

Project Title: NEOKC Community Garden Initiative

Applicant: Emmanuel Opde

Name of Organization: RestoreOKC

2025 Spring: Grant Writing (NONP 5403-WB)

Nonprofit Leadership Program

Petree College of Arts and Sciences, Oklahoma City University

Kaitlyn Hardiman

Course Instructor

April 4, 2025

Table of Contents

1. Mission	1
2. Executive Summary	1
3. Problem/Need Statement	2
4. Project Goals	3
5. Project Objectives	3
6. Project Activities	4
7. Implementation Plan	5
8. Key Partners	6
9. Budget/Justification	7-8
10. Organizational Capacity	9
11. Sustainability	10

RESTOREOKC

GRANT NARRATIVE FOR NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY GARDEN INITIATIVE

MISSION

RestoreOKC is an asset-based community development organization focused on the restoration of health, environment, reconciliation, and equity alongside our neighbors in Northeast OKC.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

RestoreOKC was initially known as Two Roosters Cleaning Company and has evolved into a cornerstone of community development in Northeast Oklahoma City. RestoreOKC focuses on the restoration of health, education, residences, and to provide employment opportunities for the local population. This commitment is particularly vital in NEOKC, where socioeconomic challenges persist. RestoreOKC has made remarkable strides, distributing over 112,754 pounds of fresh produce across the community. This initiative exemplifies not only the organization's focus on health but also its dedication to the local economy. By enhancing food access, particularly through the Eastpoint Market, RestoreOKC provides a convenient source of healthy food options that cater to the specific needs of residents. Programs like Double Up Bucks allow food stamp beneficiaries to double their purchasing power for fresh, organic produce, thereby promoting healthier dietary choices and supporting local agricultural producers.

Background and Setting

The context in which RestoreOKC operates is crucial to understanding the impact of its initiatives. Northeast Oklahoma City has a rich history that reflects both the struggles and resilience of its predominantly low-income communities. Characterized by its vibrant cultures and strong community ties, this area has faced systemic challenges, including economic disinvestment and limited access to essential services. Within such an environment, the work of RestoreOKC shines a light on the potential for grassroots movements to enact meaningful change.

RestoreOKC's commitment to community-driven development is rooted in the belief that residents possess knowledge and capabilities that, when harnessed, can lead to transformative outcomes. By engaging local residents in the planning and implementation of projects, the organization positions itself as a true partner in the community. This approach not only builds trust but also empowers residents to take an active role in shaping their own futures.

Staff, Leadership, and Governance

The leadership team at RestoreOKC comprises dedicated individuals with diverse professional backgrounds, including community development, social work, education, and urban planning. Each member brings unique expertise and passion to the organization, ensuring a holistic approach to community restoration. At the helm is Caylee Dodson, the Executive Director, whose vision drives the mission of RestoreOKC. Caylee's experience in nonprofit management and her close ties to the community have been instrumental in bridging gaps and elevating the voices of local residents.

As of 2023, RestoreOKC has expanded its team to include 19 staff members and a robust network of volunteers, all of whom are committed to the organization's mission. This allows for a community-centric approach, where volunteers and staff work collaboratively to address pressing local issues. The hands-on involvement of community members in various initiatives further enhances the relevance and impact of RestoreOKC's programs.

The governance structure of RestoreOKC is anchored by a 9-member board of directors, composed of local leaders, residents, and stakeholders. This diverse board not only provides oversight but also contributes to the programmatic and strategic direction of the nonprofit. Under the leadership of President Kori Hall, the board guides RestoreOKC through the ever-evolving landscape of community needs, ensuring that the organization remains responsive and effective.

Importantly, RestoreOKC maintains a spirit of collaboration, often partnering with local organizations, businesses, and institutions to amplify its impact. These collaborations enhance RestoreOKC's reach and reinforce the importance of solidarity in community development. By partnering with schools, health organizations, and local businesses, the Collective reinforces the interconnectedness of health, education, and economic opportunity.

PROBLEM/NEED STATEMENT

One in four residents of NEOKC grapples with food insecurity. According to the US Census Bureau the poverty rate in NEOKC is at 32.2%¹ whereas poverty rate in Oklahoma City is 23%. According to Feeding America, approximately 17.4%² of households in Oklahoma City are food insecure. This is notably higher in underserved neighborhoods such as NEOKC, where residents often rely on convenience stores that provide limited healthy food options. The USDA's Economic Research Service identifies that these areas are considered "food deserts," which lack access to affordable and nutritious food.

Furthermore, the Oklahoma State Department of Health reports that the obesity rate in Oklahoma is 36.5%, leading to increased incidences of chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension that are prevalent in this community. The lack of accessible, affordable, and nutritious food exacerbates health disparities, particularly among marginalized populations such as the residents of NEOKC.

