

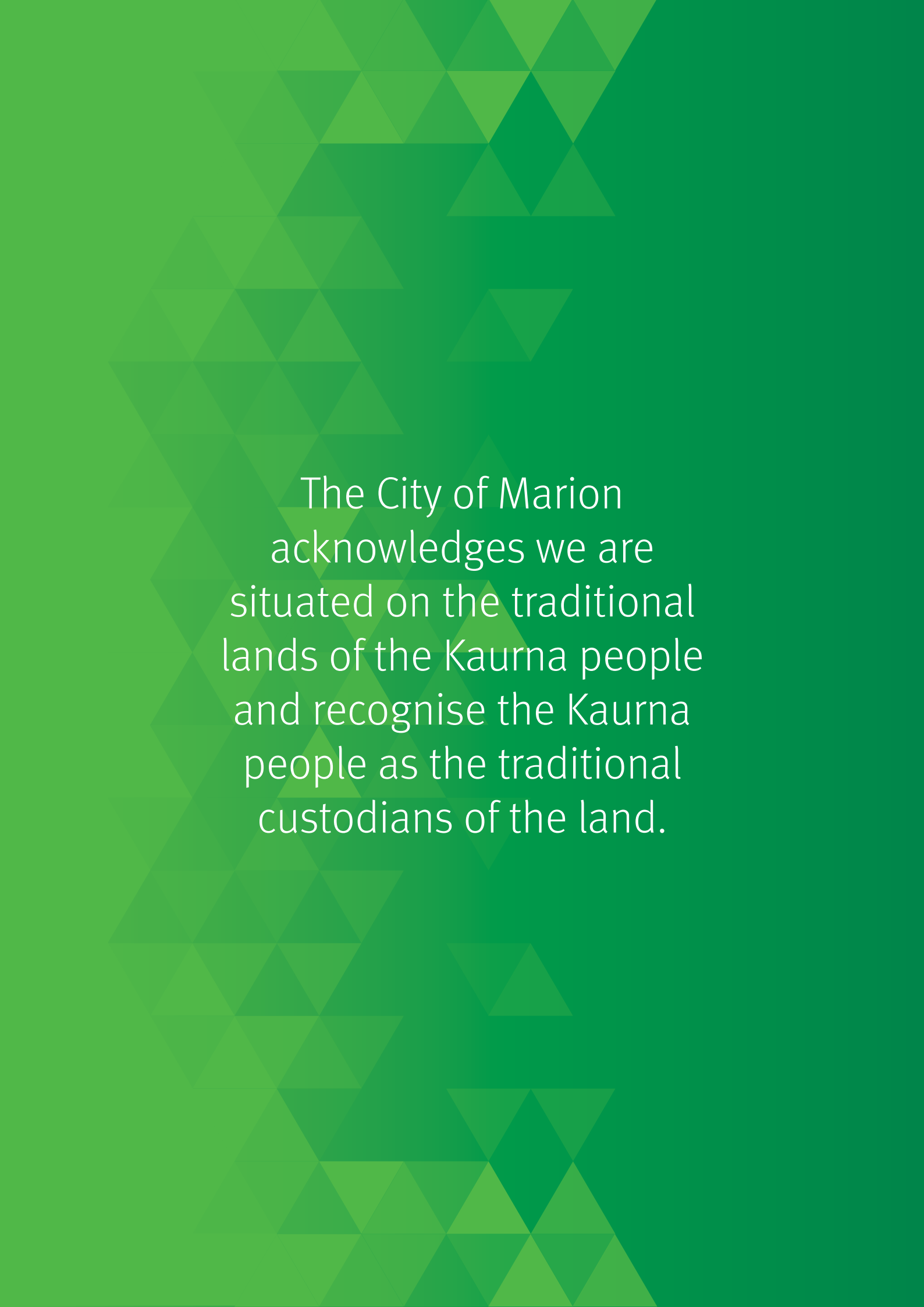


Community Garden Guidelines



Community gardens offer health, environmental, cultural, social and economic benefits. We recognise these diverse benefits to our community and strive to support existing and new community gardens.

