



## Urban Green & Community Garden Grant Program 2024 Guidelines and Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

### INTRODUCTION

The Urban Green and Community Garden Grant Program is a subset of funding through DEEP’s Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program. It is for community park and green space improvement projects. These improvements could include native plantings, rain gardens, bioswales, community gardens or walking pathways, etc. Funding is available to Municipalities and non-profits with projects in Distressed Municipalities, Targeted Investment Communities and Environmental Justice Communities.

### PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

**Applicants must be either a:**

- (1) Municipality; or
- (2) Non-profit Organization properly registered with the Secretary of the State.

**Project Site must be located within a/an:**

- (1) Distressed Municipality;
- (2) Targeted Investment Community; or
- (3) Environmental Justice Community.

**Q: How do I know if a municipality is a “Distressed Municipality” or “Targeted Investment Community”?**

**A: 2023 Distressed & Formerly Distressed Municipalities with Eligibility Remaining:**

Ansonia	Groton	New Haven	Sterling
Bridgeport	Hartford	New London	Torrington
Bristol	Killingly	North Stonington	Voluntown
Chaplin	Lisbon	Norwich	Waterbury
Derby	Mansfield	Plainfield	West Haven
East Hartford	Meriden	Plymouth	Winchester
East Haven	Montville	Preston	Windham
Enfield	Naugatuck	Putnam	
Griswold	New Britain	Sprague	

Targeted Investment Communities:

Bridgeport	Middletown	Stamford
Bristol	New Britain	Thomaston
East Hartford	New Haven	Waterbury
Groton	New London	West Haven
Hamden	Norwalk	Windham
Hartford	Norwich	
Meriden	Southington	

**Q: How do I know if the property where I am interested in completing a project is located within an Environmental Justice Community?**

**A:** An Environmental Justice Community is defined by the Connecticut General Statutes as:

- A distressed municipality (see above); OR
- Defined census block groups where 30% of the population is living below 200% of the federal poverty level.

You can [review this map](#) for the 2023 Environmental Justice Census Block Groups. This map also includes the 2023 list of distressed municipalities referenced above. More information on this map and CT Environmental Justice Communities can be found by clicking [this link](#).

**Q: I am a registered Non-profit Organization. Can I apply for a UGCG grant?**

**A:** Pursuant to Public Act No. 24-69, as of May 30, 2024, DEEP may enter into UGCG grant contracts with non-profits properly registered with the Secretary of the State, for projects which are proposed at a property located within an Environmental Justice Community, Targeted Investment Community, and/or Distressed Municipality.

For projects proposed at eligible properties which are owned by a non-profit organization, DEEP enters into a UGCG grant contract with the non-profit.

Municipalities often coordinate with non-profit entities on the management of projects proposed on municipally-owned lands. For projects proposed at property owned by a municipality, DEEP can enter into a grant contract with the municipality, the non-profit or both entities depending on who will be expending resources for the project. Non-profits may co-sponsor projects on municipal land by entering into a project management agreement with the Municipality where the project is to take place. This agreement must be in place for DEEP to reimburse the non-profit for work on municipal land. To expedite the grant award process and make payment reimbursements timely,

it is important that the non-profit and municipality have good communication and an effective working relationship. If both entities would like to be reimbursed for the grant, then the budget information must clearly show the requested amounts and match requirements from both parties.

### **COMPATIBLE EXPENSES, REQUIRED MATCH & SAMPLE BUDGET TABLE**

**Q: What percentage of costs do grant funds cover?**

**A:** This a reimbursement matching program and UGCG grant funds can cover up to 50% of the total project cost. For example, if the total cost of a project is \$50,000, then the State will fund \$25,000 and the applying Municipality or Non-profit Organization must demonstrate match for \$25,000. Match should be in the form of both expenses and other funding sources.

**Q: What expenses are eligible for grant funding?**

**A:** UGCG can fund entire projects if all expenses are compatible or compatible portions of larger projects. Examples of projects or project portions that typically get funded through UGCG are green infrastructure including rain gardens and bioswales, native plantings or gardens, community gardens and walking pathways. Eligible expenses generally cover materials, professional services, minor structures such as tool sheds, tools, and rental equipment.

