

BOSTON GRANTS INITIATIVE COVER SHEET

DATE: January 18, 2010

NAME OF APPLICANT ORGANIZATION: Chelsea Community Gardeners Association

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AMOUNT OF THIS REQUEST: \$8,560 **TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET:** \$ 16,195

TOTAL CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET (If different from Project Budget): \$ N/A

TOTAL AMOUNT YOUR ORGANIZATION SPENT LAST YEAR: \$ 8,233.88

NUMBER OF STAFF, FULL AND/OR PART-TIME (if any): 0

NUMBER OF KEY VOLUNTEERS: 6

HOW LONG HAS YOUR GROUP BEEN ACTIVE? The Chelsea Community Garden and Chelsea Gardeners Association were established in 1996.

PROJECT PROPOSAL SUMMARY (No more than 2 sentences): The Chelsea Community Gardeners Association seeks the support of NEGEF to continue to develop its structure, to expand its capacity to serve the community in the area of senior/handicapped accessibility and participation and to continue to develop the garden as a bridge to build community.

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THIS GRANT PROGRAM? We are a current grantee. We originally learned about NEGEF at the Boston Natural Area Network's (BNAN) Gardener's Gathering in March of 2009 through Ginny Callan at NEGEF's information table.

CHECK ANY OF THE FOLLOWING THAT APPLY TO YOUR ORGANIZATION:

☒ Neighborhood/Community group (not a 501(c)(3) or incorporated group)

☒ Checking or Savings account in group's name

☒ Fiscal Agent Organization: Chelsea Collaborative Federal EIN #: 22-2906521

☒ Incorporated as a nonprofit in Massachusetts

☒ 501(c)(3) status with the IRS Federal EIN # _____

If you are an informal neighborhood or community group and do not have a checking account or fiscal agent, you will need to set up an account or agent upon receipt of a grant. You do NOT need to have an account or agent when you apply.

BOSTON GRANTS INITIATIVE APPLICATION FORM

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

In 1996 the Chelsea Community Garden and its Chelsea Community Gardeners Association were developed under the umbrella of the Chelsea Collaborative (the Collaborative) to foster community gardening, community building, environmental justice, and to provide more green space within the city of Chelsea. The garden began on a single abandoned house lot and expanded two years later to the adjacent abandoned lot. The garden provides gardeners tools, a garden bed, plants and seedlings, water and gardening workshops. Historically, one of the Collaborative's Green Space and Recreation Committee's (Green Space) community organizers served as garden coordinator. Due to the limited number of garden plots, this organizer was not a gardener. Since 2009 the gardeners themselves have taken on more ownership of the garden and more responsibility for its oversight and development of the garden's physical and organizational structure. When the Collaborative took a step back, the gardeners stepped forward volunteering their time, ideas, energy, and more. The garden membership is more active than it has ever been.

The Chelsea Community Gardeners Association is very proud of this past year's achievements:

- Adding 5 new member beds and one large elderly/handicapped accessible bed built to wheelchair height specifications with the assistance of a 9 member YouthBuild Just-a-Start youth crew.
- Expanding the Executive Committee from 3 members to 6.
- Drafting, reviewing, and ratifying Chelsea Community Garden By-Laws. English and Spanish copies attached.
- Designating the garden semi-organic; only organic methods of pest and weed control may be used, but a gardener may use non-organic fertilizer on her/his own bed.
- Last season we had 23 families as Garden members. We are looking forward to adding 6 families, 12-15 Senior Center members, and youth from ROCA's YouthSTAR program.
- Please see our attached report to learn more about our 2010 garden season.

The Chelsea Gardeners Association is hard at work developing its structure, making the garden accessible to all, creating community within the Garden and using the Garden as a bridge to connect with the larger community. The Chelsea Gardeners Association goals to further develop the Chelsea Community Garden are:

- To fill the new beds with soil and mulch to ready for our new gardeners.
- To level and install stone dust walkway to facilitate senior and handicapped access to garden beds.
- To install a porta-potty for the garden season. This is tied to our Senior Center Garden Project detailed below in involvement of community at large.
- To design and build a 3 bin compost system.
- To increase shade within the garden (there is presently none) by purchasing a shade structure and constructing a grape arbor that utilizes the current tool shed and one being built by ROCA as anchors. Providing shade is key for our senior participants' comfort and safety and facilitates our bi-weekly meetings in the garden.
- To decrease the amount of formal Monthly Membership Meetings from 8 to 4 and conduct bi-weekly informal "update" meetings at the Garden on Saturday mornings to increase communication amongst gardeners.
- To develop a Sub-Committee to focus on developing more green space and community gardens in Chelsea.
- To draw on the gardening expertise of our gardeners to provide 3 garden workshops including Container Gardening for those on our waitlist, a Vermiculture workshop on all aspects of composting with earthworms and a 3rd workshop topic to be determined during the garden season by the gardeners. Mini-workshops will be provided throughout the season at gardeners' requests.
- To continue to utilize BNAN's knowledge, resources, and workshops.

