement name (*100 characters maximum*)
- **Project Overview** – Brief description of the project (*600 characters maximum*)
- **FY26 Resident and Community Gardening Grant Funding Request** – Total amount requested through this grant proposal
 - *Note: The OFSR recommends using a range of \$10-20 per square foot of gardening space when calculating the funding request.*
- **Total Project Cost** – Total cost of project from all funding sources
- **Zip Code(s) of Existing Gardening Spaces** – Zip codes where your organization currently

operates gardening spaces

- **Additional Zip Codes(s) of Grant-Funded Gardening Activities**– Zip codes that your organization anticipates expansion to, if awarded funding through this grant program.
- **Current total square footage of gardening space(s) in food production**
- **Current estimated annual volume of edible food production in gardening space(s)**
- **Is the business located in Montgomery County? If yes, what address?**
- **Is the activity taking place in Montgomery County? If yes, what address?**

Organizations applying must provide the following information using narrative entry fields.

- **Expand Local Food Access and Production:**
 - Please describe how you intend to use this grant to enhance and expand residential and community gardening in Montgomery County as an effective way of sustainably increasing the local food supply. *(1,000 character limit)*
 - Outline how the program service delivery will work from start to finish, specifically addressing the anticipated timeline and strategy for:
 - Implementation of grant-funded infrastructure purchases, including vendor selection (as applicable)
 - Gardening-related activities, including planning, planting, harvesting, and food distribution;
 - Provision of food/gardening education and/or community engagement activities related to the proposed programming; and
 - Data collection, reporting, and privacy considerations. *(2,000 character limit)*
 - Please describe the selection of food types to be produced through the proposed project, specifying crop types and estimated volumes (pounds) of each crop type that will be grown. Provide detail as to how this is an enhancement or expansion of current food production levels. *(1,000 character limit)*
 - How will your organization increase the availability of culturally diverse foods through this program? Please include detail regarding strategies to engage the target audience in the planning process to ensure that culturally diverse foods produced through the gardening activities reflect community need. *(1,000 character limit)*
 - For reference, please refer to the survey results from the Montgomery County Food Council’s Culturally Appropriate Foods Survey: <https://bit.ly/3lig6Tw>
 - Outline the educational, technical assistance, and resident and community resources that will be provided throughout the program period, including the relevant experience of the applicant to develop and provide these resources. *(1,000 character limit)*
 - Please demonstrate the language capacity that your organization has to ensure appropriate outreach and engagement with the community. What languages do members of the organizations staff, volunteers speak (if applicable)? *(1,000 character limit)*
 - Please describe the communities that will benefit from this investment of grant funds, including a description of how this program will increase food access for residents in healthy food access priority geographic areas within Montgomery

County ([identified here](#)). (1,000 character limit)

- o Please describe accessibility considerations that will be made within the proposed gardening space(s) to support ADA compliance and accessibility for residents with differing abilities. (1,000 character limit)
- **Sustainability and Scalability:**
 - o Describe the community partnerships that your organization currently has with public and private entities/institutions in Montgomery County related to gardening activities, or those that you plan to partner with through this program. Specifically address how these partners will support the long-term sustainability of the project. (1,500 character limit)
 - If the proposed programming entails collaboration between two or more organizations, please describe the role of each involved organization in the proposed programming. (1,000 character limit)
 - **Upload (optional):** A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)* is required from each organization involved in the proposal.
 - o Please describe the ownership status of and agreements that your organization has in place for committed long-term use of the land, infrastructure, and other critical resources (including water and power access) for the gardening activities. (1,000 character limit)
 - **Upload (required):** Proposals requiring the use of shared land, infrastructure, utilities, etc. must provide documentation of a specific and signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)* by the contributing partner.
 - **Upload (required):** Please include documentation of a lease agreement, contractual agreement, or other internal documents that confirm access and use permissions for your organization at the proposed gardening location. If your organization will use your own land for the gardening activities, please provide documentation from your organization's leadership demonstrating commitment to use of this land for gardening as outlined in the application.
- **Additional Garden Area Details:**
 - o Please describe the anticipated square footage of the proposed garden project, noting whether the project will **enhance** existing gardening spaces or **expand** to cover additional square footage. (1,000 character limit)
 - **Upload (required):** Please provide a photograph that captures the gardening area in its current state.
 - **Upload (optional):** The applicant may also choose to include an annotated version of the photograph to indicate where the proposed expansion of the gardening area would occur.
 - o **Upload (required):** Please upload a sketch of the proposed enhanced or expanded garden area, hand-drawn or created digitally to scale. Please include the following elements:
 - Street Address, City, and Zip-code of the Gardening Area (include cross streets of the property if needed)
 - Garden area (including square footage), including annotations that indicate the specific enhancements and/or expansion in relation to the existing