The proposed Community Garden Initiative aims to address these pressing issues by establishing sustainable gardens that promote the cultivation of fresh produce, improve local health outcomes, and foster community resilience. By providing an accessible platform for residents to participate in gardening, this initiative will help alleviate food insecurity, support healthier lifestyles, and strengthen community ties.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau (2023). *American Community Survey 5-year estimates*. Retrieved from *Census Reporter Profile page for 73111* <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/86000US73111-73111/>

² Feeding America, "The State of Food Insecurity in America" Modified 2021, [feedingamerica.org](https://www.feedingamerica.org/research)
<https://www.feedingamerica.org/research>

PROJECT GOALS

Alleviate Food Insecurity:

Establish community gardens that provide residents with direct access to fresh, nutritious produce, thereby reducing reliance on convenience stores and addressing food insecurity in Northeast Oklahoma City.

Promote healthier lifestyles by increasing the availability of affordable fruits and vegetables which may contribute to lower obesity rates and reduce the incidence of chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension.

Foster Community Cohesion:

Create spaces for community engagement, education, and empowerment by encouraging collective gardening efforts, which will strengthen social bonds among residents and promote a sense of belonging.

Educate and Empower Residents:

Provide educational programming on gardening, nutrition, and sustainable practices that empower community members with the skills necessary to grow their own food and make healthier food choices.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The Community Garden Initiative is to begin with partnership development and the first three gardens in the first one year of the program:

Establish Community Gardens to Increase Fresh Food Availability:

Develop the first three (3) community gardens in NEOKC in the first year to produce at least 5,000 pounds of fresh food for distribution to community members with priority given to food-insecure households.

Develop Partnerships:

Collaborate with local health organizations, schools, and community groups to promote the garden initiative and develop funding and resource-sharing agreements to enhance sustainability.

Evaluate Impact:

Implement a system for measuring the impacts of the initiative on food access, health outcomes, and community engagement, including collecting data on food insecurity rates and participants' dietary habits at baseline and annually thereafter.

Participant Learning and Experience Outcomes

Short-Term Outcomes (0-1 year):

Gardening Skills:

Participants will learn basic gardening techniques, such as planting, watering, and maintaining plants. They will understand seasonal planting schedules and proper harvesting methods.

Nutritional Knowledge:

Through workshops, participants will gain knowledge about the nutritional value of various fruits and vegetables, as well as how to incorporate these into daily meals for healthier eating habits.

Monitoring Progress Toward Project Goals

Harvest Data:

The quantity of produce harvested from each garden will be documented and reported annually, allowing measurement of the initiative's effectiveness in increasing local produce availability.

Third-Party Evaluations:

Engaging external evaluators to assess the program's effectiveness periodically will provide an objective measure of impact, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.

Sharing Learnings and Outcomes through social media and Website:

Dedicated web pages and active social media accounts will feature updates, success stories, and educational content, creating a broader platform for community engagement and outreach.

Project Activities and Timelines:

Year 1: Planning, Establishment, and Initial Engagement

Month 1-3: Project Planning

Conduct Community Assessments: Gather data to identify the specific locations for gardens and to understand community needs and preferences.

Form Partnerships: Engage with local health organizations, schools, and community groups to build relationships and resource-sharing agreements.

Recruit Volunteers: Begin outreach to recruit community volunteers who will support garden establishment and activities.

Month 4: Garden Design and Site Preparation

Design Gardens: Collaborate with community members to finalize the design of at least three community gardens, ensuring accessibility.

Site Preparation: Clear, till the soil, and prepare the designated areas for planting.

Month 5-6: Installation of Gardens

Garden Planting Workshops: Host workshops where community members can learn and participate in planting fruits and vegetables in the newly established garden spaces.

Install Infrastructure: Set up necessary infrastructure, such as water access and compost bins.

Month 7-12: Community Engagement and Education

Monthly Workshops: Begin a series of monthly educational workshops focusing on gardening techniques, nutrition education, and cooking classes. Target at least 25 community members per workshop.

Community Events: Host community events (e.g., garden potlucks) to foster social connections and celebrate initial successes.

Start fresh food distribution: Begin harvesting and distributing fresh produce to community members, prioritizing food-insecure households.

Summary of Activities

Workshops: Garden establishment/Monthly workshops across one year focusing on various skills and knowledge on establishing and running a successful community garden as well as develop partnership.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Phases of Implementation:

Community Engagement and Planning

Identify Stakeholders: Engage with local community members, organizations, schools, and health agencies to identify needs and build partnerships.

Conduct a Needs Assessment: Use surveys, focus groups, and community forums to assess residents' interests, existing skills, and preferred gardening models.

Location Selection: Identify at least three suitable sites for community gardens, prioritizing accessibility and visibility in underserved neighborhoods.