Describe the neighborhood or community need(s) and/or challenges that this effort will address:

More than 35,000 Residents occupy just over a third of Chelsea's total land, as just 37.6% of the city is zoned for residential use while 45.2% of the city's land is zoned industrial and commercial use. Because of the density of our residential areas we have many multiple family dwellings. The 2000 Census listed Chelsea's home ownership rate at 28.9%. There has been a significant increase in condo stock within the city. However many of these properties were former factories or commercial sites with little green space. Within our community, more often than not there is little to no open space, backyards, or planting areas for residents to use.

The economic realities of our community are stark. In order to afford rent and housing expenses many families will share an apartment or take in boarders. 23.3% of Chelsea residents live below the poverty level compared to 9.3% for

the State of Massachusetts. According to the 2000 Census indicates that, the median household income for Chelsea is \$30,161 compared to a statewide median of \$50,502.

Chelsea is a minority majority city. According to the 2000 Census a full 61% of Chelsea residents identify as Hispanic, Black or African American, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. The remainder of the population identifies as White or Caucasian. Additionally, immigrants make up 36% of the population. Chelsea's immigrant population, reflective of the larger population is largely Latino and primarily from Central America.

Chelsea bears more than its share of environmental burdens. The EPA has designated the Chelsea Creek the most polluted tributary to the Boston Harbor, the second most polluted body of water in Massachusetts, and every neighborhood in Chelsea as an Environmental Justice neighborhood. The Chelsea Creek waterfront houses tanks that hold 100% of the jet fuel used at Logan International Airport and 70-80% of the region's heating oil, illegally stored road salt for more than 250 New England cities and towns, a tannery, and 52 designated hazardous waste sites. Chelsea residents also deal with significant air quality issues due to air emissions from thousands of trucks traveling on state-designated truck routes; trucks traveling to and from; cars and other vehicles traversing the Tobin Bridge; diesel emissions from large ships which transport products into the Chelsea Creek; and the emissions from the jets and planes which fly overhead on their way to or from Logan International airport. According to the EPA, Chelsea's overall level of diesel exhaust exceeds the US average by five times.

In a neighborhood dominated by a 50 foot salt pile and an industrial waterfront area, the Garden provides a space for people of all backgrounds and economic levels to come together, to share, to learn and to create community while connecting to and reclaiming the local environment. For all of our gardeners understanding the importance of the environment and one's connection to it are particularly relevant in an Environmental Justice community. Children learn how to garden from their parents and other community members. This early exposure helps to foster a connection to the earth and environmental stewardship. Adolescents who have been engaged as part of a service commitment are now eager to have a garden bed of their own. The garden will help to keep them off the streets and provide an environment where they can connect to caring adults of all ages. We are particularly excited about the possibilities our plan for increased senior engagement will have for all of our young people. For many of our gardeners, the garden serves as an economic support defraying grocery costs. We are expanding this beyond the garden fence by contributing to a local soup kitchen. The Garden is a bright spot that addresses many community needs.

What is the level and nature of involvement of the community-at-large?

Chelsea Senior Center Garden Project: We would truly like the garden to be an intergenerational space open, welcoming and accessible to all. In order to assess and address challenges to more senior participation, we met with Chelsea Senior Center staff and Latino Elders and the Massachusetts General Hospital's (MGH) Healthy Chelsea Initiative. Collaboratively, we developed a plan to facilitate senior garden participation. It includes providing a safe means of transportation to and from the Chelsea Senior Center and Garden twice weekly, the construction of a paved walkway to safely access the elderly/handicapped beds, porta-potty, chairs and shade creation necessary to accommodate senior health issues, and garden plan designed by the seniors for the season's cultivation. MGH will provide nutritional workshops for the seniors. There will be monthly mini documentaries produced and aired on Community Cable. There will also be photo documentation and exhibition of this project at well known community agencies such as the Collaborative. The Chelsea Community Fund has partially funded this plan. We look to NEGEF to help us facilitate the engagement of seniors in the Garden by drawing on the involvement of the community-at-large.