- gardening area and demonstrate an expansion of 25% or more, if applicable
- Location of water and power sources (including distance in feet to the garden area)
- Infrastructure within the garden area (such as a greenhouse, composting bins, etc.)
- Indicate raised beds and in-ground beds with anticipated planting layout, including labels for plant types
- Indicate accessibility provisions to ensure that the gardening space(s) are ADA compliant
- Sketch should be provided as PDF file.

***Memorandum(s) of Understanding (MOU):** For the purposes of this Grant Program, each MOU must, at a minimum, clearly define:

- The specific roles and responsibilities of the lead and collaborating organization in the proposed project;
- The scope of activities to be performed by the lead and collaborating organizations (for partners directly involved in programming) and/or the scope of support offered by the collaborating organization (for partners involved in providing land, space, electric/water access, etc.);
- The expected level of engagement for the collaborating organization (including frequency and duration, where applicable);
- Any financial compensation or reimbursement to be provided to the collaborating organization, including the anticipated amount and payment structure, if applicable;
- Any non-financial resources or contributions being provided (in-kind staffing, space, seeds, data, etc.); and
- The time period covered by the agreement, which must align with the grant performance period.
- Note: Applicants can upload up to five (5) MOUs within the application. Applicants that need to provide additional MOUs, or those that do not have any MOUs to upload, should contact grants@montgomerycountymd.gov.
- MOUs must be signed by authorized representatives of both the lead applicant and the collaborating organization. Generic letters of support or commitment will not be accepted in place of an MOU.
 - o Applications that do not include an MOU for each listed partner may be deemed ineligible.
 - o If the final grant award amount differs from the amount requested, awarded applicants may be required to update submitted MOUs to reflect any changes in scope, partner compensation, or responsibilities prior to contract execution.

D. Project Budget Task

The Project Budget Task includes several data components related to the proposal:

- Description of Lead Organization's Grant and Financial Management Practices
- Upload of Current Federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) (optional)
- Upload of Public Copy of Most Recent Independent Audit Report, Financial Review, Agreed Upon Procedures. If not available, please submit a brief statement of explanation.

- Lead Organization: Upload of Previous fiscal year budget to actuals
- Lead Organization estimated staff size serving Montgomery County in 2025 (in total FTEs)
- Upload of Lead Organization total current-year budget (revenues and expenses), including funding sources, for Montgomery County programs, services, and other initiatives

Upload Project Budget (No page limit, MS Excel budget template required)

The Program Budget will be uploaded as an attachment to the application, using the provided template. The budget template for this proposal includes:

- Expenses: detailed itemized cost information for all proposed expenses, including quantities and prices. Eligible Expenses are outlined below with additional detail:
 - Project-Specific Purchases
 - **Infrastructural investments** such as raised beds or a greenhouse that expand the square footage or provide seasonal extension of food production, or that support land use viability such as electrical hookups, water access, etc.
 - **Tools and supplies**, including equipment, seeds, etc. needed to plant, cultivate, and harvest increased quantities of edible crops
 - **Community resources and materials**, including costs associated with delivering trainings, community events, print materials, etc.
 - Staffing Costs: Provide detail for each involved staff member, including title, salaries, benefits, and contract/hourly worker expenses;
 - Include fringe costs (as applicable)
 - Indirect costs, which may include general administrative costs such as: legal, accounting, liability insurance, audits, etc. If applicants have a federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), then they must use that rate within their application and include the NICRA as supporting documentation. Applicants without a NICRA may use an indirect cost rate of up to 15%.
 - Other Operational Costs: Please describe and include justification for the relevance of other costs to the proposed project.
- Revenues: include the value of any earned revenues and/or cost-shares such as donations, other grants received, and in-kind or pro bono services that you anticipate being donated and that are related to this proposal.
 - **Note:** Secured sources of external funding (revenues) must comprise at least 25% of the total project budget. Up to 10% of this can be in-kind.