April 2022



The City of Marion
acknowledges we are
situated on the traditional
lands of the Kaurna people
and recognise the Kaurna
people as the traditional
custodians of the land.

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Introduction



Community gardening is popular worldwide with the growing awareness of food security and climate change, and as a way to encourage healthier lifestyles and improve social connections. Community gardens offer health, environmental, cultural, social and economic benefits. We recognise these diverse benefits to our community and strive to support existing and new community gardens.

These guidelines outline the process for starting a new community garden on land that is owned or managed by Council. We assist community groups to plan, develop and manage a community garden. This document should be read in conjunction with our **Community Gardens Policy**.

What is a community garden?

A community garden is a garden on public land that is managed by the community primarily for producing food and creating a sustainable urban environment. It is a place for learning about sustainable living practices whilst building community and contributing to improved health and wellbeing for those involved. Community gardens are regularly open to the public and anyone can become a member.

Community gardens are not typically located on the verge or nature strip. However, residents in the City of Marion can apply to plant a garden on the verge near their property. Verge gardens are different to community gardens in that they are typically managed by nearby household, rather than a community group. More information about verge gardens is available on the **verges page** of our website.

Introduction



How we support community gardens

We take a community development approach to community gardens where groups run community gardens themselves with support from us and other partners. Our intention is to develop strong partnerships with gardening groups and play a supporting role. We can provide the following support for gardening groups:

- Assess proposed community garden sites
- Review and approval of community garden proposals
- Facilitate community engagement and consultation with the surrounding community
- Provide input into garden planning and design
- Provide guidance on developing management plans for community gardens
- Promote community gardens to help build membership
- Providing resources and building capacity of gardening groups
- Contributing resources such as people, materials and 'in-kind' support where possible.

Once established, gardening groups are expected to be self-reliant and take responsibility for ongoing management, maintenance and funding.

We encourage you to liaise with our Community Gardens Coordinator early and throughout the process of establishing your garden. It is a good idea to appoint a Council liaison person who will act as a conduit between your group and our Community Gardens Coordinator.

Contact us early to let us know your intentions and find out how we can assist. We may be able to put you into contact with other residents who have expressed a similar interest in developing a community garden in your area.

Getting started



What is involved in starting a community garden on Council land?

Building and managing a community garden is a large undertaking. It typically takes one to two years of groundwork before a community garden can open. There is a considerable amount of planning, design, approval and building involved before you can actually start gardening. Starting a community garden will be hugely rewarding but make sure you are aware of what's involved. That way you can ensure that your group has the sustained interest, energy and momentum to set up the garden and see it thrive.

Form a group

You need to have the enthusiasm and commitment of a group of people working towards a common dream to 'grow' your garden. A community garden can mean many things to different people which is why it is crucial to develop a shared group vision at the outset. Group members need to agree on the purpose of the garden to avoid disagreement as the project evolves. Your vision should be clear, concise and kept in mind throughout the process. Once you are sure your group is committed, you can hold a meeting to discuss how to proceed, identify strengths and skills of members and assign roles among the group.

It is important to form a group that includes people with a variety of skills. The size of the group will depend on the size of the project. A smaller group may be easier to manage, while a larger group will provide more energy and input. We recommend keeping your group small during the early stages of preparing your community garden application and increasing the size of your group once your community garden has been approved.

You can use the **Management Plan Template** available on our website to develop your vision. This can be a working document that you update as your community garden project evolves.



Getting started



Submit an expression of interest

As you form your group and select a site, we encourage you to keep in contact with our Community Gardens Coordinator to ensure you do not miss any key steps in the process. In the early stages, after you have formed a group and chosen a site, you will need to submit a short **expression of interest form** outlining your intentions.

