

# Urban Agriculture Grant Q & A

## Question & Answer

*The following Q&A was compiled from questions asked during Info Sessions (March 14, 2018) and questions asked via email to [mofgrants@midohiofoodbank.org](mailto:mofgrants@midohiofoodbank.org). All further questions asked will be posted in updated versions of this document every Friday so that applicants have access to the same information regarding the grant.*

1. **Do I have to attend the information session for my application to be considered? If I came to the information session in 2017, do I have to come again in 2018?**

No, the information session is not a required event for interested applicants to attend. It's intended to help applicants better understand the grants purpose, application, and requirements.

In order to include and receive funding for a high-tunnel, all applicants are required to attend the high-tunnel workshop.

2. **If I attended the OSU Franklin County Extension seminar on high-tunnels on February 1, 2018, am I required to attend the high-tunnel workshop on March 14, 2018 in order to include a high-tunnel in our proposal?**

If you attended the OSU Franklin County Extension workshop on February 1, 2018 hosted by Tim McDermont, this will satisfy that requirement and you do not need to attend the workshop scheduled for March 14. That said, the on farm workshop may also be informative as we will tour our 4 high-tunnels currently in operation.

3. **Can grantees from Year #1 (2017 grant cycle) apply for this year's funding?**

Yes, previous grant applicants are eligible and encouraged to reapply for Year #2 funds. However, please note that performance from previous grant cycles will be factored into the scores for grantees' future applications. Additionally, in order to be eligible to receive funding from the Urban Agriculture Grant program in year two, the grantee must have realized at least all of the following accomplishments: 1) project complied with applicable laws and regulations; 2) if project included a high-tunnel installation, it was fully completed before the March 2, 2018, and 3) a portion of the projects food was donated or provided to low-income individuals.

4. **Will this grant support grantees purchase of low tunnels?**

The goal of this grant 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 – this may include supplies such as low tunnels.

5. **Do applicants need to determine their location and census tract based on the Franklin County map?**

No, through the review process, each applicant's project location is identified and then factored into the scoring model.

**6. Can projects be located outside of Columbus, but in Franklin County?**

Applicants whose project is located in underserved areas within the City of Columbus or surrounding area are strongly encouraged to apply (please refer to the map we provided in the RFP).

**7. Where does the data in 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 2015 5-year estimates). 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.

**8. For expenses greater than \$5,000, are applicants required to submit more than one estimate?**

For the application, no; if a project is funded then any additional information related to the project's budget will be covered in the grantee orientation.

**9. What all can funds be used for? Can they be used to purchase a vehicle? Can they be used for operational improvements such as a produce washing and packing station? Can they be used to support fiscal sponsorship fees?**

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. Even if a project is selected for funding we do not guarantee funding for expenses that are not directly related to the grants central purpose. However if your project has certain expenses you deem critical, in your budget application please make sure to emphasize the significance of these costs in relationship to your project and to the funding priorities outlined within the RFP.

Finally, please be aware that equipment valued over \$5,000 has additional USDA requirements associated.

**10. If project costs may be impacted by rising economic forces outside of the grantees control, can we include a variance to account for potential expense pricing changes?**

We encourage you to request funds for expenses based on what the anticipated cost would be for that expense during the grant period. If funded, the funder will work with the grantee as necessary to revise and amend project budgets through a revision process that aligns to the approved project and budget while working to achieve the projects deliverables.

**11. If an applicant is not funded, can they still attend the MOF-hosted trainings/workshops?**

Yes, the trainings and workshops will be open to the public and will most likely be free.

**12. Is there any specific guidance on what will need Board of Zoning Services approval or how to get in touch with them?**

Any site enhancement or change may require special considerations to be compliant with local code and regulations. While each parcel and project is unique, some projects that may require a permit include: high tunnels, fencing, utility lines, impervious surfaces, other large structures (i.e. you can stand up inside them).

There's no easy FAQ list because every site is different, so be sure to double check. As instructed, please look up your local jurisdiction office and contact the appropriate building and zoning department. For City of Columbus, for any questions you can contact Building & Zoning Services via [info@bzscolumbus.gov](mailto:info@bzscolumbus.gov) and plan for at least 72 hours for a response, or up to a week for more complicated questions. Also be aware that their office has moved to 111 N. Front Street. Additionally, once funds are awarded MOF will work more closely with each grantee and BZA to ensure that their projects are in compliance with city zoning.

**13. Who should be contacted for County properties?**

For projects falling into the jurisdiction of Franklin County, please visit the Economic Development & Planning department for more information: <https://development.franklincountyohio.gov/#>

**14. Can permitting fees be included in the project budget?**

Yes, permits, as well as contractor costs, related to zoning concerns can be included in your project budget.

**15. What needs to be included in the site map sketch of improvements?**

All site map sketches should include any added utilities, new structures, etc your project is requesting, as well as overall site dimensions. Include dimensions for your site improvements as well. Please label your site map with the physical address associated to this project.

**16. If your organization is growing on multiple sites, what all should be included in the application to describe current production?**

When answering questions related to current production, please provide details about the site(s) where you intend to use funds. You can explain production that happens at other sites when telling us about your organization as a whole.

**17. How will the application be evaluated? Is there an area within the application that is weighted more than other areas? How do you decide what project expenses to fund?**

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. If an application is selected for funding, the project expenses are evaluated based on a tiered priority ranking tool that is directly related to the goals and objectives of the grant. At this time, this expense evaluation information is not publicly available.

**18. Who is on the Review Committee?**

An independent, voluntary review committee will be formed to objectively review applications. Reviewers are comprised of professionals and relevant experts from the non-profit, agriculture, and public sectors who will objectively determine the grant awards.

**19. Are independent growers eligible to apply?**

Individuals are not eligible to apply. To receiving funding, the individual's project needs to work with a fiscal sponsor to administer funding. In order for an independent business to be eligible for funding, the business needs to be tied to agriculture and the funds need to directly support the business' interest while aligning to the funding priorities outlined in the RFP.

All applicants are required to submit with the application a W-9, a tax identification form provided by the IRS.