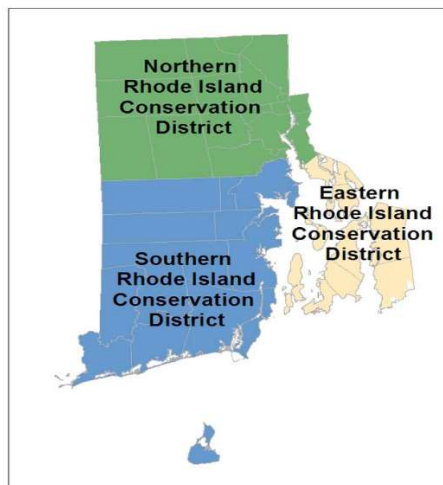


Conservation Districts vs. NRCS

1. Where do I send my proposal?

1. There are three Conservation Districts in the State of Rhode Island; Eastern, Southern, and Northern Districts. Each district has received a portion of the People's Garden Project funding from the U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA): Natural Resource and Conservation Services (NRCS) to allocate out the funding to eligible organizations and entities that are developing new projects within new or existing community gardens to support local food access. Please note that the Conservation Districts are not NRCS, but rather quasi-public organizations that assist NRCS, and other federal, state, local, and private organizations and entities in agriculture, water conservation, forest management, and environmental conservation practices on a local level.
2. When you are applying for the People's Garden Project, apply to your Conservation District where your project will be located. To see which district your project proposal is located in, refer to the map below.
3. Contacts:
 1. Eastern Conservation District:
Sara Churgin (Bristol and Newport County applicants):
schurgin.ericd@gmail.com
 - ii. Southern Conservation District:
Gina Fuller (Kent and Washington County applicants):
gfuller@sriscd.org
 - iii. Northern Conservation District:
Gennifer Keller (Providence County applicants):
gkeller.nricd@gmail.com
- d. RI Conservation District Map:



2. **Will there be future People's Garden Project funding available?**
 - a. The Conservation Districts and NRCS have a 5 year grant agreement for the People's Garden Project. We anticipate that some funding will be available every year from 2019-2024, but as with all federally funded projects, this is subject to change.

3. **How will my proposal be evaluated?**
 - a. For the 2020 People's Garden Project proposals, proposals will be evaluated on a first come first serve basis at the opening of the application date and time until all the funding is allocated out. Proposals received on the same day will be assigned a random number from a random number generator and evaluated in that order. Proposals must meet the requirements of the RFP to qualify for funding. Proposals and budgets will be evaluated and approved by NRCS to ensure that they follow NRCS guidelines and you will be able to start your project. Note, if you are selected to receive funding, NRCS and NRICD may require edits to your budget before an agreement form is signed to receive funding based on NRCS guidelines.

The Proposal:

- 1) **Do I need to fill out the People's Garden Project Application and submit a proposal?**
 - (a) No, you can either complete the application form or submit your own proposal that includes similar information.

- 2) **I applied to the People's Garden Project in the past. Can I apply again? If so, can I apply for the same project?**
 - (a) Everyone is welcome to apply for the People's Garden Project.
 - (b) If you have previously applied to the project and your project was not selected for funding, you may apply again for the same project. It is suggested that you re-evaluate your budget based on any changes you plan to make from your previous application.
 - (c) If you have previously applied for the project and have previously received funding, you are unable to apply for further funding for that particular project. You can apply for the People's Garden Project again if you are applying to do a completely different project.
 - (d) Eligible applicants that have received funding in the past will be evaluated on a first come first serve basis during the application window, after all new applicants have been funded.

- 3) **Does the 3-page proposal or application need to include our letter from the Departments/Organization/Business authorizing us to use the land or would that be an attachment?**

- (a) You do not need to include the letter in your three pages of proposal. This document authorizing the use of the land for this organization and this particular project proposed can be an attachment.

4) If there are two organizations that want to partner together for the project, should they apply jointly or should one be a partner organization? (One of us owns the land.)

- (a) It is advised that one organization should take the lead. Whichever one you want to receive the reimbursement checks. The second organization could still contribute match, use grant funds provided by the lead organization, etc.

5) Does the match count for the entire 18 month maintenance period or just building/planting the garden? Just wondering about including volunteer maintenance hours.

- (a) Yes, you'd have the full 18 months to supply the match, including volunteer hours.

