

## Capacity Building Grant Application Guide

Fall 2020

*\*\* Commentaries in red are additional information to clarify certain portions of the application \*\**

### Section 1: Introduction

AUA is excited to announce the 2020 Capacity Building Grant. The Capacity Building Grant seeks to build a stronger and more equitable local food system in Chicagoland by funding farms working to expand and scale up their operations, as well as farms working toward sustainability. This grant opportunity will provide direct support to local producers in need of funds. Proposed projects must fall into one of the following italicized categories. Examples of topics which fall into the predetermined categories are listed below. If you have questions about whether your proposed project can be considered capacity building, and is not explicitly outlined below, feel free to reach out to Bea Fry at [bea@auachicago.org](mailto:bea@auachicago.org):

- *Programming efforts*: supporting and advancing existing programming efforts
- *Infrastructure*: Soil, Irrigation, Fencing, Compost, farm structures, refrigeration, land acquisition
- *Tools and equipment*: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), farm tools, harvest supplies
- *Labor Support*: labor costs, staff support
- *Logistics Support*: Contracting out with another organization for services, supplies sharing
- *Skills and Business Development*: Business consulting, agricultural workshops or classes

### Funding Levels

You are able to apply for grant funding at one of the following levels:

- \$2,500 (up to 12 possible grants available)
- Up to \$5,000 (up to 5 possible grants available)
- Up to \$10,000 (up to 3 possible grants available)
- Up to \$20,000 (up to 1 possible grant available)

### Who is Eligible?

You must meet all the following requirements to be eligible to receive funds:

1. Location - The farm must be located in one of the following Illinois counties:
  - Cook, Lake, McHenry, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Grundy, Will or Kankakee.
2. Small Farm Size (at least one of the following):
  - Farm size (growing) less than 5 acres and/or
  - Has an annual operating budget less than \$250,000
3. Mission and Partnership Focused (at least one of the following):

- Focus on providing food for the local community or serving communities of color, or low-income communities

- Have positive engagement with community

This can be defined in a variety of ways. Think about the ways in which your operation or project makes a positive impact - from the most basic (flowers by walkways) to the most complex (free food beds/education/food hub).

- Employ people from the community where they grow

Community is largely self defined, and can include those who reside in the same ward as your operation, the same neighborhood, or a certain demographic which fits within the vision and mission of your operation. Communities should not be defined as expanding past the designated Illinois counties which are eligible to apply for the grant.

- Have existing community partners and incorporate those partners into their project proposal

- Provide educational resources within their community

- Prioritizes partnerships with [‘historically underserved producers’](#) as defined by the USDA

#### 4. Organizational Requirements

- Must be a legal entity or in the process of becoming one within the next year. This can be For-Profit, Non-profit, or DBA

#### Priority will be given to farms which:

- Serve low-income and/or BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities
- Are owned and led by BIPOC, trans, non-binary, and/or gender non-conforming people

#### Who is not eligible?

1. Farmers markets
2. Any entity or individual applying independently that is not a farm business (community gardens, food pantries, etc.)
3. Farm Businesses **Farm businesses operating outside of the designated counties**
4. Farm Businesses applying for funds not related to building the capacity of their operation through the purposes listed above

For all applicants applying for \$10,000 worth of funding or more, you will be asked to interview with the Capacity Building Grant Advisory Committee. **Requests for interviews will be made on a rolling basis.**

This application requires a letter of support for your operation to be attached. **A letter of support, otherwise often called a peer letter or a reference letter, is meant to highlight relationships the applicant has cultivated with collaborative partners, organizations, and/or community entities with whom the applicant shares space, knowledge, and/or resources. The letter of support can either be a 1 page or less written document or a 1 minute or less video from your supporter .**

Please complete the following application and submit by 11:59pm on October 24th. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis by the grant review committee and recipients will be awarded

funds by November 30th. If you have any questions about this grant application, please contact Bea Fry at [bea@auachicago.org](mailto:bea@auachicago.org).

**Section 2: Background Questions**

1. Contact person’s name **This person will be responsible for all communications from AUA about the grant. Ideally they would also be the person, or entity involved who will have their name on the check if funds are granted.**
  1. Contact person’s phone number **We would only anticipate calling to coordinate for funds granted.**
  2. Contact person’s email **To send notification of grant decisions**
2. Secondary contact person’s name **This person will be contacted in the off chance that the initial point of contact for the applying operation is not responding.**
  1. Secondary contact person’s phone number
  2. Secondary contact person’s email
3. Name of growing operation
4. Growing operation address **Please list the address of where the growing operation is located.**
5. Growing operation mailing address **This address will only be referenced to send a check of granted funds.**
6. Growing operation’s municipality **Please include the municipality where the growing operation is located, to ensure eligibility requirements are met..**
7. Growing operation's ward (if located in Chicago. If not, write "N/A') **Ward of community the operation is located in.**
8. What is your growing operation’s annual operating budget?
9. What year was your operation founded?
10. Please check all that apply. Is your operation led, owned, or founded by any of the following?

