



## 2026

# Community-led Greening Initiatives & Gardening Program Application Information Package

In response to Council's directives on April 30, 2025 (ACS2025-CSS-GEN-007), Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services (RCFS) has established a formal, city-wide mandate for the *Community-led Greening Initiatives and Gardening Program*, aligning with the City of Ottawa's environmental, equity, and climate goals. This program recognizes community gardening and greening as essential tools for civic engagement, community wellness, and sustainability.

**Deadline: February 03, 2026, by 4:00 pm**

**Email:** [communitygardens@ottawa.ca](mailto:communitygardens@ottawa.ca)

**Website:** [ottawa.ca/gardens](http://ottawa.ca/gardens)

### Funding, Partnerships & Agreements Unit

Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department

City of Ottawa



Community-led  
Greening Initiatives and  
Gardening Program

Programme d'initiatives de  
verdissement et de jardinage  
menées par la communauté

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# Key Information for 2026 Community-led Greening Initiatives & Gardening Program

## General Information

We invite local incorporated or unincorporated community groups to apply to establish, expand or modify a community-led greening and gardening initiatives on City-owned land within the City of Ottawa.

We welcome projects that seek to contribute positively to public space, support environmental stewardship, enhance neighbourhood livability, promote access to healthy, affordable food options, and provide opportunities for residents to gather, grow, learn, and connect with nature.

## Program Purpose & Objectives

The Community-led Greening Initiatives and Gardening Program supports Ottawa residents who want to improve public spaces on City land through community-led gardening, ecological restoration, and other greening projects. The program provides equitable access to City land, technical guidance, and a consistent policy framework that supports both food-producing gardens and non-food greening initiatives.

The program serves as the City's mechanism for granting community access to City land for approved greening and gardening initiatives. Through an in-principal approval process, the program authorizes eligible organizations to establish, build, and maintain gardens and greening projects in public spaces, with responsibility for all associated development, implementation, and ongoing maintenance costs, in accordance with City policies and technical requirements.

## Projects supported through this program aim to:

- Bring neighbours together, fostering collaboration and connection within local communities.
- Enhance public spaces through gardening, native planting, ecological restoration, and other community-led greening activities.
- Encourage environmental stewardship, biodiversity, climate adaptation, and sustainable land practices.

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- Promote food-producing gardens that support local food security and access to healthy food options.
- Create accessible, inclusive, and welcoming outdoor spaces for all residents
- Support long-term volunteer engagement and community partnership.
- Ensure fair and transparent access to city-land and resources for community-led greening and gardening efforts.

By strengthening sustainability, community involvement, and access to green spaces across city lands, this program helps create a healthier, greener, more resilient Ottawa.

## 2026 Key Program Application Dates

Date	Activity
January 5	Application open
January 14	Program launch and application information session
January 22	Drop in application working session
February 3	Application close <i>Refer to the Application Submission Process for submission options</i>
February 25	Successful applicants notified to advance to phase two
February 26	Supplemental application opens
March 11	Supplemental application closes
May 01	Inter-departmental review completed, and successful applicants notified on next steps

Note: Timelines are subject to change at the City's discretion based on operational priorities, emergency response requirements, or administrative considerations.

## Before You Begin

To ensure applications are successful, applicants are encouraged to carefully review all information tabs in reference to [ottawa.ca/gardens](http://ottawa.ca/gardens) and review all information details before starting their application.

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Additional stipulations include:

- If a garden or greening initiative already exists on a property, whether for food production, pollinator support, or another type of greening project, no other organization may apply to start a similar project on that same property.
- Organizations currently managing a community-led garden or greening initiative on a property may apply to expand, enhance, or update their existing project at that same location.
- If your organization wishes to apply for multiple properties, simply submit a separate application for each community-led greening or gardening project.

Before applying, please review the three documents found on Ottawa.ca under the [ottawa.ca/gardens](http://ottawa.ca/gardens) webpage:

1. **How to Complete the Application Guide**
2. **Supplemental Application** (required only during Phase Two)
3. **Community-led Greening Initiatives and Gardening Program Standards**

## Eligibility

## Organizations

Your organization is eligible to apply for a community-led greening or gardening initiative if you:

- Are an incorporated or unincorporated community group or association.
- Operate under non-profit principles.
- Have a designated representative who is at least 18 years of age or older. Children and youth are welcome to participate under the direct supervision of an adult (18 years or older).
- Follow the Ontario Human Rights Code and be non-discriminatory.
- Are in good standing with the City of Ottawa.
- Operate within the City of Ottawa.
- Demonstrate community support, such as volunteer involvement, Ward Councillor support, partnerships, and local engagement.

