

Sustainability Project Fund Application

I. Project Overview

Project summary:

Campus Crops (SPF projects #8, 35, and 72) is a student-run urban gardening initiative at McGill University's downtown campus, with gardening spaces located behind the McGill School of Environment building and on the patio behind the James Administration building. Our main activities revolve around gardening and organizing events such as workshops and potlucks, alone or in collaboration with other student or community groups and organizations. Our group has multiple objectives, namely helping people learn how to grow food in an urban setting through a hands-on approach, raising awareness around issues like food security, and providing Midnight Kitchen, another student group on campus, with fresh produce for their meals. In doing so, we hope to improve the autonomy of students regarding food, foster discussion and action concerning food-related issues, and provide students with local food of quality. All students can join Campus Crops (the terrace is wheelchair accessible) and we aim at creating a safer space for our work and discussions.

Campus Crops has had the chance to benefit from SPF funding during the past three years, namely for an expansion of our gardening area to a container garden in 2010, as well as to hire a coordinator to facilitate the expansion; for hiring another garden coordinator in 2011 for other projects and restructuring the group, including a closer collaboration with Midnight Kitchen and improving the documentation about gardening and event organizing for future members; and finally in 2012 to hire another garden coordinator, this time to solve the problem of an invasive species threatening our garden, to help structure the activities of a group mainly composed of newcomers (as almost all more experienced volunteers were leaving), and to improve the yield of both gardens, volunteer recruitment and outreach.

Despite the efforts put into ensuring the long-term survival of the collective, Campus Crops is still struggling with poor documentation and dispersed knowledge (resting mainly in the heads of the members), as well as a lack of transitioning and integration structures. This is why the tasks of the garden coordinator this year will be focused, aside from the day-to-day coordination of the garden, on designing a training manual in conjunction with a training workshop for new volunteers, as well as producing an exit report with recommendations on gardening and the general structure of the collective. We think that the exit report and the training manual/workshop would provide good structures and models for the integration of new volunteers, passing on knowledge from exiting members, and providing a resource for knowledge on gardening, volunteer coordination, and event organization. Campus Crops could then move on to other issues of self-sufficiency such as funding/income and gardening inputs (see IV. Additional information B).

Project eligibility

By using compost from McGill's industrial composting machine (SPF project #18) and giving vegetables to Midnight Kitchen during the growing season, Campus Crops is part of a closed-loop food system on campus, resulting in limited waste production.

Offering students a space where they can garden provides them with an opportunity to explore their connections with food, land, and their urban environment. Bringing issues of food production on to campus in this way contributes to a culture of sustainability by bringing to light the labour and resources involved in food production, and exploring how people in urban settings can create alternative food systems.

We also believe that students taking collective ownership of physical spaces on campus contributes to a culture of sustainability by giving them collective responsibility for maintaining

and caring for those spaces. This sense of collective responsibility connects students to their physical environment in a way that people in urban environments often are not, fostering a sense of respect and care for our surroundings.

Over the past years, the McGill campus has seen a huge increase in the number of environmental student initiatives. However, Campus Crops provides unique services and opportunities to the student body, particularly those only on the downtown campus, by offering experiential learning throughout the year, both in the garden and in workshops, that is open to people of all skill levels.

For these reasons, Campus Crops fosters a culture of sustainability on campus. Yet, a lack of institutionalization makes the collective poorly resilient to abrupt changes in our membership. The garden coordinator will help structure Campus Crops and ensure its long-term survival; a culture of sustainability can only be implemented through institutions that are themselves sustainable.

Timeframe/Milestones

The timeframe for the garden coordinator is from June 1 to September 15, although Campus Crops will continue to exist and operate after the garden coordinator leaves. During the first week of June, the garden coordinator will decide on weekly gardening hours with the volunteers. By mid-June, both gardens (in-soil and container garden) will be completely in operation (i.e. everything planted and growing), and the spiral garden will be completed (see IV. Additional information A). The garden coordinator will organize one workshop per month throughout the summer, ending with a workshop in late August or early September for QPIRG-McGill's RadFrosh. Early September will be dedicated mainly to transitioning from the garden coordinator to a collective management of the garden, including new members who will receive training designed and facilitated by the coordinator. By the end of September, the coordinator is expected to hand in an exit report with recommendations to the collective. Throughout the summer, the coordinator's role will be to coordinate the day-to-day operations in the gardens, facilitate the weekly meetings, and keep track of all important activities and data in a log book.

Measures of the yield, the attendance at workshops and events, the number of volunteers throughout the summer and fall, the frequency of food delivery to Midnight Kitchen and the exit report will serve as performance indicators. To consider this summer to be a success, we expect to have better yields than last year, an attendance of 15 to 30 people at workshops and events (depending on the nature of the workshop or event), at least 10 members total in fall, and at least one delivery of food per week to Midnight Kitchen.

