

Questions submitted to USDA/NIFA's Policy e-mail account regarding the People's Garden Grant Program, post teleconference call on 8/4/2011.

NOTE: For additional information regarding the People's Garden Initiative, visit <http://www.usda.gov/peoplesgarden>.

1. **QUESTION:** The grant RFA mentions that funds can't be used for extension facilities. Does that include extension demonstration gardens? (County Extension)

ANSWER: Refurbishment of existing gardens is allowable. Education is a requirement of the program. "Facilities" refers to buildings and fixed equipment within buildings.

2. **QUESTION:** As a national organization we have 16 chapters that have their own 501c3 designation and are largely run by community volunteers. Could we offer up the micro subgrants to our chapters only to install a garden, or does it have to be open to anyone? Is it okay to have a garden with only one kind of nut-producing tree in it? Or would we need a variety of species? Is it okay us to use weed management sprays in the garden? Or would this disqualify a project from being sustainable? (Non-profit Organization)

ANSWER: The sub-award program does not have to be competitive, so awarding micro-grants to your chapters would be allowed. There is no pre-ordained complement of species that is required, so only having chestnuts would be allowable. Herbicides cannot be used in organic production systems, but other production systems can also be sustainable as long as label directions are followed and a holistic approach to weed management is employed.

3. **QUESTION:** Are we allowed to purchase a hoop house kit with the funds? We would charge a nominal fee to interested community members who do not have People's Gardens to offset greenhouse production costs.

ANSWER: Hoop houses are allowable as long as they are not permanent structures – does not have a permanent foundation, plumbing, or electrical connections, and can be moved around, then yes, the purchase would be allowable if the item is under \$5,000 in cost. Any fees charged and earned on this project and any materials sold under this grant would be considered "Program Income" and you would be required to put that income back into the grant to further project objectives. The fees earned would have to be accounted for and reported on your annual financial report.

4. **QUESTION:** Can two grant PGG winners work together and cost share to get more money freed up to make mini-awards?

ANSWER: Collaborations such as this are encouraged, but there is no guarantee that if one application were to be recommended for award that the second would.

5. **QUESTION:** Do we have full creative power to develop the mini-grant program however we feel would best suit our communities? For example, I would like to have the smaller awards have a 25% cash match and a 25% in kind match...is it okay to structure that however we like?

ANSWER: Yes, you have the creative power to develop the mini-grant program; however, if USDA does not have a required match on the funds that you receive, you can't impose a required match on any

sub-grant. Please review the National Policy, administrative and cost principles incorporated by reference on pages 17 and 18 of the Request for Applications.

6. QUESTION: Would we be allowed to purchase an Iphone with these funds for our program coordinator in order to allow her to better answer questions onsite, keep records, take photos, etc.? Would that go under indirect costs in the budget summary?

ANSWER: This item is not normally something we allow for purchase under a grant. In order for it to be allowable, you would have to justify how the use of the item would be directly related to the objectives of the program and they would have to show there is a bonafide need for one. We would also take into consideration the amount of time the coordinator would be on-site and whether there are other means to document records and take photos.

7. QUESTION: May we use funds to send the Program Coordinator to the American Community Gardening Conference to present each year as continuing education?

ANSWER: Yes.

8. QUESTION: May we fund mini-grant applicants who may want to do raising of animals on a garden property as an education tool?

ANSWER: Animal husbandry does not fit the definition of a People's Garden. As long as PGGP funds were not used for raising animals, it would be allowable that PGGP funds could be used for the garden portion.

9. QUESTION: We would like to establish a tool bank of the tools most often needed and most expensive (auger, tiller, weedeater, etc) to help our gardeners sustain their efforts and to reap the benefits of sharing. This would require a secure storage shed and funds contributed to maintenance of said tools. Would that count as a "structure"? (Non-profit Organization)

ANSWER: Yes, the tool shed would be considered a structure as we are assuming it would be mounted in some way to be secure against vandals and thieves. Perhaps your Home Depot would consider donating a shed, which could be used as part of the matching funds. Equipment maintenance is allowable during the period of performance of the award, which is 24 months. Fences would be allowable if there was justification for the need – wildlife or vandal issues would be justification.

10. QUESTION: I'm wondering if we are eligible for a PGGP grant if we are already receiving a USDA CFP grant. (University)

ANSWER: Yes.

11. QUESTION: Are fences and tool sheds be allowed in the mini-grants? Would mini-grants less than \$1,000 be allowed? If so, we would word our mini-grant RFP to say ... grants up to \$5,000. (County Extension)

ANSWER: Fences are allowable, sheds are not. The tool shed would be considered a structure as we are assuming it would be mounted in some way to be secure against wildlife and vandals. Mini-grants less than \$1000 would be allowable.

12. QUESTION: We need to provide a dollar per dollar match for our project. Or, are we able to specifically request funds from the Food and Nutritional Services portion (which does not require a 1:1 match) of the available funds?

ANSWER: Applicants are encouraged to document matching funds in as much as is possible. Requesting funds solely from a specific source might put an applicant at a disadvantage compared to other applicants.