- **Materials:**  
Such as lumber, soil, mulch, fencing, crushed stone dust, signage and hand tools. Funds can be used to purchase native perennial flowers, shrubs, and shade trees. Grant funds cannot be used to purchase plants that are on the [University of Connecticut's invasive plant species list](#).
- **Professional Services:**  
Funding may be used to hire professional architects and engineers. Please note that any contract for construction, reconstruction, alteration, remodeling, repair or demolition of any public building or any other public work by a public agency (municipality) funded in whole or in part by UGCG funds which contract is estimated to cost more than \$1 million must be awarded to a [DAS-prequalified bidder](#).
- **Structures:**  
The UGCG grant program aims to promote urban gardens and passive recreational green spaces. Grant funding may be used to purchase minor outdoor structures. Acceptable structures may include small garden sheds, picnic tables, and benches. Funds cannot be used to purchase enclosed structures such as offices, indoor classrooms, wash/pack facilities, or indoor recreation facilities. Funds cannot be

used to purchase park amenities such as playscapes, splash pads, barbeques, agility courses, or sports equipment.

- **Non-powered Hand Tools:**  
Grant funding may be used to purchase hand tools only such as shovels, hoes, rakes, and irrigation materials. Funding cannot be used to purchase power tools or motorized equipment such as rototillers or motorized yard carts and wagons.
- **Construction / Maintenance Equipment Rental:**  
Grant funds may be used to rent equipment for the construction or maintenance of a project.

**Q: What expenses are compatible as match:**

**A:** DEEP is flexible with expenses that can be used for match. For example, if the applicant has a larger overall project involving infrastructure or ineligible expenses that UGCG cannot fund, DEEP may accept those expenses as match for portions of the budget that UGCG can help fund. In this scenario, if a Municipality proposes installing a basketball court and splash pad at one portion of the project site, and wishes to apply UGCG funding to plant native trees and shrubs or install a stormwater quality rain garden at another part of the site, the expenses and labor related to the basketball court and splash pad might be accounted as match if the overall project goal is for public outdoor access and green space enhancement. Additionally, DEEP will consider donated materials, donated professional services and volunteer labor as eligible sources of match for the program (As of April 2024, the hourly rate according to Independent Sector is \$33.49 per hour).

**Q: What funding sources are compatible as match:**

***IMPORTANT:*** DEEP grant program staff need to ensure that the requirements of any and all other private, State, or federal funding programs are compatible as match to UGCG. Please disclose all potential funding sources with DEEP when submitting a UGCG application. DEEP understands that applicants might not know all funding sources that will be used when an application is submitted, but as soon as new funding sources materialize they need to be disclosed to DEEP to ensure compatibility.

- **Municipal Sources:** Municipalities (as the grant applicant or host community) often contribute match funding for projects. Funds from municipal sources can count toward the match requirement.
- **State Sources:** Other State awarded funding can be used to assist with project costs, however, please be aware that UGCG cannot fund project components that are already

being covered or accounted for under any other State grant award and active State grant contract.

- **Federal Sources:** Funding from federal grant programs which are administered directly by a Federal agency or through the State may count towards the match requirement. For examples, the US Department of Agriculture; US Department of the Interior; US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and US Environmental Protection Agency.
- **Private Sources:** Other privately sourced funding derived from private foundations or organizations, corporations, businesses, or other programs not managed or funded by the State of Connecticut or Federal Government can be used to assist with project costs.

#### Example Budget Table with Required Match

Project Expenses	Cost	DEEP UGCG Grant Funds	Match Share	Match Source (ex. Municipality; Federal Funding; etc.)
Hand tools	\$500	\$400	\$100	Municipality
Compost	\$1,200	\$1,200		
Mulch	\$500	\$500		
Lumber and hardware for raised beds	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	Municipality
Perennial plants for pollinator garden	\$300	\$300		
Fencing	\$5,000	\$5,000		
Crushed stone for ADA accessible path	\$1,000		\$1,000	Municipality
Water irrigation service	\$1,000		\$1,000	Municipality
Irrigation equipment	\$700		\$700	Municipality
3 picnic tables	\$1,300	\$1,300		
4 benches	\$800		\$800	Municipality
Signage	\$500	\$300	\$200	Private Source
Stone path construction (by Department of Public Works)	\$2,000		\$2,000	Municipality
2 Volunteers (7 hours @ \$28.54/hr)	\$400		\$400	Private Source
Grounds Manager (100 hours @ \$30.00/hr)	\$3,000		\$3,000	Private Source
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$20,200</b>	<b>\$10,000.00</b>	<b>\$10,200</b>	

