

Proposal Requirements:

1. Mission statement and/or information on your organization's history and purpose

Mission Statement:

Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers, Inc. supports and promotes organic and sustainable agriculture, wherein; we educate consumers, farmers, future farmers (children & youth), businesses, policy makers and the general public.

History:

Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers Inc. (FOG) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation established in 1987. FOG operates two programs: Quality Certification Services and Education & Outreach.

FOG's early years were that of a grassroots organization, with the office located at various times in someone's kitchen or an unused corner of a barn. FOG was heavily involved in the development of the National Organic Program regulations governing organics. The Organic Food Production Act of 1990 required that the USDA develop national standards for organic products. The National Organic Program Final Rule was published in the Federal Register in 2000. FOG continues to be very active in policy, including continuing development of the NOP standards, food safety and genetically modified food. FOG is also active in developing and implementing Farm Bill programs. In 2001, FOG received its USDA accreditation to certify farms as organic under its certification program, **Quality Certification Services (QCS)**. QCS is a USDA ISO Guide 65 accredited program that offers USDA National Organic Program, Canadian, Japanese and European Union accredited certification options. QCS also offers Social Justice, Aquaculture and Vegan certification options. QCS certifies farming, wildcrafting, livestock, processing, packing and handling entities large and small in more than 30 states and 8 countries.

FOG's Education & Outreach Program conducts teaching, research, and service that engages the organization with external constituencies. Education & Outreach projects generate knowledge, share resources, and apply the expertise of FOG in ways that advance organic agriculture and healthy and just food systems. Our staff educates producers, consumers, media, institutions, and governments about the benefits of organic and sustainable agriculture. We also present at tours, conferences, workshops, classes and other educational opportunities to a wide audience ranging from school children to farmers and agronomists in Uganda on various topics. These topics include (but are not limited to): organic and sustainable farming practices, Farm Bill opportunities, certification options, marketing, food systems, social justice and opportunities and challenges in the organic marketplace.

2. Narrative description of the project to be funded, including:

a. Whom it will serve or benefit

Currently, one of the most pressing global issues we face today is the rising level food insecurity. In the US one of the greatest increases in food insecurity is found in Florida at a rate of 16.8% of its population without reliable access to sustainable amounts of nutritionally adequate foods. Alachua County has a food insecurity rate of 18.1% (the national average is 14.5%) and climbing. To combat these troubling statistics, FOG has created several unique programs to help alleviate hunger in an effective and sustainable manner. These programs include the Alachua County Farmers Market EBT Project which allows food stamp users to use their benefits at Farmers Markets and the Gainesville Initiative for Tasty or GIFT Gardens which installs free raised-bed vegetable gardens and edible landscaping for low income families or institutions that support them.

FOG's GIFT Gardens program has been tremendously successful in Alachua County. This project uses vegetable gardens to improve the self-sufficiency of community residents and increase food production. GIFT Gardens are provided to low-income area residents, schools, and communities. The typical GIFT garden consists of between 1-10 raised bed gardens. Recipients also receive, fertilizer, seeds, seedlings, and a GIFT Garden Guide which covers all the basic vegetable gardening information from planting dates to pest management. With over 270 GIFT Garden sites thriving across Alachua County, this project has increased food production in Alachua County as well as beautified our area with edible landscaping.

GIFT Gardens benefit low-income families by allowing them to provide for themselves but this program also influences food systems at large. Home and community gardens are increasingly recognized as an important component in local food systems by providing a way for people to learn about and interact with the environment. GIFT Garden's reach and influence can be found at every level of our community including 17 schools, 7 churches, and 17 community centers. These gardens have now been used to feed thousands of people, many of whom may not have grown their own food without the assistance of our program.

In addition, GIFT Gardens are a source of empowerment for many of the participants by encouraging self-sufficiency, a sense of pride and accomplishment, and overall well-being. Our Youth Training incorporates job training for future careers in agriculture, self-esteem building, life skills learning, and self-sufficiency. This training fosters an overall better understanding of the basics of the value of healthy food and where food comes from and thus encourages more nutritious eating habits. Our program has also received testimonies from teachers at schools with GIFT Garden installations, detailing the transformative nature of the program, particularly with high-needs children. Communities at large have also benefitted from GIFT gardens by exemplifying the idea that neighborhoods can be brought together by fellow gardeners and organizational gardens (ie: Boys and Girls Club, Interface Youth Program, Gainesville Job Corps).

GIFT Gardens have become an essential part of FOG's education and outreach component as well as the community at large. In the spring and fall when gardening interest peaks, FOG receives inquiries from dozens of applicants a week seeking to participate in GIFT Gardens and has a waiting list of low-income Alachua County residents who have applied. Our waiting list now numbers over

50 despite having done no active promotion during the past two years. FOG also receives many requests from other counties and communities, which unfortunately we are not always able to respond to or follow up with due to financial restraints.

b. Goals and objectives

FOG's aim for the use of this grant is to continue to foster the GIFT Gardens program and continue installing gardens for those most at-need. Additional funding would allow us to address the dozens of inquiries from applicants on our waiting list that we otherwise would not be able to assist. If awarded, with the total requested we would be able to build a garden a week for 6 months insuring that 26 individuals or families would be able to provide for themselves fresh, organic fruits and vegetables for years to come.

Gainesville Initiative for Tasty Garden's primary goal is to allow low-income families to provide for themselves. This program takes the "teach a man to fish" approach to addressing food insecurity in our community. Although North Central Florida can be a challenging place for the inexperienced to grow their own food, with the proper resources and preparation it has proven to be a very productive endeavor with surprising results. Our recipients are primarily identified through our GIFT Garden application process which gathers information about income, food security, space availability, and other important factors.

