FY24 Resident and Community Gardening Grant Program Information Session
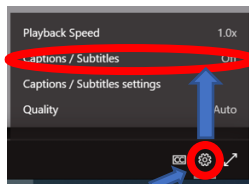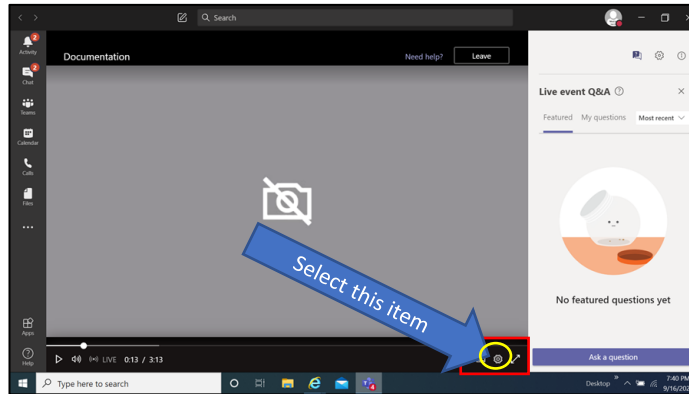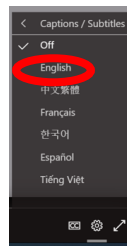
How you can view the multi-lingual closed captions

Select this item

When you select it a menu appears, choose **captions / subtitles**

You then select the language of choice

It will then display the language chosen

Disclaimer

The translations provided in this application use what is referred to as mechanical translation technology. Although this method of translation is very effective and provides a high rate of accuracy it is NOT 100% word for word accurate. Things that may affect it are the quality of the microphone used and potentially a person speaking that may have an accent.

FY24 Resident and Community Gardening Grant Program Information Session

April 26, 2024

Prepared by Montgomery County Office of Grants Management

Welcome!

- This meeting will be recorded and posted for future viewing on the Office of Grants Management online application portal
- The slide deck will also be posted in the same location for your reference

Online Application Platform Home Page:
https://mcmdgrants.smapply.org

Grant Program Page:
https://mcmdgrants.smapply.org/prog/FY24Gardening

Information Session Agenda

- Provide an overview of the program
- Walk through the application platform
- Open up for participant questions (put your questions in the Q&A box)

Any questions we cannot answer during the Information Session will be addressed and posted on the platform.

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Office of Food Systems Resilience

- OFSR was created based on the recommendation of the Montgomery County COVID-19 Food Security Task Force and established by the County Council in July 2022 under Bill 20-22.

- The mission of the OFSR is to develop and implement interagency budgetary, regulatory, and operational strategies to build a more equitable, efficient, resilient, and sustainable food system in Montgomery County.

OFSR Values & Priorities

OFSR Core Values: Equity, Systems Focus, Innovation, and Data Analysis

Strategic Priorities

- Build racial equity and social justice in the local food system.
- Expand local food production (including commercial farms, urban agriculture, community production).
- Strengthen processing and distribution infrastructure.
- Guide strategic investment in food security.
- Coordinate capacity for future crises (plans, mechanisms).
- Establish food system strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- Increase economic opportunities in food systems.

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Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger Programs: Overview

Special Appropriation #24-37 allocated $11.06 M to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger, including a variety of new grant programs, a retail food access program, and an expansion of existing initiatives. The impact of this funding includes:

- **Expanded Reach to Residents:**
    - o **Expansion of existing programs** projected to facilitate **more than 1.5 million** contacts with Montgomery County families; **New programs** will increase food access and security for up to **16,000** households

- **Positive Economic Impacts:**
    - o Reduce costs associated with addressing health challenges amongst children and families
    - o Expand procurement opportunities for local food producers

- **Bolstered Community Networks to Address Root Causes:**
    - o Strengthen cross-sector relationships amongst residents, schools, community-based organizations, and government
    - o Enhanced dignity, safety, and flexibility for families accessing food through diversified, equitable, and culturally-relevant pathways

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Gardening Grant History

First launched as a pandemic response initiative in 2020
- Invested in 12 Resident & Community Gardening Programs
- Funded by Montgomery County & Food for Montgomery
- Administered by the Montgomery County Food Council

