

# The Sustainability Fund Project Application

## Background and Context:

The NCSU Sustainability Fund Advisory Board announces the second annual request for proposals to advance sustainability on campus. This RFP is for projects that have high immediate impact or for longer-term projects that have significant potential for high impact. Projects can focus on education, outreach, infrastructure or any other component of campus sustainability. Examples include workshop development and sponsorship, symposium development, projects aimed at some aspect of sustainability, pilot projects to demonstrate potential for successful use of longer-term funding, large-scale infrastructure improvements, or other creative uses of these student-fee derived funds. Faculty or staff directed projects are appropriate if accompanied by a statement indicating how students will participate in the project or how students will benefit from project completion. Students are encouraged (but not required) to develop projects in conjunction with a faculty mentor or advisor. Priority will be given to projects with matching funds from other public or private sources. Letters of support from advisors and partners are strongly encouraged (letters of support from additional funding partners are required).

***Proposals are due February 27, 2015. Funding decisions will be made by May 1, 2015. Projects begin July 1, 2015. Mid-year reports are Due December 1, 2015 and final reports are due by June 15, 2016.***

**All materials must be submitted electronically. Please complete the following information:**

Application Date: February 27, 2015

Project Title: SOUL Garden Bed Rebuild and Signage

Total Requested Amount:

\*Total available for funding is \$120,000 for all projects in the current funding cycle. Individual project funding amounts will vary depending on number and scope of projects funded. In exceptional cases, funding renewal will be considered with re-application.

## **Applicant Information**

Name of Primary Contact:

Please mark your status with an "X": Student Staff Faculty

Campus Affiliation (Name of Organization, Department, or Office): SOUL Garden

Email Address: cmmcente@ncsu.edu

Cell and/or Work Phone:

Campus Mailing Address:

**If you are a student, please provide the following information:**

This project is solely my own **OR**

X This project is proposed on behalf of (student org., campus dept., etc.): SOUL Garden

Name of Faculty or Staff Project Advisor (if applicable):

Faculty or Staff Project Advisor Contact Information:

Email Address:

Campus Address:

Phone Number: Day-time/Work:      Cell Phone:

***Please organize your proposal into the following 8 sections and answer the prompting questions where applicable. Total proposal length should not exceed 6 pages (1 inch margins, 11 point font). Additional documentation (e.g., letters of support, maps, drawings, etc.) should be submitted as appendices and clearly labeled to aid committee review (does not count toward 6 page limit).***

***Please include a bulleted list of any attachments (including file names) here:***

- Maps and photos.pdf
- sketches.pdf
- SupportLetter.pdf

**Please email your application materials to [dasa-sfab-chair@ncsu.edu](mailto:dasa-sfab-chair@ncsu.edu). Please include “Sustainability Fund Application” in the subject line. You will receive electronic confirmation that your materials have been received.**

***Please review the application materials and online content carefully. If you still have questions, please email the Fund Advisory Board Chair at [dasa-sfab-chair@ncsu.edu](mailto:dasa-sfab-chair@ncsu.edu) with your specific question.***

## **1) Project Description**

Provide a 1 - 2 page summary of your project with enough detail that reviewers will clearly understand your project goal(s), your approach, and how you expect your project to impact some aspect of sustainability on campus.

### *Vision*

The vision of this project is to improve the SOUL Garden into an eye-catching, educational, and practical space that is not only useful for gardening but also enlightens the many students and community members that pass by it each day.

### *Goals*

Our first goal is to rebuild one of the garden beds. Our current beds were built with untreated wood several years ago, and now are beginning to rot and fall apart. The new bed design uses concrete blocks, which will last many years, are easily removable if necessary, and are low in cost. Meeting this goal will allow us to focus on growing, education and events instead of constantly using stop-gap measures to keep our beds working.

Our second goal is to fence in the rebuilt bed as well as the existing beds. We plan to use modular fence units meant to keep out both small and large mammals that often plague the garden and destroy crops. These fence units will be fully enclosed, domed structures made from PVC pipe and poultry netting. The structures will be fitted to each individual bed and will be removable for easy access to the garden during workdays. By adding transparent plastic, some of our tunnel-shaped fence modules will be able to double as season-extending hoop houses. We believe this will be the best fencing design for the garden because it will be low profile, it will avoid impeding access to large areas of the garden, and it will effectively keep out all our common pests. Meeting this goal will allow us to harvest more thanks to less crop damage from animals. This means we can give more produce to our volunteers and to the Interfaith Food Shuttle, which provides food to many people in need.

Our third goal is to install educational signage throughout the garden that will teach gardeners and passersby about growing, composting, pollinator plants, and other aspects of organic gardening. These signs will also let people know more about the SOUL Garden specifically and how they can get involved with it. Meeting this goal will help us constantly recruit the new gardeners that we need to sustain the garden in addition to better educating the public.

