

Growing Together Iowa: 2020 Mini Grant Guidelines

Mini grants are available to Iowa State University Extension and Outreach county offices in partnership with Master Gardeners and other community members. The mini grants are aimed at increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables for Iowans experiencing food insecurity.

If you are considering applying for this grant or need more information before determining if your county is able to take a project on, please join the 2020 Growing Together Iowa Pre-Application Video Q & A on October 30, 2019 at 12 pm to ask questions about the application process and hear from past projects. You can join this call at the designated time via computer (<https://iastate.zoom.us/j/708011821>) or via phone (dial 646-876-9923 then enter meeting ID 708 011 821).

Due Date: By 5:00 PM, January 10, 2020 via the online application form

Application Form: <https://iastate.box.com/s/h03mqd30oce2cw2qc7grfh443vlihaj6>

Timeline: The timeline for grant funding is February 17 through September 30, 2020. Final reports will be due by October 14, 2020.

Amount: Grants up to \$4,000 are available for applicants who have received Growing Together funding 0 to 1 times previously. Grants up to \$2,000 are available for applicants who have received Growing Together funding for two or more years.

Applicant: ISU Extension and Outreach county office in partnership with Master Gardeners and any other participating community partners. Multiple counties may partner together for one application. Applications are limited to one per county.

Activities

The purpose of this funding is to enable Master Gardeners along with other community groups in Iowa to engage in projects which increase the availability of fresh produce to families with low-income. Each proposal can list multiple projects utilizing the recommended activities and evaluation described below.

Applicants should review the ISU Extension and Outreach online Community Donation Gardening Toolkit for best practices and resources for strengthening your project plans and application: <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/localfoods/community-donation-gardening-toolkit/>

- **Donate Strategy:** Maintain a donation garden with the primary purpose of providing culturally appropriate produce to a food pantry, food bank or free meal service. Track project activities by sharing success stories, recording pounds of produce donated and listing recipient sites.*
- **Connect Strategy:** Serve as a conduit to connect growers and service agencies (food banks, pantries and meal programs). This can take the form of events to formulate mutually beneficial activities that physically connect gardeners, farmers, and service agencies through facilitated produce gleaning efforts (for example, coordinate the collection and donation of produce at a farmers market). Track the project's activities and impacts by describing connections formed, describing the results of those connections and tracking pounds of produce donated.*

**For both of the above strategies grant recipients are expected to promote and agree to follow safe food growing and handling best practices as well as share nutrition education materials provided by ISU Extension and Outreach to partner food donation sites.*

Program Beneficiaries

All funded projects must demonstrate that the end beneficiaries of all activities will be families with low-income. This is a requirement of the federal funding which supports these mini grants.

The project description provided in the application must communicate how the activities will benefit families with low-income. For this project, families with low-income will be defined as families who make use of emergency food services such as food pantries, food banks or free meal services.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants must include one of each of the following:

- ISU Extension and Outreach county office staff
- Master Gardener volunteer(s)
- At least one representative from a recipient agency (for example, staff representing local food bank, food pantry, or free meal service).

Diverse coalitions to support the applicants in planning and maintaining their projects are encouraged. Supporting coalition members may include:

- Local food system partner
- Regional ISU Extension and Outreach specialist
- Volunteer organizations
- *(list continued on next page...)*

- Food pantry or free meal program participant
- Local farmer or gardener
- Area Agency on Aging or congregate meal sites: <https://www.iowaaging.gov>
- Youth program (4-H, summer youth programming, school garden group)
- Organization that serves immigrants and refugees
- Other individuals or agencies working to support healthy food access such as local hospital

Additional Project Volunteer Support

We understand that not all counties have many active Master Gardeners or a Master Gardener population that can provide substantial volunteer physical labor. A successful Growing Together Iowa project is still possible by engaging other volunteers in your community. ISU Extension and Outreach county staff, Master Gardeners and additional community volunteers can work together to design a project that meets community needs and fits within the group's capacity.

Engaging other community volunteers is an important step for such projects. Examples include:

- 4H youth
- FFA groups
- Scouts
- Community volunteer organizations

The county ISU Extension and Outreach staff will be the fiscal agent for the mini grant. Only one application per county may be submitted for funding; the one application can be utilized to fund multiple projects.

Applications from Iowa counties with high poverty rates will be prioritized in the application scoring process. Previously funded projects that would still benefit from additional grant funds are encouraged to apply.

Example Volunteer Collaborations

-Counties with lower volunteer numbers have built gardens at local sites that have a built-in volunteer base (such as primarily free and reduced lunch population schools, low-income housing). These should be sites that primarily serve a low-income audience. Master Gardeners provide initial support for setting up the garden while other partners provide a majority of ongoing maintenance and harvest.

-Counties have also partnered with existing food security organizations to help them expand their current fresh produce donation efforts. Examples have included leveraging Growing Together funds to expand current donation gardens at food pantries/banks, YWCA, another existing community donation garden, etc. Again, Master Gardener volunteer/s may provide strategic volunteer support, but are not the ones doing the day-to-day maintenance work for the garden.

