

Capacity Building Grant FAQs Fall 2020

What is the objective of the Capacity Building Grant?

The Capacity Building Grant seeks to build a stronger and more equitable local food system in Chicagoland by funding farms which are working to expand and scale up their operations, as well as farms working toward stability and sustainability.

Am I eligible to receive the Capacity Building Grant?

You must meet 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
 - Has an annual budget < \$250,000
- 3.) Mission and Partnership Focused (at least one of the following):
 - Focused on providing food for the local community or serving communities of color, or low-income communities
 - Farms who have positive engagement with community
 - Farms who employ people from the community where they grow
 - Farms who have existing community partners and incorporate those partnerships into their project proposal
 - Farms that 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 will be within a year. This can be For-Profit, Non-profit, or DBA

Priority will be given to farms that...

- 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

What projects or expenses can be considered “capacity building”?

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:

- *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

How much can I request?

You may apply for one level of funding:

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

Who has been funded in the past?

This is the first iteration of the Capacity Building Grant and therefore there are no previous funded projects. Grant awardees from this cycle will be the first cohort of recipients and, pending consent, will be posted on AUA's social media when selected and confirmed.

How do I apply for the Capacity Building Grant?

You may apply online [here](#), or submit a copy via Word document to bea@auachicago.org. The word document version can be found on the [AUA website](#). All applications must be received by 11:59pm on October 24th, 2020.

What is the timeline?

Applications are due to be submitted via google form or via Word document to bea@auachicago.org by 11:59pm on October 24th, 2020. Review of applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis after the application deadline. Decisions will be made by November 25th, 2020 with funding being distributed by November 30th, 2020. Workshops to answer questions and go over the application guide are TBA.

What kind of documents will be required of me as an applicant?

A letter of support is required, and additional documents such as pictures, videos, and additional support letters are optional.

What is a letter of support and who can write one?

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 who share space, knowledge, and/or resources. These can be...

- Other farmers
- Wholesalers
- Farmers market managers
- Farmers market stall neighbors

- Nonprofit organizations, community orgs

A letter of support is meant to showcase the applicant's character and integrity, while also speaking to their ability to execute their proposed project. This letter can be anywhere from a paragraph to a page in length using single spaced, size 12 Arial font as a guide (this font and font sizing are not required, but are helpful to gauge how long your letter of support should be).

A support letter can also be submitted as a video from the person who would otherwise write your letter of support. This video would answer the same questions and go over the same information that a written letter of support would cover. This video should be no longer than 1 minute in length.

What should be written in a letter of support?

Some questions worth considering in a letter of support are as follows:

- What is the nature of your relationship with the applicant? In other words, how have you worked together in the past?
- What is your experience working with the applicant? Think about their work ethic, their community engagement and outreach, and ability to be a team player
- On what projects have you worked with the applicant, and how does this speak to their ability to successfully execute their proposed project?
- Reaffirm your support of the applicant's proposed project and your confidence in their ability to successfully execute the project

Additionally, the letter of support should clearly identify who is writing the letter, what organization/farm/entity they are with and what their title is, as well as be on an official letterhead for that organization/farm/entity. A letterhead is the official branding logo for that organization/farm/entity. Lastly, the person writing the letter should include their contact information in case the Capacity Building Grant Advisory Committee would like to follow up with any questions they may have.

Can multiple farms apply as part of one application?

Collaborative projects are welcome and encouraged for the 2020 Capacity Building Grant, especially for the \$20,000 grant award. The operation which fills out the application, the 'main applicant', will be the point of contact for AUA, in addition to being the entity which is in charge of distributing monies to their partner operations in their collaborative project. The budget should reflect to which partner certain funding amounts are being distributed, and the main applicant should acknowledge their collaborative partners in the project narrative and detailed questions portions of the application. Additionally, it is suggested that the letter of support is from one of the partner operations, and that the point of contact utilizes the supporting documents at the end of the application to upload letters of support from the other partner operations.

How many operations can be a part of a collaborative project?

Up to five operations can be on a collaborative project, including the main applicant.

If I am not the main applicant in a collaborative project application, can I apply for individual funding or another collaborative project?

No, each operation can only be present in one application for grant funding, even if your operation is not the main applicant in an application for a collaborative project.

I have a question that is not answered here. Who do I reach out to?

Contact Bea Fry at bea@auachicago.org. Additionally, a remote, informational workshop will be offered in English and Spanish on a date TBA and will be available as a recording for those who are unable to attend.