#### *Approach*

Our approach to each of these goals will be, first, to source safe, durable materials as listed in the budget. We will use volunteer labor to build the bed and install the fencing. We will also get regular garden volunteers to help design, construct and install the educational signage.

#### *Impact*

The impact of this project will be to improve real-life, hands-on education about sustainable small-scale food production at NC State. While many students learn about sustainability and horticulture in their classes, there are fewer opportunities to actually try their hand at growing their own food. Some professors have used the SOUL Garden directly as an opportunity for their students to apply what they have learned in class. Many students come to the garden on their own to practice their skills. After spending some time at the SOUL Garden, students become both more interested and more confident in their ability to grow food without using harmful chemicals or degrading the Earth. The infrastructure improvements will allow that empowerment to continue, having the most impact on the students who spend week after week caring for the garden. The educational signage will extend educational opportunities to people just passing by, who may know little or nothing about gardening or sustainability. These people will have access to some information about the garden, and will know how to get more involved if they so choose.

## **2) Anticipated Outcomes/Impact**

What outcomes do you anticipate? How will your project improve student life, infrastructure, education, outreach, operations, or other aspects of sustainability?

This grant will allow the SOUL Garden to continue improving student life by providing an upgraded outdoor space where people can gather to learn about and enjoy nature and gardening. New signage will improve our ability to educate regular gardeners, one-time volunteers and other students and community members who visit Lake Raleigh. The signs will also serve to draw more people to workdays, where they will have a chance to talk to people who are interested in and knowledgeable about not only organic gardening, but other areas of sustainability as well. The SOUL Garden is a good jumping off point for people to get involved in the larger sustainability scene at NC State. This project will only improve our

ability to get people started.

How will you educate the campus community about your project?

This project inherently draws more attention to the SOUL Garden by beautifying the garden and adding signage that will direct people to our website and ways to get involved. In addition, we will continue to promote the SOUL Garden as we always have, by participating at Campus Connections-type tabling events, visiting horticulture- and environment-related classes to introduce the garden, and keeping our website up-to-date with all our ongoing projects.

### **3) Project Benchmarking & Innovation**

Have similar projects been implemented on other campuses? Why should this be done at NC State?

Many colleges have community gardens, including several of our peer institutions like Georgia Tech and Michigan State University. These gardens are an important part of student life and student learning, and they all need resources to succeed.

We have already built two beds at the SOUL Garden using the new concrete block design. These beds have worked well for us over the past year, and we expect that they will last a long time. They are also visually pleasing, as you can see in the attached photographs.

We have also built a PVC hoop house similar in design to the structures we plan on using for fencing. After a full season of using that structure, we are confident that we have worked out the kinks and that this fencing application will be successful.

NC State already has educational signage installed along Rocky Branch Stream. These signs allow passersby to learn about the creek, its restoration, and the wildlife that inhabit it. Our signs will likewise educate visitors about the garden, including specific plants, gardening techniques, and ways to get involved.

### **4) Metrics for Assessment**

How will you measure and evaluate your project's success?

The success of the bed rebuild and fencing will be measured by the number of years that the bed and fencing remain useable, and the increase or decrease in crop destruction by animals. We will continue to take notes on what happens in the garden and keep track of which crops are getting eaten and from which beds. This will allow us to see any improvements that the new fence has over the current setup, in which we have a low fence around one bed, and the rest are unprotected.

Right now, most of our new gardeners hear about the garden by word of mouth, or by walking through while we happen to be having a work day. We will be able to measure the success of the signs as a recruitment tool by continuing to survey our new members about how they learned about the garden.

### **5) Cost Savings**

Will the project result in cost savings?  Yes  No

If yes, what is the payback period?

**6) Broader Vision**

What potential does this project have for long term benefits to the campus community? Is there potential for your project to be scaled for broader community application?

As the SOUL Garden becomes more well-known and more successful, its existence opens up opportunities to add other small gardens elsewhere, both on NC State's campus and at other universities. If those opportunities are realized, eventually everyone on campus could have convenient access to a place to get hands-on experience and grow their own food.

**7) Project Milestone**

Indicate your major project milestones including dates (month/year) of expected completion.

Purchase bed and fencing materials: August, 2015

Dismantle old bed and build new bed: September, 2015

Complete fencing: September, 2015

Midyear report: November, 2015

Research and write sign messages: January, 2016

Purchase signage materials: January, 2016

Build signs: February, 2016

Install signs: March, 2016

Final Report: June, 2016

**8) Project Budget & Justification**

What is the total project budget? What is your plan for sustained funding? *Please include a detailed budget that includes each of the following categories: personnel, supplies and materials, travel, and other.*

If project receives funding, applicants will be expected to report project status to the Sustainability Fund Advisory Board and notify the Board of any major changes in scope. The Board reserves the right to discontinue the funding of any project if the project is determined to be unattainable in the time frame or deviating too far from its original funding purpose. It is the duty of funded projects to acknowledge funding from the NCSU Sustainability Fund through available channels.