



FAQ:

- **What are the priorities of this program?**
 - With food insecurity in the County up 50% in the pandemic and changes in SNAP benefits, this is a cost share program that seeks to fund fencing projects on farms with the purpose of expanding the supply of local food to local hunger relief organizations. Applications will be prioritized by how much food can be grown over time, the stability of the farm, how the products grown satisfy the [stated needs of local food bank clients](#) and the proportion of [culturally appropriate food](#).

- **Who can apply for this program?**
 - In seeking to get the most food in the hands of food insecure neighbors we are seeking to keep this program flexible. **Only Montgomery County Farms can be funded.** We are prioritizing farms with agreements that show a commitment to stability over the coming years. To that end, we will ask about written leases that show a long-term commitment to growing food but we don't need financial particulars. We envision two main types of applicants but are open to other scenarios:
 1. **Owner/Operator farmers** – farmers who own their own land and are seeking to increase their fenced area to grow more food for local hunger relief efforts.
 2. **Leasing Farmer/Landowner Partnership** – A landowner with a farmer under long-term lease are welcome to apply as a partnership – a written lease showing plans for a long-term partnership is required. Applying together is preferable but each member of a partnership can apply solo:
 - 2.a **Leasing Farmers** – Farmers who have a written lease on a property can apply for this funding. The application will ask questions to ensure that the farmer has a long-term lease on the property so the full benefit of the fencing and food grown can be realized over years. An MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the landowner that the fencing will be installed will have to be signed to allow the funding to be released.
 - 2.b **Non-farming landowners** – a landowner can apply for this funding to enclose an area of their land being farmed by someone else. The landowner may already

have a farmer secured or we can help find a farmer through our Land Link program. An MOU over and above the typical written lease will have to be signed by the leasing farmer and landowner.

What are the requirements attached to this funding?

- The applicant must use the newly fenced area to grow a “significant amount” of food that reaches a food relief organization operating in Montgomery County (must be a 501c3 with a dedicated hunger relief project), the amount grown will depend on the area and type of crop. An awarding of funds will include a memorandum of understanding that lays out these expectations over a 3-year period:

-The applicant needs to provide a brief annual report on farm products grown for food relief organizations to MCA over 5 years following funding and consent to documentation of their farm in pictures, narrative and other promotional material to be disseminated on MCA’s website, social media and other outlets.

-A non-farming landowner must maintain a farmer on the land who can meet the stipulations of the agreement for the length of the program.

-What if a land partnership ends?

While understanding that land partnerships sometimes do not last, a landowner is committing to have this newly fenced area farmed to benefit hunger relief organizations and needs to be able to fulfill the agreement – even if another farmer needs to be found to lease the land. MCA can help find another farmer but if a good faith effort to meet the program mission is not being made the funding must be returned.

- How much funding is available?

For this second round of the Good Fences Grant, MCA has secured a grant from Montgomery County and two private foundations totaling \$26,000. The funds will be dispersed in a way to best meet the program priorities. Applicants should know that this is a cost-share program and funds will likely not cover the entire cost of a project. Funds may be entirely spent to support one project or smaller amounts spent to partially fund smaller projects at the discretion of Montgomery Countryside Alliance and based on the applications received.

-What kind of fencing is fundable?

This program is meant to fund deer (and other browsing animal) exclusion fencing or livestock fencing, inclusive of portable electrified fencing for pastured poultry. Cosmetic fencing is not within the scope of this program. Applicants will be required to check in with the [Montgomery County Office of Agriculture](#) prior to securing funding through the program. They also can help steer you toward the best fencing options.

*** Note – unlike the first round, labor is a fundable expense this time around. Applicants can include installation costs in their funding ask. A quote will need to be provided.***

-What kind of food distribution organization can I partner with?

There are so many different organizations distributing food that could benefit from more locally produced healthy food. This could be dedicated food banks, churches or other nonprofits with established hunger relief projects. We ask that the organization you partner with be a 501c3 nonprofit with a demonstrated program of food distribution in Montgomery County. You will want to choose an organization that is prepared to distribute your fresh food quickly or properly store it. If you don't know who to partner with, we would be happy to help you set up a relationship.

-What is the timeline for this grant?

Applications will open in the first week of June. Grant Applications will be accepted until July 2 at 5pm. Applicants should expect a decision by July 23rd. All paperwork will need to be returned by September 1. Funds will need to be spent and receipts turned in by November 1, 2024 at the latest. MCA commits to reimburse approved expenditures by check within 30 days of receiving receipts.

What do I need to be able to apply?

To prepare for the application process it is best to gather the following:

- A written lease (for leasing farmers)
- Put some thought into your fencing needs, what location needs a fence, what type and how much is needed. Drawing a simple sketch may help and we may ask for a simple sketch as part of the application.
- At least one quote on the fencing you are trying to install/ labor needed if you are asking for funding for labor.
- Check in with the Office of Agriculture about the zoning of the property to see if you need a permit. (send an email to Natalia Salazar (Natalia.Salazar@montgomerycountymd.gov) (and please cc info@mocoalliance.org as well as Mike.Scheffel@montgomerycountymd.gov)
- Select a food distribution nonprofit partner (we can help connect you with one in the application process if you don't have one yet.)

Other Resources:

- **What are some other similar grant opportunities for farms?**

Manna Food Bank, the County DHHS, Office of Ag and Food Council partnered on a [Farm to Food Bank Program](#) that provided infrastructure improvements to 20+ existing table and livestock operations in the county in 2020 and 2021 and the results of those investments are yielding great local harvests for food bank clients. The county Office of Ag also has [a cost share program](#) that provides for fencing, wells and other infrastructure but the need for this program often outstrips the funding.

Resources specifically for BIPOC farmers can be found in our [BIPOC guide](#) (in partnership with the Office of Agriculture.) Many more grant resources can be found on our [Producers page](#) –

even better, sign up for our producers listserve – a place to swap know-how, equipment as well as funding opportunities with local farmers. [Sign up here](#)

- **I'm a farm or other business that wants to donate to food banks - how do I do that?**

Fantastic! Check out [Community Food Rescue](#) - a project of Manna Food Center. They have options for donating food or getting gleaning events organized on your farm. Also check out [Community Farm Share](#), a project funneling local farm produce directly to food insecure residents.

- **I'm a gardener and I have more _____ than I can possibly eat.**

In the upcounty you can drop your produce off at WUMCo or the community cold shed at Locals - [more here.](#)

(Where should gardeners take extras down county - if you know drop us a line - info@mocoalliance.org)