

Urban Agriculture Grant | Questions & Answers

The following Q&A was compiled from questions asked during Info Sessions (hosted April 4, 2017 and April 6, 2017) and questions asked via email to mofgrants@midohiofoodbank.org. All further questions asked will be posted in updated versions of this document on a weekly basis so that applicants have access to the same information regarding the grant.

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ABOUT THE AWARD

- **What is the award period?**
 The Urban Agriculture Grant is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), therefore, the grant follows the federal government's fiscal year which ends in September 2017. The award period is annual, and there will be three award periods over the next three years, pending funding availability. The timeframes below represent the grant periods:

 - Year 1: September 2016 – September 2017
 - Year 2: September 2017 – September 2018
 - Year 3: September 2018 – September 2019

- **How many sites will be awarded in 2017?**
 Approximately \$150,000 is available in funding in 2017. There is no anticipated number of applicants that will be awarded this year.

- **Why is the Urban Agriculture Grant a three-year grant if the RFP says funds for 2018 and 2019 are pending?**
 Mid-Ohio Foodbank is in an annual, renewable contract with the USDA for the Urban Agriculture Grant. Funds will be available to Mid-Ohio Foodbank annually for 3 years as long as the funds are available through the USDA.

- **Where do I learn more? How do I contact you if I have questions?**

Information on Urban Agriculture Grant: <http://www.midohiofoodbank.org/urbanagriculturegrant/>

To apply: <https://urbanagriculturegrant.awardsplatform.com/>

For questions, email: MOFgrants@midohiofoodbank.org

FUNDS

FUND PROCESSING

- **When will funds be distributed? How will funds be disbursed if an awardee that was selected installs a high-tunnel?**

The application was launched on March 20, 2017. The application deadline is 8:00PM (Eastern Time) April 27, 2017. We anticipate conducting site visits the week of May 8, 2017 to learn more about applicants and sites. The selection process will conclude by June 1, 2017 when applicants will hear back on the status of their applications. After June 1, grantees will meet with Mid-Ohio Foodbank to verify the financial and record keeping processes and requirements of the grant, which includes the funds disbursement process. All funds incurred must align to the approved budget submitted with the application. Disbursement(s) will be made before the end of governmental fiscal year, which is September 30, 2017.

- **If I am awarded less than the amount I requested, do I still need to do all the things that I describe in the project plan and project budget?**

The funder will work with the grantee to revise and amend the project plan and budget if a partial grant is awarded.

- **If we use funds acquired from another source for something that is included in our project plan and budget for the Urban Agriculture Grant, do we still have to follow the submitted project plan and use the funds as originally budgeted?**

Yes, the applicant is held accountable to the expenses in the described project and funds cannot be used for expenses not included in the application budget. We encourage you to request funds for expenses that you know you will be able to use on your project.

ALLOWABLE & NON-ALLOWABLE FUNDS

- **What all can funds be used for?**

The goal of this grant, as determined by the USDA, is to enhance and improve urban growing sites so that they are more productive and sustainable and can improve access to produce for low-income communities. For this reason the funds are intended to be used for infrastructure, materials, and equipment that are needed for growing sites to be successful. We do not necessarily encourage the use of funding for expenses that are not directly related to the grant's central purpose, but if you feel that certain costs are an essential part to your project you can emphasize them within your application. Please describe the importance of such costs in both the project plan question in the application and in the budget narrative that accompanies the budget form.

Some examples of expenses that have been asked about and are allowable, but not necessarily encouraged are:

- **Delivery vehicle**
 - **Construction of a farm stand**
 - **Fencing**
 - **Rental of an auger or similarly relevant equipment**
 - **Monthly lawn care service at the site, as a contractual service**
- **After the grant period ends, will the awardee own the high tunnel or other equipment?**
 Upon successful completion of the grant period and the subsequent deliverables of the grant the awardee would own the equipment, but if awardee would decide to sell the equipment there are additional regulations to adhere to.

APPLICATION

APPLICATION PROCESS

- **How will the application be evaluated? Is there an area within the application that is weighted more than other areas?**
 A Review Committee will be convened to review the applications, and they will be using a rubric to score the responses. We encourage you to focus on telling us about the project goals and your plan for accomplishing those goals.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- **The application required to provide a Project Name. Can you change the project name once you fill it in?**
 You can change the project name or any part of application, even after you submit, up until the application deadline at 8:00PM on Thursday April 27, 2017.
- **If we are a 501(c)3 organization and are looking to partner with other organization(s) to achieve our project goals, how or where do we show that partnership?**
 Try to describe the relationship in the organization mission and history section, in the question about project plan, and/or the question about key partners.
- **What type of data is the application looking for?**
 Data will help us understand your goals and evaluate the capacity of your project plan, but there is not specific type of data we are looking for. Your response to questions where it may be relevant to include data also depends on the type of data that your already organization collects. Examples of data you might include:
 - Poundage and/or dollar value of food grown, sold, and donated
 - List of people that were engaged in a project
 - Number of volunteers and/or hours of volunteer time
 - Number of people involved in training/mentorship and/or hours of training/mentorship