The Grant Program Standard budget template is available here:

<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/ogm/Resources/Files/OutgoingGrants/Reporting%20Templates/FY26-RCG-Budget%20Template.xlsx>

In addition to other limitations set in this program, program funds **cannot be used:**

- Any purchase which has already been made;
- Purchases or activities unnecessary to accomplish grant purposes as determined by Montgomery County;
- Prior obligations of and/or fines;
- Debts and penalties imposed on the grantee;

- Lobbying expenses;
- Alcoholic beverages;
- Pet food;
- Supplanting (replacing) other funds; and
- Providing services that wholly occur outside of Montgomery County.

E. Budget Narrative/Justification Task

In addition to the Program Budget, applicants must submit a Budget Narrative/Justification that explains how the proposed costs were calculated and how they support implementation of the proposed Resident and Community Gardening program. Applicants may upload price quotes or other supporting documentation for budgeted costs, if available.

The Budget Narrative/Justification must address the following:

- **Project Specific Purchases, Staffing, and Other Operating Expenses:** Outline the purpose of proposed operating costs and an explanation of how costs were calculated. Include descriptions of each staff member and contractor role and responsibilities in relation to the proposed project *(2,500 character limit)*.
 - **Upload (optional), Infrastructural/Equipment Expense Estimates:** For any “capital” costs noted in the budget, including proposed infrastructure and equipment, please upload screenshots, quote(s) from a reputable sales outlet for the listed infrastructure/equipment items, or other documentation that denotes the cost.
- **Cost per Square Foot:** Estimate of the project cost per square footage of gardening area (aligned with the total project cost). The OFSR recommends using a range of \$10-20 per square foot of gardening space when calculating the grant funding request. *(1,000 character limit)*
- **Matching Funds/Revenues:** Please provide detail regarding the secured sources of non-County funding, including in-kind contributions (up to 10%), direct organizational investment, non-county public dollars, and secured outside grant funds that will be leveraged to support the proposed project. Secured sources of external funding (revenues) must comprise at least 25% of the total project budget for the initial 17-month program period. *(1,000 character limit)*
- Specify how your project would be affected if total funding awarded were less than the amount requested. State whether your project could be completed with a smaller amount, and how your projected outcomes would be affected by any funding reduction. *(1,000 character limit)*;
- Specify how project costs will be supported if the grant award were to be renewed for one additional 12-month (one year) performance period. Please note that if renewed in FY27, the renewed grant award will not exceed 25% of the initial grant award and must meet an increased match requirement of 75% (not including in-kind), pending Council appropriations. *(1,000 character limit)*;
- If your organization provides services outside of Montgomery County, please describe in detail how your organization will ensure that funding provided through the Resident and Community Gardening grant will exclusively benefit Montgomery County residents. *(1,000 character limit)*.

F. Performance History

The Performance History should demonstrate the applicant's readiness and capacity to successfully implement the proposed Resident and Community Gardening program. Applicants should describe relevant experience, outcomes, and organizational practices that provide confidence in their resident and community gardening program design and implementation abilities, which are rooted in research and best practices and measurably increase the volume of fresh, edible food available to Montgomery County residents experiencing food insecurity.

Performance history may draw from:

- The organization's prior or current resident and community gardening programs;
- Comparable programs implemented by the applicant or key partners; and/or
- Evidence-informed models grounded in research or best practices that the proposed project builds upon.

Performance History Narrative (*2,500 Character Limit*): Applicants should address the following:

- **How do the outcomes achieved in the past provide evidence that your proposal will achieve these outcomes in the future?** Please include detail regarding the gardening activities offered, and reference data collected, such as participant data gathered through satisfaction surveys, listening sessions, or other direct feedback mechanisms.
 - The Performance History Narrative should address the grantee's history expanding local food access and production via gardening activities, including:
 - 3+ years of experience in community garden-based food production;
 - Annual production of 1,000+ pounds of edible crops, including production of crops aligned with community dietary patterns and cultural food preferences;
 - Existing, secured community gardening property;
 - Ongoing relevant collaboration with Montgomery County partners, including with institutional, government, and/or community-based organizations; and
 - Established partnerships with philanthropic organizations, corporate partners and/or individual donors to support long-term program sustainability.
 - If your organization was funded in previous cycles of the Resident and Community Gardening Grant Program but did not meet or exceed the milestone
 - Estimates established in prior grant cycles, please explain why not. (optional)

Supporting Documentation

Applicants may upload supporting materials that help illustrate relevant experience or readiness, such as:

- Program descriptions, outreach materials, or participation data from related initiatives;
- Examples of workflows, landscape architecture outlines, or resident-facing educational materials; and/or
- Other documentation demonstrating operational capacity.