#### EXISTING PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

**Q: Where can I get a copy of the current deed for the parcel or lot which is the subject of my proposed project?**

**A:** Town or City Clerk's Offices have public computers you can use to search electronic databases for copies of property cards and property deeds. You can also visit your

municipal Assessor's Office in person and ask for the property tax field card(s). Look on the tax field card for the parcel or lot's most current deed book volume(s) and page number(s). Then, go to the Town or City Clerk's Office to retrieve a copy the deed(s). Some Municipalities also have land records information online at [Search IQS](#) or [Record Hub](#).

## **ACCESSIBILITY, COMMUNITY NEED & CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER PLANS**

**Q: Where do I find resources for making an environment accessible to people with disabilities?**

**A:** The United States Department of Agriculture [Accessibility Guidebook for Outdoor Recreation and Trails](#) includes the federal standards for creating comprehensive accessibility in outdoor environments. The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) does not include trail standards, but does include standards for outdoor recreation, including some associated with passive recreation. (Entities obligated under the ADA, for example, local governments and private non-profits, apply relevant federal standards to fulfill the ADA's mandate of equal opportunity when the ADA itself does not offer the applicable guidelines.) The Land Trust Alliance guide, "[Open to All](#)," goes beyond the standards to provide information on the principles of inclusion and the creation of community-based open space projects.

**Q: Where can I find materials which support my project purpose statement?**

**A:** Links to and information about relevant local and State plans is below:

- **The State C&D Plan - [The Connecticut Conservation and Development Policies Plan 2025-2030](#)**
- **Municipal Plans of Conservation and Development/Conservation and Recreation** are typically available online or at your Town or City Hall. Please note that these plans now need to be less than ten years old to be "current" – if a municipality submits a proposal and their C&D plan is not current, that project will not be evaluated.
- **Regional Councils of Government Plans of Conservation and Development** -To understand your region of interest check out the [COG map](#). Available regional plans are linked below.
  - [Capitol Region Council of Governments](#)
  - [Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments](#)
  - [Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments](#)
  - [Northwest Hills Council of Governments](#)
  - [South Central Regional Council of Governments](#)

- [Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments](#)
- [Western Connecticut Council of Governments](#)
- **Other Potentially Relevant Plans**
  - [Connecticut's 2016-2020 Comprehensive Open Space Acquisition Plan \(The Green Plan\)](#)
  - [Connecticut's Comprehensive Wildlife Strategy \(The Wildlife Action Plan\)](#)
  - [Connecticut's 2020 Forest Action Plan](#)
  - [GC3 Working and Natural Lands Recommendations in the Near-Term Actions Report, January 2021](#)
  - [Connecticut Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\)](#)

## **LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

**Q: Where can I get the required letters of support for my project?**

**A:** Applicants must demonstrate through letters of support from community organizations, municipal boards and departments, and regional governmental planning councils that they performed local public outreach and received meaningful community input on the proposed project need and design.

- For municipal letters of support, contact your local Departments, boards and/or commissions, such as Board of Education, Planning & Zoning, Building and Engineering, and Agricultural, Open Space and Conservation.
- For regional (RPO/COG) letters of support, contact your Regional Planning Organization. The agencies and contact names are available online [here](#).
- For local community support, engage the community early. Learn what they want/need and focus project outcomes on those needs/wants to ensure the project will be successful once funded. Host community meetings, reach out to local non-profit organizations, youth groups, etc.

### **PAST GRANT COMPLIANCE**

**Q: Where can I get information on the State Single Audit Requirements?**

**A:** [State Single Audit or Exemption Form](#) information can be found on the Office of Policy and Management's website.

### **OTHER QUESTIONS?**

Contact:

Jamie Sydoriak, Environmental Analyst

Email: [Jamie.Sydoriak@ct.gov](mailto:Jamie.Sydoriak@ct.gov)

CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

Land Acquisition & Management Unit