|  | <b>Owned</b> | <b>Founded</b> | <b>Led</b> | <b>N/A</b> |
|--|--------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color (BIPOC)</b> |              |                |            |            |

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Transgender, gender non-conforming (GNC), and/or non-binary (NB) folx</b> |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|

12. What percentage of your leaders/founders/owners are BIPOC and/or trans/GNC/non-binary?
1. Less than or equal to 25%
  2. Between 26% and 50%
  3. More than 50%
13. What are your avenues to accessing capital?
1. Non-farm income
  2. Grants
  3. loans
  4. Fundraising
  5. Farm profits
  6. Other
14. If chosen as a grant recipient, who should the check be made out to?

**Section 3: Proposal Description**

1. What is the funding amount you are requesting? (if the amount of funding you need is between categories, choose the higher category and feel free to reach out to [bea@auachicago.com](mailto:bea@auachicago.com) to discuss your situation)
  1. \$2,500
  2. \$5,000
  3. \$10,000
  4. \$20,000
2. Please provide a description of your farm business (250 words)

This description is to help the reviewer visualize your current farm operation and what kind of work you currently undertake. This can be details about the location, size, land access situation (leased or owned), setting (indoor/outdoor), farm products/crops, annual revenue/budget, owners, business model, types of revenue streams, years in business, communities served, how you got your start as an operation, and any other information that will help the reviewer gain an understanding of your farm.

3. Please provide a detailed description of your project proposal, including a problem statement (500 words)

Clearly outline your project proposal, detailing what you hope to accomplish with the funds you would receive. Establish what problem you are facing with a problem statement. A problem statement is a clear description of the issue (problem) which also includes a vision for what you want to accomplish, and methods used to solve the problem. It provides context for the problems that will be addressed. Here's an example of a problem statement: "Our community is experiencing record high levels of food insecurity alongside a lack of mobility, due to a historic lack of investment in Black/Latinx communities. If granted the funds, we would purchase a truck to make deliveries of produce to neighbors in need, who would otherwise be unable to access it. We will continue to invest in our community by partnering with local non profits to continue this work even after our funds run out."

4. Briefly include relevant experience of the project leads, and how this experience lends to their ability to successfully execute this project (150 words)

To the best of your ability, describe the experience/qualifications of the individuals leading this project. Include the skills, certifications, and training they have acquired that will allow them to meet the goals for the project's success. This is not limited to academic/on paper successes, but also years worth of agricultural experience and certain farming skills.

5. Please upload a letter of support detailing relationships the applicant has cultivated with collaborative partners, organizations, and/or community entities who share space, knowledge, and/or resources

A letter of support, otherwise often called a peer letter or a reference letter, is meant to highlight relationships the applicant has cultivated with collaborative partners, organizations, and/or community entities with whom the applicant shares space, knowledge, and/or resources. The letter of support can take the form of a 1 page or less written document, or a 1 minute or less video from your supporter.

#### **Section 4: Detailed Questions**

5. How does your project increase your organizational capacity, and/or scale up your operation? (350 words)

In other words, how will your project allow your farm to better serve your community, expand your capacity to bring in revenue, or how will your project expand your farm's reach and impact? Some examples include:

- (scale up operations example) Our project seeks funding for the material and labor costs of building a hoop house on our farm. With the addition of a hoop house we will be able to extend our season by 2 months, increasing our yield by 1000lbs.
- (organizational capacity example) If selected to receive a capacity building grant, we will hire a part-time staff member to help with bookkeeping and administrative tasks. We're specifically planning to hire from within our neighborhood/community.

6. What is the community your organization serves? How does the project embody the need to support and serve communities of color, and/or low-income communities? (250 words)

When describing the community your operation serves, this can include those within your geographic location who buy your products and/or interact with your operation. It can also include demographic markers, such as latinx community members in La Villita, for example, or low-income residents in Garfield Park. For the second part of the question, you should describe how the project you are proposing for this grant funding may benefit communities of color/low-income communities. Some examples of ways to do this include:

- Saying a certain percentage of increased yield due to the project will be donated to low-income/BIPOC community members within a 5-7 block radius of your operation
- Your operation plans to scale up its operation through this grant funding by building a hoop house, which will increase yield enough to sell to more BIPOC owned businesses, or
- You plan to employ low-income folx to carry out this project

7. In what ways does your operation currently serve the community outlined in the previous question? (250 words)

Explain how the community your operation serves, described in your response to the previous question, benefits from the products or services your farm **already** provides. Here are some examples:

- Your farm operates a market stand once a week in [community name] where the predominantly asian-American residents would otherwise have no way of accessing fresh produce, as the closest supermarket is 7 miles away by highway.
- Your farm partners with [community organization] to provide 100 lunches a week to youth during the summer months

8. How do you promote equity within your operation? Please provide 2-3 examples. (250 words)

For this question, think about topics such as: how are you ensuring equity amongst your workforce and community? Is there space for your workforce to provide input in direction and growth? For for-profit businesses, are you set up so that employees are able to share in profits? Examples include...