Photo Exhibit: In the fall we held a well received Garden Photo Exhibit displaying gardener Melissa Shook's work capturing the rich cultural diversity of our membership and the beauty of the garden. This sparked much interest in 2011 Garden applications. Based on its success, she has proposed an in depth photographic and video documentary project exploring the seasonal changes in the garden with an emphasis on recent immigrants' gardening stories in their own languages. A fall photo exhibit would be held. The videos would be shown on Community Cable. A grant is pending with the Chelsea Cultural Council to support this effort to engage the community through photo and video.

Chelsea Neighborhood Developers' (CND) Community Garden: Joe Rubin and Enesa Skopljak, our former and current Groundskeeper and experienced gardeners, developed a relationship with the CND gardeners by offering their novice gardeners assistance and advice in 2009. In 2010 we kept CND gardeners informed of and carpooled their

members to BNAN workshops. We initiated a joint cookout with CND. We plan to make it an annual event. We will continue to carpool to BNAN workshops and to develop and strengthen our relationship with CND gardeners.

YouthBuild/Just-A-Start: We are so grateful to the two groups of JAS youth that helped us to rearrange, expand existing and build new garden beds over the past two years. Depending on their schedule this season, they may help us to use a donation of wooden planks to build small communal strawberry and herb beds. We will be holding a cook out for them in the Garden so that they can see the fruits of their labor, enjoy the Garden in full bloom and know that their contribution is greatly appreciated.

The ArtWalk: Four garden members are members of the Chelsea Artists Collaborative (CHARCOLL) which launched the Chelsea Art Walk as an annual event in 2009 “to showcase artistic expression and creative excellence from artists of all media in [Chelsea] galleries and theaters.” It is held over a weekend and shuttle buses stop at each gallery or venue highlighted. Our Garden was chosen to be 2011 ArtWalk site. We will have an “INVITATIONAL” prior to the event for artists to design and create scarecrows for exhibition in the Garden that weekend. This will bring many people to the garden that might not know about it or otherwise visit it. It will also engage the larger community in the garden.

Chelsea Community Kitchen: This soup kitchen and food bank operates from ROCA’s kitchen on Saturday mornings. We shared the garden’s bounty with the larger community by making weekly organic vegetable donations from our communal bed and the surplus from 3 individual beds. We plan to continue this relationship and to enlist more gardeners to commit to contributing throughout the growing season.

General Outreach to the Community-At-Large: We will utilize the language skills of the Garden Co-Coordinator to reach out to and connect to the diversity of the larger community. We will use the Chelsea Collaborative’s weekly Community Cable show once again to inform and engage the larger community about gardening and Garden events. We will also utilize bi-lingual flyers at community agencies to publicize the Garden and its activities.

If your project is successful, what changes will occur in your community and its environment?

If our project is successful:

- The Garden will be truly and finally accessible to the handicapped and elderly.
- We will create lasting cross-cultural and cross-generational relationships.
- We will continue to increase the sense of community within the Garden.
- We will continue to develop and deepen relationships within the larger community.
- The larger community will have a greater awareness of gardening as well as the garden and be engaged.

We want to inspire and engage our community through the Garden. Ultimately, we hope the larger community will see the value in community gardening, its possibilities for community building and work with us to create even more community gardens.

PROJECT BUDGET: Project Budget is attached.

Principal sources of support (such as membership dues, individual donations, grants, special events etc)

Gardeners pay a \$20 annual garden fee. Senior citizens pay a \$10 annual garden fee. Everyone pays a refundable \$5 key deposit. We expect to see approximately \$700 in dues for the 2011 gardening season. We have been awarded a grant from the Chelsea Community Fund for \$4,000. We will receive \$100 from CHARCOLL (the Chelsea Artists Collaborative) to cover some of our expenses for our participation in their annual ArtWalk. We have a grant pending with the Chelsea Cultural Council for \$1,100. The Chelsea Collaborative will continue to provide in-kind assistance through the assistance of its Development Coordinator and Financial Manager. We will continue to work with the Collaborative’s Development Coordinator to identify foundations and potential funding sources. Additionally, some of the grants received by the Green Space and Recreation Committee will help to cover expenses.