

Project Title: Campus Crops
Budget Requested: \$5000

Applicant/Project Leader: Campus Crops
Role: Graduate Student
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--Project Group--

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Sustainability Project Fund Application Instructions

I. Project Overview

Project summary

Campus Crops is a student run urban gardening initiative at McGill University's downtown campus. We grow food on campus, by students, for students. Our main activities revolve around gardening and improving our gardening spaces (behind the MSE building and on the terrace behind the James Administration building), though we also organize other events such as workshops, alone or in collaboration with other groups on campus or from the community. Our group has multiple objectives, namely helping people learn how to grow their own food and tend their own urban garden through a hands-on approach, raise awareness around issues like food security, and provide 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 around the world, and provide students with local food of quality, through Midnight Kitchen. All students can join Campus Crops (the terrace is wheelchair accessible) and we aim at creating a safer space for our work and discussions.

Project eligibility

By using compost from McGill's industrial composting machine, Big Hannah, 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.

We also don't use synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and other additives in our garden. In their place we use natural and/or homemade products mostly coming from organic and/or local sources. This practice rejects the unsustainable use of fossil fuels and other pollutants as soil amenders.

Finally, by providing a space for people to develop skills in growing their own food, we hope to work towards a decentralization of food production that limits industrial-size waste and pollution, as well as transport of resources and products from the producers to the consumers. Decentralization of food production also limits the impact of the economic market on food availability for people in financially precarious conditions.

Through our contributions for a socially and environmentally sustainable network of food production, we directly oppose the capitalist system, which discards quality for productivity, good life and work conditions for efficiency and exploitation, diversity for optimization, autonomy for precariousness, sustainable for short-term and social relationships for economical relationships. We believe that these

methods are not sustainable, for they destroy the environment on which we rely to survive, but also the community we live in and the lives of the people whom we love, all of this for short-term, economical goals.

Supporting Information

Over the last five years, the McGill campus has seen a huge increase in the number of environmental student initiatives, such as Organic Campus, Gorilla Composting and SSMU's environmental commissions and actions. 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. We recognize that The Wheel (the student-run garden on the MacDonald campus) also offers students similar opportunities, however, Campus Crops is distinct for focusing our mandate and projects within an urban context.

Timeframe/Milestones

The main active period of the group will be approximately from March to October of this year, that is, during the growing season, however our group functions year round in order to be properly prepared for each season. This year, during our active period, we hope to build an irrigation system coupled with a wooden raised bed on the terrace behind the James Admin building that would improve our crop yield. We would also like to continue limiting the growth of a patch of Japanese knotweed (a highly invasive plant) that is not-so-slowly creeping toward our garden behind the MSE building.

As a continuation of our past workshop series, we would also like to organize a number of workshops throughout the summer, some of them skill-based and others more "theoretical." Some of these events would be organized with other student or community groups, such as QPIRG, the Concordia Greenhouse and Midnight Kitchen.

Finally, we aim at being a more prominent provider of food for Midnight Kitchen at the start of the 2012-2013 academic year, until the growing season ends.

Performance Indicators

- We expect the harvest yield to be higher than last year (we weighed our harvests last year and will continue to do so this year), considering the benefits of our irrigation system and our raised bed.
- No new sighting of Japanese knotweed would be an indicator of success concerning its eradication.
- The success of our workshops and other events would be measured by the attendance.
- Since last year, because of the departure of many students who graduated or had other commitments, the group has shrunk: only a handful of students who wish to be active year-long in the group are left, although supported on demand by "old-timers". Ending the growing

season with more (active) members than at the beginning of the summer would be positive.

- Finally, regarding our food provision to MK, we aim to provide enough food each week for Midnight Kitchen to prepare at least one main dish with the primary ingredients coming from our gardens.

Sharing Outcomes

Midnight Kitchen, and more importantly the students who eat there, will certainly benefit from our input of food at Midnight Kitchen. The students and community members who attend open volunteer garden sessions (3 times a week throughout the season) and workshops (throughout the year) will be the other primary benefactors from our activities.