Before an installation, a FOG coordinator visits the recipient to locate the ideal space for their garden on their property. The FOG employee then delivers our GIFT Garden guide, and walks the recipient through the basics of growing their own food. Every installation is designed specifically for the location and its recipient to ensure a successful garden. We generally install raised bed gardens, which offer several solutions to the challenges of gardening in North Central Florida. The beds are constructed with locally sourced lumber and lined with plastic where they will be in contact with soil to prevent rot. They are then filled with a mixture of composted cow manure, peanut shells and top soil, which addresses the issue of sandy soil composition that is common in Gainesville. The raised beds also allow for easy attachment of covers to protect crops from the blasts of freezing temperatures which can ruin what is otherwise the best season to grow crops.

We strongly encourage the recipient to participate in the installation if they are able. FOG provides plants and seeds with the installation but does not assist in planting. We will guide recipients, but we want to ensure that they take ownership of their garden. By providing the resources and knowledge necessary we aim to empower people to help themselves and grow their own fresh organic fruits and vegetables.

GIFT Gardens aims for recipients to save \$50 or more on monthly grocery bills. To measure this we ask recipients to keep track of what they plant and harvest and then calculate a market value based on their records. To date, harvest study participants report an average monthly harvest of \$77. We also survey GIFT Garden recipients and aim for 85% of recipients to report that they have an increased access to and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. To date 93% of recipients have reported increased access. We also set annual goals for the number of gardens we can install. For 2012 we currently have a budget of \$15,000, and with that we hope to build gardens at 30 new locations while continuing to provide support to existing gardens. But that budget is heavily

dependent on local governmental grants that in the current economic and political climate are tenuous at best.

Florida Organic Growers has long held that food production should be both socially just and environmentally sustainable. GIFT Gardens is an extension of these aims by bringing small organic farming systems into neighborhoods and schools that are most in need. Through allowing people to grow their own food they are able to cut down on trips to the grocery store and thus save money on produce and gas. Additionally, participants' understanding and interaction with the environment is fostered through increased awareness of the shifts in weather and a better understanding of the efforts required to grow food. We hope that the gardens will become a community meeting place and excite residents to start their own home gardens. Gardening can be a powerful tool to not only address food insecurity by increasing the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables but also improves quality of life.

c. Timeline for completion of the entire project, including the portion SFC is being asked to fund

As long as there is a need to assist those less fortunate in helping them grow their own food, FOG hopes to continue operating the GIFT Garden program. Funds from Singing for Change will go directly toward building more gardens. If the total requested is approved, FOG can build a garden a week for 6 months with the end goal of establishing 26 individual gardens with each garden containing on average two beds. The climate of Florida allows the home gardener to grow something all year long with Fall and Spring being the most popular and easiest times of the year to start a vegetable garden. To correspond with the seasons we aim to install gardens with Singing for Change funds from August to October and February to March but these dates can be flexible.

d. The amount of funding requested

\$9,909.36

e. Method of measuring the project's impact, and the three top measurable results you expect to accomplish if you receive this grant.

As stated earlier in our goals, we define success through the use of harvest studies and surveys. Harvest studies measure an individual or community gardens output for a minimum of three months. Participants are asked to record everything harvested from their garden. We then use the records to calculate their savings based on the market value. The goal is for participants to save a minimum of \$50 a month on grocery bills. With surveys, our goal is that 85% of GIFT Garden recipients report increased access to and consumption of fresh and fruits and vegetables. Our hope with the GIFT Garden program is to provide the initial encouragement to get people gardening. After a year of support through education and providing plants, seeds, and fertilizers we anticipate that recipients should be able to successfully grow their own food. However, we continually check in with recipients to ensure the gardening experience is a positive and successful one.

Top three measurable results:

1. 85% of GIFT Garden recipients report increased access to and consumption of fresh and fruits and vegetables.
2. Recipients save \$50 or more on monthly grocery bills.
3. Build gardens at 26 new locations.

3. 2 copies of IRS letter confirming your organization's 501(c)(3) status

(See attached .zip)

4. Itemized budget for the project if it is separate from your organization's budget

Singing for Change

(3 months in the Fall, 3 months in the Spring)

	\$/Hr	Hrs/Week	Fringe	Weeks	Total
Project Coordinator	16	8		26	\$3,328.00
Part Time Dir E&O	19	1		26	\$494.00

Supplies	\$/bed	# beds	re-ups		
Lumber	50.58	52			\$2,630.16
Soil	30	52	0		\$1,560.00
Seeds					\$150.00
Starts	13	52	0		\$676.00
Misc. (Screws, plastic, ect)	7	52			\$364.00
GIFT Guide	2	26			\$52.00

Vehicles:

	\$/per mile	miles/week		weeks	
Gas	0.21	60		52	\$655.20
Total					\$9,909.36

5. Letter from a responsible officer of your organization, stating that:

- a. To his or her knowledge, the organization's nonprofit status has not been revoked;**
- b. The proposed grant from SFC will not result in the loss of the organization's nonprofit status (that by funding this project, SFC will not become the organization's predominant source of support);**
- c. The present operation of the organization and its income are consistent with its nonprofit status (that the organization's mission and funding sources are the same as when it received 501(c)(3) classification).**

(See attached .zip)

6. Copies of audited financial statements for the last four years. If your organization was founded fewer than four years ago, please provide pertinent financial data showing your contribution base and program budget

(See attached .zip)