6) Our organization is functioning as a not-for-profit but we do not have a 501c3. We have a bank account under an individual's name, not the organization. What type of organization should we call us?

- (a) Since this funding opportunity isn't limited to 501c3s, I'd simply briefly describe the nature of the organization. We will need to have a W9 from groups/individuals receiving the funds, so that might be something to keep in mind.

Use Of Funding To Purchase Items:

1. What tools can I purchase for this project that would fall under NRCS grant funding requirements?

- a. Funding can be spent on items such as tools, soil, seed, fertilizer, soil additives, irrigation materials, garden materials, lumber, high tunnels, pollinator plants, etc.

2. Are there any items that we have restricted purchase amounts based on NRCS funding guidelines?

- a. Each installed garden must have an irrigation system. It need not be complex; an outdoor spigot with a hose would qualify. Agreement funds may be used for the installation of the system. A maximum of \$500 for small projects or \$1000 for larger projects should be budgeted for a combination of irrigation and fencing. For example; \$500 for irrigation and \$500 for fencing, to total \$1,000.

3. How does the reimbursement process work?

- a. Once you are approved for funding and sign an agreement with your Conservation District, you are able to start your project. Your organization

is responsible for the purchasing of everything in your budget proposal. Keep track of all recipes, expenses, invoices, etc. for your project. Your Conservation District will provide you with an easy fillable form to help keep track of expenses, if you so chose to use it. Once you have paid for your project expenses you can send your expense and invoicing copies to your Conservation District, who will then reimburse your organization for those expenses. Reimbursements of any expenses not on your project's agreed upon budget will not be reimbursed.

Irrigation:

4. **If we have a current garden and would like to set up new raised garden beds, can we use the irrigation funding for a new irrigation system, or do we have to use irrigation funds to build off of the current existing irrigation system to support the new beds?**
 - a. You can only use irrigation cost for putting in a new irrigation system.

High Tunnel, Greenhouse, Hoop House etc.:

5. **The RFP mentions beds and hoop houses. Would a small greenhouse qualify as well?**
 - a. No; only temporary growing structures (high tunnels) can be paid for by the funding. This is a common NRCS policy for many projects. The high tunnel/hoop house would also need to meet NRCS specifications (mainly a gothic-style roof).

Soil Remediation:

6. **Does funding cover soil remediation costs?**
 - a. The use of raised beds and imported soil is required for sites where soil is contaminated. Raised beds may also be used to increase accessibility. Agreement funds may be used to pay for these costs.

In-Kind Match:

- 1) **What is the current volunteering rate?**
 - a) The current volunteer rate is \$27.20 per hour.
- 2) **Can I use a staff's rate of pay instead of the volunteer rate of pay for that individual's time on the project as a match, if the staff personnel has a higher rate for their time?**
 - a) Yes, you may use your staff's rate of pay as their match rate instead of the volunteer rate, if their rate of pay is higher and they are acting in their job capacity (i.e. a heavy equipment operator moving mulch). Someone acting outside of their normal field of work (i.e. an attorney helping to plant seedlings) would be counted at the volunteer rate.

Project Components:

1) Are we required to do anything at the garden or report anything specific at the garden throughout the project?

a) Yes. You are required to submit:

i) Reporting:

(1) Two written stories about the garden project at the end of each growing season

(2) Include five photos showing progression/installation of the project. Awardee must provide on-camera release forms for any people in the photos. Photos will be shared and may be used by USDA NRCS. NRICD may provide release forms for recipients to use.

ii) At the Garden you must:

(1) Install signage at the garden or high tunnel site acknowledging NRCS along with other partnering organizations who provided support for the community garden or high tunnel.

(2) Host one educational workshop at its garden site.

2) Can budget costs cover the signage?

a) Agreement funds may be used for the installation of signage, and District staff is available to assist with the creation of signage.

3) What are the requirements for posting a sign at the garden?

a) The People's Garden Project grant recipient must install a sign at the garden or high tunnel site acknowledging NRCS along with partnering organizations (NRICD, and your project partners) who provided support for the project. Your Conservation District will provide you with their logo and NRCS's logo versions for you to pick and put on the sign. They will also assist you with developing the sign if required. NRCS requires the recipient to have USDA's non-discrimination statement on the sign ("USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender").