

Sustainability Project Fund Application

For the McGill, Macdonald Student-Run Ecological Gardens (MSEG)

Applicant/Project Leader

Name: Anna Elbon
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Budget Requested

Re-allocation of approved and unused funding of \$2777.50 from 2010
Request for \$38,262.50

Project Group

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Emily McGill	emily.mcgill@mail.mcgill.ca

A list of other persons currently involved with the project and their contact info can be found in Appendix A. The project has a mailing list with over 200 subscribers; through the project's outreach more undergraduate and graduate student researchers, volunteers, and community members are becoming involved as the project develops.

1. Project Overview

The McGill Student-run Ecological Gardens (MSEG) is a student initiated and run group dedicated to ecological agriculture. By cultivating land for sustainable vegetable production at the university, MSEG's vision is to feed academic investigation into ecological agriculture. MSEG's domain does not stop at harvest, though. This group is also committed to connecting and aiding groups working towards local, sustainable food sourcing for McGill and Macdonald food systems. In doing this, MSEG is bringing students, staff, and members of the community together while hosting workshops, selling produce, educating and employing students throughout the process.

Over the past two years MSEG grew from just a 48ft x 48ft plot of vegetables to over a quarter acre and a 3380 ft² meditation garden. This coming year MSEG intends to cultivate 1 ¼ acres for vegetable production, enhance the permaculture design strategy of the meditation garden, while heightening the project's impact with greater transparency. All of the lessons from the previous year will be applied this season, leading to a more informed crop planning schedule and overall smoother project operation. To sustain the variety of activities the project engages in, MSEG 2011 hopes to employ 5 full-time and 2 part-time students from the months of May – October.

The land managed by MSEG includes 1 acre at Ferme Carya, an organic farm located in nearby Senneville. This land is being leased by the Ferme Carya from Macdonald farm through an agreement that this acre be available for students to grow on throughout the period of the lease. This expression of faith in the project on the part of the farm's director Paul Meldrum and the organizers of Ferme Carya speaks of the success this project experienced this past season and the support for the project both at the university and with the community partners. The last land parcel managed by MSEG is a ¼ acre field at the Horticultural Centre and the 200m² meditation garden.

Objectives

The Project has three main objectives to satisfy each season; to increase the capacity for ecological agriculture research at the university, to address what a sustainable food system is and help its implementation, and to educate on ecological agriculture to the campus and local community.

Over the long-term, the project aims to become a self-sustaining (that is, requiring minimal to no external funding in order to persist) ecological farm that provides the backbone for a sustainable food system at Macdonald campus as well as the basis for ecological agriculture research at the university. This contributes directly to building a culture of sustainability on campus by being the first group actively pursuing implementing and advancing ecological agriculture practices at Mac, and being an integral piece of the food systems puzzle at Macdonald.

Emphasis on Transparency

The 2010 season coordinators found that a lot of the learning attained in the field wasn't translated into the public domain. The 2010 coordinators are working together still to identify, summarize, and produce more of this learning in digital and print forms.

To facilitate this in the coming season, MSEG 2011 is placing strong emphasis on transparency of operations. In the field this manifests as an on-site field book detailing the milestones of the field processes. In the meditation garden this means labeling plants and an informative plaque detailing the tenets of permaculture. At the market this means bringing a field summary, map, and information pamphlets. The most effective way this transfer of learning is being facilitated is through the creation of a functional website with frequent updates.

Timeline

This is a rough sketch of the timeline that the project follows, heavily dependent on variables such as weather and funding.

January-February	Crop planning confirmed and planting materials purchased Potluck February 9th
March	Greenhouse seedling preparation Student volunteers brought in
April	Continued seedling preparation
May	Field preparations Planting in field, employing items such as row covers to extend the season Workshops begin
June	Market selling begins Workshops
July	Field maintenance and harvest Workshops
August	Field maintenance and harvest Workshops & Tours
September	Field maintenance and harvest Workshops & Tours
October	Planting over-winter crops and cover crops Market closure

Eligibility

- Linking different departments of Mac campus is one of the most important impacts that MSEG is having. The academic projects MSEG has attracted this season is bridging a gap between Natural Resource Sciences and Dietetics, and incorporating Bioresource engineering into the system of food production. This also shows an important factor; the more the faculty takes academic interest in MSEG the more MSEG becomes a part of the faculty community, enabling it to become an institution and increasing the chances of attaining self-sufficiency.
- Aside from just linking departments in name, the Out of the Garden project, with MSEG, will develop crop plans suitable to provide vegetables for campus food service this coming year – laying the building blocks for a sustainable food system at Macdonald campus.
- By bringing people into contact with each other, the campus, and food in a positive sustainable way MSEG is bringing sustainability to a very personal level for those the project reaches.
- MSEG has already been working towards helping Mac bring ecological agriculture practice into its reputation by presenting a poster at the Global Food Security conference and by presenting to the community on and off-campus.
- MSEG produced more than it sold in 2010, and this overflow produce went to Happy Belly – a free, student-run group providing food for a once weekly meal.
- Looking into working with the St. Louis breadbasket – extra crops helping supply food for low-income members of the West Island community.

