

# Dallas County Health and Human Services/City of Dallas

## Growers Education and Workforce Development Program

### ***Background***

Dallas County Health and Human Services (DCHHS) is expanding its efforts in urban agriculture through the Growers Education and Workforce Development Program in collaboration with the City of Dallas. This initiative supports agricultural internships and apprenticeships at community gardens and other urban agriculture sites. Its primary aim is to educate and train prospective gardeners and growers, thereby enhancing access to nutritious foods in underserved and low-access areas of Dallas County.

The PROGRAM seeks to achieve this objective by fostering the growth of the Dallas agriculture workforce and promoting community outreach. Through hands-on mentorship and training in urban agriculture and business concepts, the program equips participating community members with valuable skills at no financial cost to them.

Limited knowledge about and access to healthy foods are significant risk factors for individuals residing in low-income and low-access communities, increasing their susceptibility to chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases. By addressing these challenges, the PROGRAM mitigates health risks and threats, strengthening the local food production capacity as trained community members enter the urban agriculture workforce.

### ***Objective***

The program's objective is to bolster the urban agriculture workforce in the Dallas area by providing hands-on training in various aspects, including efficient gardening techniques, food safety protocols, agribusiness models, conservation of natural resources, and understanding consumer food markets. To this effect, the City of Dallas is setting aside funding in the amount of \$49,800 to implement a mentorship program in collaboration with the Dallas County Health and Human Services.

The program aims to collaborate with **8 to 10 urban agriculture sites** across Dallas County to provide **training for at least 10 mentees**, all residents of the City of Dallas. The training will take place **over a 12-week period** at the urban agriculture sites.

## ***Eligibility***

Eligible potential mentees and mentor sites could apply to the program by completing the online application form ([Click here](#)). All applications need to be submitted electronically (online). Eligibility criteria for mentees and mentors alike are described below.

### 1. Trainees/Mentees

Participation in the program as a trainee is **restricted to residents of Dallas City**. Trainees must undergo and successfully complete the Citizen Gardener Training provided by DCHHS or other comparable training before commencing their internship. In addition, Trainees are required to complete prerequisite training in business and workforce development from one of the following online sources:

- [Free Online Business Management Courses | Alison](#)
- [Free Training – Special Programs – Dallas College](#)
- [Courses | Harvard University](#)
- [Best Business Courses Online \[2024\] | Coursera](#)

In addition, trainees will be required to submit 300-word write-up outlining the business model of Facilitator site.

### 2. Mentors/Facilitator sites

Mentorship sites must use experienced and trained staff, preferably Master Gardeners and/or Master Naturalists, capable of providing necessary guidance to trainees throughout the internship period. Gardens or growers participating in the mentorship program must practice **at least two gardening methods** including but not limited to the following options:

- Raised garden beds
- In-ground/row-gardening/ Hügelkultur gardening/Mound gardening
- Square foot gardening
- Container gardening
- Vertical gardening
- Hydroponics
- Aquaponics
- Greenhouse
- Cold frames and high tunnels
- Orchards
- Beekeeping,
- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), farmers markets, other revenue new stream models.

Mentorship sites will provide all necessary materials for both trainees and mentors to fully engage in each session. Trainees will receive **a stipend of \$18 per hour for a weekly**

**commitment of 4 hours, up to a maximum of 20 hours per week, over the 12-week program.** Additionally, participating sites will be awarded a stipend ranging from \$1,500 to \$2,200, based on the number of mentees: \$1,500 for one mentee, an additional \$500 for a second mentee, and an extra \$200 for a third mentee, **for a total of up to \$2,200.** Each site is required to complete a brief report using a provided form and submit a Monthly Report to the DCHHS Chronic Disease Prevention Division.

### ***Mentoring Methods***

This mentorship program is designed to introduce trainees to gardening or help them enhance their gardening skills. It emphasizes regular practice, spending time in the garden, using a variety of tools, planting and caring for diverse plants, and adapting to different methods of urban gardening. Additionally, the program aims to offer opportunities to explore gardening-related businesses, such as starting a new garden, growing and selling plants, or offering garden services

The garden mentorship methods would include hands-on learning, where trainees work directly in gardens alongside experienced mentors. This involves practical tasks such as amending soils, planting, pruning, weeding, watering, harvesting, managing pests and other things. Mentors would provide personalized guidance, helping trainees understand various gardening techniques and tools. Regular feedback and observation help trainees improve their skills over time. Moreover, regular communications and discussions with the mentor (s) on topics like the environment, soil health, plant care, and garden design could be valuable to the development of the trainee. Aspects like marketing and customer relations for gardening-related enterprises may also be covered as well.

### ***Evaluation***

A pre- and post-knowledge test survey of mentees will be conducted to evaluate the mentorship program. These tests will help to assess mentees' understanding of gardening techniques, sustainability practices, and nutritional benefits before and after the mentoring program. The pre-test establishes baseline knowledge, while the post-test measures the impact of the mentorship on knowledge improvement.

Questions may cover topics such as:

- Basic gardening skills (e.g., soil preparation, planting techniques)
- Sustainable practices (e.g., water conservation, composting)
- Nutritional benefits of home-grown produce

- Common challenges and problem-solving strategies in gardening

By comparing pre- and post-test results, DCHHS can assess the mentoring program's effectiveness, identify areas of strength, and uncover knowledge gaps to improve future programs. Additionally, DCHHS may follow up with participants after a year to determine if they are engaged in urban gardening in any capacity.