- Does the food distributed to low-income communities have to be donated? What is the amount or percent of food that must be distributed?**

Food grown on sites supported by the Urban Agriculture Grant does not have to be donated, but this grant is aiming to enhance urban growing for the explicit purpose of increasing low-income community members’ access to fresh produce so you must have a plan for distributing produce within the community. The full Request for Proposal lists several ways that food can be distributed. There is no particular requirement for how this is done, nor for the amount/ percentage of the food grown that should be distributed. Thru the application process you will communicate your plan and projected volume, and it is this that you will be held accountable to.
- Under Produce Distribution in the Request for Proposal, one of strategies for distribution of vegetable is farm stand or farmer’s market. Does this mean that we can set up a farm stand in a needed area to meet that goal?**

The method to get produce from the growing site to people in need is determined by the applicant and we are asking you to tell us how you plan to do this as well as how you will measure your success. For example, if you decided to distribute to a corner store at a reduced price, we would want to know how much food you distributed and how many people accessed it.
- What is the international format for a phone number?**

There are international codes for every country, so for the USA you need to add “+1” before your phone number. For example, if your number is 614-123-4567 you would enter +16141234567.

APPLICATION ATTACHMENTS

- We are a for-profit entity and do not request any funding other than from Urban Agriculture Grant. How do we show that in the application and budget form?**

Consider listing the ways that revenue is generated in the Funding Source part of the budget form and that can serve as part of your total operating budget.

[Budget Form Spreadsheet](#)

[Budget Form PDF](#)
- What do you accept as land use documentation?**

Land use documentation needs to assure that the applicant has the right to access to the parcel of land that is referenced in the application is able successfully implement all project activities that are outlined in the grant proposals. Documentation will vary depending on your site and your organization. Examples of acceptable documents:

 - Agreement with a library/school to use the backyard
 - Lease agreement with the city land bank
 - Land owner’s copy of the deed or mortgage
 - Letter from a bank and/or land owner authorizing land use
- What is the insurance policy amount required? Does it depend on the area or the organization?**

There is not a specific amount required for your liability insurance since an appropriate amount will most likely depend on the size, activities, etc. of your organization. Based on input from Mid-Ohio Foodbank’s insurance provider and guidelines from other similar grant programs you might consider having liability insurance between half a million and a million dollars. This can be a general liability plan, and should at least cover bodily injury, personal injury, and property damage.

- **What is W-9 in the required attachment list?**

The W-9 is a tax identification form provided by the IRS. You can read more about it [here](#).

- **What do I do if my attachments are not accepted by the platform?**

There is a size limit of 5MB per attachment so anything larger will not be accepted by the platform. Also, there are specific areas to attach the required documents and the optional documents, so be sure you have them entered in the correct area.

HIGH TUNNELS

- **Is this EQIP? What's the difference?**

There is program administered by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) called Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) that is focused more specifically on funding high tunnels. You can read more about it [here](#). This Urban Agriculture Grant is a separate but similar program administered through Mid-Ohio Foodbank that is providing an opportunity for funding beyond high tunnel installation and focusing more broadly on enhancing urban growing sites.

- **Are there specifications on high tunnels like with USDA's NRCS EQIP grant?**

We encourage alignment to the same set of standards set by NRCS for EQIP.

- **What is the zoning for high tunnels?**

Projects should adhere to and be in compliance with all city or county codes and regulations required for urban growing, which depends on your location and your property. We do recommend that high tunnel size be less than 2,000 square feet because a high tunnel larger than this size could require adherence to additional project planning requirements. Please check with Board of Zoning (BZS) for additional information, which you can [here](#).

- **If we only have a small parcel of land but would like to have a high tunnel, should we wait for a newer site and start from scratch to not disturb what we already have?**

Consider your own project and whether you are ready for a high tunnel. You do not have to request for a high tunnel to be considered for this grant.

- **Can high tunnels be use for seedlings?**

Yes, the grant does allow high tunnels to be used for seed starts. Information about how you intend to use your high tunnels should be included in your project goals and project plan, along with information about how such use of infrastructure will support your project goals.

- **Supplemental heat in high tunnel?**

High tunnels are not typically heated with an supplemental heat source since they are designed to capture heat from the soil; however, if this is a part of your project it should be included in the project plan section of the application.

