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# Urban Agriculture Microgrant Program

Colorado Department of Agriculture  
2026

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## Grant Guidelines

### Background

In 2025, \$20,000 of the Colorado Department of Agriculture's (CDA) Agricultural Management Funding was allocated to the Urban Agriculture Program to be distributed as microgrants for urban producers during Fiscal Year 2026. Between 2024 and 2025, CDA engaged with stakeholders including urban producers, urban agriculture advocates, and conservation districts to advise on the program's focus, which has influenced the eligibility and evaluation criteria for this microgrant program. These guidelines describe the purpose and objectives as well as the responsibilities of the grantees.

### Purpose of the Grant

The purpose of the Urban Agriculture Microgrant Program is to aid Colorado's agricultural producers in building a more resilient and sustainable food system by supporting and uplifting urban producers in providing access to fresh, local agricultural products for their communities and conserving natural resources on urban farms.

Due to limited funding, the Conservation Services Division has decided to use this microgrant opportunity to concentrate on small scale projects crucial to expanding urban production, implementing conservation practices, educating community members, and addressing other common challenges faced by urban producers.

## Definitions

**Urban Agriculture:** Within the context of CDA's program, Urban Agriculture refers to the cultivation and distribution of food in and around existing urban, peri-urban, and rural populations, where the products produced are intended to serve the local community, rather than distant markets. Urban agriculture can encompass a wide range of operations including small to mid scale market farms and ranches, community gardens, school gardens, and more. These operations, in addition to production, can sometimes also serve as a tool for education, community engagement, and awareness of agriculture and food production, which may otherwise be inaccessible to certain populations. ***\*\*Due to limited funding, we are focused on urban farms and ranches rather than community and school gardens for this grant cycle.***

**Urban Farm:** An agricultural operation located within or on the periphery of an urban, peri-urban, or rural population center, which is designed to serve the local community. These are typically small-scale and grow produce for direct to consumer or local retail or restaurant sale, while also sometimes serving as hubs for education and community building.

**Community Garden:** A space typically shared amongst individuals, families, neighbors, small groups, and organizations intended to serve as land for producing agricultural products for personal or organizational consumption. Community gardens are typically managed by public or nonprofit organizations which are subdivided into plots for use or rent.

**Local:** Within the context of food and agriculture, local refers to food that is produced, processed, and distributed within a particular geographic region in order to specifically benefit the community that resides there. For the purposes of CDA's Urban Agriculture program, there is no precise boundary for local distribution, and instead refers to food grown with intent to serve a specific community in proximity to the farm or garden in which it was grown.

**Grant Evaluation Committee:** A subgroup of the Urban Agriculture Microgrant Program that will review the grant applications based on the Review Criteria and recommend awardees to the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Commissioner.

**Grantee:** The organization or entity is awarded an Urban Agriculture Microgrant from CDA.

## **Eligibility Information**

Eligible entities can be either non-profit entities or for-profit entities.

## **Eligible Activities & Expenses**

This grant encourages projects which aim to address needs and challenges of urban producers throughout Colorado. The State in its sole discretion, determines if a project type and/or expense is ineligible or eligible for this grant.

## **Eligible Project Types**

This grant funds projects that support Colorado's urban farms through actionable improvements, capacity building, and community engagement. Eligible project types include projects that may help positively impact an urban grower, urban farm, and/or their greater community.

This includes on-farm improvements, implementation of conservation practices, increasing production, purchase or repair of infrastructure and/or equipment, new opportunities for community engagement, education, and/or outreach, tapping into new markets, hiring interns and fellows, and diversifying income streams.

High ranking projects will help resolve pain points for producers by creating ways to conserve time, money, and/or resources, improving resilience to climate change impacts and/or conserving natural resources, increasing community understanding of agriculture, improving the farm's ability to market products and access local markets, increasing labor capacity, and/or expanding operations.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Purchase or repair of tools and equipment
- Soil assessments and/or remediation
- Wildlife and pollinator habitat creation and preservation
- Community outreach projects & events
- Coalition building
- Marketing materials and market equipment
- Intern, contractor, and/or volunteer stipends

- Farmworker housing & benefits
- Expanding growing space
- Agritourism projects
- Production of value added products

## **Ineligible Project Types**

Ineligible project types include:

- Funds to individual urban growers or hobbyists for homesteads, backyard subsistence gardens, equine facilities, or community gardens
- Funds to institutions including schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, etc.
- Research projects
- Funds to for profit or nonprofit entities that do not produce agricultural products
- Travel expenses
- Leases and purchase of land/water
- Staff expenses as related to all projects aside from community engagement, education and coalition building style projects
- Projects already funded partially or in full through other grants, state funds, or similar.