Design and Establish Gardens

Garden Design: Collaborate with landscape architects and community members to design gardens that cater to community needs, including raised beds for individuals with disabilities.

Soil Testing and Preparation: Conduct soil health tests to ensure safety and suitability for planting. If necessary, implement soil remediation strategies.

Gather Resources: Secure funding, tools, seeds, and other gardening supplies through grants, donations, and partnerships with local businesses.

Recruit and Train Volunteers

Volunteer Recruitment Campaign: Launch outreach efforts to recruit a diverse group of volunteers from the community. Utilize social media, flyers, and community events.

Training Workshops: Conduct training sessions for volunteers focusing on gardening techniques, safety protocols, and leadership skills to empower them as community leaders.

Implementation of Educational Programs

Monthly Workshops: Develop and implement a calendar of educational workshops covering gardening techniques, nutrition education, and sustainable practices. Incorporate guest speakers from local health organizations and agricultural experts.

Hands-On Learning: Organize community workdays where participants can apply their learning directly in the gardens while fostering community spirit.

Production and Distribution of Fresh Produce

Harvest Management: Establish a system for monitoring and managing the harvest to maximize production. Develop a simple distribution process to ensure produce reaches food-insecure households first.

Food Preservation Workshops: Offer seasonal workshops on food preservation methods such as canning, freezing, and drying to help families extend the availability of their harvest.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback

Impact Evaluation Tools: Implement surveys and tracking tools as mentioned in the measuring progress section to assess knowledge gains, behavioral changes, and community engagement.

Regular Feedback Loops: Host quarterly meetings with community members, stakeholders, and volunteers to solicit feedback and adapt initiatives as needed.

Celebrating Success and Building Community

Garden Celebrations: Host seasonal celebrations or harvest festivals to engage the community, promote gardening successes, and share stories of transformation.

Collaboration with Local Events: Partner with local events to showcase the gardens and disseminate information about the healthy eating initiatives.

KEY PARTNERS AND COLLABORATION

1. Office of the Major/County Commissioner Oklahoma City

Collaborate with the office of the Major and County Commissioner to select participants based on available data.

2. Oklahoma State University, Department of Agriculture (OSU)

To carry out program evaluation.

3. Oklahoma Department of Health and Human Services

To provide guest speakers and disseminate information to the public.

4. TruGreen Architect

To design three (3) community gardens

5. National Women in Agriculture Association (NWIAA)

To coordinate women to participate in the program's workshop

BUDGET NARRATIVE

RestoreOKC is seeking a total of \$220,000.00 in funding to support the Community Garden Initiative, which aims to alleviate food insecurity, enhance public health, and promote community cohesion in NE OKC. The budget detailed below outlines personnel costs, participant training stipends, supplies, contractual expenses, and other necessary elements over the project duration of one (1) year.

Personnel	FTE	Calculation	Total for one year
Project Director	50% of their time	20 hours per week at \$25 per hour	\$25,000.00
Community Garden Manager	50%	20 hours per week at \$20 per hour	\$20,000.00
Agriculture Educator	50%	20 hours at \$20 per hour	\$20,000.00
Program Coordinator	50%	20 hours per week at \$20 per hour	\$20,000.00
Volunteer's Stipends	10 hours per week	10 hours per week at \$10 per hour	\$15,000 to assist three Volunteers for Gas and lunch
Total for Personnel		Personnel Total for 1 year	\$100,000.00
Contractual	Description	Calculation	

Consultant			\$15,000
Program Design	Training Participants are provided with assistance	\$150.00 for each participant at 100 per year (x) 1 year	\$20,000
Total for Contractual			\$35,000.00
Services/Supplies	Description	Calculation	
Garden Seedlings/Setup		\$10 Per farm x3	\$30,000.00
Equipment Rental			\$10,000.00
Garden Maintenance			\$10,000.00
Marketing/Outreach			\$10,000.00
Project Materials/Supplies			\$10,000.00
Total			\$70,000.00
Travel			\$10,000.00
Others			\$5,000.00
Total Project Expenses			\$220,000.00
Direct Project Income			
Donation from Community			\$10,000.00
Ticket Sales			\$5,000.00
Individual Contributions			\$15,000.00
In-kind Contributions			\$50,000.00
Total Direct Income			\$80,000.00
Grant Request			\$200,000.00
Total Project Income			\$280,000.00

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

Description of Personnel

Project Director is to oversee and administer the grant.

Community Garden Manager- To coordinates the community garden activities.

Program Coordinator is to assist in managing workshops and engagement activities, and tracking participation.

Agriculture Educator- Provides hands-on training and workshops focused on sustainable gardening practices that empower community members to grow their own food for food security.

Volunteers will assist with project implementation.

