



**Agriculture
and Markets**

Community Gardens Task Force

Meeting III Discussion Guide

April 12, 2023

Richard A. Ball
Commissioner

Agenda

- Review timeline and executive budget
- Introduce and gather feedback on projects currently in development as a result of the 2023 Report recommendations
 - Agriculture Resource Dashboard
 - Soil Testing Initiative
 - Community Gardens Leadership Certification Program
- Discussion of Today's Priority Topic: *Protecting Community Gardens*

Timeline and direction

1. **Release the 2023 report to the public-** *2/15/2023*
2. **Meeting 3:** Discuss and gather input on the action items in progress- *today*
3. **Send survey** to gather list of goals/priorities to discuss in the next meeting- *this week*
4. **Meeting 4:** Discuss survey results and come to a consensus on top goals and priorities- *summer-fall of 2023*
5. **3 meetings per year** to develop actionable solutions and policy recommendations based on agreed upon goals and priorities, draft 2028 report together- *schedule TBD*
6. **Submit the 2028 report-** *1/1/28*

Proposed Executive Budget

- Establish an Urban Farms and Community Gardens Grant Program (\$2 million) to support the creation of new or expansion of existing community gardens.
- Create a Community Gardens Leadership Certification Program to provide training and continuing education.
- Provide funding for soil testing, as well as associated outreach and training.
- We will confirm what is included in the final enacted State Budget after April 1.

Resources Dashboard

Overview

- A user-friendly up-to-date resource hub where urban farmers can access resources which aid in the development and expansion of local agriculture
 - Will expand to be inclusive of New York's full agri-food value chain to provide a central location where producers, processors, and consumers alike can go to access resources
- Will utilize a PDF format to reduce limitations and mitigate the need for external resources to ensure ongoing maintenance of the document

Review PDF

Notes here...

Discussion

- What additional regional resources should we include in this guide?
- What type of data do you currently use to support project development?
 - Where do you source data?
 - What challenges do you face when sourcing or analyzing data?
- Do you find the content included in the publications section to be comprehensive?



Soil Testing Initiative

Overview

- Eligible community gardens in New York State will be able to send soil samples to the Cornell Soil Health Lab for free testing up to one time per year.
- Gardeners are only responsible for collecting the sample and the shipping costs to Cornell.
- Testing will analyze soil health/fertility factors, pH and heavy metals.
- Test results, interpretation guides, and follow-up educational and technical assistance will be provided through CCE's Community Garden team.



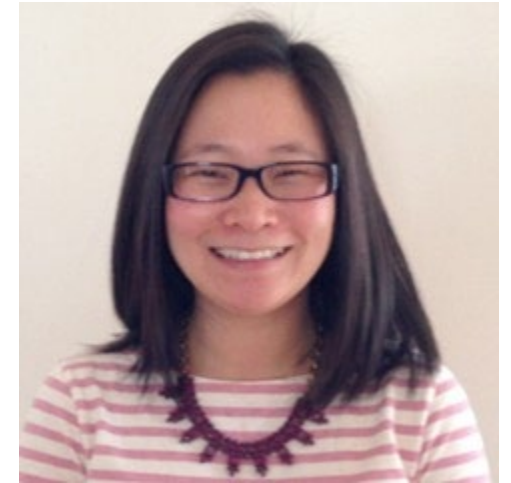
CCE Community Gardening Team



Makela Elvy



Kwesi Joseph



Mallory Hohl

Process Discussion

Pre-Test (AGM)

- Gardener fills out soil test request form from AGM's Community Gardens webpage
 - Provides proof of eligibility
- AGM distributes testing instructions from the Cornell Soil Health Lab

Test (Lab)

- Sample is collected by garden members
- Sample is mailed to the lab
 - Gardener is responsible for shipping costs
- Test is administered

Post-Test (CCE)

- Results provided to gardener via email
 - CCE interpretation guide is attached
- CCE Community Garden team is CC'd on communication, will reach out to offer educational and technical support



Eligibility Parameters

- Parameters are necessary to ensure funding is best utilized and that programs applying are active
 - In order to reduce barriers, no special equipment is needed to participate in this program, although documentation for the garden is necessary to apply

Your Garden May be Eligible if:

A.) Established community garden:

- Proof of land access in the form of a lease, deed, agreement, or other documentation
- Proof of active programming (e.g. calendar of events, volunteer schedule, marketing fliers or social media posts, etc.)

B.) Beginning garden—a workplan that includes:

- Evidence of community interest and support (e.g. letter of agreement from the municipality, list of volunteers, etc.)
- A leadership committee in place to formulate structure (i.e. bylaws)
- A budget plan listing available resources
- A site designation with proof of land access and identified water source

Discussion

- Do you have feedback on the proposed eligibility criteria for gardens?
 - What barriers associated with these parameters need to be considered?
 - What proofs of active programming, community support, etc. is available and reasonable for gardeners to provide?

Discussion

- Does the proposed workflow between stakeholders make sense from a gardener's perspective?

Discussion

- What is the best way for CCE to support community gardens after the soil test results are received?
- What confidentiality concerns should we consider?
 - Additional communications and opportunities from Cornell and Ag & Markets?
 - Soil data for aggregate analysis by the CCE team to inform programming and assistance?

Discussion

- What are the most effective ways to communicate with Community Gardens that this program is available?

Community Gardens Leadership Certification Program

Overview

Community Gardens Leadership Certification Program

- CCE will develop curriculum and deliver the program; will utilize an advisory team to support planning and development
- Less than a year in length ending in a certification for the individual
- Virtual and possible field/in-person components
- Multiple modules. Areas of learning may include gardening best practices, land access, insurance, safety, financial management and funding, organizational best practices, etc.

Host Biannual Garden Leadership Summit

- In-person Summit every other year for graduates of the training program
- Offer expert presentations, sharing of best practices and provide networking opportunities

Discussion

- Broadly speaking, what are the priority areas that should be included in a leadership training certificate for Community Gardeners?

Discussion

- Is a virtual format an effective and accessible way to deliver training materials?
 - What barriers associated with virtual versus in person training would need to be addressed (e.g. technology)?

Discussion

- What would you like to see from a Garden Leadership Summit?

Land Protection & CEAs

NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation

- What is involved in the designation of a Critical Environmental Area (CEA)?
 - What does DEC consider when reviewing applications?

Q & A

- *Notes here...*

Next Steps

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- We have planned to focus more on land access and preservation of Community Garden land at the next meeting
- We will send you a survey to better understand additional priority items for the next meeting(s), what models exist already, and what action items can we adopt to address the recommendations in the report

Thank you!