Fairfield Garden Initiative program is supporting nourishing home gardens in our backyards

The mission of the Fairfield Garden Initiative (FGI) is to build food security in our community by helping low and moderate income households grow, harvest and preserve their own fruits and vegetables. The program is operated by the Sustainable Living Coalition (SLC), a local non-profit organization in Fairfield, Iowa.

The components of the program aim to support growers of all skill sets and income levels to acquire the tools, materials, and plants needed to grow food in their own gardens, as well as education and training services to help community members grow food, cook and prepare food, preserve food, and gain knowledge about nutrition and health. While the educational component of this grant funded initiative is open to gardeners of all skill levels, direct support from grant funds are reserved for qualifying Low to Moderate Income households. To learn more about FGI and the SLC, please visit gardenfairfield.com and sustainablelivingcoalition.org.

The FGI Program launched on Earth Day 2022 after applying for and being awarded a $85,000 Community Development Block Grant. The grant funds cover the cost of plant starts, seeds, soil amendments, compost, basic garden tools, education workshops and a program coordinator for the first year of development and the fulfilling of program objectives. All grant funds must and will be utilized by the end of May 2023.

Outcomes listed as part the grant narrative:

Program Outcomes
- 6,000 Plants Starts
- 10 Garden Toolkits
- Partnership/Support of 3 Community Gardens
- 100 New/Expanded Home Gardens
- 12 Workshops with 100 workshop participants

Macro Outcomes
- Community resiliency
- Individual/family food resiliency
- Ongoing plant nursery
- Ongoing garden toolkits lending library

The FGI Program is on track to achieve its stated program outcomes, with a few alterations, and is diligently observing where the program needs to expand its scope to be more supportive of the community needs.

Activities and outcomes achieved between May 2022 and November 2022	
FGI participating LMI households that received free plant starts in 2022	114
Total plant starts distributed 2022	3545
Ongoing Garden Tool Lending Library accessible here	Stocked
Community Garden Supported	1
High quality bagged compost distributed	100+
Hours of personalized in-garden support and training to participating households	50+
Households that received garden soil testing and garden consultations	30+
Recorded educational gardening tutorial modules filmed located here	18
Additional resources provided or available to FGI Program Participants as of Fall 2022	
Organic baled mulch hay and straw	
Organic seeds for direct sowing	
Organic, diverse cover crops seeds	
Soil fertility amendments	
Containers for mobile gardens	
Trellis/plant support	
Row cover/frost blanket	
Activities and outcomes predicted to achieve by May 2023	
On-boarding of additional LMI household in Jefferson Count, Iowa	50+
Expected number of free plant starts available for FGI participating households spring 2023	2455
Community Garden Supported	2
Food Preservation-Centered Workshops. In-person	3
Garden-Centered Workshops. In-person	3-4
Additional resources are anticipated to become available for distribution to FGI Program participants in Spring 2023	
Limited/select materials to create raised beds	
Materials for season extension	
Drip irrigation supplies	
Seed starting supplies	
Broadfork	
Plant fertility amendments and inoculants	

Please consider getting involved as a partner or donor. The Fairfield Garden Initiative program desires to become well rooted in Jefferson County as a hub of support for all home gardeners and community garden participants. Visit gardenfairfield.com to read what participants are sharing about the program.