FY23 Base Budget Funding
- Doubled with investment from Dept of Environmental Protection

Alignment with Food System Priorities
- Increase resident food security & nutritious food access
- Expand local food production of culturally diverse foods
- Provide food education opportunity
- Address impacts of climate change & protect natural resources
- Improve emotional and physical well-being of residents
- Build community around food

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Key Program Details

Total Funding Available:	**$200,000**
Award Range:	**$10,000 Minimum to $50,000 Maximum** *Final award amounts may be lower than $10,000*
Performance Period:	**May 31, 2024 to August 31, 2025**
Where to Apply:	https://mcmdgrants.smapply.org/prog/FY24Gardening
Application Opening:	**Monday, April 22, 2024**
Application Deadline:	**Monday, May 13, 2024 at 11:59 PM**

Program Goals

The goal of this program is to **provide funding to home and community farming and gardening initiatives that support broader food security initiatives through the expansion of resident and community food production.**

- <u>Target Populations</u>: individuals and households residing in Montgomery County, who have been historically and disproportionately impacted by food insecurity and poor health outcomes and disadvantaged in access to opportunities to grow their own fresh, local, and nutritious food.

- <u>Allowable purposes for this grant</u>: increased resident access to yard, patio, and community gardening supplies, space, and education.

Applicants will outline how the program service delivery will work from start to finish within the Strategy Narrative. Details are outlined in the NOFO Section II: Application Tasks – C. Project Strategy

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Eligibility (1 of 2)

- The organization may be a Federal 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status organization or provide evidence of fiscal agent relationship with a 501(c)(3) organization;

- The organization's principal place of business must be located in Montgomery County; if a national or regional organization, it must have a location in Montgomery County through which it provides related services. Any services or activities taking place outside of Montgomery County must be exclusively benefiting Montgomery County residents;

- All services and programming to receive funds must be provided in Montgomery County

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Eligibility (2 of 2)

- The organization must be currently registered and in good standing with the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT);

- Proposed programs must be for a new service(s), expansion of existing services, or a combination of both. County funding cannot be used to supplant other funding for already funded services; and

- Current Montgomery County contract or grant award winners must be current on all reporting obligations for other awards and those reports must reflect substantial progress towards the goals of their grant agreement(s)

Priority for funding will focus on projects that:

- **Establish new or renewed small-space food production locations**, including:
  - Private land, such as those owned by community-based organizations, faith-based institutions, and educational institutions;
  - Underutilized, unused, vacant, or abandoned lots in neighborhoods and municipal centers;
  - Unused and abandoned plots in community gardens; and
  - Other creative opportunities for land access or growing spaces, such as (but not limited to) vertical gardening and rooftop gardening.

- **Increase access to culturally appropriate foods** in Montgomery County;

- Provide **gardening and nutrition education** resources, and engage community residents directly in food production;

Funding Priorities (2 of 3)

Priority for funding will focus on projects that:

- **Demonstrate partnerships**, including with the business community, **for in-kind or discounted supply** purchases to increase the cost efficiency of programming;

- **Provide planting materials**, containers, seeds, seedlings, **gardening supplies and/or education** to residents to enable them to grow their own produce in yards and/or on patios; and
- **Increase food access for residents in zip codes with high rates of food insecurity** (USDA Food Access Atlas, link is in the NOFO Project Strategy).

OFSR seeks proposals from organizations that:

- Exhibit cultural proficiency;
- Are inclusive of the LGBTQIA+ community members;
- Use a racial equity lens in providing services.

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Priority for funding will focus on projects that align with the OFSR's core values:

- **Equity**: all efforts should address social injustice and racial disparities to build equity and food sovereignty in our community;

- **Systems-based**: strategies should focus on identifying, maximizing, and addressing the interconnections of food issue areas, simultaneously contextualizing their benefits and their impacts on production, access, natural resources, education, and economy;

- **Innovative**: to transform our food system, novel approaches, creative ideas, and best practices models from other jurisdictions are critical; and

- **Data-driven**: strategic policy and investment decisions require intentional and reliable data collection and analysis, and solutions with clearly defined success metrics and measurable impact.

