NEW YORK STATE | Department of Agriculture and Markets

Community Gardens Task Force

Meeting 10 Discussion Guide

APRIL 1, 2026

Opening Remarks

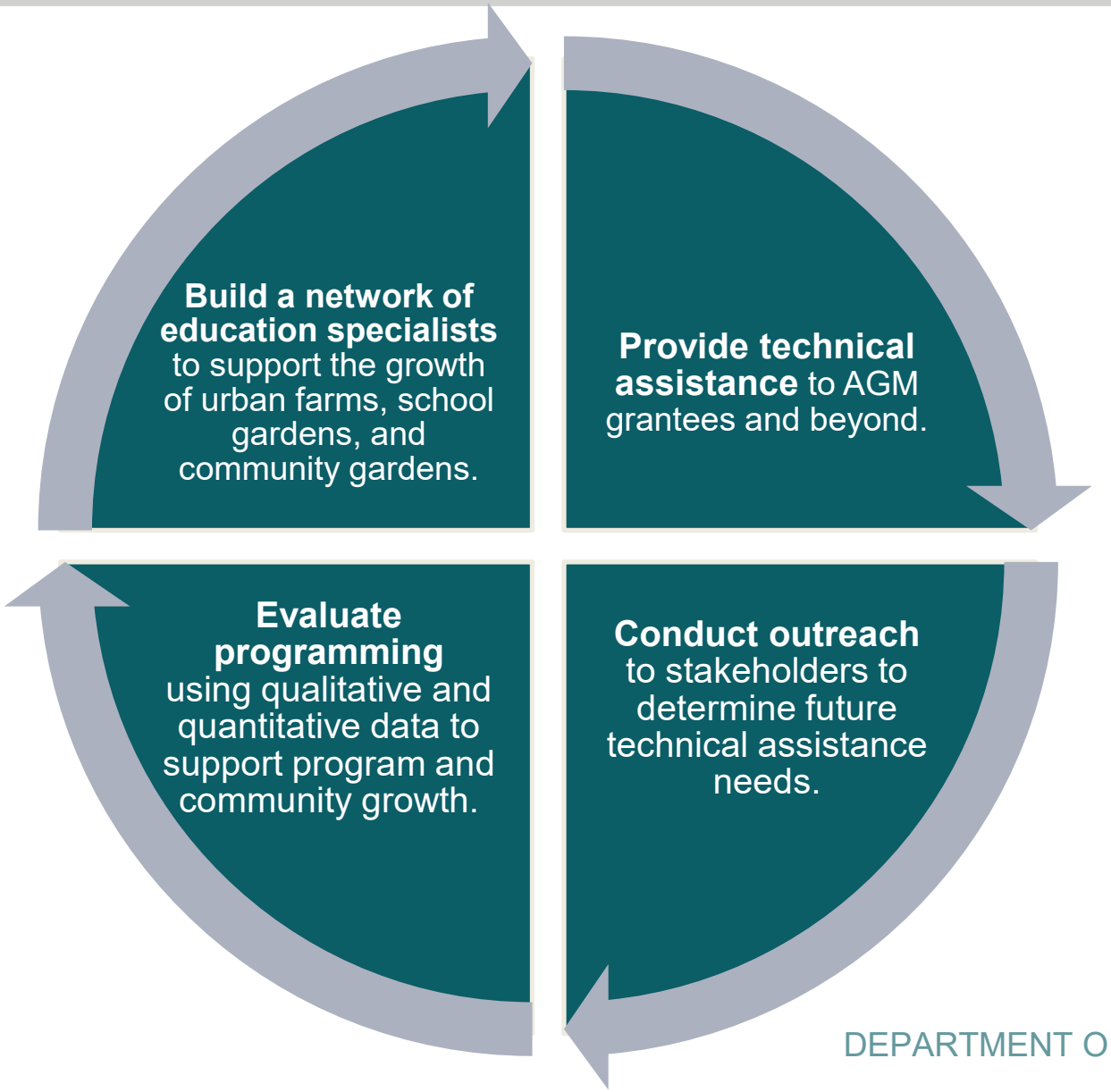
Deputy Commissioner Kelly Young

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

Member Updates

State Program Updates

Urban Farms and Community Gardens Technical Assistance Program



CCE HARVEST NY

Community Gardens Leadership Program

Program Updates:

• 2 ongoing cohorts; *extended access for cohort 1; Section 3 for cohort 2*

• ***Application for 2026-2027 Cohort are now open! Deadline is June 15, 2026.***
**Attendance for Information Session is required to apply; Use QR Code on the slide*