Research and gauge interest

A crucial factor for a successful community garden group is research. This will help you understand different community garden models and provide insight into the level of commitment required. [Community Gardens Australia](#) or the [South Australian Community Gardens Network](#) are great places to start. You can also approach existing community garden groups in the City of Marion to find out how they work. By speaking to existing community garden organisers, you can find out what has worked well for them.

You and your group might think the community needs a community garden, but what do the community think? Community gardens only thrive when supported by locals. Without the need for formal consultation at this early stage, gauge the level of support and commitment in your community. You could do this through letterboxing, doorknocking, holding a community meeting or drop in event, putting up posters and flyers, and tapping into existing local groups and networks.

Site selection and assessment



Choosing a site

You may already have a site in mind when you form a community garden group. To ensure the site is suitable, we will assess the site in accordance with our site selection criteria. You will need to demonstrate that you have considered these criteria in your application but don't worry if you cannot meet all the criteria. We prioritise sites that meet as many of these criteria as possible, but all applications will be considered. If we determine that the site is not suitable, our Community Gardens Coordinator will work with you to find an alternative site.

There are many factors to consider when deciding if a site is suitable for a community garden. Our Community Gardens Coordinator will coordinate a site assessment process, with input from various teams across Council. We consider a range of factors when determining if a site is suitable for a community garden. In addition to the site assessment criteria, we also look at existing uses of the land; impacts on biodiversity, water and trees; traffic and parking impacts; and proximity to existing community gardens.



Site selection and assessment



Site Selection Criteria

These site selection criteria must be considered and adequately addressed in your application.

■ Land status

Contact us to check the land tenure, zoning, community land status and any planned activities for the site. We are only able to assist with community gardens on Council land.

■ Connection with community facilities

Priority will be given to sites close to a relatively high density residential area and/or a community centre or other community organisation which can support the gardening group.

■ Compatibility with surrounding land uses

Is it an ecologically sensitive area where the garden could have an adverse impact e.g. a wetland or remnant vegetation area?

■ Land size

Sites should be large enough to accommodate garden beds, composting systems, rainwater tanks, seating areas, shelter for gardeners and for community workshops and demonstrations. There is no limit to the garden size if all the above issues have been considered and the proposed garden design is appropriate for the space. It is recommended that larger gardens are developed in stages.

■ Water

Gardens need access to water, or to nearby buildings from which rainwater can be harvested.

■ Sun

Sites should not be overshadowed by tall buildings or dense tree canopy, to enable food plants receive more than six hours sunlight per day. To ensure the site has enough sun in winter, it is best to have a north, north-west or westerly orientation.

■ Topography

Ideally your site will be relatively flat. In some cases, gentle slopes may be feasible but avoid significant slopes which require ramps or terraces.

■ Toilets

People using the garden must have access to toilets. The best option is to be in proximity to an existing public toilet or you could consider requesting access to a nearby public building for this purpose.

■ Access

Consider what services you will need to access on the site including electricity, phone, sewers, drains and water. People and vehicles will need to access your site. Large vehicle such as utes or trucks may need access during the construction stage and ongoing vehicle access is likely to be needed for deliveries. Sites should be highly accessible to a range of user groups including people with disabilities where possible. Fenced community gardens on Council land are required to be open to the public on a regular basis.

■ Soil contamination

We will arrange soil tests to ensure all sites are checked for soil contamination by a qualified professional. If unacceptable levels of contaminants are present, advice will be sought from experts on whether the site is suitable for growing food.

■ Impact on residents

Ensuring support from nearby residents is crucial for the success of your garden. Consider what impact your garden would have on neighbouring households in regard to traffic, noise and parking – and how this could be reduced or managed. Consider whether the site has enough parking and if there will be an impact on surrounding residents and businesses during events or busy times.

■ Safety and security

The site should have good passive surveillance which means being in a easily visible location that can be easily observed from nearby houses, shopping areas or businesses. Amenity, noise, pollutants and weed infestations from adjoining sites should also be considered.