Integral to the garden coordinator's responsibilities will be the production of an exit report and training manual/workshop at the end of the season. The exit report will help outline what did and did not work in terms of gardening, workshops, volunteer management, outreach, et cetera for the past season. The training manual/workshop will be an excellent resource for familiarizing future volunteers with the essential tasks, skills, and information needed to manage Campus Crops, so that in future, there would not need to be the paid position of Garden Coordinator, as all members, rather than one external individual, will have the knowledge needed to efficiently coordinate the activities of Campus Crops.

We hope to share the benefits of our activities with members of the community through workshops, which will be open to all, food donations to the students through Midnight Kitchen, an aesthetically pleasing garden, as well as good learning opportunities to volunteers and other people joining us in the gardens.

Stakeholders

- Midnight Kitchen will receive our harvests of September.
- Santropol Roulant: We expect to help Santropol Roulant again this year for their Iron Chef Competition. We usually prepare soup and dessert for the event.

- The McGill School of Environment provides us with a space for our in-soil garden, and the staff of the MSE building is invited to get involved in the garden if they wish to.
- QPIRG-McGill is an umbrella organization of which Campus Crops is a working group. They provide the collective with a meeting space, opportunities and visibility for events, as well as technical expertise on internal organization.
- The James Administration staff shares their patio area behind their building with us, for our container garden. They benefit from its presence, and are invited to get involved if interested.
- McGill Grounds services helps us with technical expertise on gardening and space use on campus, and may also help us fund some gardening expenditures (they have already bought soil and rocks for our containers garden).
- Students and other users of the spaces around the gardens: Because of the visibility of our gardens and our open door policy, everyone passing nearby our garden can have an input on the project.
- The MacDonald Student Ecological Garden accepted to share their space and materials with us in the MacDonald greenhouse so we could grow our own seedlings.
- Potential stakeholders in the community: Although we have yet to solidify these plans, we have been approached in the past year by Projet C-Vert, a youth volunteer organization in Montréal, Montréal à Votre Service Écologique, an educational project at McGill focusing on ecosystem services, Lufa Farms, an urban agriculture corporation in Montréal, and Julia Freeman, a professor at the MSE, for various projects.

II. Project Implementation

Tasks and Responsibilities

Type of Activity – Task	Estimated Time Required	Group Member in Charge
Select a garden coordinator	4 weeks	All members
Coordinate activities (gardening and events) throughout the summer	From June 1 to September 15	Garden coordinator
Build the spiral garden	1 week, including gathering the materials	All members
Produce an exit report and training manual/workshop for future volunteers	1 month	Garden coordinator

III. Financials

- Critical Date: June 1

Detailed expenses:

Expense Description	Estimated Cost
Stipend for garden coordinator (June 1 to September 15,	3,000\$

20-25 hours a week)	
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Detailed revenues:

Revenue Source	Amount Requested	Confirmed?
Sustainability Projects Fund	3,000\$	No

IV. Additional information:

A) Although the garden coordinator will not be completely in charge of all of this, having a garden coordinator will help other active members improve the sustainability of the gardens by:

- building a [spiral garden](#), which is a vertical growing structure arising from permaculture principles. It allows for a wide diversity of plants to use less space and soil modifications than with horizontal growing. It will also likely create a focus point in the garden, contributing to the visibility and aesthetics of our garden.
- adding more perennial crops to the soil garden, including medicinal herbs, which are generally less expensive to maintain than annuals. Medicinal herbs can also be used for workshops, as it has already been done in the past.
- designing and implementing a space-efficient design of permanent beds, since our soil garden has been considerably [damaged by the January 2013 flood](#) and more recently [removed by Grounds services](#), we will need to redesign our bed layout. We designed the layout by putting together the standard bed width (75 cm), to facilitate gardening activities, and principles of the keyhole design, which allow an economy of space in non-conventional gardens (i.e. not a row layout).
- designing a crop rotation system, which will improve weed and pest control, nutrient management and soil fertility, among others.

B) Members of Campus Crop have also been discussing different ways to improve self-sufficiency on materials and funding, although they cannot all be applied this year:

- The collective will look into opportunities for internships, student research, community programs, courses and community groups that could fulfill the garden coordinator's functions for free.
- Although Campus Crops doesn't own much growing space, it could be possible to plan production in order to sell some vegetables through Organic Campus.
- Likewise, if the Class Action Project greenhouse ever becomes a reality, it could be used to organize an annual seedling sale. Since we are also planning on adding perennials in our soil garden, perennial plant cuttings could also be sold.
- Many techniques, such as saving seeds, growing our own seedlings, and making our own fertilizers and pesticides, can be learned and integrated in Campus Crops' gardening methods to save on the costs of inputs.