Submission Guidelines

- Submissions must come through the County's SM Apply online application portal at
https://mcmdgrants.smapply.org

- All applications must be fully submitted online by **Monday, May 13, 2024 at 11:59 PM**

- Applicants requesting an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation should contact the Office of Grants Management to discuss alternative submission options.

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Required Application Tasks

- **Applicant Information (Reusable) Task:** Organization contact info and supporting documents (data fields and uploads)

- **Applicant Background (Reusable) Task:** Organization size and leadership demographics (*data collected will never be seen by Review Committees or used for awarding*)

- **Project Strategy Task:** Project data & narrative (3 page limit, PDF upload)

- **Project Budget Task:** Project cost details (No page limit, MS Excel upload)

- **Budget Narrative/Justification Task:** Brief explanation of the Project Budget (2 page limit, PDF upload)

- **Project Work Plan/Timeline:** Implementation schedule (1 page limit, PDF upload)

- **Performance Plan:** Outline of metrics and outcomes to be achieved (2 page limit, PDF uploads)

Full Task requirements and guidance on the **FY24 Gardening Grant Page**

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Optional Application Tasks

- **Project Staffing Plan Task:** Outline of staff roles (2 page limit, PDF upload)

  When is it recommended to submit a staffing plan?
  If you are requesting funding to cover staff salaries or staff-related costs.

- **Performance History:** Outline of metrics and outcomes already achieved (2 page limit, PDF upload)

  This section is recommended, but optional.

- **Optional Supporting Documents to be Uploaded Task:** Optional additional uploads. (no limit, PDF uploads)

*Full Task requirements and guidance on the **FY24 Gardening Grant Page***

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Project Strategy Narrative

- The Strategy Narrative should answer specific questions about **program service delivery, organizational capabilities and impact** on the grant program's target populations.
  Details are outlined in the NOFO Section II: Application Tasks – C. Project Strategy

- You will also be asked how your organization may be **increasing the availability of culturally diverse foods** through this program. Refer to the survey results from the Montgomery County Food Council's Culturally Appropriate Foods Survey: https://bit.ly/3lig6Tw

- If a question does not apply to your proposal, please indicate that it is not applicable within the Strategy Narrative.

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Project Budget

Expenses: detailed itemized cost information for all proposed expenses, including quantities and prices, plus any indirect costs.

- Include staffing and fringe costs (as applicable) as well as program expenses including food purchases, transportation, infrastructure like refrigeration or shelving, and all additional operational costs for this program.
- Program Budgets may also include indirect costs such as: legal, accounting, liability insurance, audits, and the like.
- If applicants have a federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), then they must use that rate within their application. Applicants without a NICRA may use a rate of up to 15%.

Revenues: include the value of any cost-shares such as donations, other grants received, and in-kind or pro bono services that you anticipate being donated and that are related to this proposal.

If applying as a collaboration, please include the appropriate division of budget between the two or more organizations that are applying.

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Project Budget Narrative Task

- Include the purpose of an expenditure and an explanation of how costs were calculated. This may also be achieved through notes in the budget.

- Specify how your project would be affected if partial funding were awarded. State whether your project could be completed with a smaller amount, and how your projected outcomes would be affected by any funding reduction.

- Describe how the proposed program will align with your current programs. How will this create new and/or expanded services for your clients?

- If your organization does work regionally or has other funding sources, provide us with information to reassure us that the Montgomery County funds will not simply enable you to shift current, non-County monies to operations outside the County but rather will allow you to add to or expand your work on behalf of services in Montgomery County.

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Project Staffing Plan

If your budget proposal includes funding for staff expenses, please submit a staffing plan.

The Staffing Plan should detail at a minimum for the incumbent, position to be filled, and/or contractors to be supported by the project:

- The name of the position;

- Expected salary or hourly rate for the position;

- Percentage of staff time to be dedicated to the proposed project;

- Any relevant degrees, licenses, certifications, or other professional credentials related to the project;

- Outline of language skills and/or cultural competencies; and

- Description of the position role in relation to the proposed project.

- If applying as a collaboration, please note the organizational affiliation of each staff member.

Performance Plan and History

The Performance Plan and Performance History outline how you will measure success for your proposed project as well as the history of outcomes achieved by similar projects that are being emulated or expanded through this proposal.