- A faith-based organization whose proposed services/activities do not include the direct promotion and/or required adherence to a faith or religious activities.
- Demonstrate the ability to plan, build, and maintain the garden or greening initiative long-term.
- Follow stewardship, accessibility, maintenance and environmental guidelines as set out in the **Community-led Greening Initiatives and Gardening Program Standards**, reference the [ottawa.ca/gardens](http://ottawa.ca/gardens) webpage.

## **Incorporated Community Group or Association**

These organizations are formally registered legal entities. Typically, they:

- Are incorporated as a non-profit under provincial or federal legislation.
- Have formal governance, such as a board, bylaws, and documented decision-making processes.
- Can enter into agreements, hold insurance, and manage funds.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Registered non-profit gardening groups
- Neighbourhood associations
- Environmental stewardship charities
- Community associations recognized through the City of Ottawa

## **Unincorporated Community Group or Association**

These are groups that operate without formal legal status, relying on community members and volunteers rather than a registered corporate structure, and may include informal or grassroots organizations. They:

- Are formed by residents or volunteers around a shared purpose
- Operate under non-profit principles
- Have some structure, such as:
  - A coordinator or volunteer committee
  - A mission or shared goal
  - A list of members or volunteers

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- A clear method of decision-making (e.g., a basic constitution or terms of reference)

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Informal collectives
- Volunteer committees
- Hobby groups
- Grassroots advocacy groups

## **Ineligible Organizations**

Your organization cannot be:

- Sponsored by another non-profit or charitable organization.
- For-profit businesses.
- A faith-based organization whose proposed services/activities include the direct promotion and/or required adherence to a faith or religious activities.
- An organization which acts as a funding source for other groups.
- A hospital, clinic, or medical treatment program.
- Politically affiliated with or have a mandate that involves political activities.
- A government organization or proposing programs that fall under other governments' responsibilities.
- A provincial or national organization, unless it has a local chapter in Ottawa.
- City of Ottawa elected officials (Members of Council are encouraged to offer their support to applicants and will be consulted on site approvals).

## **Activities**

We encourage community-building projects that beautify shared spaces, support food production, and strengthen local ecosystems. These efforts may include a variety of gardening, greening, and habitat-enhancing activities.

## **Eligible Activities**

Examples of eligible activities include, but are not limited to:

- Installing or expanding raised garden beds for food production.

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- Establishing or enlarging pollinator gardens with native plants.
- Adding or enhancing ornamental gardens, rock gardens, or xeriscape plantings.
- Developing or expanding rain gardens to help manage stormwater.
- Replacing invasive plants with native species.
- Installing hardscape features such as, benches, or pathways as part of a new or existing garden or greening project.
- Culturally relevant greening and gardening initiatives that are open to everyone.
- Invasive species removal as part of a new or existing gardening or greening project.

## **Ineligible Activities**

There are some initiatives that are out of scope of the community-led greening initiatives and gardening program:

Examples of ineligible activities include, but are not limited to:

### **Planting types**

- Cannabis
- Prohibited plants
- Invasive food crops
- Non-native or invasive plants and flowers
- All trees, including fruit trees\*

\*Note: Certain planting types are out of scope and managed through other City programs.

### **Animals and livestock features**

- Bat boxes, birdhouses, or nesting platforms
- Bee hives or boxes, butterfly enclosures, or feeding stations
- Any type of livestock, animals and enclosures

### **Non-garden features**

- Little libraries, monuments, peace poles, or decorative items such as orbs
- Hardscape features like benches, or pathways, unless they are part of a new or existing garden or greening project

### **Other activities that aren't eligible**

- Projects intended for private or exclusive use, such as expanding a property owner's backyard garden onto public land.
- Gardens or spaces created for religious, worship, or faith-based gatherings and activities
- Gardens or spaces for political promotion or advocacy
- Installations for marketing or commercial purposes
- Personal or pet remembrance memorial gardens
- Food grown for commercial resale or commercial agriculture
- Projects that do not allow continued public access

### **Activities coordinated through other City-led programs**

Some activities are delivered through other City-led programs and are not included in the Community-led Greening Initiatives and Gardening Program. These include programs focused on the care and maintenance of City assets, as well as community tree planting and forest health initiatives.

