

CITY OF DAYTON DEPARTMENT OF WATER URBAN AGRICULTURE GRANT PROGRAM

NEAA26 COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP



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AWARDS

“By supporting gardens in underserved and immigrant-rich areas, these gardens not only provide culturally relevant produce but also serve as hubs for education, mentorship, and community connection. Participants often donate excess harvests to local food banks, reinforcing the program’s role in combating hunger.” – Project Summary





National Association of Clean Water Agencies
2025 Community Leadership Award Submission for Consideration
The City of Dayton's Urban Agriculture Grant Program

The City of Dayton's Urban Agriculture Grant Program, launched in 2012, is a transformative initiative that merges stormwater management with community empowerment. The program is coordinated by the Water Department and the Community Engagement umbrella of the Planning, Neighborhoods, and Development Department, offering a unique chance for urban growers to use finished Dayton Water and collected rainwater to support environmental benefits such as restoring biodiversity, increasing green space, and addressing food insecurity across the city.

By offering up to \$2,500 for infrastructure and \$500 for water use, the program removes some of the financial barriers to converting vacant lots into productive gardens. These green spaces encourage runoff reduction, improvement of soil health, and the mitigation of climate impacts. To be considered, applicants must incorporate Best Management Practices (BMPs) to ensure erosion control and water quality improvements for Dayton's rivers and streams.

Dayton's population reflects a rich tapestry of racial and ethnic diversity. As of 2025, approximately 38% of residents are Black or African American, 6.8% multiracial, 2.3% other races, and 1.2% Asian, with 51% identifying as White. This diversity is mirrored in the city's immigrant communities, which are supported through initiatives like *Welcome Dayton*, a city-led program that fosters integration by promoting access to education, health services, and economic opportunities. Immigrant-owned businesses and cultural events have become vital to Dayton's economy and social fabric, with organizations like El Puente and Cross Over Community Development providing mentorship and resources to refugee and immigrant families.

Food insecurity remains a pressing issue in Dayton, particularly in historically marginalized neighborhoods. In 2022, 14% of households in Montgomery County and one in four children in Dayton were food insecure. West Dayton, a predominantly Black area, has been disproportionately affected by food deserts due to redlining and disinvestment. The closure of grocery stores like Kroger and ALDI in these neighborhoods has left residents with limited access to fresh, nutritious food.

The Urban Agriculture Grant Program directly addresses both of these challenges by supporting gardens in underserved and immigrant-rich areas. These gardens not only provide culturally relevant produce but also serve as hubs for education, mentorship, and community connection. Participants often donate excess harvests to local food banks, reinforcing the program's role in combating hunger.

To date, Dayton's Urban Gardens have grown to 41 different locations, serving communities throughout the many corners of the City of Dayton. We intend for this program to continue growing and supporting those who need it the most.

The City of Dayton's Urban Agriculture Grant Program is a practical, community-focused initiative that directly addresses stormwater management, food insecurity, and equity. By

supporting urban gardens with water access and infrastructure funding, the program helps reduce runoff, improve water quality, and expand green space in underserved neighborhoods. It engages a diverse population—including immigrant communities and residents in food deserts—by enabling them to grow culturally relevant produce and contribute to local food banks.

This program removes financial barriers, strengthens community ties, and promotes environmental stewardship – all the while helping to promote food security and sustainable practices through ongoing education. Its measurable impact on water quality, public health, and neighborhood resilience makes it a strong candidate for NACWA’s 2025 Community Leadership Award. Dayton’s approach demonstrates how clean water programs can be leveraged to support inclusive, sustainable urban development.