To measure the impact of the project on the target populations, include any of the following related to your project:

- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and metrics -** Provide an outline of metrics to be collected, targets for each metric, the data collection method for each metric and any qualitative evaluation methods.
- **Milestones -** Provide an outline of the milestone to be achieved, a target date to achieve each milestone and the impact achieving it will have on the organization.
- **Qualitative/Other Evaluation: -** Provide an outline of any qualitative or other evaluation methods the program will be using.

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Performance Plan and History

- This Grant Program recommends reporting on specific metrics and evaluation mechanisms. Details are outlined in the NOFO Section II: Application Tasks – H. Performance Plan and I. Performance History.

Organizations should expect mid-cycle and end-of-cycle financial and performance reporting, modeled on the submitted Performance Plan, as a grant requirement.

The Performance History section is optional. If opting out of this task, make sure your application still includes information about your organization's capability to carry out your proposed project.

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General Training Materials

OGM has provided additional trainings specific to each Task focused on more detailed explanations of the Task, optional templates, and past Review Committee feedback on what they felt was useful. The PowerPoint slides from these trainings are available on the MCG Grants Portal home page.

Training Topic	Link to PowerPoint slides
Applicant Information and Applicant Background Reusable Tasks	View Session 1 Slides
Project Strategy and Project Work Plan/Timeline Tasks	View Session 2 Slides
Project Budget, Project Budget Narrative/Justification, and Project Staffing Plan Tasks	View Session 3 Slides
Performance Plan and Performance History Task	View Session 4 Slides

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Ethics Questions

- **Does your organization employ current employees or contractors of the Montgomery County Government?** This applies for employees that are paid by your organization but are also paid by Montgomery County Government.

- **Does your organization's Board of Directors include current employees or contractors of the Montgomery County Government?** This applies to volunteer board of director positions.

- **If you answered yes to either question, please describe the employee(s) role and function as it applies to your organization.** Answering "yes" to either question does not exclude your organization from being eligible to apply.

- Montgomery College, Montgomery County Public Schools, and WorkSource Montgomery do not count as Montgomery County Government employees for the purpose of this Grant Program.

If you are unsure if a position applies please contact the Office of Grants Management.

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Other **REQUIRED** Preparations

- **Register and create a profile on the online application platform** for each team member who will be working on your application.

- **Verify that your organization is registered with the Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation (SDAT).** Click **here** to go to the SDAT Business Express site to confirm. Even if your organization is registered in another jurisdiction, you must be registered with SDAT for Montgomery County to finalize an award with your organization.

- **If your organization is not in Good Standing with SDAT, take the necessary steps to get back into Good Standing.** SDAT will advise what steps are required. Montgomery County cannot finalize an award with you or organization if you are not in Good Standing. Your application for a grant could be disqualified if you are not in Good Standing.

- **Register with the Montgomery County Central Vendor Registration System (CVRS)** by clicking **here**. If you or your organization receives an award from the County then you will need to be registered with CVRS to receive payments.

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Review Process

- The Office of Food Systems Resilience will recruit an independent Review Committee made up of qualified neutral individuals in Montgomery County Government, and possibly the broader Montgomery County community, selected for their experiences in the grant program's subject area, grants administration, and/or project management.

- The panel members will review and score applicant proposals based on the criteria and priorities established in the NOFO.

- Final decisions will be made based on the scores, reconciliation of funding across categories, and other factors such as the applicant's past performance on previous County awards.

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Scoring – 100 Possible Points

A.   Soundness of the Proposal (1-3 rating; weighted 20/100 points)
- The proposal, if funded, will result in the accomplishment of their stated goals;
- Applicant clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of their proposed activities/expenses in accomplishing their stated goals;
- The implementation plan within the proposal is realistic and achievable based on the proposed time requirements; and
- Applicant has contingency plans for altered operations in case of lower than requested funding amounts.