Stakeholders

- The McGill School of Environment
- Quebec Public Interest Research Group of McGill
- Midnight Kitchen
- The Concordia Greenhouse
- The James Administration staff
- The McGill Grounds crew
- Santropol Roulant's Edible Campus project
- Everyone who walks by the two spaces, particularly the James Admin Terrace which was previously empty

We originally obtained our gardening space from Shannon Scott, building coordinator of the McGill School of Environment. As a result of our good care and work in the space, two years ago she granted us use of the space indefinitely. We continue you to communicate with her throughout the year so she is always aware of our projects. QPIRG-McGill provides us with funding, meeting space, expertise and assistance on issues of safer space and allows us a better outreach to the community. In the past, Midnight Kitchen and Campus Crops have collaborated on workshops, financial support, cooking and garden maintenance. We expect this relationship to continue and further grow each year.

The Concordia Greenhouse has been a great partner and resource for us in the past years, as a source of seedlings, informative workshops and amazing horticultural expertise. We consider the James Administration staff to be one of our key stakeholders as many people from the building (as well as elsewhere) use the space on a daily basis during warm weather. During our first year on the terrace, the area continued to be used mainly for smoking breaks, but we have noticed more people using the space for longer periods of time and other purposes during our second year growing there. Since the beginning of Campus Crops we have been in touch with the McGill Ground crew, specifically Eric Champagne, for advice, resources and help getting rid of pesky raccoons. In addition, we have always worked closely with our sister growing project at McGill, Santropol Roulant's Edible Campus run by Tim

Murphy. In the past we have shared seedling starter space and helpful resources around the city, sponsored events together, such as the annual Harvest Party, and hosted groups on campus at our two different gardens, such as a girls YWCA summer camp.

Finally, because of the visibility of our garden and our open door policy for volunteers, we consider the whole McGill community to be stakeholders in our projects. Since the garden began over four years ago, we have had the chance to meet a few community members who stop by the garden every few weeks throughout the growing season each year. There is one elderly woman, the wife of a chemistry professor, who walks through McGill in the summer and has been tracking our progress in the space from year one. As the reach and impact of our garden is always farther than we know, everyone who walks by and notices our gardens is important to us!

Other affected parties

As this project has been ongoing for a number of years, we feel the list of stakeholders above adequately describes the people primarily affected by the project. As our work on the James Admin terrace expands, we would like to make one of the main projects for this year's Garden Coordinator be focused on engaging and working with the James Admin staff, whether through a special lunchtime volunteer session, monthly info sessions and workshops, or otherwise

II. Project Implementation

Tasks and Responsibilities

Type of Activity – Task	Estimated Time Required	Group Member in Charge
Preparing the garden and seeds	Approx. 1 month	All members
Building the raised bed	1-2 weeks	All members
Building the irrigation system	1 week	All members
Selecting a garden coordinator	4 weeks	All members
Coordinating activities (gardening and workshops) throughout the summer	8 months	Garden coordinator (TBA)
Putting the garden to bed	1 day	All members

III. Financials

Requested funding -> \$5000 for a stipend to hire a Garden Coordinator for 4.5 month position (beginning of May to mid-September).

Ideally the funding would be secured by the end of March. We would like to have everything ready so we can begin our seedlings, begin design and construction of a new raised bed and irrigation system,

and begin the hiring process for the Garden Coordinator.

IV. Additional information

To further emphasize our experience, we have been operating the garden behind the MSE building for four years now, and have managed the hiring of a garden coordinator for the past two years as well. Throughout, we have developed important ties to many other groups in the city, especially in the past two years with the garden coordinator position. These include groups listed in the stakeholder section, as well as other urban agriculture projects, social justice organizations, and groups working for greater accessibility for all. Campus Crops as a group has developed a good mix of new and old members, combining fresh ideas and motivation with established knowledge and experience.