■ Storage

All community garden sites must have an appropriate location to store tools and equipment. We recognise that it is not always possible to find a site that meets all our site selection criteria. We prioritise sites that meet as many of the criteria as possible.

Site selection and assessment



Testing the soil for contamination

In the interests of public health, soil must be tested for contaminants before edible plants can be planted. Some areas have high levels of heavy metals and pesticides. Contamination is not necessarily obvious when looking at the site. It is safest to assume most sites will have some contamination which needs to be managed. We will identify the previous use of the site to help determine the degree of soil contamination. We also arrange for the soil to be tested by an accredited company. At the end of the site assessment process, you will receive the soil test results along with recommendations on how to manage any contamination that is identified.

Development approval

Most community gardens need development approval before the project can go ahead. This is in addition to Council's approval as land owner. Development approval is required for structures such as storage sheds or shelters and may be required for the garden itself. Our Community Gardens Coordinator can assist you through this process. For more information about development applications visit the **PlanSA website**.



Engaging the community



Involving the local community

You will need to speak to the local community to gauge interest, seek support and find members and volunteers. You can use the Planning and [Community Engagement Form](#) available on our website to step you through this process.

Once you have chosen a site, we strongly encourage you to contact adjacent neighbours and overlooking residents early in the process. These residents are the most likely people to raise concerns about the garden and it is important to have their support. Neighbours also make great members of your gardening group!

Our consultation requirements

Consultation helps prevent potential conflict and ensures the community has a voice. This will give the project the best opportunity of success. In addition to the community engagement that your group will undertake, we will consult with local residents about the proposed site and garden design. Keep in mind that some community members may raise concerns about the site you are considering. We will listen to all ideas and concerns and work with you to find a solution.

The community garden consultation process will be consistent with our **Community Engagement Policy**. We will seek feedback from local residents through a mail out to households within 400 metres of the proposed site and online through our community consultation website [Making Marion](#). A report on the consultation findings will be prepared for Elected Members to consider. We will communicate to your group and the wider community about the consultation findings, responses to concerns and any decisions made.

Garden management



Develop a management plan

You must submit a management plan as part of your community garden application. This should outline your vision, objectives and policies, prioritise tasks, allocate responsibility, outline decision making and conflict resolution processes and include a code of conduct to share amongst members

The management plan is a useful tool for:

- Demonstrating to Council and funding bodies that an appropriate level of research and planning has gone into the project.
- Showing there is adequate commitment and capacity to plan, establish and maintain the garden.
- Planning for the long-term management of the garden.
- Clarifying direction and demonstrating ways of achieving the group's vision.

A **Management Plan Template** is available on our website and can be adapted to suit your group.

Group Incorporation

Becoming an incorporated association gives community garden groups a clear legal structure that is separate from individual members. It gives the group the ability to manage funds, open a bank account, obtain public liability insurance cover, enter into a formal agreement and apply for grants.

Key steps to becoming an incorporated association include agreeing on a constitution, electing a public officer and establishing a management committee who meet regularly. The committee generally includes a President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary and committee members. Having a structure helps share the tasks of garden management and avoids excessive responsibility falling to a few people.

To become an incorporated association, your group must apply to the South Australian Office of Consumer and Business Services. For more information visit the **Consumer and Business Services website**.

Garden management



Insurance and risk management

There are of course some risks associated with building a community garden with public access. Your group has a duty of care to the people who visit the garden and are responsible for providing public liability insurance of \$10 million.

Community Gardens are a unique land use that does not fit easily into most insurance categories. This can lead to significant variations in the cost of premiums so make sure you shop around. You might like to consider the following options:

- Green Adelaide can arrange public liability insurance for community garden groups at no cost through their volunteer support area.
- Garden Clubs Australia and the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria provide affordable insurance for community gardens in South Australia.
- Enter into an auspicing arrangement with another organisation and be covered by their insurance.

All groups must prepare a [safety plan](#) to ensure that everyone involved in the garden is aware of hazards and takes appropriate precautions. A Safety Plan Template can be found on our website.

