

Gardens for Learning

2017 Grant Application Guidelines



We are pleased to announce the fourth year of the Gardens for Learning grant program coordinated by the Vermont Community Garden Network. VCGN is dedicated to the growth and success of community and school gardening across Vermont. We have pursued this mission since 2001 through educational programs for adults and youth, and technical assistance, outreach, networking opportunities, and funding for garden groups all over the state. Through Gardens for Learning, VCGN will continue to expand its support for groups that empower youth to grow, prepare, and eat their own food.

What is the Gardens for Learning Grant Program?

Gardens for Learning is a grant and technical assistance program that provides a unique opportunity for participating communities to support summer gardening, nutrition, and cooking programs for children at risk of summertime hunger. By learning how to grow their own food in an engaging and supportive environment and using that food to make healthy snacks, the children are not only changing their own habits, but increasing their families' overall food security.

The grant program was created in 1994 by Food Works at Two Rivers and has been coordinated by the Vermont Community Garden Network since 2013. Grant recipients run programs at affordable housing sites, schools, community health centers, and summer camps. Some locations almost exclusively engage in gardening and cooking activities, while others are part of a larger program offering a host of other summertime activities.

Site Coordinators play an essential role in successful Gardens for Learning summer programs. Their responsibilities include overseeing garden maintenance throughout the growing season; designing weekly activity plans and acquiring necessary materials; facilitating hands-on gardening, nutrition and cooking activities; and documenting through reports and photographs. Most programs hire a Project Assistant and/or invite adult volunteers to assist in daily activities. The Site Coordinator Handbook, two networking retreats, and the Statewide Coordinator provide valuable ongoing support and resources to mentor both new and veteran Site Coordinators.

The Gardens for Learning grant program supports youth programs that meet the following educational standards:

- **Hands-on Gardening:** Youth understand how to plant, take proper care of, and harvest several varieties of fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Youth have daily visits to the garden and can identify the different plants growing. Youth recognize the garden as an ecosystem and value local agriculture.
- **Hands-on Nutrition:** Youth have a basic understanding of whole foods nutrition and can apply healthy eating guidelines. Youth can identify edible plant parts and understand their nutritional value. Youth have access to taste testing foods grown in the garden.
- **Hands-on Cooking:** Youth participate in the preparation, cooking, and preserving of healthy snacks and meals for themselves and their community. Youth acquire practical skills in simple cooking techniques and are able to follow a recipe. Locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables are highlighted.

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To achieve these educational standards, Gardens for Learning grant recipients should include in their summer programs:

- Regular work in a garden, farm or greenhouse that includes planting, caring for and harvesting fresh produce and herbs
- Preparation of daily snacks or meals using whole foods, garden harvest, and local ingredients when possible
- Participation in activities/lessons that foster an understanding of healthy eating guidelines

Eligibility

- Sites must be located in Vermont
- Preference will be given to sites serving low-income communities (i.e., affordable housing and federally-funded free summer meal sites)
- Gardens for Learning sites that participated in the program in previous may re-apply. Please consider the tiered-funding model when applying. *See below for details.*

Grant Requirements

- Summer programs must serve a **minimum of 8 youth** during each activity day. *The age range is flexible and has historically included preschool to middle-school aged participants.*
- Summer programs must be in session for a **minimum of 4 consecutive weeks**. *Start and end dates are flexible.*
- Summer programs must meet for a **minimum of 6 hours a week**. *Scheduled week days and start/end times are flexible.*
- Summer programs must strive to incorporate and meet the Gardens for Learning **educational standards** in hands-on gardening, nutrition, and cooking. *See grant program description for more details.*
- At least 1 staff member (the Site Coordinator and/or Project Assistant) from each site receiving funding is required to **attend the Spring and Fall Retreats**. Each site will receive a \$40 travel stipend for attendance to each retreat. *Please see the Grant Award Timeline to consult the exact date and location of each retreat.*
- Grant recipient sites must **fully document their program** using Weekly Program Report forms.
- Grant recipient sites must provide a complete **Final Report** and submit it by the deadline. The report includes the expense summary, parent surveys, photographs, a sample activity plan and recipe, and a Site Coordinator final reflection.

