

FY 24 CT GROWN FOR CT KIDS GRANT

PROJECT NARRATIVE TEMPLATE

*Please note, this form is for all CTG4CTK project proposals above \$5,000. Shipping Container Growing Grantees have a separate narrative template.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Please complete this form in its entirety and upload it to your application on Cognito.
<https://www.cognitofrms.com/CTDoAg/CTGrownForCTKidsGrantApplicationFY2024>

INTRODUCTION

We are excited to announce the partnership between KOCO Child Care Center and Farm2X, aimed at launching a comprehensive Farm-to-School program. KOCO Child Care Center, also known as Kids of Chatham Organization, Inc., is a revered not-for-profit child care center in East Hampton, CT, with a history dating back to 1988. Renowned for providing exceptional care and education to children in the local and surrounding areas, KOCO offers a variety of programs including robust before and after school programs, as well as a summer camp, catering to children aged 5-12 years. This collaboration with Farm2X, an expert in farm-to-school initiatives, is set to enrich the learning experiences of KOCO's Pre-K students, aged 1 to 12 years, through hands-on agricultural learning. Additionally, the partnership will enhance the educational journey of older students through immersive and interactive experiences that connect them with local agriculture and sustainable practices. Together, KOCO Child Care Center and Farm2X are dedicated to creating a program that benefits not only the young learners but also fortifies the community's ties to local food and farming.

KOCO Child Care Center and Farm2X Partnership:

KOCO Child Care Center: Located in East Hampton, CT, KOCO Child Care Center is a not-for-profit child care center serving children from East Hampton and surrounding communities. Established in 1988, KOCO Child Care Center has a long-standing reputation for providing quality child care and education for children aged 8 weeks to 12 years. Their philosophy emphasizes recognizing each child as an individual with unique learning styles and providing activities that stimulate and challenge them.

Farm2X: Specializing in designing, building, and implementing farm-to-school projects, Farm2X brings expertise in integrating local, healthy foods into school classrooms and incorporating food, agriculture, and STEAM education into the curriculum.

Population Served

- **Primary Beneficiaries:** The primary beneficiaries of this project are the students at KOCO Child Care Center, specifically but not limited to children between 1-12 years old. These young learners will directly experience the hands-on learning opportunities provided by the garden classroom and taste testing activities.
- **Community Impact:** The project will also benefit the broader community, including families of the students and local agricultural producers. By fostering a connection between local farms and young consumers, the project aims to strengthen community ties and support local agriculture.

Past and Current Farm-to-School Initiatives

- **Previous Initiatives:** KOCO Child Care Center has not previously embarked on a dedicated farm-to-school program but has engaged in activities that align with the principles of such initiatives. Their curriculum includes elements of outdoor play and basic education about nature and food.
- **Current Readiness:** The partnership with Farm2X represents KOCO Child Care Center's first structured foray into a farm-to-school program. Farm2X's expertise in agricultural education and local food systems is ideally suited to complement KoCo's established educational framework.

Readiness and Capability

- **Infrastructure and Experience:** KOCO Child Care Center has the necessary infrastructure, including space for the proposed garden and a team experienced in early childhood education.
- **Farm2X's Role:** Farm2X will provide the necessary technical and educational support to establish the garden classroom and facilitate the taste testing program.
- **Community Links:** KOCO Child Care Center's established connections within the community and Farm2X's relationships with local farms create a strong foundation for the success of this program.

In conclusion, the partnership between KOCO Child Care Center and Farm2X presents a unique opportunity to introduce a comprehensive farm-to-school program. The project leverages KoCo's experience in child care and early education and Farm2X's expertise in agricultural education, thereby meeting the dual goals of enriching the educational experience of young children and strengthening the community's connection to local food systems

PROJECT EXPLANATION

This project aims to establish a comprehensive Farm-to-School program at KOCO Child Care Center in East Hampton, CT, by creating an outdoor gardening space and conducting a series of Taste Testing activities using locally grown produce. The program is designed to educate pre-K

students about locally grown foods, promote healthy eating habits, and provide hands-on learning experiences in agriculture and nutrition.

