

## Community Garden Sustainability Fund Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Updated March 2019

### 1. What is the Community Garden Sustainability Fund (CGSF)?

The CGSF is a project of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and Grow Pittsburgh that exists to provide support to established community food gardens in Allegheny County. The program has been active since 2013, having supported 97+ community gardens with over \$95,000 of materials, not including staff time.

### 2. Who is eligible to receive support?

Any established community-focused food garden group in Allegheny County is encouraged to apply. This includes gardens managed by schools, community organizations, shelters, and religious institutions. “Established” means you are actively growing food and/or host programming at the garden related to food-growing. This fund does not and will not provide start-up support for new projects. Gardens currently enrolled in Grow Pittsburgh’s community garden or school garden programs are not eligible to apply.

### 3. Do I need to have 501(c)3 tax-exempt status?

No.

### 4. Are there any other requirements?

- a) You must include written permission from the landowner (public or private) proving gardening activities are allowed on the site. If your garden is on City of Pittsburgh property, you must get permission from the City through the Adopt-A-Lot Program. All project requests must comply with Adopt-A-Lot requirements. For more information pertaining to this permission, visit:  
<http://pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/programs/adopt-a-lot/index.html>.
- b) You must complete Grow Pittsburgh’s Community Garden Sustainability Survey <https://www.growpittsburgh.org/gset/>. (Call 412-362-4769 x 203 or



email [alyssa@growpittsburgh.org](mailto:alyssa@growpittsburgh.org) for a paper copy.) This should take approximately 25 minutes. We recommend filling it out once as a team of two people or more to account for different perspectives. We will compile your answers from the Sustainability Survey into a report that you can use to track your garden's progress. You only need to fill this out once per year, but it must be completed each calendar year.

5. Can I edit my application once I've started it?

Yes. The online application will save your progress and prompt you to enter your email address. You will be sent a link immediately so you can open the application where you left off at a later time. This link can be opened on any computer.

6. What do you mean by Sustainability?

A sustainable garden is one made to last, where little is wasted and plants are healthy. A sustainable garden has access to sufficient materials, volunteers, and funds. Its leadership and membership include a diversity of energized and creative people.

Ask yourself:

- What support do we need to get through this season that will also help us in years to come?
- What will draw more people to the garden? What do we need to keep them coming back?

7. What kind of support can I get?

There are two options: "Small Potatoes" which are generally smaller projects that are less expensive and require less staff time and "Big Tomatoes" which are generally larger or more expensive projects that require more staff time. Big Tomato applications are only accepted once a year since they require more time to complete. Small Potatoes applications are available two times a year, in the spring and again in the fall.

8. What DON'T you provide?

- Startup costs for new gardens
- Cash
- Stipends or wages
- Chainsaws or other more dangerous tools
- Fees for insurance or taxes
- Payment for utility bills like electricity or water

9. What is considered a Small Potatoes project?

Small Potatoes projects include, but are not limited to:

- Books
- Compost or Soil
- Compost bins
- Gift Cards
- Hand tools
- A year-long group subscription to Grow Pittsburgh's [Garden Resource Center](#)
- Perennial edible fruits and herbs
- Power tools such as string trimmers, cordless drills, small tillers, lawn mowers (some restrictions apply)
- Rain barrels (larger rainwater systems may be considered a Big Tomato project)
- Season extension (row cover, low tunnels)
- Seed starting materials (potting soil, pots, trays)
- Seeds
- Seedlings
- Soil amendments
- Soil testing (may be considered a Big Tomato project)
- Straw

10. What are the due dates for the Small Potatoes application in 2018?

- April 1st
- October 1st

11. When will I know if my Small Potatoes project has been accepted? If accepted, how long will I wait to receive the items I requested?

We will let you know within 4 weeks after that cycle's due date whether your application has been awarded. Projects will be complete within 8 weeks.

12. What is considered a Big Tomatoes project?

Big Tomato projects include, but are not limited to:

- Consultation
- Education
- Fencing
- Hardscaping for borders and pathways such as bricks and gravel
- Irrigation systems
- Conflict mediation
- Raised beds (lumber, hardware, kits)
- Season extension (high tunnels, greenhouses)
- Tool storage
- Workshops

13. What is the due date for the Big Tomatoes application?

Big Tomatoes projects are awarded only once per calendar year. Applications are due June 1st.

14. What if my project idea isn't listed?

Please give us as much information as you can on the application. We will contact you and let you know whether your project idea qualifies as a Small Potato or Large Tomato project.

15. What do I do if my CGSF application is not approved?

If your project is not approved, we may give you feedback about how to scale down the project into smaller projects over time. We can give you feedback to help you apply next time. We also have information about other grants that you might want to apply.

16. Can I apply to the Community Garden Sustainability Fund more than once?

Yes. You can apply for two (2) Small Potatoes projects and one (1) Big Tomato project every calendar year (i.e. 2019). You may receive up to two (2) Small Potatoes awards and one (1) Big Tomato award each calendar year. You can apply multiple years in a row.

17. How do you prioritize applications?

Applicants that submit complete applications on time and who are eligible to receive support through the CGSF will be considered.

Priority will go to those applicants which:

- a) explain clearly what they need and why
- b) explain how the project will make the garden more sustainable
- c) are applying to the fund for the first time
- d) are applying to the fund for the first time this calendar year
- e) serve communities in low-to-moderate income areas

We do our best to complete time-sensitive projects first.

18. How do I submit the best possible application?

Great question!

- First make sure to answer **all** of the application questions completely and submit your application on time - incomplete or late applications will not be considered. Take some time to edit your answers to make sure they are clear and thoroughly explain what you need help with. Get in touch early if you have questions.
- Demonstrate how your garden supports the community - show us photos, tell a story, tell us how you plan to keep the garden sustainable and thriving year after year.
- In your application answers, tell us how your project proposal:
  - affects the garden long-term
  - increases attendance and engagement at your garden



- reduces the need for continual inputs (money, materials, etc.) in the future
- Make it easy for us by doing your homework. For example, determine how many yards of compost you need ahead of time.
- Provide up to date contact information so we can get in touch with you when we need to and make sure someone shows up to your site visit (if necessary).
- Finally, make your projects discrete. Apply for **one project** per application.
  - One project is: expanding the garden with 5 more raised beds plus hardware and soil to fill them.
  - One project is: a compost bin and a book about composting.
  - One project is: compost and wood chips for the spring volunteer day.
  - One project is **not**: tools, seeds for the whole garden, a few more beds and a compost bin.

19. Once the project is complete, do I have to do anything else?

We will send you a feedback survey, a request for a brief written report, photos, or a reminder to post on social media based on which form(s) of reporting you agree to on your application. If you have photos of your project in action we would love to see them and share them with your permission!

20. Who do I contact if I have questions?

All application questions and requests for paper applications can be directed to Alyssa Kail, Grow Pittsburgh Garden Sustainability coordinator, 412-362-4769 ext. 203 or [alyssa@growpittsburgh.org](mailto:alyssa@growpittsburgh.org).