**National Association of Conservation Districts**

**Urban Agriculture Conservation Initiative FY2021 grant proposal**

**1. Applicant Information:**

# Contact Person:

Gooding Soil Conservation District

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**Project collaborators and grant co-authors:**

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Add someone from Shoshone

**2. Project Title:**

Gooding Community Garden expansion, projecting a successful model to neighboring communities and expanding our reach by serving new clientele. Supporting urban agriculture, conservation education, and fighting food insecurity.

**3. Brief project description:**

The project will allow the Gooding Community garden to build upon years of experience and community contacts by expanding its services and reach. It will also help launch a similar community garden in the City of Shoshone, Idaho, where there is a significant need. Both projects will apply high tunnels.

**4. Amount of the request:** $50,000.00

**5. Are you applying on behalf of a conservation district according to your state’s legislation?**

Yes, we are organized as an arm of the state government to assist local landowners using their natural resources’ best management practices.

**6. Board Resolutio**n:

See resolution adopted by the Gooding Soil Conservation District (GSCD) and signatures of board members.

**7. Previous UAC grantee:**

Yes, in 2019, the GSCD was awarded a $42,000 NACD grant to revitalize the Gooding Community Garden (GCG) area that had been underutilized for several years due to the lack of resources. This grant helped launch a thriving community garden program and demonstrate many conservation practices. The GCG community plots produced and delivered 4,200 lb of fresh vegetables to seven institutions serving underserved audiences in two of the county’s four cities.

In the 2020 season, GCG operations were sustained by volunteers who committed time and local companies that provided some funds. We distributed 6,500 lbs of vegetables to the same institutions served in 2019, increasing the number of people reached. Conservation practices showcased included cover crops, drought-tolerant grasses, pollinator habitat, fruit trees, and composting. Invited Students from elementary and high schools attended educational tours, plantings, and community projects for their state Envirothon contest. University of Idaho and District staff have done many programs with Master Gardeners, community organizations, Boy and Girl Scouts, churches, and other civic groups. The programming focused on how the community can make an impact on their environment through simple landscaping and lifestyle choices to benefit water quality, wildlife habitat and native plant restorations.

**8. Applicant Qualifications:**

The Gooding Soil Conservation District has experience working in rural and urbanized settings through diverse projects. Organizing and coordinating many workshops, trainings, tours and events that deal with urban and agricultural conservation. Promoting windbreaks and cover crops, establishing demonstration plots with landowners on cover crops, soil health, gardening and water management. The district regularly gives presentations on resource topics to local schools, businesses, and other surrounding districts. We have a vast network of landowners that apply conservation practices and we regularly communicate with our local legislators, County Commissioner’s on funding issues and important district project needs. We present displays, flyers, brochures and advertisements for on-going projects, reaching a wide variety of audiences. GSCD members have a diverse set of skills and knowledge on farming, conservation practices, farm equipment utilization, and problem solving that adds a community knowledge base to the project. Additional expertise will be added through partner organizations and individuals, in particular the University of Idaho Extension and their Gooding County Extension Educator, Master Gardeners, and an AmeriCorps Instructor, the City of Gooding and their City Public Works Director, the USDA-NRCS and its personnel, and FFA advisors from two cities in Gooding and one in Lincoln Counties.

**9. District Capacity:**

The GSCD is unique because they share their Administrative Assistant with the Wood River Soil and Water Conservation District in Shoshone, Idaho. This has resulted on many special projects done together. Each district has worked on urban-rural conservation activities such as annual tree sales, earth day, arbor day events, the “Trees Against the Wind” initiative, and the community garden initial concept. We partner with NRCS on projects and hold locally-led meetings with many partners to discuss resource concerns and priorities. This project will increase the district work and capacity in urban and urban-rural interface conservation practices. Working with our partners like the University of Idaho Extension, Gooding and Lincoln Counties and the Cities of Gooding and Shoshone, will bring exceptional expertise on these topics and, at the same time, build capacity by developing new networks. The project will allow the district to extend its reach to more communities within Gooding and Lincoln counties and the Magic Valley region. Many urban areas around face similar challenges related to conservation, and in several conservation districts and government institutions meetings, participants were very enthusiastic about our GCG results and how to replicate this initiative in their area.