The project's success is assessed throughout the season by checking actual completion dates against those intended. The end-of-season summary and reflection also provide an indicator of the season's successes and failures, while the end-year account summary provided by Lise Wood provides insight into the successful money management of the project. MSEG 2011 is going to implement 'satisfaction surveys' accessible online and in person at tours, workshops, and presentations, to have 3rd party assessments of the project's success throughout the season.

Stakeholders

The funding partners of the project have a vested interest in the project's success. In addition, there are investors of land, time, and experience, These, in particular, are the Plant Science Department's Horticulture Center and Seed Farm (offers of land and machinery rental), the Macdonald Community Gardens (offer of land and some facilities); local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Zephyr and Carya organic farms (offering advice and long-term support), faculty lecturers Caroline Begg, David Wees and Mark Lefsrud (offering expertise and research supervision); Scott Manktelow (providing tools from the Engineering Shop); and Michael Bleho, manager of the McGill Horticulture Center.

Support for this project, monetary and otherwise, comes from several student groups including the Macdonald Campus Student Society (MCSS), Green Drinks Ste. Anne, the Post Graduate Student Society of McGill, Gorilla Compost, Happy Belly, and the Mac Food Systems Project.

Almost 100 individuals were directly involved via volunteering in last year's student run garden project, not including those reached through the market venues and publicity materials. This coming season, the base of supporters has reached a mailing list of almost 200 individuals, with almost half of those being specifically interested in volunteering..

This past year MSEG has received overwhelmingly positive feedback and encouragement from those touched by the project. Customers at the Sainte-Anne's Farmer's Market are eager to encourage the project and express interest in connecting more with the on-campus community through MSEG.

All those who study or work at McGill have a stake in McGill becoming an ecologically literate university; by employing multidisciplinary approaches towards food security issues MSEG will be able to engage the entire McGill community in taking responsibility for this transformation.

Projects running in conjunction with MSEG include but are not limited to:

- The Out of the Garden Project: a student research initiative aiming to make quality, locally produced food available at Macdonald campus, with sustainability at the forefront.
- Mulch research experiment by Emily McGill with Dr. Mark Lefsrud

There are other conversations involving potential research experiments, special topics courses, and the like which may become involved as the season progresses.

2. Project Implementation

Each coordinator works 30 paid hours per week during the summer, and 15 during the two spring/fall months. There is also a part time co-coordinator employed for planting in May and harvest in August. The division of tasks below is subject to change and modification throughout the season. All members are likely to participate in field tasks and a variety of market and harvest-related activities.

By supporting the salary of this group of individuals the SPF is investing not only in the interwoven learning and stimulation of a student-run organization but also stabilizing the groundwork for what this group represents; students wholly involved in their learning experience, applying their classroom knowledge first hand, and reaching for opportunities for research.

<i>Coordinator</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>	<i>Coordinator Name</i>
Management and Budget	Creating management guides with advisors; Coordinating support of research projects; Accounting; Purchase of supplies and materials;	Pauline Richard
Communications and Outreach	Contact management, Promotion and management of communications and volunteers; Workshop coordination; Tours; Presentations on and off campus; Outreach material	Anna Elbon Sophie Price

Implementation and Documentation	Coordination of field production - preparation, planting, irrigation, weeding, harvesting, rotations, etc; Field research and documentation; Compost management; Post harvest tasks - washing, sorting, packaging, etc; Market assistance	K. Mohtashami David Crook
Co-coordinator	Field production and research assistance; Assistance with: market set up, post harvest tasks, volunteer management, workshop supervision, documentation; Other tasks as required	Emily McGill Alice Pradel

3. Expenses

All paid student positions operate such that for each work week they volunteer a minimum 3 additional hours, bringing the average full-time work week to around 33 hours and the average part-time to 18 hours. The table below is a breakdown of the fund request amount for the SPF. A more detailed report of the total operating expenses of the project can be found in Appendix C.

This season five students will be working full-time from May to August and then continue to work part-time September and October. One student will work part-time for May and June, while one more will work part-time from June-October.