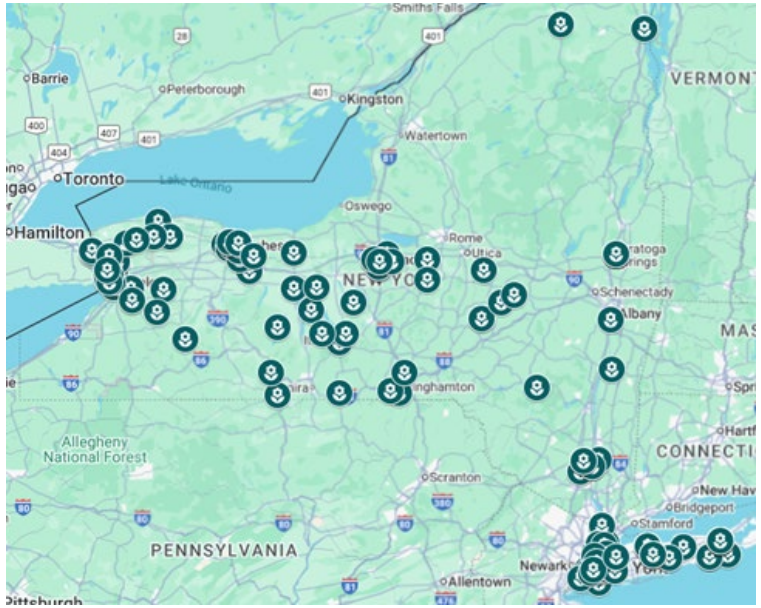
• *Information Session dates:*
- April 9th (10am)
- April 14 (12pm)
- April 22 (5:30pm)
- May 7 (12pm)
- May 11 at (5:30pm)

Save the Date!
September 17-19th 2026
Resilient Gardens Symposium, Vassar College

Soil Testing

- **2025: Redesign of application, shipping process, eligibility, supporting documents**
  - Paused at 405 applications confirmed and processed
  - Waiting list: 20+ gardeners

- **2026: Program re-opened March 1**
  - 200 applications processed & confirmed within 4 weeks of program start
  - 140+ unique sites across the state
  - Five Harvest NY specialists assisting program participants

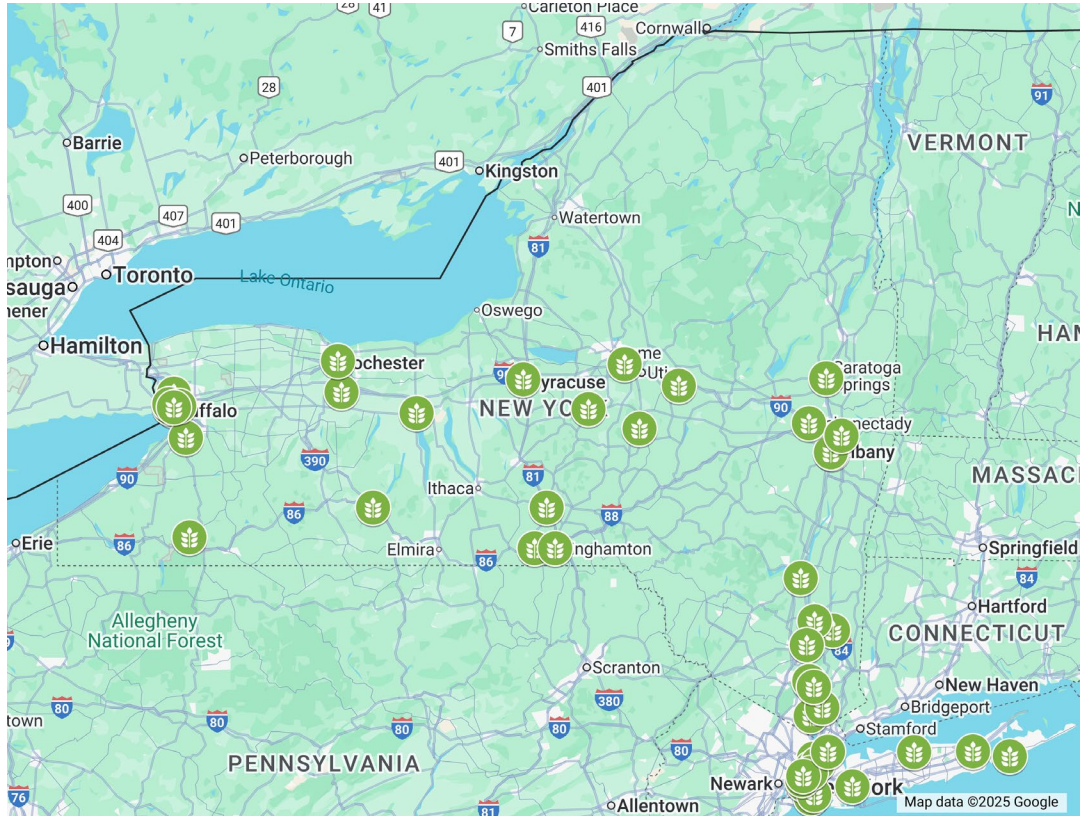


Urban Farms and Community Gardens Grant

The Urban Farms and Community Gardens program supports the development and expansion of community gardens, school gardens, and urban farms across the state, focusing on **food production**, **food safety**, and **food distribution** while improving local food resiliency.

- **51** projects funded statewide with **over 150 total recipients** due to subawards!
- Next round opens **Summer 2027**.
- Weekly Office Hours with CCE Harvest NY Educators to provide technical assistance.

