



DCHHS

Dallas County Health and Human Services

*Healthy People Healthy Communities
Health and Social Equity*



DALLAS COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Chronic Disease Prevention Division
Obesity Prevention Program

COMMUNITY GARDEN MINI-GRANT GUIDELINE



Last Updated March 2026

COMMUNITY GARDEN MINI-GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINE

Background

Community gardens can be described as a single piece of land on private or public property, managed collectively by a group of people to harvest fresh produces such as fruits, vegetables and herbs.

Being overweight and obesity¹ increases a person's risk to heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, and other serious medical conditions. With about 35%² prevalence, obesity is a main public health issue impacting many Dallas County residents. Various research has shown that communities with limited access to healthy food options are more likely to experience higher rates of obesity and related health conditions. Many communities in Dallas County reside in areas with limited access to affordable, high-quality fresh produce, where fast food is easily accessible but healthier options are lacking. Community gardens can help improve access to nutritious food in areas often located in underserved communities. Although, there are several community gardens located throughout Dallas County, there still remains significant unmet need. Expanding community gardens not only provides fresh produce to underserved communities but also creates stronger communities, provides educational opportunities and promotes healthier lifestyle. Therefore, through its Obesity Prevention Program, Dallas County Health and Human Services (DCHHS) is making available limited funding (mini-grant) to support community gardens in select zip codes.

Target communities were identified based on prevalence of diabetes, obesity and hypertension, access to supermarkets, and median income. Accordingly, the following zip codes have been selected as priority areas. These zip codes are: 75210, 75212, 75216, 75217, 75203, 75211, 75227, 75233, 75223, 75224, 75042, 75220, 75180, 75215, 75172, 75237, 75228, 75253, 75041, 75061, 75231, 75247, 75051, 75240, 75141, 75241, 75232, 75060, 75246, 75236, 75208, 75050, 75116, 75149, 75243, 75159, 75040, 75150, 75235, 75062, 75146, 75115, 75134, 75226, 75315, 75339 and 75371. Other zip codes may be considered based on updated identified socioeconomic needs.

¹ BMI of 30 or above

² <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/Obesity/data/>

Grant Amount

Each year the overall grant amount will be determined based on funding availability and may vary annually. Funds will be distributed among a designated number of both established and new gardens. Currently, each established garden may apply for up to \$3,000 in support, while applicants seeking to start a new garden may be eligible for up to \$5,000. For the purpose of this mini-grant, an established garden is defined as a community garden with existing garden structures in place. A new garden refers to a proposed garden with an identified plot of land (which may be fenced) but no current garden infrastructure, such as raised beds, trellises, high tunnels, or shade structures. **Please note that mini-grant funding is a reimbursement based one-time opportunity. Funding requests (applications) with total budget exceeding the maximum eligible funding amount \$3,000 for established gardens and \$5,000 for new gardens) will be rejected and will not move forward for review.**

Eligible Expenses

Eligible Expenses:

Mini-grant funds may be used for a variety of garden-related expenses, including but not limited to:

- Garden raised beds and/or materials for constructing garden beds (e.g., wood, stone)
- Organic gardening supplies (e.g., organic soil, mulch, compost, fertilizers)
- Seeds, transplants, and seed starter kits
- Garden tools
- Bed covers and low-cost propagation supplies
- Pathway mulch and other pavement materials such as gravel
- Installation or repair of drip irrigation systems on garden beds, provided they connect to existing water mains
- Low priced greenhouses and storage (garden sheds)
- Reasonable maintenance needs or upgrades to support the garden's function
- Registration for Texas Master Gardener training

Ineligible Expenses:

Mini-grant funds may not be used for:

- Promotional items
- Beautification-only projects
- Major infrastructure (e.g., installation of water mains or electrical systems)
- Food and refreshments
- Uniforms

- Personnel costs, including transportation

Each mini-grant recipient is responsible for confirming with Program Staff whether a specific expense is eligible for funding if there is any uncertainty.

Who Can Apply?

Any organization or group of residents in Dallas County that meets the following criteria is eligible to apply for the mini grant:

- **Garden Ownership/Management:** The garden must be operated by an established group or organization (e.g., school, church, neighborhood association, nonprofit, or other community-based organization).
- **Demonstrated Financial Need:** There is a demonstrated need for funding.
- **Location and Community Impact:** The garden or proposed garden must be physically located within one of the designated target ZIP codes or identified food desert areas, or demonstrate that a substantial portion of its produce is distributed to residents within those designated communities
- **Compliance with Laws and Regulations:** The garden must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal ordinances, zoning requirements, and operational regulations. Documentation of site ownership or approval may be requested.
- **Sustainability Commitment:** The garden must commit to remaining operational and actively maintained for a minimum of three (3) years following receipt of grant funding.
- **Minimum Garden Infrastructure (New gardens only):** For newly established gardens, the proposed site must include at least two (2) raised beds or in-ground planting areas, with a combined minimum planting footprint of 16 square feet or greater at the time of installation.
- **Participation in Technical Assistance Program:** Grant recipients must agree to actively participate in the DCHHS/AgriLife Community Gardens Support and Volunteer Program. Participation includes engaging in technical assistance, training, volunteer coordination, reporting requirements, and other support activities designed to strengthen garden operations and long-term success.