## **Eligible Expenses**

All expenses must be directly related to the goals and outcomes in the grantee application.

Eligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Purchase and installation of infrastructure and equipment
- Purchase of materials related to implementation of conservation practices
- Purchase and design of print and digital materials
- Event/meeting space fees
- Speaker fees
- Training equipment and supplies
- Market and food hub fees
- Workforce development
- Building materials and building costs

- Equipment to process, produce, and package value added products
- Staff expenses as related to community engagement, education and coalition building style projects

## Grant Timeline

This timeline is for information and planning purposes only. The schedule of activities listed are “estimated” and may be subject to change depending on the needs of the State.

### Schedule of Activities

Activity	Date
Grant Application Opens	December 16, 2025
Grant Outreach	December 16, 2025 - January 23, 2026
Live Grant Guidelines Webinar	January 7, 2026
Application Deadline	January 26, 2026, 8:00 am MT
Final Grant Selection by CDA	February 2026
Notice of Award	By February 20, 2026 via email
Grant Period Opens	Effective as soon as the notice of award is received
End of Grant Period	June 30, 2026
Final Grant Report Due	July 30, 2026

Grants are paid on a reimbursement basis.

Any work performed prior to the issuance of the notice of award is not eligible for reimbursement.

The grant period ends June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026, the end of the State’s fiscal year. All funds must be invoiced no later than June 30, 2026.

Grant awards may not exceed \$5,000.00 for a single entity application. After application submissions and prior to award, CDA may work with applicants to refine budget requests as the department deems fit.

## **Application Process**

Interested applicants must submit a grant application to be considered. Applicants are asked to fill out a google form with all the required information and materials. The full application must be submitted via google forms by the grant deadline, January 26th, 2026 at 8:00am MT.

## **Review Process**

Applications will be reviewed by an evaluation committee of industry experts and state staff. The committee will make recommendations for awards to the Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture for final review and approval.

## **Invoicing & Reporting Requirements**

Grantees must submit invoices by June 30, 2026. All billable work must be completed prior to June 30, 2026.

Grantees will be required to submit a Final Report by July 30, 2026 via Google Forms. CDA will provide a form to fill out, through which the grantee will be expected to report on:

1. Project successes
2. Lessons learned
3. Project impact/expected impact
4. Project photos
5. Additional supporting information as necessary

If awarded, CDA may publicize information about the grant award, including but not limited to the grantee's name, award amount, project summary, and outcomes in reports, press releases, websites, or other public communication material related to the Urban Agriculture Microgrant Program.

## Review Criteria

Category	Description	Reviewer Questions	Points
<b>Project Goals</b>	This funding is designed to to concentrate on small scale projects crucial to expanding urban production, implementing conservation practices, educating community members, and addressing other common challenges faced by urban producers. The purpose of the grant is intentionally open ended so that applicants are encouraged to make use of the funding in a way that meets their unique needs. Applicants may submit creative and innovative projects which may not match the standard examples listed in the guidelines.	Does the project description offer sufficient detail and clear objectives on what the applicant is looking to accomplish?	30
<b>Project Impact</b>	Projects should have a direct positive impact on the producer/operation and/or the community in which they grow. The funding is designed to support producers in providing access to fresh, local agricultural products for their communities and conserving natural resources on urban farms. High ranking projects will quickly resolve pain points for producers by creating ways to conserve time, money, and/or resources,	Will the project have a positive impact on the producer, the operation, and/or the community which they serve?	30

	improving resilience to climate change impacts and/or conserving natural resources, increasing community understanding of agriculture, improving the farm's ability to market products and access local markets, increasing labor capacity, and/or expanding operations.		
<b>Project Timeline</b>	The project's timeline should accurately reflect a realistic timeline for the project at hand. While the project itself will not need to be complete by June 30th, all purchases must be made prior to this date.	Is the project timeline realistic and does the applicant intend to complete all purchases related to the grant prior to June 30, 2026?	20
<b>Project Budget</b>	The project budget should realistically cover project materials including both award funds and any match (if necessary).	Does the applicant demonstrate a clear understanding of their budget and the financial obligations involved in completing this project? If the budget is followed, will the project likely succeed?	20
		<b>Total Points</b>	100