UFCG Program Funding Map

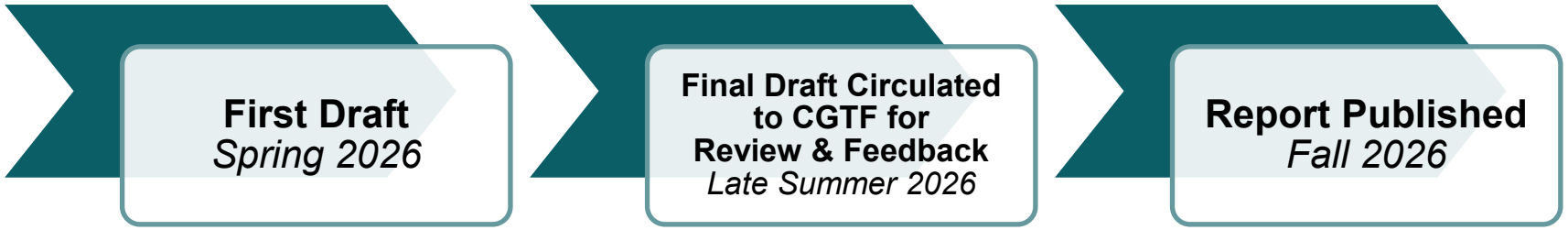


2026 Interim Report

2026 Interim Report

- **Interim Report Purpose**: The report provides an overiew of the accomplishments thus far and the work that still needs to be addressed by the Task Force, as it pertains to the legislation and previous report recommendations.

Report Timeline



2026 Interim Report Outline

Introduction

- Purpose of Report
- Role of Community Gardens in the Food System
  - Ecosystem Services
  - Economic Incubators
- Current Community Garden Landscape in NYS
  - Number, Nature, and Geographic Location
  - Garden Structure
- Barrier to Develop, Maintain, and Expand Community Gardens

2026 Interim Report Outline

Local, State, and Federal Investments

- Local: Soil & Water Conservation Districts, City grants, Food Policy Councils
- State: Increase AGM Staffing, UFCG, DEC, Regional Commissions
- Federal: SNAP-Ed, USDA Office of Urban Agriculture, RFSI
- Federal Administration: Uncertainty, Opportunity for local governments and CBOs
- The Role of Philanthropy

2026 Interim Report Outline

CGTF Role and Membership

- Summary of Legislation
- Member Representation
- Recent Meetings
- Transitioning from Open Meetings Law to Community-Informed

2026 Interim Report Outline

Progress on 2023 Recommendations

5.1 Dashboard
- Ag Resources Dashboard (PDF)

5.2.1 Increase Coordination
- Community Gardens Soil Testing Program
- Urban Farms and Community Gardens Technical Assistance – Cornell Harvest NY
- Community Garden Workbook

5.2.2 Mitigate Grant-Related Barriers
- Urban Farms and Community Gardens Grant Program
  - Program Growth, Optimizing Programming, Subawards
  - Grantee training

5.2.3 Recommendations to Increase Staffing Opportunities
- Urban Farms and Community Gardens Grant Program
- Increase AGM Staffing
- Community Garden Leadership Program
- Workforce Development

2026 Interim Report Outline

Outstanding Work

- Community Gardens Census
- After-School Programming
- Increase Gardening Opportunities for Senior Populations
- Educational Opportunities for and from Local Governments

2026 Interim Report Outline

New Recommendations and Looking Ahead

- Measuring Success
- Updating Existing AGM Resources
- Prioritizing Targeted Geographic Outreach
- Tribal Engagement

Resources

Glossary of Terms

Group Discussion

2026 Interim Report and Beyond

- **Utilizing Existing Resources**
  - How are you using the 2023 CGTF Report, Ag Resources Dashboard, and Community Garden Workbook?

- **2026 Interim Report**
  - How do you envision using this report?
  - Are there specific studies, data sets, or resources that should be included?

- **Measuring Success**
  - What does success look like?
  - How can we work collaboratively to ensure the CGTF meets its legislative and community outcomes?

10 Minute Break

Reconvene at 2:20pm

Showcasing Collaboration in School Gardens

Salamanca City Central School District

Sandi Brundage
Salamanca City School District

City School District of Albany

Sara McGraw
City School District of Albany

BUGS Gardens
Growing Community

Laura Karlen

Brooklyn Urban Garden Charter School

Group Discussion

Delancey Nelson

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

Group Discussion

After-School Garden Programs and Senior Programming

- Are there ways in which your past, current, or future programming helps to either **develop after-school programs** that establish, maintain, and expand community gardens or **increase opportunities for seniors** to participate in community gardens?

- How do you see the Community Gardens Task Force working to achieve these goals through studies, evaluation, or recommendations?

- Who should we partner with for future initiatives?

Next Steps

- Staying Connected
  - **Monthly email**
- Next Community Gardens Task Force Meeting in **Fall 2026**
  - Brooklyn and Virtual via Webex

Closing Remarks

Commissioner Richard Ball

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

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