Applicants are also encouraged (but not required) to upload one or more photos illustrating the types of edible crops, quantities, and distribution formats proposed or used in relevant programs supported by the applicant organization in the past.

G. Performance Evaluation Task

This Grant Program **requires** evaluation, documentation, and reporting on specific metrics relevant to (1) program performance and (2) financial management of grant funds (Performance Reporting Requirements Attachment linked [here](#)). Grantees will be required to submit **Programmatic and Financial Reports** (two total throughout the grant performance period), following the schedule outlined in the [Performance Reporting Requirements Attachment](#).

Please note that the OFSR may adapt the final list of required and recommended metrics prior to making awards. Final reporting requirements will be included in all grant agreements. Required metrics must be reported by grantees at the mid-cycle and end-cycle points of the performance period; these dates will also be indicated in all grant agreements.

The Performance Evaluation Task should detail the applicant's proposed strategy for monitoring implementation and outcomes, including projected benchmarks for required Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Applicants must indicate how progress toward program goals will be measured, tracked, and reported over the grant performance period, and demonstrate that the applicant has appropriate systems, staffing, and processes in place to support accurate and timely data collection and reporting.

Required Performance Evaluation Task Components:

- Applicants must provide the following information and documentation, using narrative or upload fields:
 - **Data Management:** What tools or systems will be used to capture and record the data, and ensure data is accurate and consistent? (*500 characters maximum*);
 - **Data Collection and Reporting Roles:** Who will be responsible for collecting the data? Note: This response should be consistent with the staffing roles outlined in the Budget Narrative (*500 characters maximum*);
 - **Data Collection Frequency:** How often will data be collected to ensure compliance with reporting requirements? (*500 characters maximum*)
 - **Participant Feedback Survey:** A description of how the required participant feedback survey will be administered, including: (*1,000 character limit*)
 - Whether survey administration builds on an existing process or how a new process will be implemented,
 - Who is responsible, and how completion will be encouraged.
 - If providing unduplicated data will not be possible, please explain the barriers to doing so. (*optional*)
 - Upload of the organization's most recent annual or program report (*optional*).

H. Performance Evaluation Milestone Estimates:

Applicants must provide targets for the following Performance Evaluation Metrics which will be used to evaluate the anticipated impact of services. Targets should be provided for two points in

time (“milestones”): 7 months (mid-cycle) and 17 months (end-cycle). Applicants must also include baseline figures for each metric below (estimated or actuals).

<i>Metric</i>	<i>Baseline (Annual Figures, 2025)</i>	<i>7-month milestone estimate</i>	<i>17-month milestone estimate</i>
Total pounds of edible crops harvested from the garden area			
Total pounds of food grown through the gardening project donated to food assistance networks within Montgomery County			
Total number of residents engaged in gardening activities			
Total number of residents receiving food produced by the gardening project			
Percentage of food grown in gardening spaces directly distributed to Montgomery County residents experiencing food insecurity			
Percentage of food grown in gardening spaces distributed through community partnerships to Montgomery County residents experiencing food insecurity			
Total square footage of space in food gardening production, including raised beds, expansion of in-ground plots, greenhouse development, etc.			
Additional/New square footage of space in food gardening production, including raised beds, expansion of in-ground plots, greenhouse development, etc.			

SECTION III – SCORING OF APPLICATIONS

Scoring Criteria

Applicant’s proposal submissions will be evaluated using the following confidence ratings based on the below weighted criteria. Confidence ratings are another form of objective rating that allow evaluators to assign ratings more holistically. [Confidence ratings](#) provide evaluators the ability to look more holistically at the strong points and weak points of a proposal to capture raters’ overall confidence in the applicant’s likelihood to succeed, helping smaller organizations who may be stronger overall than some more seasoned larger organizations. Confidence ratings are identified by the federal government as an innovative practice that may help with reducing the lead time from solicitation to award.:

3 – Confident	The Reviewers are confident that the applicant understands the requirements, proposes a sound and relevant project, and will be successful in implementing the proposed project.
2 – Somewhat Confident	The Reviewers are somewhat confident that the applicant understands the requirements, proposes a sound and relevant project, and will be successful in implementing the proposed project.
1 – Not confident	The Reviewers are not confident that the applicant understands the requirements, proposes a sound and relevant project, and will be successful in implementing the proposed project.