Description of Contractual Expenses

We will contract TruGreen Architect company and another consultant who are specialists in urban farming and community gardens to provide ongoing consultation throughout the project, ensuring the initiative adheres to best practices.

Description of Services and Supplies

Garden design, gardening tools and equipment's, garden maintenance, seeds, marketing and educational resources, are critical for the success of the Community Garden Initiative. These supplies are estimated for a total of one year, providing essential materials for both participants and volunteers.

Description of Other Expenses

The community engagement hub will be designed to facilitate effective gardening practices while serving as a gathering space for education and community interaction.

Travel

Travel expenses for one years of the project which includes travel for Conferences and invitation for grant recipient's meetings at the USDA Headquarters in Washington DC.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

Organizational Capacity

RestoreOKC has built a robust organizational capacity that emphasizes collaboration, engagement, and empowerment, community development, social work. Education and urban planning. This team possesses a wealth of experience across various backgrounds with 80% senior staff as females, 43% Black/African American, 43% of White/Caucasian/European, 14% multi-racial/multi ethnic which reinforces RestoreOKC's multidisciplinary approach to serving the underserved population of NEOKC. Also, RestoreOKC's track record speaks volumes about its capacity for impactful programming. The organization has successfully distributed over 112,754 pounds of fresh produce through innovative initiatives like the Eastpoint market and the Community Garden Initiative, which directly responds to the prevalent issue of food insecurity in the region, the organization has created 247 new jobs, generated 3,250.000 from businesses, carried out 1,457,000 free home repairs and handicap

assistance, supported 1,800 plus students and utilized 10,000 plus hours of volunteering from 500 volunteers.

Project Sustainability Plan

The sustainability of RestoreOKC's Community Garden Initiative is built upon several key principles: community involvement, educational programming, and strong partnerships. The initiative is designed to create long-lasting impacts by integrating food security solutions with community development efforts, ensuring that residents not only benefit in the short-term but also acquire skills and resources that serve them for years to come.

To sustain the Community Garden Initiative, RestoreOKC will utilize the active participation of local residents.

RestoreOKC will develop three community gardens in the first one year and sustain in the project for the long-term of three-four (3-5) years through Sustainable Practices such as health improvement initiatives, education, empowerment, and community cohesion through:

Resident Local Farm Ownership Model/Individual Participant Management:

Few participants will be selected and handed ownership and managerial responsibilities for a designated plot within the community garden.

Participants will be expected to maintain their plots, adhere to garden guidelines, and contribute to the overall health and sustainability of the garden.

Provide Quarterly Reporting:

Each farm owner must provide a progress report on their farm activities every quarter. This report will include:

Crop yield and variety grown

Challenges faced (pests, weather, etc.)

Efforts undertaken for pest management, irrigation, and soil health

Any community engagement or outreach initiatives related to their plot

Plans for the upcoming quarter

Ongoing Monitoring by RestoreOKC

RestoreOKC will continue to monitor all farm activities to support participants and ensure adherence to best practices in sustainable farming.

Periodic assessments will be conducted to gather data on overall garden health, productivity, and participant engagement.

RestoreOKC will provide guidance and resources to assist participants in overcoming challenges and maximizing productivity.

Data Collection and Impact Measurement Methods

C. Harvest Data

Produce Yield Documentation: Establish systematic tracking of the amount of produce harvested from each garden. This includes weighing items harvested and categorizing them by type (fruits, vegetables, herbs) for annual reporting.

Engage external evaluators to conduct periodic assessments, offering objectivity in measuring program effectiveness and impact.

Measuring Progress Toward Project Goals

Goal 1: Alleviate Food Insecurity

Measurement: Track the volume of produce distributed to food-insecure households. Analyze the number of households reporting reduced reliance on convenience stores through follow-up surveys.

Goal 2: Foster Community Cohesion

Measurement: Analyze social connection metrics via attendance and engagement in gardening activities. Gather feedback on community bonding through surveys and qualitative interviews.

Goal 3: Educate and Empower Residents

Measurement: Track attendance and participant feedback from workshops. Monitor participants' self-reported confidence in gardening and nutrition, aiming for a measurable increase in knowledge and skills.

3. Reporting and Feedback Mechanisms

A. Community Reports

Annual Reports: Create comprehensive reports detailing activities, outcomes, and impacts. Distribute them at community meetings and through local media channels to engage stakeholders.

B. Workshops and Events

Community Presentations: Organize events where participants can share their experiences and outcomes, strengthening community connections and promoting ownership of the initiative.

C. Partnership Engagement

Regular Updates: Share findings and success stories with partner organizations through newsletters or collaborative meetings to foster continuous support and enhancement of programs.

D. Digital Outreach

Social Media Campaigns: Use social media platforms to showcase progress, share personal stories from participants, and provide educational content to reach a wider audience.