Activities coordinated through other City programs include, but are not limited to:

- Tree planting initiatives, including fruit trees [Tree planting | City of Ottawa](#)
- Memorial or dedication benches and plaques [Commemorative naming | City of Ottawa](#)
- Invasive species removal where no native replanting is proposed [Invasive species | City of Ottawa](#)
- Adopt-a-Park and Adopt-a-Road programs [Adopt-a-Park/Adopt-a-Road | City of Ottawa](#)
- Cleaning the Capital Program [Cleaning the Capital Program | City of Ottawa](#)

### **Projects/Initiatives**

Eligible Projects Must:

- Be located on City-owned land.

- Follow accessibility, stewardship, and environmental standards outlined in the **Community-led Greening Initiatives and Gardening Program Standards**, reference the [ottawa.ca/gardens](http://ottawa.ca/gardens) webpage.
- Demonstrate community need, benefit, and engagement.
- Be designed to offer ongoing community benefit.
- Operate under non-profit principles.
- Allow for continued public access.
- Follow all municipal by-laws and site-specific requirements.

If you are unsure about your eligibility; questions and inquiries about the Community-led Greening Initiatives and Gardening Program can be sent to [communitygardens@ottawa.ca](mailto:communitygardens@ottawa.ca)

## How Applications Are Assessed

### Application Review Timelines

Applications undergo a two-phase review process of approximately 90 days from the application close date outlined in the *Key Program Application Dates* section.

**Phase 1 Review:** Following the application close date, your application will be reviewed for site suitability within 20 business days. If the site is deemed suitable, eligible applicants will be asked to complete a **Supplemental Application Form**.

The **Supplemental Application Form** is where the City will collect more in-depth details to confirm that the proposed operations fit within the site requested.

Applicants are encouraged to review the **Supplemental Application Form** (reference the [ottawa.ca/gardens](http://ottawa.ca/gardens) webpage) in advance to help prepare for this stage should their requested site be deemed suitable.

**Only applications that are deemed feasible during Phase 1 review will undergo a Phase 2 review.**

**Phase 2 Review:** Following submission of the **Supplemental Application Form**, applications will be reviewed through a more extensive interdepartmental review process.

The estimated total timeline for completing both phases of the application review is approximately 90 days.

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Following the 90-day application review, successful projects will be posted on [Engage Ottawa](#) for public consultation for up to 30-days.

Note: Timelines are subject to change at the City's discretion based on operational priorities, emergency response requirements, or administrative considerations.

## Ongoing Communication

Throughout all phases, the City of Ottawa - Funding, Partnerships & Agreements Unit maintains regular communication with applicants, providing updates, responding to questions, and requesting additional information when needed.

### Possible outcomes include:

- Approved in-principle
- Conditionally approved
- Revisions required
- Declined

If a request is denied, the interdepartmental working group will strive to provide clear reasoning when feasible. When a single, immovable factor prevents approval, the Funding, Partnerships & Agreements Unit will communicate that constraint transparently. Applicants may also be invited to explore alternate options or reapply during future intake periods, as appropriate.

If a group is unable to move forward with its project, the site will not be held. City staff will not hold or reserve sites for projects that require revisions or that have not yet received full approval, including those with conditional approval or approval in principle. Sites will only be held when groups have entered into a Community Garden Agreement with the City of Ottawa (Funding, Partnerships & Agreements Unit).

**All decisions are final.**

## Project Approvals

Following the phase two review, if:

### Your Project is Approved In-principle

You will receive an email confirmation outlining:

- Conditions of approval

- Soil testing requirements (if applicable)
- Additional documents needed
- Site meeting requirements before installation
- Installation conditions and next steps

**Before any work may begin on-site, your organization must:**

- Sign a Community Garden Agreement with the City of Ottawa (Funding, Partnerships & Agreements Unit).
- Provide proof of required insurance.
  - Groups are eligible for insurance through the Community Program Insurance Program (CPIP) with coordination from City staff or may submit proof of comparable insurance that meets City requirements.
- Submit any revised plans or documentation requested to confirm the final design and site layout, including a detailed construction schedule, if applicable, for City approval.
- Depending on the site layout and design, some sites may be required to submit landscape architect and/or engineer-stamped drawings and provide that locates have been obtained; locates must be completed within the week prior to installation.
- Ensure all required documents are submitted at least 30 days before installation. Incomplete submissions may delay or revoke project approval.
- A variance letter from the City will be required before any work can begin.