Fiscal Processes

These mini grants will provide reimbursement for approved activities and materials. Local county ISU Extension and Outreach offices will need to provide up-front funding. At the end of the grant period, staff will submit an invoice and itemized receipts to campus for reimbursement. It is critical that local county ISU Extension and Outreach offices are aware of proposals and agree to support them before the application is submitted.

Expenses

Here is a table with examples of the types of expenses that are allowable and unallowable for mini grant funds. This is not an inclusive list. If you have a question about whether an expense is allowable, email Christine Hradek at hradek@iastate.edu.

Allowable Expenses

- **Seeds, plants & seedlings** (fruits, vegetables, and herbs)
- **Small gardening tools & supplies** (no single item to exceed \$500)
- **Potting soil**
- **Fertilizer**
- **Garden fencing* & trellising**
- **Produce scale**
- **Harvest supplies*** (e.g. colander, harvest bins, gloves, clippers)
- **Food safety supplies*** (other supplies needed to carry out safe food growing, handling, and distribution best practices for your project such as hand washing sink, etc.)
- **Mileage reimbursement** (\$0.58/mile) for produce donation transport
- **Printing of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach materials for target audience** (families with low-income)
- **Space and materials for an educational event for the target audience** (families with low-income) **that is delivered by an ISU Extension and Outreach staff member.**

*Food safety best practice equipment

Unallowable Expenses

- Rental or purchase of land
- Rental or purchase of equipment such as tractors
- Staff salary or benefits
- Mileage reimbursement for volunteers to and from their home to the garden
- Financial incentives to partners or participants
- Lobbying
- Child care or transportation services
- Promotion of messages inconsistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*
- Nutrition education materials not created/endorsed by ISU and/or not described in approved application.
- Nutrition education delivered by someone who is not a nutrition professional.
- Expenses not clearly described in approved application
- Any single item costing more than \$500

Reporting

Each funded county office will be asked to report on their success by sharing stories and information about the impact of their grant activities at the end of the project. Reports will be submitted electronically and will be due by October 14, 2020.

Reports may include photos and videos from the project, total poundage of food donated, number of people served (pantry/meal site service numbers), project partners, stories of increasing awareness about food insecurity in the community, etc. Funded projects will be given an anticipated copy of the final report at the beginning of the grant period so that they know what to expect and can collect information during the grant period. In addition, funded projects may be asked to participate in a video call with other mini grant recipients, a project site visit with Growing Together Iowa staff or brief research surveys. As projects evolve, additional evaluation steps may be included.

Grant Application

The mini grant application includes the following required fields entered in the online form. Please direct mini grant questions to szy@iastate.edu

- **Applicant Contact Information**

- Name of County/Counties Involved
- ISU Extension & Outreach Primary Contact Person: First and last name
- ISU Extension & Outreach Primary Contact Person: E-mail address
- Primary Master Gardener: First and last name
- Primary Master Gardener: E-mail address
- Food Recipient Agency Staff: First and last name
- Food Recipient Agency Staff: E-mail address
- I agree to submit a project report by October 14, 2020

- **Mini Grant Description**

1. Describe how this project will increase access to fresh produce for lowans with low income. (Maximum 800 characters)
2. What are the goals of this project? (Maximum of five goals; Maximum of 800 characters)
3. What activities will be utilized for the Donate strategy? (Maximum 1000 characters)
4. What activities will be utilized for the Connect strategy? (Maximum 1000 characters)
5. What evaluation will be utilized for the Donate strategy? Please include how pounds donated will be tracked. (Maximum 500 characters)
6. What evaluation will be utilized for the Connect strategy? (Maximum 500 characters)
7. Food safety best practices must be followed in all funded projects. Please describe how food safety best practices will be promoted and maintained. store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/15257 (Maximum 500 characters)

I agree to post a yard sign showing food safety best practices (provided by Iowa State University) at all mini grant funded gardens. Agree/Disagree

8. Please list your coalition members who support this project.

9. Describe the project coalition members' history (if this is an existing coalition) and roles. Diverse coalitions to support the project are encouraged and will be favored in application scoring. (Maximum 1000 characters)

Our project team included our proposed donation site(s) in our project planning and received feedback on types of produce to grow, capacity for refrigeration, etc. Agree/Disagree

Our project team agrees to share a package of nutrition education materials to each partner pantry or distribution site. These nutrition education materials will be provided by campus at the start of the growing season if you are awarded a mini grant. Agree/Disagree

10. Has your county received Growing Together mini grant funding in the past two years? (recurring grants are still encouraged to apply) Yes/No

11. How much money are you requesting for the project? Grants up to \$4,000 are available for applicants who have received Growing Together funding 0 to 1 times previously and up to \$2,000 for applicants who have received Growing Together funding for two or more years. Budget carefully, it is expected that all funds awarded will be spent.

12. Please provide a budget narrative. Make sure all costs are necessary and allowable (see page 3 of this application). Describe very briefly how equipment or non-consumable supplies will contribute to project longevity. The budget must include any needed safe food growing and donating supplies that will allow you to carry out best practices. You can review best practices here: store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/15257

13. List any additional sources of funding for the project (if applicable).