

COMMUNITY GARDENS/LOCAL FOODS SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is seeking partnerships with Illinois education and training providers that are interested in operating a WIA-funded summer youth program that involves WIA-eligible youth in operating community gardens to expand access to locally grown, high-quality foods for low-income populations. A program description is provided below.

Interested education and training providers will be required to:

1. Sustain the garden after the end of the summer youth program.
2. Provide a qualified, experienced agricultural professional to manage the program.
3. Provide appropriate land for operating at least one community garden for this growing season.
4. Distribute the locally grown foods to low-income populations in their communities.
5. Agree to provide DCEO-sponsored educational enrichment and workforce readiness components as part of their summer program (see program description below).
6. Agree to partner with DCEO and Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs) to recruit and enroll WIA-eligible youth for the summer program.

Priority will be given to those providers that:

- Currently offer or plan to offer a local foods education program as one of their agriculture-related credit programs (degree or certificate). Providers without an existing credit program will be asked to provide evidence that they plan to establish a program before the next growing season.
- Currently operate or plan to operate one or more community gardens (see definition below) as part of their local foods program in which students gain experience in local foods production.
- Currently have a partnership with local WIA and have discussed partnering on this project.

Partnerships between educational institutions, Extension offices, and non-profit organizations are strongly encouraged.

Interested Illinois education and training providers who meet the above criteria should contact Tammy Stone at Tammy.Stone@illinois.gov no later than June 30, 2009 with contact information and detailed statements as to how they meet the six program requirements and the three conditions that make them a priority in operating a summer youth program -- addressing each of the nine items in a separate paragraph with full, detailed explanations/descriptions.

Qualified providers submitting information after June 30, 2009 will be considered if funding is available.

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Background: Summer Program Description

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) will work with education and training providers and other partners to develop and manage a statewide local foods summer youth program for teams of WIA-eligible disadvantaged youth in areas throughout Illinois. This summer youth program will serve approximately 200 youth over an 8-12 week period between June 1 and September 30, 2009.

The program will have three major components:

- **Work Projects**--Local foods work projects supervised by local foods professionals in which students grow and distribute fresh foods to organizations serving low-income populations.
- **Education Program**--Local foods education program developed by DCEO-identified education curriculum specialists.
- **Work Readiness Program**--Provided through Illinois workNet. The program will provide students with the work readiness skills needed for employment.

Education and training providers will work with local Workforce Investment Act (WIA) grant recipients to recruit and enroll WIA-eligible youth, identify the employer of record for these youth, and provide the wages, stipends and other support services for these youth during the program.

Local foods professionals will supervise youth work teams in carrying out the 8-12 week projects. This professional will also be responsible for providing appropriate training for the specific work tasks of the project as well as coordinate the delivery of the statewide local foods education program and the work readiness program in cooperation with one or more education support staff persons.

In funding summer youth programs, DCEO will give priority to education and training providers that will establish or expand community gardens as a core component of a postsecondary local foods education and training program. Community gardens are gardens that are operated to expand access to locally-grown, high-quality food for low-income populations.

Local Foods Work Projects

As part of this summer youth program, DCEO and partners will establish community gardens to produce fresh foods for targeted low-income communities. Local foods professionals will lead youth teams in planning and developing community gardens and distributing food from these gardens to low-income populations. At the end of the project period, local food professionals will assist participating youth in evaluating the community garden enterprise and developing plans for improving the local foods enterprise in the following growing season to meet community needs.

Local Foods Education Program

DCEO and its partners will work with education curriculum specialists who will develop an education program designed to provide students with educational experiences that apply academic subjects (e.g., reading, math) in the context of local and regional foods networks. This program also will provide students with information on related careers in agriculture and natural resources.