**If Your Project is Conditionally Approved**

Conditional approval does not permit any on-site work. Your project will only proceed to full approval in-principle once all conditions are met to the satisfaction of the City.

**If your project is conditionally approved, you will receive an email notification outlining:**

- Specific conditions that must be met before full approval in-principle can be granted.
- Required revisions to plans, including site layout, planting choices, accessibility considerations, or maintenance details.

- Additional documentation required (e.g., updated maps, design drawings, letters of support, or organizational information).
- Deadlines for submitting outstanding items.
- Clarification of site limitations, including access restrictions, soil or environmental constraints, or seasonal limitations on installation.

## **If Your Project Requires Revisions**

If revisions are required before a decision can be made, you will receive an email outlining:

- Requested changes or clarifications needed to assess the proposal (e.g., plant species, maintenance plans, water access solutions, or site suitability concerns).
- Guidance or examples to help strengthen your proposal.
- Any technical requirements, such as additional site measurements, updated drawings, or soil considerations.
- A timeline for resubmitting revised materials (typically aligned with the current or next intake period).

Your application will have an opportunity to be resubmitted. Once submitted, revisions will be reviewed in the next stage of the intake cycle. A resubmission does not guarantee approval.

## **If Your Project is Not Approved**

You will be notified by email. Feedback may be provided where possible and could include alternate options or considerations. Applicants will have an opportunity to resubmit a proposal at each bi-annual application intake period.

### **Reasons for non-approval may include, but are not limited to:**

- Site unsuitability
- Safety concerns
- Conflicts with City operations or future capital projects
- Insufficient organizational capacity
- Incomplete documentation
- Environmental constraints

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Non-approval does not prevent future applications. Applicants may revise their proposal or explore an alternate site for consideration in a future intake period.

Applications deemed ineligible due to organizational status or lack of resources will be invited to reapply once eligibility criteria are met.

### Additional Note:

Where feasible, City of Ottawa - Funding, Partnerships & Agreements Unit staff will work collaboratively with applicants to help them strengthen future submissions. This may include clarifying requirements, identifying ways to address gaps, or suggesting alternative approaches, so applicants can reapply more successfully in future intake periods.

## What's Next

After the Phase Two review, your organization will be notified of the status of your application. The next steps will depend on whether your project is **Approved** or **Conditionally Approved**. Review the **Community-led Greening Initiatives and Gardening Program Standards**, reference the [ottawa.ca/gardens](http://ottawa.ca/gardens) webpage.

### If Approved

Before installation or on-site work can begin, ensure the following steps are completed:

#### Agreements & Insurance

- Sign the required Community Garden Agreement with the City of Ottawa.
- Provide proof of required insurance (CPIP or equivalent municipal-standard coverage).

#### Documentation

- Submit any requested revised plans or final design documents.
- Provide all remaining required documents at least 30 days before installation.

#### Site & Installation Preparation

- Review all site conditions of approval provided by City staff.
- Confirm installation conditions, site limitations, and timelines with City staff.

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- Ensure compliance with municipal regulations, including applicable bylaws, approved plant species, and permitted materials.
- Submit landscape architect and/or engineer-stamped drawings, if required based on site layout and design.
- Request utility locates for underground services when digging is required (e.g., garden bed installation or in-ground planting) and provide proof of completed locates; locates must be done within the week prior to installation.
- Attend any required on-site meetings with City staff.

Note: Soil testing is conducted by the City when required for in-ground planting and are dependent on contractor availability and timelines.

## Design, Construction & Resources

- Finalize site plan: plot layout, pathways, raised beds, compost areas, storage, irrigation, and accessibility features, as applicable.
- Submit landscape architect and/or engineer-stamped drawings, if required based on site layout and design.
- Gather and organize tools, supplies, and storage for the installation and ongoing maintenance.
- Secure funding or in-kind resources if needed (grants, donations, sponsorships).

## Community Engagement & Volunteer Coordination

- Build your garden and greening committee and assign roles (coordinator, volunteer lead, maintenance, outreach).
- Recruit volunteers and organize workdays for site preparation, installation, and ongoing maintenance.
- Communicate with the local community and neighbours to share your plan, membership process if applicable, and gather community support.

## If Conditionally Approved

To move from conditional approval to full approval, applicants must complete the following:

## Revisions & Requirements

- Make required revisions to project plans (layout, planting choices, accessibility features, maintenance details).
- Submit additional documentation such as updated maps, design drawings, letters of support, or organizational information.