**10. Project Description:**

The GSCD, University of Idaho Extension and neighboring Wood River Soil and Water Conservation District located in Shoshone, Idaho will work together to build upon the Gooding Community Garden and establish a community garden in Shoshone. We will expand the GCG by purchasing a greenhouse/high tunnel. This will be used to extend and improve the growing season, but to also impact students, with many life lessons on weather, horticulture, fertilizers and climate conditions. We then plan to grow our own seeds for vegetables and flowers for pollinator habitat such as Bees and Monarch Butterflies. This will allow us to reduce operating costs. Tree seedlings will be raised in the high tunnel and then sold to the Wood River SWCD for their annual Tree Sale to increase project sustainability. It is our goal to continue educating and informing Gooding & Lincoln County members of different conservation practices.

Gooding and Lincoln counties are in a rural community in south-central Idaho. Despite agriculture being the main activities in these two counties, two specific situations inherent to this grant’s objective occur in the county. First, conservation practices adoption, especially urban conservation practices, are lagging. The need to promote, educate, and encourage citizens to adopt more urban and agricultural conservation practices, as well as develop urban agriculture, is evident. Second, even though Gooding and Lincoln are top agricultural production counties, food insecurities, lag on access to fresh produce, and healthy nutritional choices are issues that disproportionally affect at-disadvantage and high-risk community members. Food insecurity is disproportionally prevalent in low-income families, elderly people, migrant laborer families, and individuals recovering from substance abuse.

The GCG project aims to tackle both situations. The present phase II will expand the success of the GCG re-launch (see Applicant Eligibility), focusing on increasing the demonstration, education, and promotion of conservation practices and establishment of urban agriculture in rural communities. A new important component of the new grant funds to be used at the GCG is the addition of a high tunnel or greenhouse to grow part of the seedlings to be planted in the garden and extend the season of vegetable production. Extending the growing season will result in increased production of vegetables to distribute among the community. Shading and fruit trees for distribution and sale within the county communities will also be grown in the tunnel, incrementing such conservation practices. Most of these tree seedlings will be purchased by the Wood River SCD which has established a successful regional tree sale for the last 40 years. This will help to generate income for the GCG, increasing the project sustainability. We will work on new plots showcasing conservation practices and urban vegetable gardening, including edible landscaping, winter cover crops, shade and fruit trees, high-density vegetable gardening, and rainwater collection. The project will also improve the garden and establish demos in the city of Shoshone related to low water demand gardens and grasses, stormwater containment, water conservation, pollinator habitat, and edible landscaping. The city of Shoshone plans to use its community garden as a launching point to promote pollinator habitats within the city limits and become a certified Bee and Monarch City USA. The project will include the delivery of classes on topics related to each demo coordinated by the Extension Service, NRCS, and the GSCD. With grant funds, selected volunteers will receive high-level training like Master Gardener, Food Safety Advisor, Master Composter, Victory Garden, and other training to allow both districts to increase their capacity to assist their communities on conservation and food insecurity related topics.

To expand the reach to in-need underserved community members, we will increase production at community plots, teaming with local producers who are willing to share some of their production, and start a gleaning initiative to capture fruit or produce that goes to waste. We will expand the number of institutions receiving fresh food help. Classes will be delivered at different locations and with diverse partners on topics related to community development, nutrition, family budgeting, healthy choices, and other topics.

