



Office of Sustainability, Climate Action & Resilience

DATE: 2/22/2023
TO: Board of County Commissioners
FROM: Tim Broderick, Senior Sustainability Strategist and Susie Strife, Director of Sustainability, Climate Action & Resilience
RE: Memo of Approval for the Sustainable Food and Agricultural Fund

In November 2016, Boulder County voters approved a .125 percent sales tax starting in 2020 to support countywide sustainability infrastructure and programs. The scope of projects funded by the sustainability tax will include energy efficiency and renewable energy services, zero waste, sustainable transportation, water conservation, and local food and sustainable agriculture. Given the ballot initiative specifically called out the need to address the priorities of local farmers and agriculture producers, Boulder County's Office of Sustainability, Climate Action & Resilience created a "Local Food and Agriculture Grant Fund" of approximately \$405,000 dedicated to supporting environmental sustainability projects that benefit Boulder County agricultural lands and food systems.

This funding opportunity is dedicated to supporting four broad local food and agriculture areas:

1. On-farm regenerative agriculture and soil health practices;
2. farmer/producer education, conferences, and workshops that focus on sustainable and regenerative agriculture demonstrations;
3. on-farm and farmer's market infrastructure; and
4. sustainable local food and crop production.

The grant fund launched in November 2021, and Boulder County businesses, non-profit organizations, and government entities were invited to apply, \$380,000 was set aside for large projects and \$25,000 was allocated for smaller budget. Applications were then reviewed by a screening committee made of local food and agricultural experts from Boulder County Parks & Open Space, CSU Extension, Boulder County's Office of Sustainability Climate Action & Resiliency, Land Use, Boulder Valley and Longmont Conservation Districts, Boulder County's Parks and Open Space, and a selected Rancher /Farmer.

Boulder County's Office of Sustainability is seeking approval of recommended projects below totaling \$405,000 in funding.

LARGE FUND RECOMMENDATIONS

Saint Vrain School District, Project Sky Garden

Recommended Grant: \$100,000

Project Summary:

The Saint Vrain School district will build a new vertical garden education and entrepreneurship program at St. Vrain's Career Elevation and Technology Center. In

addition to serving all 120 students in the Center's agriscience pathway, the new vertical garden will also support a paid afterschool student project team, where students will learn and apply skills in agriscience, entrepreneurship, and technology.

Harvest of All First Nations: Corn Festival

Recommended Grant: \$20,000

Project Summary:

The 2nd Annual Harvest of All First Nations Corn Festival will foster cultural and ecological regeneration by reconnecting BIPOC + communities with their traditional foodways. The event will bring together community and experts to share locally-grown heritage foods and Indigenous Knowledge through workshops and hands-on activities. The first festival was a great success with hundreds in attendance. Harvest of All First Nations hopes to again inspire others to create their own cooperative projects that focus on empowerment, education and the rematriation of the land.

Boulder Valley Ranch, Compost Spreading and Irrigation

Recommended Grant: \$41,350

Project Summary:

Boulder Valley Ranch will use funds to purchase a medium-scale compost spreader and threepoint hitch mounted ditch cleaner. Boulder Valley ranch will utilize the equipment throughout their public and private lands of more than 3,000 acres of hay and pasture. This equipment will allow Boulder Valley Ranch to better cycle nutrients on-farm and allow for more efficient irrigation water delivery. Both on farm practices will improve plant productivity and, in turn, the soil health and microbiome.

Speedwell Farm and Garden, Building Resilience Through Perennial Cropping and On Farm Fertility

Recommended Grant: \$40,000

Project Summary:

Speedwell Farm and Garden aim's to build long term community resilience through regenerative agriculture systems. Using perennial cropping and closed-loop fertility, Speedwell will transform farm by-products and waste streams into viable inputs and organic amendments in an ecological and effective manner. These circular fertility systems alongside annual/perennial market gardens improve soil health and access to local food.

Wild Wellspring Winter, CSA Expansion Project

Recommended Grant: \$55,697

Project Summary:

Wild Wellspring Farm's funding will go towards on farm infrastructure to help meet the growing demand for fresh, local food in the cold winter months. More specifically dollars will be spent on increasing crop production under protection, more efficient wash/pack/storage systems and on farm equipment. The project will increase soil fertility through increased cover crop planting and no-till practices.

Rocky Mountain Pumpkin Ranch, Organic Grain Storage

Recommended Grant: \$60,000

Project Summary:

Funding will go towards grain storage for organic corn, organic wheat, and organic grains grown across 2,000 acres of USDA organic certified lands. This will help address the limited supply of storage space in Boulder County for grain bins. The grain bins will also be available for other organic farmers to store their harvest which improves the economics and access of growing organic in Boulder County.

Boulder County's Farmers Market (BCFM), Strengthening Regional Food and Purchasing

Recommended Grant: \$61,988

Project Summary:

BCFM funding will go towards launching a year-round online marketplace to connect institutional buyers with locally produced food. This effort will increase access to the regional food hub serving local food producers and community members in Boulder County. Tapping into the economics of scale that comes with institutional level procurement will help medium size growers find stable markets.

SMALL FUND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustainable Alliances, Inc – *Project Qanil*: \$4,860

The mission of Sustainable Alliances Inc. is to protect wildlands of significant biological and cultural diversity through the development of ecosystem services. Project Qanil, Sustainable Alliances, Inc. will develop adequate supply of native seed for post-fire restoration through a holistic, regenerative farm model. In addition, they plan to launch an on-site bilingual market, conduct outreach to underserved communities, and develop a “Dia de los Muertos Garden-in-a-Box” which will include native plant materials that are used in traditional ofrendas.

Community Fruit Rescue – *Harvest Infrastructure Expansion Project*: \$4,972

Community Fruit Rescue (CFR) harvests and distributes surplus urban fruit growing in BoCo to reduce waste, minimize greenhouse gas emissions, and increase equitable access to healthy, local food. Funding for CFR will expand its harvest footprint by installing a new centralized Harvest Hub in a high need location. This second hub will store additional harvest equipment and serve as a home for their new DIY Harvest Kit rental program.

Victory Gardens – *Victory Garden's Greenhouse*: \$ 5,000

Victory Garden's mission is to build food security and sovereignty in Nederland and surrounding mountain communities through the development of local food systems. Victory Gardens will build a greenhouse with net-zero energy using recycled carbon neutral materials. This greenhouse will serve as an educational tool to demonstrate how regenerative and organic local food production can be achieved in high-altitude locations.

High Plains Biochar and Yellow Barn Farm: *High Plains Biochar RocketChar 301 Life Cycle Analysis on Yellow Barn Farm: \$5,000*

High Plains Biochar (HPB) works with people who have wood and agricultural waste to generate heat, biochar, and carbon credits. Funding will go towards HPB partnering with Yellow Barn Farm, a regenerative farming operation in Longmont, to conduct a life cycle analysis to provide detailed information on the carbon emissions reduction and carbon farming benefits of replacing propane greenhouse gas heating with cogen biochar heat.

Sustainable Living Designs: *Colorado Backyard Fruit: \$4,750*

Sustainable Living Designs is an edible landscaping company that utilizes permaculture principles and incorporates regenerative agriculture practices. They design, install, and maintain edible landscapes for homeowners to convert lawns into food forests to lower water usage, increase carbon sequestration, and promote food security. Through this project, Sustainable Living Designs will set up an edible plant nursery at their business address in Longmont, including 200 perennials that are adapted to Colorado's growing conditions. The plants will later be planted in the backyards of homeowners throughout Boulder County.