## Meeting Conditions

- Address all specific conditions identified by City staff.
- Follow any noted site limitations, including access restrictions, soil or environmental constraints, or seasonal restrictions.

## Deadlines

- Submit all outstanding items by the deadlines provided in your conditional approval notification.

## Tips for Success

- Engage with City staff early if you need guidance on design, compliance, or site limitations.
- Plan for long-term sustainability: water, composting, and volunteer scheduling are key for ongoing success.
- Keep clear records of your budget, volunteers, materials, and correspondence with the City.
- Review the **Community-led Greening Initiatives and Gardening Program Standards**, reference the [ottawa.ca/gardens](http://ottawa.ca/gardens) webpage.

## Application Submission Process

**Applications will be accepted between January 5 and February 3, 2026.**

Submit your complete application only once - either online, in a single physical package, or in one email, but not more than one of these options.

Applications may be submitted using one of the four following methods:

## **1. Electronic (Preferred)**

Applications are available to be submitted electronically through the [ottawa.ca/gardens](http://ottawa.ca/gardens) webpage.

## **2. Email (Preferred)**

Email: [communitygardens@ottawa.ca](mailto:communitygardens@ottawa.ca)

Subject Line: *Community-Led Greening & Gardening Application*

## **3. Hard Copy (Canada Post or Courier)**

City of Ottawa - Funding, Partnerships & Agreements Unit  
Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department  
100 Constellation Drive, 8th Floor West, Mail Code 26-55  
Ottawa, ON K2G 6J8

## **4. In-Person Delivery**

Applications may be delivered to the Funding, Partnerships & Agreements Team at:

City of Ottawa – Ben Franklin Place (Meridian Theatres @ Centrepointe)  
101 Centrepointe Drive, Ottawa ON K2G 5K7

1st Floor, Room 1A

**Date: Tuesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026**

Hours: 9:00 a.m.- Noon & 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

## **Application Format**

### **Email Applications (Preferred)**

- Email attachments must not exceed 15 MB.
- Files must be print-ready (PDF, Word, JPG, PNG).
- Ensure the subject line reads: “*2026 Community-Led Greening & Gardening Application*”.
- A confirmation email will be sent once received. If you do not receive confirmation:

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- Verify your email size does not exceed your provider's attachment limit (City of Ottawa limit is 15 MB).
- Ensure all required documents are attached.
- Contact [communitygardens@ottawa.ca](mailto:communitygardens@ottawa.ca) to confirm receipt.

## Hard Copy Applications

- Submit the completed application form and all required documents on single-sided 8.5" x 11" white paper.
- Do not submit materials via USB or DVD.
- If submitting by email instead of hard copy, ensure documents are printer-ready and in PDF or Word format.

## Inquiries

If you have questions about eligibility, site selection, or the application process:

Email: [communitygardens@ottawa.ca](mailto:communitygardens@ottawa.ca)

Website: [ottawa.ca/gardens](http://ottawa.ca/gardens)

## Program Resources & Useful Links

### Community-led Greening Initiatives and Gardening Program Resources

Please review the three documents found on Ottawa.ca under the [ottawa.ca/gardens](http://ottawa.ca/gardens) webpage:

1. How to Complete the Application Guide
2. Supplemental Application (required only during Phase Two)
3. Community-led Greening Initiatives and Gardening Program Standards

### Useful City-led Program Links

- [Community gardens | City of Ottawa](http://Community%20gardens%20-%20City%20of%20Ottawa)
- [Pollinators | City of Ottawa](http://Pollinators%20-%20City%20of%20Ottawa)
- [Residential Gardening within the Right of way | City of Ottawa](http://Residential%20Gardening%20within%20the%20Right%20of%20way%20-%20City%20of%20Ottawa)

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- [Tree planting | City of Ottawa](#)
- [Gardening and Growing Food - Ottawa Public Health](#)
- [Invasive species | City of Ottawa](#)
- [Garden care | City of Ottawa](#)
- [Rain Ready Ottawa | City of Ottawa](#)
- [Risks/impacts of climate change | City of Ottawa](#)
- [Environmental policy and planning | City of Ottawa](#)
- [Commemorative naming | City of Ottawa](#)
- [Cleaning the Capital Program | City of Ottawa](#)
- [Adopt-a-Park/Adopt-a-Road | City of Ottawa](#)