Detailed Project Components

Outdoor Gardening Space Creation:

- Purpose: To provide a hands-on learning environment where students can engage in growing a variety of fruits, vegetables, and herbs.
- Execution: Farm2X, with its expertise in farm-to-school projects, will lead the design and development of the garden. This will include planting beds, educational signage, and necessary tools.
- Educational Aspect: The garden will serve as a living classroom where students learn about plant life cycles, sustainable agriculture, and the importance of local food systems.

Taste Testing Program “Local Flavors: A Journey Through Connecticut's Farms at KoCo for Kids”

- Purpose: To introduce students to a wide range of locally grown produce and value-added products, fostering curiosity and expanding their palates.
- Execution: A 18-month taste testing schedule will be implemented, featuring raw ingredients and value-added products sourced from local farms within 20 miles of KOCO Child Care Center. The schedule aligns with the seasonal availability of produce.
- Educational Aspect: Each taste testing session will include discussions about the food's origin, nutritional value, and culinary uses. Students will also participate in simple food preparation activities.

Community and Local Farm Involvement:

- Purpose: To strengthen the connection between the school, local farms, and the community.
- Execution: Partnering with nearby farms, such as Gotta's Farm, Dondero Orchards, and Belltown Hill Orchards, to source fresh produce and value-added products. This partnership may also involve farm visits and guest sessions by local farmers.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

- Educational Benefits: Enhancing students' understanding of where their food comes from, the importance of local agriculture, and the basics of healthy eating.
- Skill Development: Cultivating skills like observation, experimentation, and teamwork through gardening activities.

- Community Engagement: Building a stronger sense of community and appreciation for local food producers.
- Health and Nutrition: Encouraging healthier eating habits by familiarizing students with a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Sustainability Plan

- Garden Maintenance: KoCo staff will be trained by Farm2X to maintain the garden, ensuring its use as an educational tool beyond the grant period.
- Ongoing Local Partnerships: Establishing lasting relationships with local farms for continuous sourcing of produce and educational collaboration.

By integrating practical gardening experiences with a structured taste testing program, this project not only contributes to the creation of a robust Farm-to-School program at KOCO Child Care Center but also furthers the mission of educating young children about the importance of local, healthy food choices.

WORKPLAN

Anticipated Start Date: 4/1/2024 **Anticipated End Date:** 6/1/2025

*Hover your mouse over the table and click the (+) that appears to add a row

Project Task	Anticipated Completion	Who is Responsible
Finalization of design for garden classroom area	Within 30 days of grant signing	Farm2X
Installation of garden classroom area	Within 60 days of grant signing: April-June	Farm2X
Taste Testing Activities start with Local Farms	May 2024-May 2025	Farm2X / KOCO
Grand Opening of garden classroom- Community Event- Inaugural Planting	June- July 2024	Farm2X / KOCO
Integration of Garden Classroom into classrooms through activities, lessons, and curriculum	June 2024-May 2025	KOCO/Farm2X
Final Reporting and submission of final financials.	May-June 2025	KOCO/Farm2X

The Farm-to-School program, led by Farm2X in collaboration with KOCO Child Care Center, will commence with the finalization of the garden classroom area's design within 30 days of the grant signing. This task, spearheaded by Farm2X, involves crafting a conducive and educational outdoor space for hands-on learning. Following the design phase, Farm2X will oversee the installation of the garden, which is anticipated to be completed within 60 days of the grant signing, targeting the period from April to June. Concurrently, starting in June 2024 and continuing through June 2025, Farm2X and KoCo will initiate a series of taste testing activities, incorporating locally sourced produce and value-added products. These activities are designed to educate students about local agriculture and healthy eating habits. A key milestone will be the grand opening of the garden classroom, planned for June to July 2024, where the community, including students and local farms, will be invited to participate in an inaugural planting event. This opening marks the integration of the garden into KoCo's educational curriculum, a process managed by BEST (Building Educational Success Together) in conjunction with Farm2X, from June 2024 to May 2025. This integration involves incorporating the garden into classroom activities, lessons, and curriculum focusing on agriculture and nutrition. Finally, the project will culminate with the submission of a final report and financial statement by KOCO Child Care Center and Farm2X, expected to be completed by May 2025. This comprehensive plan ensures a structured and effective rollout of the Farm-to-School program, enhancing the educational experience at KOCO Child Care Center through practical agriculture and nutrition-based learning.