**11. Geographic Focus**

The Community Garden is located in the City of Gooding, Idaho. The other community that will be served is Shoshone, Idaho and all of Lincoln County. The project’s focus is two-fold, on conservation practices that will be applicable to both urban and agricultural settings and on combating food insecurity of citizens mainly concentrated in the urban and peri-urban areas of the county.

These communities have in common a high percentage of low-income families (Gooding County has a Qualified Opportunity Zone, 16047960100), all schools in both counties qualify for supplemental lunch programs (ID Department of Education, 2020). Also, a high percentage of individuals struggle to access fresh, healthy food. Small farmers leaving their production areas and livelihood due to consolidation of production land, and tendency of young adults to leave the area looking elsewhere for opportunities to work or business establishment.

Food insecurity, lack of knowledge on how to prepare healthy foods, lack of access to affordable fresh vegetables, low financial literacy, and lack of local resources to educate citizens on urban conservation practices are at the forefront of this project proposal to serve the communities in both counties.

**12. Project Goals and Timeline:**

1. Project goals: Purchase and install the greenhouse / high tunnel for both community gardens and replicate the model of the GCG to make available raised beds or garden plots in Shoshone.
2. Increase the number of demonstration plots for diverse urban and agricultural conservation practices.
3. Increase the production and extend the season of communal vegetable garden plots to
4. produce food for in-need community members and organizations. Plant and grow tree seedlings to sell and distribute within the communities in the county to increase the number of trees that provide food and shade in those communities
5. Increase knowledge sharing capacity by targeting training to volunteers.

6) Deliver educational events at both community gardens, increasing participation of partners and serving in-need community members.

**Timeline:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **March 2021** | **April** | **May** | **June** | **July** | **August** |
| Purchase and Install High Tunnel/Green House  Re-hiring GCG program Coordinator | |  |  |  |  |
|  | Hiring helper |  |  |  |  |
| Meeting with partner organizations and individuals to assess needs, strengths and action plans. Plant tree seedlings after high tunnel is built. | | |  | NACD  quarterly report | Showcase program at  Gooding County Fair |
|  |  | Prepare and plant diverse plots | | |  |
|  |  | Build edible garden plots | |  |  |
|  |  |  | Build runoff infiltration plot | | |
|  | NACD quarterly report |  |  | Grow, harvest, and deliver vegetables | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **September 2021** | **October** | **November** | **December** | **January** | | **February 2022** |
| Grow, harvest, and deliver vegetables | | |  |  |  | |
|  | Plant winter cover crops |  | |  |  | |
| Deliver classes and programs | | | | | | |
|  | NACD  quarterly report |  |  |  | NACD final report | |

**13. Project Sustainability:**

The project sustainability will be developed during the year-long life of the grant. However, the project intends to raise tree seedlings and pot them in 1-gallon containers to then sell to the Wood River SWCD to help sustain the garden cost. Paramount to this built-in sustainability will be the work of the Community Garden and program coordinator hired by grant funds and the main partners’ work, that is the Gooding soil Conservation District, The University of Idaho Extension, the USDA-NRCS, and the City of Gooding. Secondary partners and individual volunteers will also be essential to the sustainability of the project. Education and training encompass courses and educational events by the University of Idaho Extension, local schools, conservation districts, and other partners. Indirect costs are administrative duties.

During this grant’s one-year life, the hired coordinator and all partners will bring a solid volunteer base and donors to assure the project’s continuity operatively and financially. This grant will be paramount to launch the project into the future and assure that the diverse activities generated during the life of the grant take off within the community.