<i>Salaries</i>	Description	# positions	\$/hr	Hrs/wk	# Weeks	\$/ Position	Total Cost
	Full-Time 4-month	5	12	30	16	5760	28800
	Part-Time 2-month	6	12	15	8	1440	8640
	Part-Time 5-month	1	12	15	20	3600	3600
	Total amount required for salaries through from May - October						\$41,040.00
	Suggested re-allocation of 2010 funding as offset to salary request						2777.5
	Total amount requested from the SPF (total req'd - re-allocation)						\$38,262.50

Revenue

The project has enough money from 2010 to purchase the starting materials to seed in the greenhouse and begin developing the website. As such, the critical date to receive funding for the project this year is not until mid-April. Also, at the time of this application's submission, the funding requests detailed below have not been submitted save for the submission to the TD Friends of the Environment foundation. The rest of the funding requests will be submitted within the next two weeks.

Detailed revenues:

Revenue Source	Amount Requested	Confirmed?
Sustainability Projects Fund	\$38,262.50	No
Macdonald Campus Students' Society	\$12,755	No
FAES Deans' Office	\$1000	No
Post-Graduate Students' Society	\$800	No
Green Drinks Ste-Anne	\$150	No
Macdonald Community Garden land & tools	\$300	No
Mary H Brown Fund	\$400	No
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation	\$28,000	No
Total requested funding	\$81,667.50	

4. Related Experience of Project Leaders

Pauline Richard is an Ecological Agriculture student, and passionate about sustainable food. Anna has extensive experience both volunteering and working on organic farms throughout Canada and the southeast US. This past year she worked for Michael Bleho at the McGill Horticultural Center while also volunteering for the student ecological garden throughout the 2010 season. Anna and Pauline are two of the four students running the Out of the Garden project.

Alice studies International Agriculture and Food Systems while being the student coordinator for Macdonald Campus Gorilla Composting as part of her dedication for soil quality and intelligent waste management.

Emily amassed a host of experience with the project and the tenets of ecological farming by being a main coordinator of MSEG 2010. She hopes to integrate all of the lessons from the previous season to push MSEG into a new level of functionality and integration at the university.

Kourosh is another returning member of MSEG. Having coordinated the field management in the previous season, he is eager to pass on this expertise to the coming coordinators.

Additional Commentary

Over the 2010 season the project's profile has risen at McGill; having been visited by the Principal and a host of her administrators, who said at the time that she sees projects such as MSEG as the future of McGill. This is strong encouragement for the MSEG to become a permanent part of the institution, helping McGill join the many other universities that support the education and promotion of a food system that ties in: local nutritious food with community learning and sharing as well as research opportunities. A list of such universities is provided in Appendix D.

The SPF provided for MSEG 2010, which successfully launched the project into the next stage of its evolution with the expanded land and communication goals of MSEG 2011. With this season's funding application MSEG hopes to express excitement to continue working with the SPF to make sure that this investment is in a project with a future, and that all requirements in terms of timelines, submissions, and deliverables are met promptly and completely.

This project is harbinger of the new sustainable directives being taken across the university.

Appendix A – Member and stakeholder contact information

Caroline Begg	Professor of Ecological Agriculture Internship caroline.begg@mcgill.ca 514.398.8749
Mike Bleho	Horticultural Technician at the Horticultural Research Center michael.bleho@mcgill.ca 514.398.7875
Stephen Homer	Organic vegetable producer, Ferme Zephyr fermeduzephyr@videotron.ca 514.550.6980
Ramzy Kassouf	Organic vegetable producer, Carya Farms fermecarya@gmail.com rkassouf96@gmail.com 514.312.7175 / cell: 514.893.1919
Lise Wood	Accounts manager for MCSS and MSEG mcss@mail.mcgill.ca 514.398.8787
Paul Meldrum	Director of McGill Farm paul.meldrum@mcgill.ca
Natalie James	Happy Belly Coordinator machappybelly@gmail.com
Jerome Boisvert	Website Developer Jerome.boisvert-chouinard@mail.mcgill.ca 514.
McGill Farmers' Market	McGill Downtown Campus Farmer's Market mcgillfarmersmarket@gmail.com
Philippe Seguin	Chair of Plant Science Department philippe.seguin@mcgill.ca 514.398.7855
Christopher Wrobel	Advisor & volunteer christopher.wrobel@mail.mcgill.ca
Scott Manktelow	Laboratory Supervisor, Bioresource Engineering scott.manktelow@mcgill.ca 514.398.7788
Sarah Reiling	Butterfly and Scent garden coordinator Sarah.reiling@mail.mcgill.ca 514.398.8767

Appendix B – Groups with complementary goals at McGill

Butterfly and Scent Student Theme Gardens: An independent concept developed this year to plant two theme gardens adjacent to the meditation garden. MSEG and this group plan to partner together to create a welcoming and attractive space, and to potentially reach the community together with joint workshop material.