- Creating a sliding scale fee for services, based on areas served in your community. Mentorship program to share knowledge with BIPOC and trans/GNC/non-binary.
- Business practices: Employee owned, group decision making, profit sharing.
- Thought processes: Anti-racist structure/communication, open communication and dialogue

9. In what ways does your operation and/or this proposed project center sustainable and ecologically minded approaches to agriculture? (150 words)

How do you ensure sustainability is a central focus of your work? Share with us some examples of how you approach agriculture in a way that is ecologically focused. Some examples include:

- Methods: such as cover cropping, permaculture, regenerative, seed keeping, protecting waterways, runoff prevention, drip irrigation, organic practices, etc.
- Certifications: Certified Naturally Grown, Organic, Integrative Pest Management, FSMA produce safety certifications, etc.

10. Please list the project goals and intended outcomes. This can be a bulleted list.

What do you aim to accomplish through this project? This brief narrative or list should describe the overarching purpose(s) of the project and the intended impact on the business as a whole. Example:

- Build a hoop house
- Extend growing season
- Offer more food to more folx in the community you serve

11. How do you plan to evaluate the success of your proposed project? (150 words)

In reference to the previous question, how will you measure and determine the impact of your project? This can include quantitative and/or qualitative data as appropriate. This includes having listed metrics that you plan to reach. Example:

Our project seeks to create programming to engage community members through providing instruction on how to start your own backyard garden. We plan to provide supplies for 10 backyard gardens and will work with community partners to sign up residents for the programs. At the conclusion of our programming, we can assess if we were able to successfully achieve those goals by implementing a survey to all involved, tracking the percentage increase of participation over time, and noting if all 10 garden spots are filled.

12. Please provide a projected work-plan for your proposal including intended deliverables. If granted, funds will be dispersed by November 30th, 2020.

Provide the steps you have planned to complete your project. Please keep in mind, the grant period is one year. How will the work flow? How is progress tracked? Please include your goals and/or end results. What are the deliverables (deliverables are tangible items which you want to create by the end of the term of your grant funding, such as a wash station being built). What are the outputs as a direct result of working on your project? These could be but not limited to internal policy, standard operating procedures (a set of instructions to help the operation carry out tasks such as washing, harvesting, and selling at market), additions to website, increased production, community outreach...

13. What barriers, if any, have you experienced trying to access funding for this project? (250 words)

Explain any challenges or limitations to gaining funding for this project. This may include lack of revenue sources, small/limited donor base, flow of funds, limited capacity to apply for funding, structural racism (racist or discriminatory policies/laws/regulations put in place which disproportionately affect and target communities of color causing economic, educational, social, and geographic segregation), etc.

## Section 5: Budget

All word counts provided are maximum word counts for that question.

1. Please attach a detailed budget which includes all associated costs of the proposed project. Feel free to use this example budget as a template:  
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1tPuZ5HvatA9e-zaR7KLhLUMdORr7JljdPHTFmQrHYE/edit?usp=sharing>
2. Based on this budget, please provide a narrative for how your organization plans to use the granted funds. (250 words) **Let us know your detailed plan of how you plan to use the funds, including why each item on your budget is needed to successfully execute**



your project. This section is to simply and concisely explain the reason for each budget item.

## Section 6: Media Release

Thank you for being comfortable with allowing us to boost your online presence on our communication outlets. Please provide the following information to share out.

1. If awarded, are you comfortable being featured in AUA's communication outlets (including Instagram and Facebook)? Your answer will not affect your request for funding.
  - Yes
  - No
2. What is your website name? **Not required**
3. What are your social media handles (Facebook and Instagram only) **For example: @AUACHicago or www.facebook.com/AUACHicago/**
4. What are your direct donation channels? **This may be a website, email address or app handle (\$YourName) etc.**
5. Please include a high-resolution photo we can use to highlight your operation if selected

## Section 7: Final Thoughts

The questions in this section are OPTIONAL and your grant application will not be penalized if you decide not to answer them or upload documents.

1. Is there anything else we need to know to have a holistic view of your operation and project proposal?
2. Please upload up to 5 supporting documents, such as brochures, infographics, or site photos, which will help the committee have a better sense of your project proposal.