Depending on the volume of applications, number of Review Committee members, and whether they all review each application, OGM may employ a [statistical rescaling](#) of scores to put applications on a more level playing field.

Additionally, each criterion is attributed a specific weight out of a total of 100 points.

Criterion A: Project Strategy Alignment with Grant Program Priorities (1-3 rating; weighted at 35/100 points)

- In line with the priorities for the Grant Program, the proposal demonstrates:
 - A strong understanding of effective community food production strategies to expand local food access and production, including a clear and realistic timeline for planning, planting, harvesting, and food distribution;
 - Plans to produce significant (1,000+ pounds) of diversified, culturally-relevant crops that meet the needs of the communities being served, informed by community engagement and ongoing data collection amongst participants;
 - An inclusive service model that offer food/gardening education and/or community engagement opportunities for County residents;
 - Technically, culturally, and/or linguistically proficient services, inclusivity of

underserved community members, accessibility considerations to support ADA compliance, and the use of a racial equity lens in providing food assistance to underserved communities and zip-codes (including those residing in healthy food access priority geographic areas within Montgomery County ([identified here](#)))

- Partnerships with County agencies and institutions to support scalability and long-term sustainability of the grant-funded activities, and evidence of land-use agreements/approvals and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) as needed
- Clear photographs and sketches that indicate how the proposed programming will enhance and/or expand food gardening activities at the proposed sites and confirm that sufficient electricity and water access are considered in the project plans.

Criterion B: Sound Fiscal Management and Budget (1-3 rating; weighted at 15/100 points)

- Applicant demonstrates sound grant and fiscal management practices and will be able to submit financial reports and back-up documentation to meet administrative and audit requirements;
- Expenses listed in the Budget and Budget Narrative are consistent with the Project Strategy, Performance Evaluation Task, and other parts of the proposal, and comply with the eligible expense categories (infrastructural investments, tools and supplies, community resources and materials, staffing, and other relevant operational costs).
- Applicant's Budget and Budget Narrative reflect reasonable and realistic costs needed to implement the proposal, and are based upon research regarding the current cost of relevant infrastructure, equipment, or other inputs;
- Proposal's contingency plans for a lower than requested funding amount is realistic and still results in desired outcomes albeit at a lower level; and
- The proposal leverages additional resources to support this program, including 25% or more in: in-kind contributions (up to 10%), direct organizational investment, non-county public dollars, and secured outside grant funds.

Criterion C: Organizational Capability and Relevant Performance History (1-3 rating; weighted at 25/100 points)

- Applicant demonstrates three or more years of relevant experience to deliver the proposed outcomes to the target population;
- The proposed program provides continuity of food gardening activities at an existing, secured gardening property that engages County residents, at sustained or expanded levels of scale and scope;
- The proposed program engages strong, existing partnerships with a history of successful collaboration in Montgomery County and includes one or more Memorandum(s) of Understanding, if applicable, to clearly outline each partner's role in the proposed project;
- The project demonstrates existing annual levels of production through residential or community-based gardening exceeding 1,000 pounds of edible crops.

Criterion D: Performance Evaluation Plan and Data Collection Capacity (1-3 rating; weighted at 15/100 points)

- Applicant demonstrates in their Performance Evaluation Plan a clear process and effective methods to measure/evaluate its project and comply with the required service metrics and program evaluation data collection and reporting, including clear methods to track

- unduplicated participants, food quantities produced, and participant/recipient satisfaction;
- Proposal's milestone estimates, proposed evaluation methods, and ultimate proposed outcomes fit the project strategy and Grant Program's goals, including target production of at least 1,000 pounds of food during the performance period and expansion of at least 25% square feet in gardening area (if an expansion is proposed); and
- Applicant provides a strong justification for the target milestone estimates, other evaluation methods, and ultimate outcomes.

