

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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H2O to Grow Coalition

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H₂O to Grow turns on the faucet for food production

Unified Government's Public Works Department in collaboration with the Public Health Department offers \$50,000 in grants to give water access to urban gardens and farms that benefit Wyandotte County.

Kansas City, KS: June 10, 2013– The H₂O to Grow Coalition announces a new grant fund to install water taps at community gardens and urban farms. The Fund results from a unique partnership between the Unified Government's Departments of Public Health and Public Works and the H₂O to Grow Coalition working together to:

- increase healthy food grown in Wyandotte County,
- use Land Bank land for community benefit, and
- manage empty lots to reduce stormwater run-off.

“Water access is one of the main barriers to gardens and farms growing more food to feed Wyandotte Countians,” said Katherine Kelly of Cultivate Kansas City and H₂O to Grow Coalition member. “With 18,000 Wyandotte County residents living with low access to food, the H₂O to Grow Coalition has been looking for creative ways to remove that barrier.”

The Coalition, which includes representatives from Cross-Lines, Inc. Community Outreach, Cultivate Kansas City, the Giving Grove, Healthy Communities Wyandotte, IEJ Farms, Kansas City Community Gardens, K-State Extension, Latino Health for All, Master Gardeners, Rosedale Development Association, and The Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition, began meeting in 2012 to examine barriers to community gardening and urban farming in Wyandotte County.

The cost to install a new water tap can range from \$4,000-9,000, a prohibitive amount for most small growers. Gardeners and farmers looking for new growing sites are often limited to choosing locations that already have water or hauling water to their site. The H₂O to Grow Fund will bring water access to empty lots in Wyandotte County that can be used for food production.

Applicants for grant funds will be required to demonstrate how their operation benefits Wyandotte County: through beautifying vacant lots and reducing blight, catching and conserving stormwater that would otherwise go into the city's overtaxed system, or providing food to communities that have low food access.

The H₂O to Grow Coalition, with active engagement of staff from the Public Health Department's Healthy Communities Wyandotte program, worked with the Unified Government Public Works Department to design a grant program that would serve the needs of growers and the Unified Government. Public Works is funding the program, the Public Health Department's Healthy Community Wyandotte staff will manage the grantmaking process, and H₂O to Grow member organizations will be providing technical assistance to grant applicants.

“It's a win-win-win program,” said Nancy Moylan, Board Member of Cross-Lines Community Outreach. “Growers will reduce the burden on the Unified Government to maintain empty lots

and manage stormwater, the Unified Government will reduce the burden on growers to access water, and the new gardens and farms will increase the amount of healthy produce available in Wyandotte County.”

For additional information on the H₂O to Grow fund, contact:

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