Community Garden Sustainability Fund
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Updated June 2022

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 125+ community gardens with over $175,000 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. How do I get a reminder about when applications are due?

   Sign up to get Grow Pittsburgh email newsletters here: https://www.growpittsburgh.org/mailing-list/ and be sure to select Community Garden Network.

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

   No.

5. 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 213 or email communityprojects@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. You only need to fill this out once per year, but it must be completed each calendar year.

6. 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. Once the application has been submitted, it will no longer be editable.

7. 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?

8. What kind of support can I get?

This fund provides materials and consultation. Requested materials will be purchased by Grow Pittsburgh or Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and

delivered to the garden. Both application rounds are open to projects of any size within the following budget guidelines.

- The majority of applications awarded are under $1000.
- On a rarer occasion, we will fund projects between $1000 and $5000, but we do ask for more detailed information in the application including but not limited to a more specific proposed budget, images or design sketches of the project, and a detailed materials list.

9. 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

10. What are some examples of frequently requested projects?
    - Books
    - Compost or Soil
    - Compost bins
    - Conflict mediation
    - Consultation
    - Fencing (typically upgrades or repairs to existing systems)
    - [Garden Resource Center](#) annual group membership fee
    - Hand tools
    - Irrigation systems
    - Perennial edible fruits and herbs
    - Power tools such as string trimmers, cordless drills, small tillers, lawn mowers (some restrictions apply)
    - Rain barrels
    - Raised beds (lumber, hardware, kits, and repair)
    - Season extension (row cover, low tunnels)
    - Season extension (high tunnels, greenhouses, and repair)
    - Seed starting materials (potting soil, pots, trays)
    - Seeds
    - Seedlings

- Soil amendments
- Soil testing
- Straw
- Tool storage
- Workshops

11. What are the due dates for applications?*

- April 1st
- August 1st

*Timelines are subject to change. Please visit
https://www.growpittsburgh.org/garden-and-farm-resources/community-gardens/start-and-build-a-garden/get-funding-and-support/ for the most up-to-date information.

12. When will I know if my 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 completed within 8 weeks.

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

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

Please give us as much information as you can on the application. If you have any questions, it's best to get in touch as early as possible in the application process. Lack of clarity or details about your garden's request may result in your application being declined.

14. 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 for. Please inquire if you'd like additional information.

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

Yes. You can apply to both rounds each calendar year. You can also apply multiple years in a row.

16. 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 directly improve the long-term success of the garden and community impact
   c) are applying to the fund for the first time
   d) are applying to the fund for the first time this calendar year
   e) are graduates of the New Garden program
   f) are in communities of color or low resourced communities

17. 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. Also, if delivery or shipping fees apply, include those in your estimates as well.
- 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.

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

    We will send you a feedback survey* with space for a brief (1 paragraph) written report and opportunity to share photos of your project being delivered, installed, or in use. With your permission, we might even share those photos or testimonials out to our networks.

    And speaking of networks, we love to be tagged in social media posts about the support you receive from this fund! Tag us @growpittsburgh and @waterlandlife

    *Your honest feedback with regards to the application process, etc. will be kept anonymous. We welcome your ideas on how we can continue to improve this program and provide support to as many gardens that need it.

19. Who do I contact if I have questions?

    All application questions and requests for paper applications can be directed to 412-362-4769 ext. 213 or communityprojects@growpittsburgh.org.