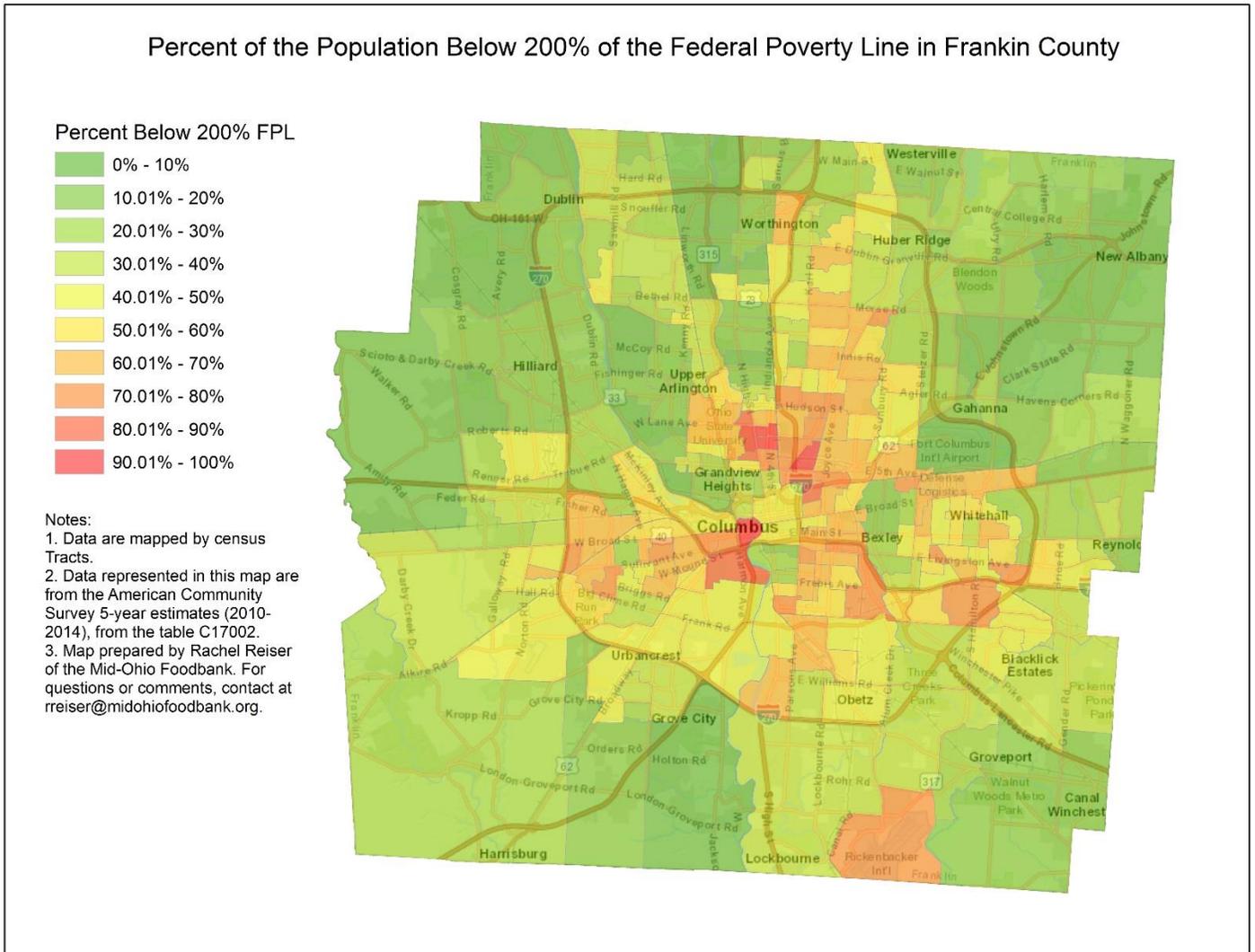
GEOGRAPHY

- **Is this program specifically for farms within Columbus city limits?**

Applicants whose project is located in underserved areas within the City or surrounding area are strongly encouraged to apply.

- **Where does the map come from?**

The heat map in the Request for Proposals was created by Mid-Ohio Foodbank with data from the American Community Survey (ACS 5-year estimates from 2010 to 2014). It depicts the percent of the population in each census tract in Franklin County that is at or below 200% of the federal poverty line. The red, orange and yellow coloring shows where more than half of the tract's population fall in this category.



- **We have multiple growing sites that would benefit from this funding, but they are not all in the same area.**

Are multiple growing sites allowed?

Though sites located in or serving low-income communities are strongly encouraged to apply, the grant does not prohibit multiple sites that are a part of a single project. This kind of detail should be included in the project plan.

- **Are there limits on the size and dimension of the parcel?**

No, there are no specifications on the size and dimension of the parcel. We want you to describe your parcel and what you are growing within the application.