Strategies for Success

Some program sites have been part of the Gardens for Learning program for many years. Based on our assessment of their experiences, we have seen that sites with these characteristics have high success rates with youth participation, community engagement, garden maintenance, and longer-term sustainability:

- Target youth participants to a specific age range: 3-6 year olds *or* 7-10 year olds *or* 11-14 year olds.
- Involve at least two adults to run the summer program. The Site Coordinator is the main contact person responsible for overall program planning, delivery, and grant reporting. A program assistant, part-time staff person, parent volunteer, or Master Gardener volunteer can provide additional valuable support.
- Sites where some sort of summer programming already exists tend to have an easier time scheduling activities, recruiting youth, and making use of existing logistics and infrastructure for running a summer program.
- Early-season garden planning is important for summer programs to be able to use the garden as an outdoor classroom. The Gardens for Learning Statewide Coordinator provides technical assistance for starting new gardens and/or improving garden maintenance, but sites benefit from having a committed staff or volunteer in charge of overseeing the garden throughout the season.

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Grant Award Package

The Gardens for Learning grant program provides funding for gardening and cooking supplies, food and equipment, as well as coordinator stipends. The grant award package given to selected sites is based on a tiered-funding model:

Tier A – First and second year sites (new applicants and 2016 grant recipients)

- A grant award of \$1,200 to be used for salary stipends and/or program materials.
- Participation in and a travel stipend to attend the Spring (April) and Fall (September) Retreats intended for Site Coordinators.
- Two visits from the Gardens for Learning Statewide Coordinator to provide technical assistance and program assessment. The first visit is scheduled in May to provide technical assistance for program and garden planning. The second visit is scheduled in July or August, when summer programs are in session.
- A Site Coordinator Handbook full of resources for hands-on gardening, nutrition and cooking activities, as well as recipes, activity plans, and valuable tips for program planning.
- A \$200 gift card from Gardener's Supply.
- A Gardens for Learning Supply Box valued at \$100 with child-friendly gardening and cooking equipment.

Tier B – Third and fourth year sites (2014 and 2015 grant recipients)

- A grant award of \$1,000 to be used for salary stipends and/or program materials.
- Participation in and a travel stipend to attend the Spring (April) and Fall (September) Retreats intended for Site Coordinators.
- One visit from the Gardens for Learning Statewide Coordinator to provide personal support and program assessment. The site visit is scheduled in July or August, when summer programs are in session.
- A Site Coordinator Handbook update with new resources, as made available.
- A \$200 gift card from Gardener's Supply.
- A Gardens for Learning Supply Box valued at \$100 with child-friendly gardening and cooking equipment.

Tier C – Sites participating for five or more years (to be implemented in 2018)

- A grant award of \$800 to be used for salary stipends and/or program materials.
- Participation in and a travel stipend to attend the Spring (April) and Fall (September) Retreats intended for Site Coordinators.
- One visit from the Gardens for Learning Statewide Coordinator to provide personal support and program assessment. The site visit is scheduled in July or August, when summer programs are in session.
- A Site Coordinator Handbook update with new resources, as made available.
- A \$200 gift card from Gardener's Supply.

Grant Program Timeline

February 17	Grant application deadline
March 1	Grant award recipients announced
April 8	Spring Retreat – Saturday from 10:00am to 4:00pm in Barre (<i>tentative location</i>) First grant payment to cover 80% of program materials and 50% of staffing costs
May	Site visit #1 scheduled by the Statewide Coordinator
May – June	Site Coordinators begin garden planting and ongoing maintenance Youth recruitment, weekly activity plans, material purchasing, and general program planning is continued by Site Coordinators with ongoing support from the Statewide Coordinator
July – August	Summer programs in session Site visit #2 scheduled by the Statewide Coordinator
September 1	Final Report deadline
September 16	Second grant payment to cover remaining balance Fall Retreat – Saturday from 10:00am to 2:00pm in Barre (<i>tentative location</i>)

Application

- **Online Application Form**

The 2017 Gardens for Learning Application is an online form - www.surveymonkey.com/r/GFL2017

- **Budget Proposal**

The Budget Proposal template can be downloaded from VCGN's website (scroll down to the "Applications" section) - www.vcgn.org/gardens-for-learning

****Complete applications are due by midnight on Friday, February 17****

For questions or comments, please contact Carolina Lukac, Garden Education Manager and Gardens for Learning Statewide Coordinator for the Vermont Community Garden Network, by email carolina@vcgn.org or phone (802) 861-4769.

"My son never ate green beans, but when he brings a bag home that he picked from the gardens, he can't wait for us to both sit down together to eat them."

– Mother of a youth participant from Green Acres Apartments, 2016

"I think every child should be allowed the opportunity to learn about where their food comes from. But beyond that, I think providing these skills and education to children who are suffering from food insecurity is especially powerful and gives them an incredible sense of autonomy."

– Alanna Ojibway, Site Coordinator at the Upper Valley Haven, 2016

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