**14.** **Project Promotion:**

The project will be showcased locally through the promotion of classes, programs, and events generated by the program. Every year the District host Legislative, Division and State meetings that we can showcase and promote our garden. The District, Extension, and NRCS have a booth at the Gooding County Fair, the county’s biggest event. Through partners, the project will be showcased at dozens of events in the Magic Valley, impacting an area with several cities. The City of Gooding produces a monthly newsletter that can promote the program and its outcomes. The University of Idaho Extension Educator, in conjunction with the district and other partners, would generate scholarly products to be presented at appropriate national events and published at refereed journals and trade magazines. Due to the nature of the program, interest from local news organizations is warranted. This will help to increase the promotion of the program and its outcomes in the nearby communities. As the Shoshone community proactively looked to recreate the GCG project, we expect other communities around the Magic Valley will follow suit. The district, all partners, and volunteers will promote the program in both counties, help bring more volunteers, expand the served audiences, and bring the project and its outcomes to local business’s attention that can support it economically or otherwise on a yearly basis. A set of yearly “sponsors” will help with the project’s sustainability and promotion with materials containing educational and informative content. This material will be distributed among those receiving fresh vegetable assistance, NGOs, and at several events in both counties. Some examples of dual-purpose educational-promotion materials are cooking recipes delivered to people receiving vegetables to use those specific vegetables in their meal preparation. These flyers or brochures will include the educational material and sponsor’s logos and contact info. This way, all involved, from the GCG, the food recipient, the sponsors, and NGOs, will help promote the project in diverse ways.

**15. Project Budget:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Expense Item** | **NACD Funds** | **Matching funds (25%)** |
| Salary and benefits | $22,000 | $8,000 |
| Employee & volunteers support (training, mileage, etc.) | $6,000 | $2,500 |
| Consultant/contractor | $8,000 | $1,000 |
| 1- 20 x30 high tunnels with plastic enclosing  1-20 x50  (no more 15%) | $7,500 | $2,500 |
|  |  |  |
| Administrative | $5,000 | 3,000 |
| Other & contingency | $2,000 |  |
| Total | $50,000 | $16,500 |

**16. Matching funds**

Salary and benefits: Include salary and benefits for the actual Gooding Soil Conservation District Administrative Manager. She will oversee the grant employee, be instrumental in directing and managing the project, directing reports, and establishing the project’s future sustainability in coordination with partners. It also includes time commitments from the University of Idaho Extension Educator, who will direct many of the Extension programs or classes associated with this project.

Employee support and training: include training to be provided by the University of Idaho and other partners, mileage paid for partners when working on the project. Supplies, equipment, and promotion: include water for watering the community garden during the entire season as well as mowing services provided by the City of Gooding. Irrigation supplies and some small tools will be provided by the District and the University of Idaho Extension. Cover crops seeds and seed spreader provided by the University of Idaho Extension. Use of a no-till small planter supplied by the District. Community Volunteers to assist with gardening to include 4-H, FFA, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Elders, 5th-grade students, High School Students, Envirothon Team, and Gooding Bug Crew.

**17. Budget Justification:**

Salary and benefits: A Project and community garden coordinator will be hired at $16/hr for a total of 800 hours. An assistant laborer will be hired at $10/hr for 525 hours, both to be distributed during the grant life. Benefits and withholdings were calculated at 18%. Employee and volunteer support includes training (basic and advanced), mileage to visit stakeholders, partners, and other cities to promote the program and potentially replicate it in those cities. Consultant/contractor includes hiring contractors to provide concrete work, electricity and water, erect the high tunnel or greenhouses, rototilling plots and crops, cutting/bailing when needed, excavation work, etc. Supplies/ equipment includes the acquisition of two high tunnels or greenhouses (one for Gooding and one for Shoshone gardens). We will work with a local innovator that has developed a high tunnel or greenhouse model using forest harvested refuse wood. This model will repurpose such wood, reducing the environmental footprint of the structure. In addition, the structure will have lave rock wall bases (a local resource) that will help increase the thermal inertia of the tunnel or greenhouse. Office supplies include paper and office consumables, copying/printing costs, small tools and supplies for gardening, seeds of vegetables and pollinator habitat and shrubs. Administrative includes the coverage of district costs and district administration manager small portion of work time. Other includes a 4% for unpredicted expenses.

**18. Letters of Support:**

See letters attached.