13. QUESTION: The last bullet under the Matching Funds section (page 5) reads that if our IDC rate is higher than 10% and we agree to reduce it to 10% for this proposal, we can use the difference as a source of **non-matching** funds? I'm confused by the term **non-matching**. Does that mean we can use it as matching or not?

ANSWER: That line should read “non-federal matching funds”.

14. QUESTION: Let's say we include \$30,000 in match- some from our indirect costs or staff time not charged to the grant, some from volunteer time (e.g., MGs or 4-H leaders), some from other sources. While we will not know in advance, let's say that of the mini-grants that we award, \$20,000 goes to local projects that would qualify for Forest Service funds. Would those specific mini-grants need to show match? Or would our grant wide match cover that requirement? Makes a difference in how we write the mini-grant RFP.

ANSWER: Matching funds need to be secured at the time of award in order to be considered as matching and to meet the matching criteria. Therefore, the mini-grants would not need to show matching.

15. QUESTION: The application promotes the inclusion of trees and shrubs, nesting sites, and water sources in the design to form a fully competent habitat. In addition to the more obvious tree-related projects, would this (pollinator gardens) type of garden qualify for USFS funds?

ANSWER: Quoting from page 6 of the RFA, “To receive funds contributed by the USFS, applicants must propose educational activities related to planting, protecting, maintaining and utilizing wood from community trees and forests to maximize social, environmental, and economic benefits.” In addition, USFS funds must be matched dollar for dollar with non-federal funds.

16. QUESTION: On page 6 it states that proposals must "present a plan to support the establishment of community gardens through a re-grant program". Does this mean that all applications must include a re-grant plan? Does the re-grant need to be actual money or would a plan to distribute equipment of materials be sufficient?

ANSWER: Please note that on page 6 of the RFA guidance exists indicating that successful proposals will, “Present a budget narrative that shows the majority of project funds devoted to the support of local projects via a micro-subgrant program.” For this RFA, the term majority refers to 50% or more. The purpose of the People's Garden Grant Program (PGG) is to facilitate the creation of produce, recreation, and/or wildlife gardens in urban and rural areas, which will provide opportunities for science-based informal education. While the provision of “tool kits” may be an allowable expense, a responsive application will need to indicate how this activity leads to the outcomes associated with the PGGP. For example, how is the science-based informal education component being met? How are you ensuring

that the materials distributed are being used to create a garden? Please, visit the People's Garden Initiative website at <http://www.usda.gov/peoplesgarden>.

17. QUESTION: In addition to the dollar for dollar required match for US Forest Service funding, my research indicates that the purchase of hand tools and supplies are limited to 5% of the total budget. I am concerned that this will present a problem implementing projects; please advise.

ANSWER: This requirement refers to plant materials other than trees; therefore, it is designed to enable the greatest amount of funds to be directed towards the purchase of trees. It may be helpful to use a scenario with actual dollar amounts. Therefore, if a proposal intends to implement a project which meets the US Forest Service criteria and the total budget is \$100,000, the following guidelines would apply:

- \$50,000 US Forest Service funding and \$50,000 recipient match funding; and
- \$5,000 in expenses for hand tools and supplies would be allowable.

18. QUESTION: I reviewed the teleconference questions and found on page 5 the indirect costs are cited as 10% of total direct costs. However the guidelines indicate the following:

Applicants are required to contribute resources to the accomplishment of project objectives. Applicants with an officially negotiated indirect cost rate agreement are encouraged to cost share in order to maximize programmatic impact by limiting indirect cost to ten percent (10%) of total federal funds awarded. This is actually 12% of total direct costs. The current rate negotiated with the cognizant Federal negotiating agency should be used. Which rate should be used: 10% or 12% TDC? And to clarify – we can use the unrecovered F&A from our current rate negotiated for cost share?

ANSWER: To clarify, the 10% indirect cost rate relates to the federal funds awarded NOT to the total project cost. For some proposals, the total project cost will be higher than the total federal funds awarded. Also, the appropriate application of allowable indirect costs always applies to total direct cost. If you have a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement which is higher than 10%, yes the difference can be used as a source of non-federal matching funds.

19. QUESTION: I would like some further explanation of what is meant by recreational and wildlife gardens?

ANSWER: A recreational garden refer to tree, shrub, plants, and flowers that populate open spaces, parks, and greenbelts that benefit the general public. A wildlife garden refers to the planting of tree, shrub, plants, and flowers designed to attract certain species. For example, pollinators like bees, bats, and butterflies, can be encouraged to visit and habitat in urban areas due to planned wildlife gardens.

20. QUESTION I would also like further guidance on the USFS contribution and how it relates to the purpose and priorities. Is USFS basically expecting gardens that are tree nurseries?

ANSWER: USFS contributions relate to the purpose and priorities of The People's Garden Grant Program due to the importance of trees to the environment. Produce, recreational, and wildlife gardens benefit from having trees incorporated into their design.

Updated: 8/12/2011