



FAQ:

- **What are the priorities of this program?**
 - With food insecurity in the County up 50% in the pandemic, 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. We are prioritizing Montgomery County 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 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 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?

MCA has matched a County DHHS grant to total \$10,000 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.

-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?

Grant Applications will be accepted until March 24th 2023 at 5pm. Applicants should expect a decision by mid-April. Funds will need to be spent by June 1.

What do I need to be able to apply?

As part of the application, we would like to see at least one quote on the fencing you are trying to install and you need to have checked in with the Office of Agriculture. We may request a simple drawing to better understand your project

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.

While a much smaller program than either the farm to food bank program or the Office of Ag cost share program, MCA's Good Fences Grant seeks to not only grow more food but grow more farms at the same time, prioritizing new or fledgling farms where basic infrastructure investments could be the spark to get a new farm off the ground. Through the last decade of matching farmers and landowners fencing has proved to be a big hurdle to getting a new farm lease started - many of these farmers being people of color seeking to intentionally grow the culturally appropriate foods missing from food banks. This grant program is meant to fill this gap with a win-win-win solution.

- **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)