Formal agreements

A formal agreement similar to a lease agreement must be in place before public land can be allocated for a community garden. Once your community garden has been approved at a Council meeting, it will be eligible for an initial two-year agreement. To provide security of tenure this will be followed by a five-year agreement so long as the community garden is still feasible and well managed.



Sourcing funding



Develop a budget

Funding is essential for the success of any community garden project. You must develop a budget and consider where you will obtain the necessary funds for your community garden. A three-year garden budget must be submitted as part of your application, and a template is available on our website. Speak to our Community Gardens Coordinator to find out which costs can be covered by Council.

The requirements for each garden will vary but most new gardens have the following expenses:

Start-up costs

- Incorporation fees
- Irrigation
- Rainwater tanks, including costs of fittings, pump and installation
- Shed/ tool storage
- Tools and equipment e.g. hand tools, wheelbarrows, watering cans and hoses
- Garden signage
- Construction materials e.g. garden beds, paving, seating, fencing
- Site construction works e.g. levelling the ground.

Ongoing costs

- Tools and equipment e.g. hoses, garden tools, fire extinguisher
- Materials e.g. soil, manures, plants, fertilisers and mulch
- Promotion and printing
- Toilet, kitchen and meeting facilities
- Waste management.

Sourcing funding



Raise funds

Plan your fundraising efforts carefully, ensuring that the money raised is worth the time and energy you spend. Community gardens can raise funds through a range of avenues:

- Annual membership fees, which can be a consistent income stream.
- Sponsorship, by local businesses of a section of the garden.
- Grants, from Council or other funding bodies
- Donations, from local business for materials, plants, soil or a tool shed.
- Events such as open days and workshops
- Traditional fundraising events like sausage sizzles and cake stalls.
- Raffles, with prizes donated by local businesses.
- Sale of produce or seedlings

We encourage groups to apply for grants or sponsorship to assist with start-up costs, construction or ongoing costs of new or existing gardens. Our **grants webpage** has details of our community grants program and our Grants Officer can give you advice to make the application process easier. You can also speak to our Community Gardens Coordinator to find out which costs can be covered without applying for a grant and other funding opportunities.



Application checklist



You will need these documents for your community garden application.

Stage 1. Expression of Interest.

Begin by submitting a short online **Expression of Interest Form**.

Stage 2. Concept Overview.

Following the site assessment, you will need to submit:

- Planning and Community Engagement Form.
- Garden design/concept plan.
- Draft three-year budget for the community garden.

Stage 3. Management Documents

Once your concept overview has been approved, you will need to provide:

- Management Plan.
- Safety Plan.
- Evidence of public liability insurance (\$10 million).
- Incorporation certificate and copy of your Constitution.
- Minutes of last meeting.

