

Request for Proposals: Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS) People's Garden Project

Submissions Accepted beginning Monday, November 16, 2020 at 9:00 am. Submissions are due electronically to:

Gennifer Keller (Providence County applicants): gkeller.nricd@gmail.com ,
<https://www.nricd.org/>
Gina Fuller (Kent and Washington County applicants): gfuller@sracd.org , <https://sracd.org/>
Sara Churgin (Bristol and Newport County applicants): schurgin.ericd@gmail.com ,
<https://www.easternricconservation.org/>

Chosen projects will be notified of funding as soon as possible.

Changes To People's Garden Project for 2020-2021: In the first year of this program, applications for funding in Providence County were evaluated by a team of three reviewers who decided which projects would ultimately be funded. For 2020-2021, at the request of the USDA NRCS, eligible projects will be funded on a **first come, first served basis** from **Monday, November 16, 2020 at 9:00 am through March 15, 2021**. Priority will be given to entities that have not received funding from the People's Garden Project in the past. Proposals from new applicants will be evaluated on a first-come-first served basis throughout this timeframe. Applicants that have received funding in the past will be evaluated on a first come first serve basis during the application window, after all new applicants have been funded. All eligible applications received on November 16 before 11:59 pm will be evaluated in an order selected by a random number generator, and as many projects as possible will be funded until the \$40,286.33 available for projects in each district has been allocated. Eligible proposals received after November 16 will be awarded funding on a first-come, first-served basis. A proposal is still required to ensure that all costs are allowable by our funders at USDA NRCS. Applicants can complete the attached application form or submit their own proposal that includes similar information.

Background and Requirements:

Each of the Rhode Island Conservation Districts (Eastern, Southern, and Northern) is seeking a minimum of three organizations in urban, suburban, or rural areas to install community gardens or high tunnels and maintain them for a minimum of 18 months (gardens) or 36 months (high tunnels). This project is funded by an agreement between the RI State Conservation Committee (RISCC) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS). A maximum of \$13,428.77 is available to fund each proposed project; funding can be spent on items such as tools, soil, seed, fertilizer, soil additives, irrigation materials, garden materials, lumber, high tunnels, pollinator plants, etc. Projects with lower budgets are also encouraged to apply. Although funding *cannot* be used to maintain existing gardens, it may be used to create new garden beds at a site where other gardens already exist. An existing garden is defined as one that produced produce for human consumption during the 20 growing season.

Organizations receiving funding must agree to the following requirements, set in place by the USDA NRCS:

- Entities must have and maintain control of the land (such as a deed, lease, or written agreement with the landowner) where the garden and/or seasonal high tunnel will be established for the duration of the selected project, 18 months or 36 months.

- The recipient is responsible for maintaining the selected community garden site for approximately 18 months beginning with the installation of the garden, or 36 months beginning with the installation of a high tunnel.
- The recipient must provide their Conservation District with two written stories about its garden project at the end of each growing season, and include five photos showing progression/installation of the project. Awardee must provide on-camera release forms for any people in the photos. Photos will be shared and may be used by USDA NRCS. The Conservation District may provide release forms for recipients to use.
- The recipient must install signage at the garden or high tunnel site acknowledging NRCS along with other partnering organizations who provided support for the community garden or high tunnel. Agreement funds may be used for the installation of signage, and Conservation District staff is available to assist with the creation of signage.
- The recipient must agree to host one educational workshop at its garden site.
- Each installed garden must have an irrigation system. Agreement funds may be used for the installation of the system. A maximum of \$500 for small projects or \$1000 for larger projects should be budgeted for a combination of irrigation and fencing.
- The use of raised beds and imported soil is required for sites where soil is contaminated. Raised beds may also be used to increase accessibility. Agreement funds may be used to pay for these costs.

Funds may not be used for staff time, and will be dispersed on a **reimbursement basis**. This means that recipient organizations will document purchases with receipts, paid invoices, and/or cancelled checks, and then receive reimbursement from their Conservation District. Although reimbursement is generally processed within 1-2 weeks of receiving required documentation, unexpected events such as government shutdowns can occasionally cause longer delays.

Required Match: For every dollar of funding that you apply to receive, you must agree to provide one dollar of *matching funds*. Volunteer time is currently valued at the rate of \$27.70/hour. Examples of volunteer time that can be counted as match include time spent planting, building garden fixtures, or tending to gardens. If a paid employee acting within their job capacity helps to build or maintain the garden (such as a volunteer coordinator overseeing volunteers, a teacher building a garden with students, or a town DPW employee delivering mulch), their time can be valued at their actual rate of pay. The value of donated materials such as soil, plants, beds, or any other material that is not funded by federal sources can also be counted as match. Conservation District staff will be available to assist you with properly documenting your match commitment. Match must be funded by non-federal sources.

How To Apply: Please submit a 1-3 page single-spaced proposal or fill out the People's Garden Project Application form and submit electronically to your Conservation District no earlier than Monday, November 16, 2020 at 9:00 am. The last day application will be accepted for the 2020 People's Garden Project is March 15, 2021. Your Conservation District contacts are:

Gennifer Keller (Providence County applicants): gkeller.nricd@gmail.com ,
<https://www.nricd.org/>

Gina Fuller (Kent and Washington County applicants): gfuller@sracd.org , <https://sracd.org/>
 Sara Churgin (Bristol and Newport County applicants): schurgin.ericd@gmail.com ,
<https://www.easternricconservation.org/>

Your proposal should include:

- The name of your organization, as well as the type of organization (i.e. school, nonprofit, business entity, or quasi public)
- The name, email, and phone number of your organization's contact person for the project.
- A description of your proposed community garden (i.e. beds required, materials that will be used, plants that will be grown) or high tunnel (i.e. size of high tunnel required, brand or source of high tunnel, what will be grown in the high tunnel).
- A description of how the project will benefit your organization's community.
- A proposed budget outlining how you will spend your requested funds and how you will provide match. A maximum of \$13,428.77 may be requested. Smaller requests are also welcome.
- A description of any other partners involved in the project.
- Indicate if your organization has applied to the People's Garden Project before and provide a description of the project if you received funding.

With any questions about preparing your proposal, please contact your conservation district contacts listed above.

ERICD, SRICD, NRICD, RISCC, and USDA NRCS reserve the right to accept or reject any proposal submitted, or any portion thereof, for any reason.

USDA NRCS is an equal opportunity employer, provider and lender.