Criterion E: Soundness of the Overall Proposal (1-3 rating; weighted at 10/100 points)

- Proposal clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of proposed activities and, if funded, will result in the accomplishment of their stated outcomes;
- Proposal aligns with the OFSR's [core values](#) of equity, systems-based, innovation, and data-driven; and
- The implementation plan within the proposal is realistic and achievable based on the proposed timeline.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Those persons scoring the proposals will confirm that they have no conflicts of interest.
- Neither the County Executive nor any elected official will be involved in the scoring of grants or determining winners and amounts of awards.
- Scores and award amounts are non-appealable.
- Scorers' comments and the scores themselves are deliberative and privileged and will not be released. However, winners will be announced publicly, and successful grant applications and award letters may be subject to release (with redactions as allowed by law).
- County officials may decline to debrief with unsuccessful applicants why their proposal was not granted, or their funding request was not granted in full.

SECTION IV – CERTIFICATIONS, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, AND ASSURANCES

The applicant shall complete and return the Certifications, Acknowledgements, and Assurances listed with the application submission provided in the Application Certification section of the application in the online grant application portal.

Montgomery County Ethics Questions

Note that individuals employed by partner agencies such as Montgomery College, Montgomery County Public Schools, and WorkSource Montgomery do not count as Montgomery County Government employees for the purpose of this Grant Program. If you are unsure if a position applies please contact the Office of Grants Management for clarification.

Does your organization employ current employees or contractors of the Montgomery County Government? This applies for employees that are paid by your organization but are also paid by Montgomery County Government.

Does your organization's Board of Directors include current employees or contractors of the Montgomery County Government? This applies to volunteer board of director positions.

If you answered yes to either question, please describe the employee(s) role and function as it applies to your nonprofit organization. Answering “yes” to either question does **not** exclude your organization from being eligible to apply. Instead, we would like to receive this information upfront so that we can allow adequate time for the Ethics Commission to review.

Acknowledgements Agreed to by All Applicants

- ✓ Applicant acknowledges that this grant application may not be revised or altered after submission.
- ✓ Applicant acknowledges that if funding is awarded, the organization will enter into a non-competitive contract or grant with the County.
- ✓ Applicant acknowledges that awards may not be distributed as a lump sum, but may be reimbursed or provided on a fixed schedule after sufficient documentation is submitted to the administering County agency.
- ✓ Applicant acknowledges that any funds submitted for reimbursement must be spent AFTER the contract is finalized and a Notice to Proceed is secured.
- ✓ Applicant has cited in this application all individuals affiliated with the organization and this program who are employed by Montgomery County.

Assurances Agreed to by All Applicants

If the grant is awarded, the applicant assures that:

- ✓ The applicant will administer all awarded funds through this Grant Program.
- ✓ Funds received will be used solely for the documented activities within the submitted proposal.
- ✓ The applicant has read and will conform to the program guidelines and any other conditions

- imposed by the County in connection with the grant.
- ✓ The applicant organization intends to comply with the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.), indicating that no person will be excluded from participation or be denied the benefits of any program, activity, or service on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The applicant further agrees to make every attempt to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12131 et seq.) and ensure that the program is accessible to persons with disabilities. In addition, the applicant intends to comply with the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. Sections 6101-6107) such that no person will experience discrimination based on age in any program that receives federal financial assistance.
 - ✓ Please note that applications are subject to the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA) (found at Md. Code Ann., State Gov't., §10-611 through -628 (MPIA) and the County must comply with the disclosure requirements of the MPIA when a request for documents is received.
 - ✓ The applicant understands that all grantees that receive awards under this Grant Program must show proof of insurance prior to receiving the funds., when requested, must be able to show proof of all insurance coverage required by law.
 - ✓ The applicant agrees that any time before final payment and three (3) years thereafter, the County may have the grantee's expenditure statements and source documentation audited.
 - ✓ If there are any changes that need to be made to the grant application after submittal or if the organization ceases operations or becomes a subsidiary of another organization, you have the responsibility of notifying the appropriate County administrator.
 - ✓ The filing of this application is made by the undersigned individual, officially authorized to represent the applicant organization by its governing board.
 - ✓ I hereby certify that information submitted in the grant application is a true and correct statement of facts. I, as a designated legal representative of the Organization, further certify that this Organization shall abide by and be subject to all applicable Federal, State and Local laws and regulations pertaining to any subsequent grant that may be issued.