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Scoring – 100 Possible Points

B.   Program Goals, Objectives and Services (1-3 rating; weighted 20/100 pts)

- The proposal's goals are in line with the overall goals of the Grant Program;
- The proposed activities/expenses are clearly defined and linked to both the proposal specific goals and that of the overall Grant Program; and
- In line with the priorities for the Grants Program, the proposal:
  - Increases food production, education, and access in Mont. Co., with a focus on:
    - Increasing the supply of culturally appropriate foods and food production-related educational opportunity in the County; and
    - Supporting diverse populations in the County
  - Outlines an immediately actionable model, including secured operational approvals for food production, location access, and confirmed partnerships;
  - Demonstrates relevant subject-matter knowledge and leverages best practices for food gardening programs; and
  - Demonstrates existing relationships with Montgomery County's food security network and other food system partners.

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Scoring – 100 Possible Points

C.   Program Evaluation (1-3 rating; weighted at 20/100 points)

- Applicant demonstrates in their Performance Plan a clear process to measure/evaluate its program in alignment with the required and recommended metrics;

- The milestone estimates demonstrate a significant impact for numerous Montgomery County residents; and

- Other evaluation methods and outcomes described are relevant and realistic measures for the proposal's goals.

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Scoring – 100 Possible Points

D. **Organizational Capability and Relevant Experience (1-3 rating, weighted at 20/100 points)**

- Applicant demonstrates the use of a racial equity lens in both its overall operations and within this specific proposal;

- Applicant demonstrates the cultural, linguistic, and/or technical proficiency to work with their target community in the context of the proposed project; and

- Applicant demonstrates competencies, qualifications, and/or past experiences to serve or advocate for the target community in the context of the proposed project.

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Scoring – 100 Possible Points

E.   Sound Fiscal Management and Budget (1-3 rating; weighted at 20/100 points)

- Applicant demonstrates sound fiscal management;
- Applicant's budget with budget justification is reasonable and realistic to achieve stated goals within the proposal;
- Applicant will be able to submit a budget which reflects compliance with audit and other administrative requirements;
- Where applicable, if the applicant previously received a County award grant, it managed the funds transparently and responsibly for the award's intended purposes; and
- In line with the priorities for the Grant Program, the proposal:
  - Demonstrates how the project will be maintained beyond the performance period of this grant program; and
  - Demonstrates that the applicant is prepared to use allocated funds successfully within the performance period of this grant program.

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Award Notification

- Award notification letters are expected to be released roughly 3 weeks after the application deadline via email.

- For successful applicants, the award agreement will contain funding restrictions; programmatic, administrative, and policy requirements; reporting documents including total budget along with the amount of grant funding for the program; and payment terms.

- Documentation standards are very high as we are subject to audits and must follow official procedures. If you are unable to provide documentation of how the funds were used, your organization may be required to return the grant funds to the County.

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General Recommendations

- **Read the guidelines and instructions in the NOFO and follow them.**

- Develop, coordinate, and finalize your application offline and then upload all materials into the application.

- Uploads in PDF format are preferred (except the Program Budget, MS Excel please) but other formats are also welcome.

- **The application platform cannot read Mac formatted documents** (i.e., Pages, Numbers, and Key Note) so these should be submitted as PDFs or converted to MS Office formats.

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Review Committee Feedback: the Seven Cs

1. **Concise -** Be concise, when possible. Review Committee Members (RCM) have difficulty absorbing information from long narratives.

2. **Concrete –** Be specific and direct in **_how_** your proposed project will achieve its stated goals. RCMs often see gaps in how a project will work.

3. **Clarity –** RCMs prefer that you include the question you are answering or add sub-headings for clarity. Application task uploads should also include the title of the application task, organization name and project title as headers.

4. **Connection -** All elements of your application should show a clear connection with the grant priorities and scoring criteria, as outlined in the NOFO.

5. **Consistent -** All elements of your application should be consistent with each other. RCMs often note a lack of consistency between budget and narratives.

6. **Cite -** Feel free to refence other application sections/Tasks (i.e., budget) in your narratives. Specifically cite the application Task name so the RCM can go directly there. Hyperlinks to external sources (i.e., news article, research paper, your website, etc.) can be helpful too. Overall, no need to repeat information that is in other places in your application or external source.

7. **Complete** – Before clicking Submit, go back and make sure you finished all Tasks, filled out all fields, and **uploaded the right attachment in the right place.**

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Further Questions?

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OGM Website
https://montgomerycountymd.gov/ogm/
OGM online grants application platform
https://mcmdgrants.smapply.org