



Microgrant Program Description & Guidelines

updated October 2017

Overview

Forsyth Community Gardening (FCG) microgrants support existing and developing community gardens that are located in, and/or engaging and benefiting, limited resource communities in Forsyth County. Each year, microgrants of up to \$1000 each are awarded to community garden groups. Funds should be used for specific projects designed to enhance the garden's long-term impact on community nutrition, environmental quality, and/or social well-being. Funds for microgrants are available thanks to a generous grant from the Winston-Salem Foundation. In some years we receive additional funds from other supporters.

Eligibility

To apply for a microgrant, an applicant must meet the following basic criteria:

- **Be a community garden group or organization** (grants are not given to individuals);
- **Be located in Forsyth County;**
- **Be located in, and/or actively engaging and benefiting, limited resource communities.**
Gardens must meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - **Be located in a limited resource community and primarily organized by residents of this community.** Limited resource communities are defined as census tracts with more than 20% of the population living in poverty.
 - OR -
 - **Engage and benefit primarily people of limited resources and under-represented communities.** At least one-half of all gardeners should be of limited resources and/or from under-represented communities (including, but not limited to, racial/ethnic minorities, immigrants, people who speak English as a second language, and people with disabilities).
- **The group must include either a Community Garden Mentor OR someone who commits to attending the next Mentor Training** (for details, see: <http://tinyurl.com/FCGMentorProgram>). This person must commit to being active in the Mentor program and providing guidance to the applicant garden for, at minimum, the upcoming growing season.
- **Starting in Fall 2016**, a garden group may receive a grant once every three years. Grants awarded prior to Fall 2016 (when awards were smaller) will NOT affect a group's eligibility to apply for the current program.

Faith communities that meet the above criteria are welcome to apply for FCG microgrants. We do ask that faith community gardens applying for microgrants benefit people beyond the congregation.

In addition to satisfying these basic criteria, for the greatest chance of success we also suggest the following guidelines for garden groups and proposed projects:

- **Strong garden organizing:** All gardens applying for a microgrant should have *already* done significant community organizing, and be able to demonstrate a strong leadership team and sufficient number of committed gardeners to maintain the existing or proposed garden space.
- **Leverage additional resources:** All proposed projects should leverage resources outside of microgrant funds. This could include donations of services and materials from garden members and the surrounding community. Applicants should itemize the materials and services secured as the 'Community Contribution' in the Budget section of the microgrant application.

Grant Cycle

The FCG Microgrant Program accepts applications once a year, as outlined below. For exact dates each year, please sign up for FCG's monthly newsletter at: <http://tinyurl.com/FCGBulletinBoard>, and/or check the FCG website (<http://forsythcommunitygardening.com/>) in early November. The cycle is designed to encourage garden organizing and advance planning in the Fall for the following growing season. Funding is awarded in time for groups to realize Spring garden projects.

Microgrant Orientation Session (required)	Late November
Grant application process opens	Late November
Grant applications due	Early January
Initial evaluation of applications by Microgrant Committee	Early to mid-January
Site visits by Microgrant Committee to finalists	Late January – Early February
Grant recipients announced & funding becomes available	by 15/ February
Receipts and initial project report due	15/ August

Use of Grant Funds

Grant funds may not be used for 'consumable' supplies used for only one growing season (for example, seeds, annual transplants, straw mulch, commercial fertilizers, natural pest control products, etc.). Gardens should demonstrate their capacity to obtain these inputs on a sustainable basis.

Grant funds may be used for training, services, and infrastructure/supplies that benefit the garden for multiple years. Examples of eligible uses of funds are outlined in the table on Page 3.

Applicants must demonstrate how microgrant funds will result in long-term benefits, and present a plan for sustaining and sharing the benefits of microgrant-funded projects. For example:

- *How will new learning from a workshop by an outside expert be used and shared?*
- *If microgrant funds are used to till new areas or build raised beds, how will gardeners build their gardening knowledge and obtain inputs (seeds, transplants, etc.) each year?*

- How will new infrastructure, such as rainwater harvesting tanks, be maintained?
- What is the garden's plan for maintaining proposed perennial plantings?

	Examples of acceptable expenses
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops (on topics that require an outside expert) • Instructor for a garden-based program (must educate garden members to be able to continue the program) <p><i>(Please check with the Community Gardening Coordinator first to see if there are no-cost providers of the workshop or instruction services you are seeking.)</i></p>
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grading and tilling to establish new garden • Soil testing for contaminants (where this is a concern due to past land use) • Community researcher stipend (to answer a question of broad importance for management of urban gardens) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Example: If your group wants to know, 'What native plants attract beneficial insects to urban gardens in Winston-Salem?' you could design a project to find out and pay a small stipend to a community-based researcher to conduct the insect scouting. Please check with the CGC for help developing your idea and designing your project!</i>
Infrastructure and Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lumber and soil for raised and wheelchair-accessible beds • Specialized tools not available from Forsyth Community Gardening's Tool Lending Shed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Check http://tinyurl.com/FCGToolLending to see if you can borrow your desired tool or tiller before requesting microgrant funds to purchase one.</i> • Rainwater harvesting structures and equipment • Irrigation system materials • Hoop house for season extension • High-cost perennial plants (fruit trees, berry bushes, native plants for pollinators)

Guidelines & Evaluation of Proposed Projects

Grant applicants are evaluated by a Microgrant Committee, drawn from the Forsyth Community Gardening Advisory Board and/or N.C. Cooperative Extension staff, Community Garden Mentors, and other community organizations.

Guidelines for gardens and proposed projects are outlined in the rubric on the following page, which the Committee uses to evaluate applications. We strongly encourage all applicants to use this rubric as a guide to strengthen garden organization and practices before applying, and to develop a well-thought-out project proposal.

Please note, the committee assesses overall garden organization and practices (or planned practices) and the project for which funds will be used. This is because our microgrants will only have a lasting impact if the gardens where they are awarded continue to grow and thrive, and use best practices! For this reason, we carefully assess overall garden organization and practices in considering where microgrants should be awarded.

Forsyth Community Gardening Evaluation Rubric for Microgrant Applications

	<i>Not evident</i>	<i>Poor, incomplete</i>		<i>Average</i>		<i>Very well-developed</i>
Evaluation Criteria	0	1	2	3	4	5
Garden Organization and Best Practices:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garden mission statement: The garden mission was developed through an inclusive process, and clearly identifies priority goals reflecting community needs. 						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garden organization: The garden is well-organized and has procedures to ensure sustainability (e.g., leadership committee, assigned responsibilities, written rules, enforced gardener agreements). 						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: The garden leadership actively invites and facilitates participation by under-represented groups (racial/ethnic minorities, immigrants, people with disabilities, etc.). 						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmentally sustainable gardening practices: The garden uses sustainable practices (e.g., crop rotation, soil testing, cover cropping, cultural practices to control weeds, providing habitat for beneficial insects, etc.). 						
The Proposed Project:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was developed through an inclusive process and addresses specific community needs. 						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates potential for long-term positive impacts in specific areas (e.g., food security, environmental education, intergenerational relationships, etc.). 						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes an educational / capacity-building component that will reach people within and beyond the garden. 						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents a plan for sustaining and sharing the benefits of the project (e.g., putting new learning into practice, making full use of new garden space, maintaining new infrastructure or perennial plantings, etc.). 						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains a plan for monitoring and evaluation of impacts and a commitment to reporting, including indicators of success and how these will be tracked. 						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverages resources beyond the microgrant to ensure project success (e.g., donations of services and materials from garden members & surrounding community). 						