PROJECT IMPACT

This Farm-to-School project, aimed at students aged 1-12, is designed to enhance their sensory awareness and foundational understanding of plants and healthy foods. Key activities include interactive garden exploration, sensory-based taste testing, storytime and songs about plants and foods, and simple gardening tasks. These activities, planned regularly, provide diverse, hands-on experiences to engage young learners. Regular garden visits and monthly taste testing sessions will allow children to experience a variety of tastes, textures, and colors. Storytime and songs, integrated into daily or weekly routines, will reinforce learning in a fun and engaging manner. The project's impact will be evaluated through observational assessments by teachers and caregivers, feedback from parents, documentation of activities, and monitoring engagement in themed storytime and songs. This comprehensive approach is crafted to cultivate early curiosity and knowledge about nature and nutrition in a playful, interactive environment.

Outcome: Enhanced sensory awareness and basic understanding of plants and healthy foods among Pre-K students (ages 1-12).

This outcome focuses on age-appropriate developmental milestones, emphasizing sensory experiences and foundational knowledge about plants and healthy eating. It is measurable through observable behaviors and engagement in activities.

Activities to Achieve the Outcome

1. Interactive Garden Exploration:
 - Allowing children to explore the garden, touch the soil, smell the plants, and see the various colors and shapes of produce.
 - Measurable Step: Regularly scheduled garden visits, at least twice a month.
2. Sensory-Based Taste Testing Program:
 - Introducing children to a variety of tastes, textures, and colors through monthly taste testing sessions with raw and prepared foods.
 - Measurable Step: Hosting a sensory-based taste testing session each month.
3. Storytime and Songs About Plants and Foods:
 - Incorporating storytime sessions and songs that are themed around gardening, plants, and healthy foods.
 - Measurable Step: Integrating these themes into daily or weekly routines.
4. Simple Gardening Activities:
 - Engaging children in basic gardening tasks like watering plants or sowing seeds, suitable for their age group.
 - Measurable Step: Participation in simple gardening activities during each garden visit.

Evaluation of the Outcome

1. Observational Assessments:
 - Teachers and caregivers observe and record children's reactions and interactions during garden visits and taste testing sessions, noting changes in curiosity, willingness to try new foods, and enjoyment of sensory experiences.
2. Parent and Caregiver Feedback:
 - Collect feedback from parents and caregivers about any noticeable changes in the children's interest in plants or foods at home.
3. Documentation of Activities:
 - Keeping a photo journal or creating a simple portfolio of children's garden-related activities, drawings, and participation in taste testing.
4. Engagement in Storytime and Songs:
 - Observing children's engagement and response during thematic storytime and song sessions, noting their ability to recall and relate to the content.

By tailoring these activities and evaluation methods to the developmental level of Pre-K students, the project aims to foster a foundational understanding and appreciation of plants and healthy eating in a fun and interactive way.

PROJECT TEAM AND STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

Team Composition and Roles

KOCO Child Care Center Staff:

- **Role:** Primarily responsible for integrating the garden and taste testing activities into the daily curriculum and facilitating student engagement.
- **Members:** Includes experienced educators and caregivers, led by co-directors Janet Santos and Laurie Caron, along with assistant director Brian Barber. Their deep understanding of early childhood education will be crucial in tailoring activities to the developmental needs of Pre-K students.