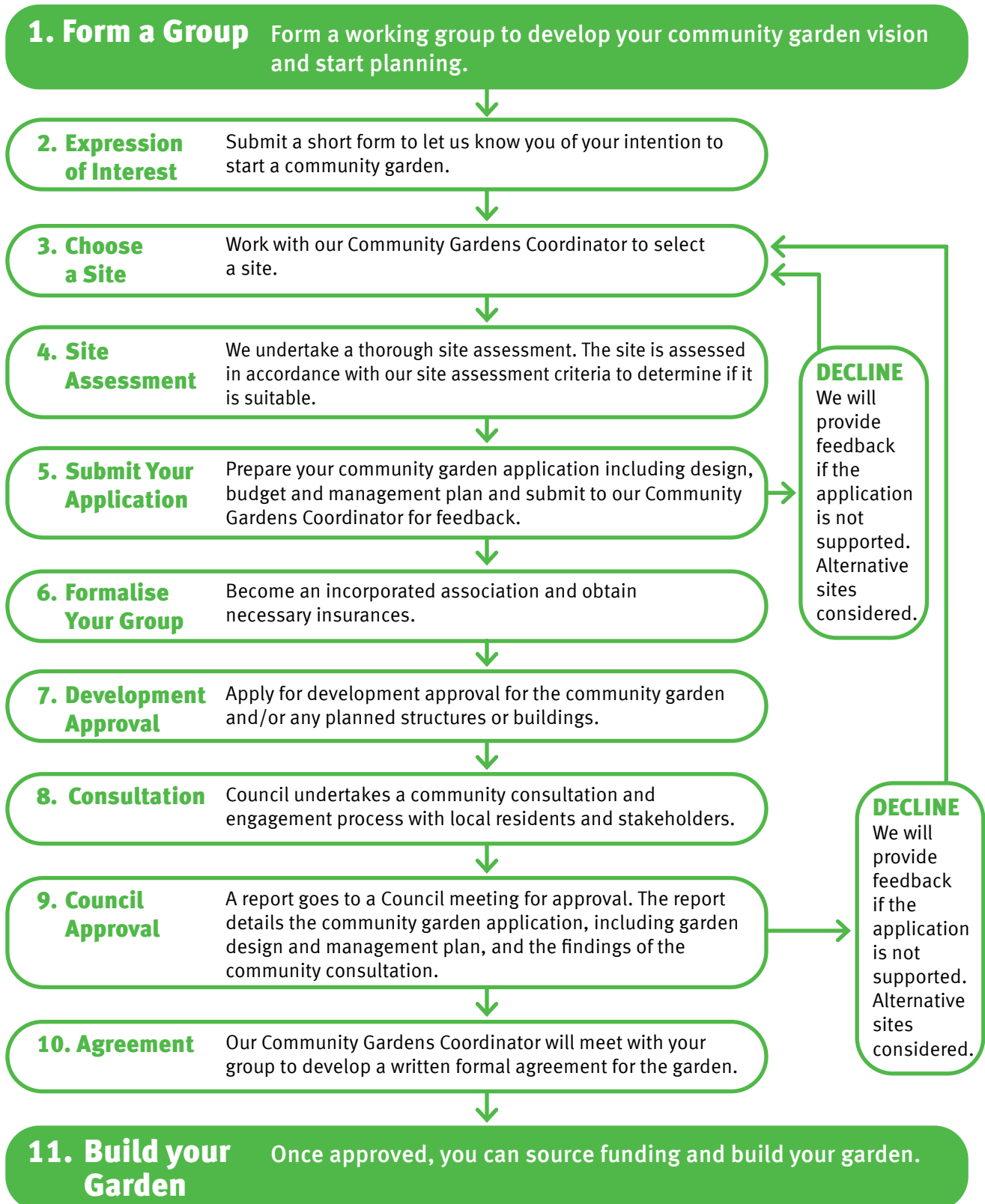
We recommend completing your application in stages with assistance from our Community Gardens Coordinator.

Forms and templates are available at marion.sa.gov.au/communitygardens

Procedure



Procedure for Starting a New Community Garden on Council land



Useful links



Community Gardens

marion.sa.gov.au/communitygardens

Verge Gardens

marion.sa.gov.au/verges

Community Gardens Australia

communitygarden.org.au

South Australian Community Gardens Network

Contact them through their Public Facebook page

Growing Community:

Starting and Nurturing Community Gardens Handbook

An excellent e-book developed by Community Centres SA

communitygarden.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/growing-community-starting-and-nurturing-community-gardens-e-booklet.pdf

PlanSA

plan.sa.gov.au

Consumer and Business Services website

Information about becoming an incorporated association

cbs.sa.gov.au/associations-cooperatives

Department for Environment and Water

Green Adelaide provides free insurance for community garden groups

environment.sa.gov.au/green-adelaide

Garden Clubs of Australia

Provides affordable insurance for community garden groups

gardenclubs.org.au

Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria

Provides affordable insurance for community garden groups

rhsv.org.au

CONTACT DETAILS

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Community Gardens Guidelines 2022

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