The Out of the Garden Project: Aiming to do an assessment similar to McGill Food Systems Project, the students involved here are addressing what a sustainable food system at Macdonald Campus would look like. MSEG shares two members with this project, and from this there is movement towards integrating the produce from MSEG into the food required for the Dietetics program this coming fall.

Farmers Market at McGill: The market operates during the fall and provides the McGill community and neighbourhood residents the opportunity to buy organic and local foods directly from the farmers who produce it. This initiative came out of the Rethink Conference 2008 with the collaboration of students, staff and faculty. Its aim is to support community building and local, sustainable agriculture.

The Sustainable McGill Project (SMP): Created as a multi-stakeholder initiative to assess McGill's sustainability performance using the Campus Sustainability Assessment Framework (CSAF) tool. The group worked with other campus organizations in the creation of a Sustainability Office at McGill, and is also working with Campus Crops to procure more gardening space on campus. With the official opening of the McGill Office of Sustainability in 2009, the group initiated the first ever "Rethink Your Curriculum Challenge" aimed at mobilizing students to implement their ideas for sustainability across different curriculums. The results of this initiative were presented at the 8th Annual Rethink conference.

McGill Food Systems Project: A cooperative project between students, McGill Food and Dining Services, and the McGill Office of Sustainability. The McGill Food Systems Project uses student research and community collaboration to improve the food operations on our campuses. By engaging in consultation with the McGill community, facilitating McGill-focused research projects, and supporting change in McGill's policies and operations, the Project endeavours to maximize the ecological, social and economic sustainability of McGill's food systems.

Campus Crops: Campus Crops is a group of McGill students working towards obtaining gardening space on the downtown campus and promoting urban agriculture. The group's primary garden is located behind the McGill School of Environment (MSE) on University Street. The food that is grown is given to the volunteers during the summer. During the school year Campus Crops donates their produce to the Midnight Kitchen.

Appendix C – Detailed Expenses

<i>Field Materials and Operations</i>		Type					Cost
	Seeds						1200
	Greenhouse space						250
	Seedling material		trays				750
			peat moss				1000
	Irrigation		Pipes				800
			Drip tapes				800
	Mulch		leaf and straw				100
	Compost						1000
	Organic Fertilizer						600
	Row Covers						2000
	Storage space						100
	Tools		Weed Whacker				200
			Reel Lawn mower				200
	Toolshed and bike trolley materials						1500
	Machinery						400
	Post harvest and marketing		washing/containment tools				100
			packaging				250
			market tent and table				300
			Total for Field materials and Operations				11550
			Cost overrun 10%				1155
			Total for Field materials and Operations including overrun				\$12,705.00
<i>Additional Costs (Funding applied for through TD FEF)</i>	Greenhouse materials		electric generator for heat				4000
			building materials				24000
<i>Additional Expenses</i>	Workshops						2000
	Publicity materials (approx. 250 flyers, 200 pamphlets)						200
	Website development						500
			Total Additional Expenses				\$30,700.00
<i>Salaries</i>	Salary Description	# of positions	\$/hr	Hrs/wk	No. Weeks	Cost/ Position	Total Est. Cost
	Full-Time 4-month positions	5	12	30	16	5760	28800
	Part-Time 2-month positions	6	12	15	8	1440	8640
	Part-Time 5-month positions	1	12	15	20	3600	3600
	Total amount required for salaries through from May - October						\$41,040.00
Re-allocation of	Amount of approved funding remaining from SPF 2010 application						2777.5

2010 funding	<i>Suggested re-allocation as offset to salary request</i>
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Total amount requested from the SPF (total req'd - re-allocation) \$38,262.50

Total budget requested from all sources \$81,667.50

Appendix D – Similar Projects at other Institutions

Michigan State University Student Organic Farm

10 acre certified organic year-round farm. Organized primarily as a CSA.

<http://www.msuorganicfarm.com/>

Washington State University Organic Farm

3 acre, began in 2003 and certified organic since 2004. Running as a CSA, and now primarily managed by faculty.

<http://smallfarms.wsu.edu/>

Iowa State University

6 acres, began in 1996. Entirely run by students, and recently began providing produce to the university's dining services.

<http://isustudentorganicfarm.weebly.com/>

As well, the Rodale Institute has collected a directory of university farms within the USA, found online here <http://newfarm.rodaleinstitute.org/features/0104/studentfarms/directory.shtml>.

There are over 50 farms listed on this site, at least 6 of which are entirely student run and organic.

MSEG recently became a member of the Campus Growers wiki – a wiki site developed by the University of Wisconsin student gardeners. Through this MSEG hopes to understand better what works well for other, older groups that have succeeded in the unusual student-run university organic farm business model.