**Applications which do not meet listed criteria may be administratively withdrawn without full evaluation.*

Program Requirements

To be eligible and remain in good standing throughout the grant cycle, participating community gardens must adhere to the following requirements:

- Completion of the Pre-Application Community Garden Training is required. At least one garden staff member must participate. *This requirement is considered met if a staff member (s) has completed appropriate training within the past two years.*
- The garden must dedicate 100% of its space to growing produce. A small area may be used for pollinator-friendly flowers.
- The garden site must meet minimum suitability standards, including adequate growing space, 6–8 hours of direct sunlight daily, and access to a water source or documented ability to extend an existing water line to the site.
- The total weight of produce harvested must be reported annually before the end of the grant cycle.
- At least 5% of all produce grown must be donated to a local food bank or pantry.
- Smoking is strictly prohibited on garden grounds.
- The garden must remain free of illegal substances or prohibited plants.
- Only environmentally friendly products may be used in the garden.
- A detailed expenditure report, along with photographs of the garden and a signed photo release form, must be submitted with the invoice for reimbursement. A clear color photograph showing the entire planting or proposed garden area must be included with the application. *Handwrittensketches will not be accepted.*
- Approved gardens must designate a minimum of two Garden Stewards to oversee garden operations. Both Stewards are required to complete an approved gardening training, such as *Edible Gardening for All* or an equivalent program if they have not already done so. Documentation verifying training completion may be requested by Program Staff.
- Gardens without a trained gardening professional on staff must agree to accept technical assistance from an assigned Texas Master Gardener as a program requirement.
- Grant funds will be disbursed only on reimbursement basis on invoices using the DCHHS-provided invoicing form, along with all required supporting documentation including receipts.

Application Submission and Evaluation

All applications must be submitted through the designated online form by the stated deadline for each grant cycle. Late or incomplete applications will not be reviewed or considered for funding. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all required information and supporting documentation are complete and submitted on time.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to begin the application process early to allow adequate time to resolve any technical issues or address questions. Deadlines and detailed instructions for each grant cycle will be announced by the Chronic Disease Prevention Division, posted on the DCHHS website, and shared through official program communications.

Once received, applications will be reviewed and scored based on the following five criteria, for a total of 100 possible points:

- **Mission and Purpose of the Garden (20 points):** Clarity and alignment of the garden's goals with grant objectives and community needs.
- **Gardeners and Volunteer Resources (20 points):** The number of current or planned gardeners and availability of volunteer support.
- **Community Involvement (20 points):** Engagement with the surrounding community and collaboration with local partners.
- **Budget and Use of Funds (20 points):** Appropriateness and feasibility of the proposed budget and planned expenses.
- **Sustainability (20 points):** Operational stability, and plans for continued maintenance and growth.

*Priority will be given to first-time applicants in order to promote wider reach, expand access to funding opportunities, and encourage participation from organizations that have not previously received support through this program. **Applications requesting funding in excess of the maximum allowable amount will be administratively withdrawn and will not proceed to review.**

Pre-Application Community Garden Training

The Pre-Application Community Garden Training, offered in partnership with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, equips participants with essential knowledge and practical guidance for establishing, managing, and sustaining a successful community garden. This training is provided at no cost to mini-grant applicants and is a required component of the grant program for organizations that do not have previously trained staff.

Training dates for each grant cycle will be scheduled and announced by Program Staff.

Applicants may register in advance using the link below:

<https://forms.office.com/g/UywGhUeYeW>

Applicants who have completed an applicable gardening training within the past two years may use it to fulfill this requirement. To be considered complete, documentation verifying successful completion of the training must be submitted with the application.

How to submit your application

Applications for the Community Garden Mini-Grant must be submitted online through the official application form available on the DCHHS Chronic Disease Prevention Division webpage at the link below:

<https://forms.office.com/g/iCwJ8Asvkv>

Please note: The online application does not offer a “Save and Continue Later” option. Applicants must complete and submit the application in a single session. It is strongly recommended that all required information and supporting documentation be gathered and prepared in advance before starting the application. The application process may take approximately 30 minutes to one hour to complete.

If you have any questions, contact DCHHS Chronic Disease Prevention Division Urban Agriculture program at DCHHS.Urbanag@dallascounty.org or (214) 819-5115.

The deadline for submitting the DCHHS Community Garden Mini-Grant application is outlined in the application materials for each grant cycle. Applicants will receive confirmation once their submission has been successfully received. Application review will begin shortly after the submission deadline.

As part of the review process, Program Staff may request a site visit to the existing or proposed garden location. Upon completion of the review, all applicants will be notified of the funding decision. Selected applicants will be required to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Dallas County. Please note that final approval of all grant awards is contingent upon authorization by the Dallas County Commissioners Court. Grant recipients may only request reimbursement for eligible expenses incurred on or after the effective date of the MOU, following Commissioners Court approval and execution of the agreement by all parties.

Steps in the Application and Approval Process:

Steps	Action	Party	Remark
STEP -1	Applicants submit applications through on-line form	Applicant garden	Applicants may contact CDPD for assistance;
STEP -2	Application Review	CDPD staff	CDPD may request additional information and/or a site visit
STEP -3	Selection by DCHHS	CDPD staff and DCHHS management	Approval by DCHHS management
STEP -4	MOU	DCHHS & Applicant Garden	Applicant garden has the opportunity to review final draft
STEP -5	Final decision and approval	Dallas County Commissioners Court	MOU Execution date is effective date of award
STEP -6	Reimbursement request/invoice	Recipient garden	Invoice form and back up documents
STEP -7	Impact assessment	Recipient garden & DCHHS	Impact assessment form, pictures, and media release