

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.

21. QUESTION: I am the Authorized Representative of a private property. I have the Authority to use this land for the term of the grant. What does permanent designation mean? If I can use this property for the

length of the grant only, what legal consequences does it have past the grant period? Is liability insurance on the gardens allowed? How much can I use for fencing?

ANSWER: The intent of the program is to fund the creation of gardens that will be sustainable into the future. The permanent designation means that the garden will always be a People's Garden. Liability insurance would most likely be very costly and would detract from the number of gardens that could be created. A signed waiver might be more realistic. Fencing is allowed but the program intent is that most of the funds will be used for the creation of new People's Gardens.

22. QUESTION: Which budget items would I include in the "Non-Federal" budget column? The entire PGGP is federally-funded, correct? Should I leave that column blank on all the budget forms?

ANSWER: ANSWER: The non-federal budget column is to be used for the required matching contribution. The costs listed there would be project costs which are being paid by your organization as part of your cost-share amount. Please note that required matching costs must be those that would normally be allowable under the Federal budget. In other words, if the cost would not be an allowable item charged to the Federal side, it would not be permitted as a matching cost.

23. QUESTION: Where should the micro-subgrants be reflected on the budget form? Should they be included in the Research & Related Budget, Section F.5, "Subawards/Consortium/Contractual Costs?"

ANSWER: Yes. You should also include an explanation of how those funds will be used.

24. QUESTION: Do I need to submit an R&R Subaward Budget Attachment for each micro-subgrantee? If so, how detailed do the budgets need to be? It is my understanding from Mr. Belwick's conference call that we needn't necessarily know who will receive the micro-subgrants yet, so we wouldn't know what their exact budget needs are yet, either.

ANSWER: An R&R Sub-award budget attachment would not be necessary for the micro-subgrant. However, we do need to know how those funds are going to be used, so a detailed description of the costs should be included. Refer to the "Budgetary Details" document found at http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/awards/budg_det_grantee_09.pdf for the level of details needed for each budget category.

25. QUESTION: In the NIFA workshop on August 9th, there was an extensive introduction to evaluating USDA programs. However, in the RFA, there is no language suggesting that grant applicants include an evaluation component as part of their submission. Is there an expectation that responses include some degree of program evaluation in addition to regular reporting?

ANSWER: Education and outreach are major components of the PGGP. Applicants are required to present a plan to use the gardens as educational sites. Any good education program contains evaluation.

26. QUESTION: Are local governments eligible for the People's Garden Grant? Our county Environmental Protection Division has education in its mission.

ANSWER: Yes

27. QUESTION: One of our organization's most successful programs is the Build-a-Garden program, through which we build raised-bed gardens at the homes of interested community members with a demonstrated need for increased access to fresh, healthy food. Generally, these consist of one or two 8'

x 4' garden boxes. This year we are also piloting a program that matches experienced community gardeners with newer ones in a mentorship relationship. Often, we also partner with other local organizations, such as local housing developments, to build many beds in one location, for use by members of that organization. We would consider these gardens "micro-granted" to the individuals and organizations involved. I'm writing to ask whether this program would be considered appropriate for the People's Garden Program?

ANSWER: One of the criteria that must be met for a garden to be considered a People's Garden is that it be collaborative. Gardens managed by individuals are not collaborative.

28. QUESTION: I work for the Parks Department and we have land that is suitable in our community parks for gardens. We have a botanical garden that currently conducts educational programs in partnerships with schools and community patrons. We would intend to expand some of the programming to this location if awarded. Are we eligible to submit a grant for the development of multiple recreation gardens on our Park property.

ANSWER: Yes

29. QUESTION: Our local Cooperative Extension (and community partners) has a plan for the Peoples garden and wishes to apply but is not registered with grants.gov. Our Economic and Development Dept (not for profit) is registered but have no staff to perform administration duties for the grant. The Cooperative Extension will provide administration and oversight of the grant- can we use the Economic & Development registration for this? The Director of Economic & Development would do a final review of grant submission and any reports submitted if the grant is received. We all work together on many grants. Please advise...

ANSWER: What you propose would be acceptable. The Director of EDD would be the AR and someone from the Extension office would be the PD.

30. QUESTION: I am pulling the last bit of information together for the People's Garden Grant proposal and have received support letters from the schools and organizations that are willing to collaborate with us. Can these support letters be submitted with the grant?

ANSWER: Yes. Use the "other attachments" feature.

31. QUESTION: SF 424 (R&R) line 18. What is SFLLL?

ANSWER: The SF-LLL is the Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form. Disclosure of lobbying activities is required by 31 U.S.C. 1352. The filing of this form is required for each payment or agreement to make payment to any lobbying entity for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with a covered Federal action. This form and instructions for completion may be found at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/grants/sflll.pdf>

32. QUESTION: (R&R Other Project info) Are human subjects involved? While the gardens will involve humans, do we need to answer yes to the question about whether or not human subjects are used in the project? Do we cite an exemption?