Farm2X Experts:

- **Role:** Leading the design and implementation of the garden classroom, providing ongoing support for garden maintenance, and organizing the sensory-based taste testing program.
- **Members:** A team of specialists, led by Eric Francis CEO, and Brittany Nassr the Director of Education, in farm-to-school projects, skilled in creating educational programs that integrate agriculture and healthy eating into school curriculum.

Working with Partners

- **Collaborative Planning:** Regular meetings and collaborative planning sessions between KOCO Child Care Center and Farm2X will ensure that the project's activities are well-aligned with educational goals and logistical considerations.
- **Training and Support:** Farm2X will provide training and support to KoCo staff, ensuring they are equipped to maintain the garden and incorporate its use into their teaching.

Community Support and Involvement

Local Farms:

- **Involvement:** Source produce for the taste testing program and possibly participate in educational activities.
- **Partners:** Farms such as Gotta's Farm, Dondero Orchards, and Belltown Hill Orchards, all located within the vicinity of East Hampton, CT, can play a vital role in supplying fresh, local produce.

Parents and Caregivers:

- **Involvement:** Encouraged to participate in certain activities, such as garden planting days, and provide feedback on the program's impact on their children.

- Support: Parental involvement will be crucial for reinforcing the lessons learned at home.

Local Community Organizations:

- Involvement: Community groups like the East Hampton Public Library, East Hampton Senior Center, and East Hampton Lions Club can be involved in special events or educational collaborations.
- Support: These organizations can help foster a broader community connection and support for the program.

East Hampton School District:

- Involvement: Potential collaboration for educational resources and support, aligning the project with broader educational objectives in the region.

Through this cohesive effort, the project aims not only to provide an enriching educational experience for the children at KOCO Child Care Center but also to foster a community-wide appreciation and involvement in local agriculture and healthy eating habits. The support and involvement of these diverse stakeholders will be instrumental in the program’s success and longevity.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

This project is designed not only to provide immediate educational benefits but also to contribute significantly to the longevity of the farm-to-school program. Here's how the project will ensure sustainability and continuation beyond the grant timeline:

Contribution to Longevity

1. Establishing a Sustainable Garden Infrastructure:
 - The creation of a permanent garden classroom area at KOCO Child Care Center lays a physical foundation for ongoing agricultural education. This space can be used year after year, becoming an integral part of the school environment.
2. Developing a Scalable and Replicable Model:
 - The project serves as a model that can be scaled up or replicated in other settings. The success and learnings from this initiative can be documented and shared, inspiring similar programs in other pre-K environments.
3. Integrating into Curriculum:
 - By integrating garden-based learning and taste testing activities into the regular curriculum, the project embeds these practices into the everyday educational experience of the students, ensuring its continuation as part of the school's educational approach.

Steps for Program Continuity

1. Training Staff and Educators:

- Training KOCO Child Care Center staff and educators to manage and utilize the garden and conduct taste testing activities ensures the program's sustainability. This includes not just gardening skills but also how to integrate agricultural concepts into teaching.
2. Building Community and Parental Involvement:
 - Encouraging the involvement of parents and the local community in the garden and related activities fosters a sense of ownership and support, making it more likely that the program will continue to receive support and resources.
 3. Establishing Partnerships with Local Farms:
 - Forming lasting relationships with local farms ensures a continuous supply of produce for taste testing and educational activities. These partnerships can also provide additional resources, such as expert visits or donations.
 4. Creating a Garden Management Plan:
 - Farm2X will create a long term plan for maintaining the garden, including seasonal planting schedules, required maintenance, and potential additional funding sources, will ensure its ongoing viability.
 5. Documenting and Sharing Successes:
 - Regularly documenting and sharing the successes and challenges of the program with the school community, potential funders, and through educational networks can attract ongoing interest and support.
 6. Seeking Continuous Funding and Grants:
 - Exploring opportunities for additional funding or grants to sustain and expand the program, especially as the initial grant period concludes.

By implementing these strategies, the project aims not only to achieve its immediate objectives but also to establish a sustainable, long-term farm-to-school program that can continue to enrich the educational experiences of students at KOCO Child Care Center for years to come.