ANSWER: No, human subjects are not involved.

33. QUESTION: Environmental impact? There will be environmental enhancement, but do we need to answer yes to whether the project will have environmental impact?

ANSWER: In the sense that this question is intended, there will be no environmental impact of this program.

34. QUESTION: Where in the budget (section F) do we insert the micro-subgrant amount? Is it under Subawards/Consortium/Contractual Costs?

ANSWER: List it under "other direct costs".

35. QUESTION: Is Conflict of Interest List required for this grant or is that just for research grants?

ANSWER: Prepare a conflict of interest list as carefully as possible.

36. QUESTION: As we have no official legal/tax status at this point, I am planning to apply as an individual on behalf of our collaborative. Is this an appropriate strategy?

ANSWER: It would seem to be.

37. QUESTION: we are volunteers and rely on donated resources, and so have no non-federal funds to reflect in our budget. At the same time, we have no overhead or indirect costs, have full support from the town, including access to Public Works facilities, tools, and services, and we collaborate with many different community institutions -- however, this support is difficult to quantify and varies from project to project. How/where do we represent this self-sufficiency in our application?

ANSWER: Matching funds do not have to be actual cash. The value of volunteer hours and other goods and services can be listed in the non-federal column on the budget sheet.

38. QUESTION: I intend to request a modest salary for myself as administrator of the grant: will this hurt our application, if we have no other sources of funding?

ANSWER: That is not part of the evaluation criteria that reviewers will use when reading the applications.

39. QUESTION: The optional sub-award budgets: Are these meant to be budgets for the mini-grants we intend to award? If so, can these be narratives, or do they need to be submitted in the same format as the overall budget? How detailed must they be? Should they be submitted by the sub-awardees, or the applicant?

ANSWER: the funds for the mini-grants should be listed under "other direct costs".

40. QUESTION: If we are planning to plant fruit trees at one of our garden sites but don't intend to use the wood from the trees, does this still qualify as a garden or do we need to meet the matching qualifications for the Forest Service funds for this portion of the grant?

ANSWER: Document as much matching as possible. We will determine which source of funding to use for applications recommended for award.

41. QUESTION: **From the "SF 424" document:**

line 6 (EIN/TIN): How do I complete this line if I am not currently employed?

line 12 (Start Date/End Date): The transcript of the teleconference states that the mandatory start date is Sept 1, 2011 -- is this the case? If so, is our end date Sept 1, 2013, regardless of when our funding begins?

ANSWER: Yes; The start date will be September 1, 2011 and the ending date will be August 31, 2013 for a two-year period of performance.

42. QUESTION: **"Project/Performance Site Locations":**

Do we list here all of the potential sites where we plan to create gardens, or just the primary site where we are based? (If the latter, would you expect this to be an office or a garden?)

ANSWER: the latter, which is usually an office.

43. QUESTION: **Other Project Information:**

line 4a (Environmental Impact): Are there particular guidelines for what constitutes an "actual or potential impact on the environment", or may we use our own discretion here?

ANSWER: There are no environmental impacts from these awards.

line 9 (Bibliography): do you prefer MLA or APA citations?

ANSWER: Either

lines 10 & 11 (Facilities and Equipment): Is this where we should mention that we have access to the town's equipment and services? How specific should we be? I can provide examples of previous assistance -- would a letter from them promising similar support in the future be useful here, or should that be included in line 12?

ANSWER: Yes. Give a reasonable description, but not overly lengthy. Support letters would be good.

line 12 (Other Attachments): I intend to attach here letters of support from our potential collaborators: do we need to include vitae/resumes for each letter, as the instructions suggest, or would official letterhead with contact information suffice?

ANSWER: Vitae are not needed here. Letters will suffice.

44. QUESTION: Budget periods: Is the expectation that we will have more than one budget period for this grant? If so, can we expect to receive the funds at the beginning of each period? And if not spent can they be rolled over into the next budget period? Do we include in the main budget all of the materials/services we anticipate needing for the sub-grants, or do we create a "subaward" budget for each?

ANSWER: the project period can be up to two years. If you request multiple year funding, you need a budget for each year. Funds are automatically carried over. The micro-grants can be lumped and listed under "other direct costs" at this point.

45. QUESTION: **Supplemental Information:** line 7 (Key Words): Is there a particular bank of key words to draw from here, or should we come up with our own?

ANSWER: Come up with your own.

46. QUESTION: I have just discovered that I need to register to complete an institutional profile. Should I continue to complete the application for the grant so I can meet the Friday deadline or what should I do to get what I need done and submitted on time for a successful application?

ANSWER: Complete the application. If you are recommended for an award, it would be restricted until we have the institutional profile.

Updated: 8/23/2011