

## 2022-2023 Bright Spot Award Nomination Form

The Bright Spot Awards are an effort to recognize examples of meaningful Primary Prevention initiatives taking place across our state. Here are the steps to nominate your initiative:

- 1.) All nominations must be submitted by July 14, 2023. One nomination form must be completed per initiative nominated. Email completed nominations to Matt Coleman ([Matthew.Coleman@TN.gov](mailto:Matthew.Coleman@TN.gov))
- 2.) All nominations received are redacted so that the review committee will not know the exact location and persons involved with the initiative. The review committee is made up of individuals from each region of the state. They will review, score, and discuss each submission. An average of the final scores given by the review committee will be used to determine the award level earned.
- 3.) Award levels include Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Honorable Mention.
- 4.) Awardees will be announced in the fall of 2023.
- 5.) Each nomination will be presented with a comprehensive feedback report from the committee, which will include strengths of the initiative and opportunities for improvement.

### **Application:**

**County:** Cocke

**Initiative Name:** Cocke County Garden of Eat'n Community Teaching Garden

**Primary Prevention Focus Area(s):** Healthy Eating

**Primary Contact Name, Email, Phone:**

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## Bright Spot Award Questions

**Why is this initiative important to your community?** (150 words max; 10 points available)

The project we are submitting is for a community garden. The area that community garden is in has limited access to food. Residents with cars need to drive across town to access healthy options, though many will instead stick to local convenient stores they do not have healthy options. This community garden will provide these residents with a healthy option right near their home. Many residents in this community live in Government Housing (the community garden is located in the cluster of the largest development in the County) and do not have access to a car. They can literally walk down their street and have access to fresh food.

**Is this initiative contributing to a policy, systems, and/or environmental change<sup>1</sup> in the community?** (300 words max; 75 points available)

This project is contributing to an environmental change by providing residents with fresh fruits and vegetables. The community garden was strategically placed within one of the largest public housing complexes in Newport. This area is also a food desert. It is hoped that placing it there residents will use the community garden to grow fresh fruits and vegetables. This will lead to healthy eating.

**What are the SMART objective goals and major purpose(s) of this initiative? (SMART objectives are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound. Example: By May 2023; all soft drink machines in Lauderdale County Schools will be turned off during the school day, per school board policy.)** (300 words max; 10 points available)

The major purpose of this project is to bring healthy options to a disadvantaged population. We will do so by building a community garden for the community with the intention of using it as a teaching garden for youth in the community. The teaching element will show youth from the nearby school and adjacent boys and girls club how to grow healthy foods with the goal of them doing that throughout their life. This element is one that has been strongly recommended by local partner Cocke County Cradle to Career Coalition, a program that rallies for helping children early in life make right choices that will help them in the future. The goal is to have 10 garden beds and education available to teach the community about gardening and sustainability.

**What is the annual budget and funding source for this initiative? If no funding is available, how have you implemented or sustained the initiative?** (150 words max; 5 points available)

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<sup>1</sup> Policy, systems and environmental change is a way of modifying the environment to make healthy choices practical and available to all community members. By changing laws and shaping physical landscapes, a big impact can be made with little time and resources. By changing policies, systems and/or environments, communities can help tackle health issues like obesity, diabetes, cancer and other chronic diseases (<http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/files/PPP/PSE%20Change.pdf>)

The annual budget for the first two years of creation will be \$15,000. This money comes from a Project Diabetes grant. The Cocke County Health Council was the organization that decided to apply for this grant. Afterwards, there will be no planned funding for the project. If the Health Council and other community partners decide to grow the project, we will likely apply for more grants. However, that step is not part of the plan right now. We expect to use volunteer labor and continue with the current vegetables and beds.

**Have community partners helped with the initiative? What are the roles of these partners? (300 words max; 20 points available)**

This entire project has been driven by partners. The project was launched when a Regional Office staff member came to talk to the Cocke County Health Council about the Project Diabetes grant. The Health Council was interested in applying for the grant because food education was already found as a need in the County and there was discussion about how this neighborhood was essentially a “food desert.” Many members of the Health Council were willing to help out on this grant as partners. These entities include Tennessee Extension for Cocke County, Cocke County Cradle to Career Coalition, WestCare, Keep Cocke County Beautiful, Newport Housing Authority, and East Tennessee ArtsCapes. Each partner was willing to help out in their own way. For example, Newport Housing Authority was willing to donate the land and help run water to the garden.

**Describe your staff’s involvement, including the interdisciplinary team approach taken with this initiative? Begin with the planning process; explain staff roles in planning and implementing the initiative. Discuss how you foster creative scheduling so that clinical staff can lend their expertise? (350 words max; 20 points available)**

The Cocke County Health Department has been involved on several avenues of this project. First, they were the ones who got the ball rolling on the grant. A former Health Educator, Airika Actouka, worked very hard on the Project Diabetes grant application with help from community partners. Even though she is no longer with the Health Department, she has been a big believer in this project and still helps out almost every day (rain or shine; hot or cold) to make sure the garden lives up to its potential. Without her, this project does not happen and we are blessed that she has continued to help out even though she is no longer a paid employee of the Health Department. The Health Department also manages the grant each month and tracks expenses. We also are involved in community work days at the garden. We took one week of caretaking in June to water and pull weeds in the garden. The staff attended the groundbreaking celebration at the garden as well. Lastly, the staff also promotes the garden when appropriate to patients.

**In what way is this initiative especially innovative? How is this initiative different from other similar programs? Is there a specific idea tested with this approach? Is this work informed by relevant literature or research studies? (400 words max; 20 points available)**

This project is innovative because it is providing fresh food to an impoverished community that is also a food desert. It is different to other programs because it is actually in the community. Other Health Departments have put their community garden at the Health Department. But this isn't where the community is. And in many cases, residents will have to drive to the Health Department, which could be impossible if they do not have reliable transportation. The specific idea tested is whether or not residents will use it if it is in their community. While we do not have any data yet as the grand opening hasn't happened, we do know that a half-dozen community partners have signed up to work on the garden.

**Is this initiative considering or addressing an inequity in your community? What is that inequity and how are you addressing it? (350 words max; 20 points available)**

This project is addressing the inequity of food security in Cocke County. A distressed county with high poverty, Cocke County has major issues with access to food. This is especially true in the neighborhood where the community garden is located. The project will give these residents access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Because of its location, many of the town's poorest residents will be able to walk to the community garden and will not have to rely on transportation. If this project was to be built at the Cocke County Health Department, for example, residents in this neighborhood would have to walk several miles to reach the community garden instead of being able to quickly walk out their front door to it.

**How are you evaluating the effectiveness of the initiative? Is the initiative on track to achieve stated goals or has it achieved stated goals? (350 words max; 20 points available)**

The garden has a working timeline for projects and progress of the garden. We are on track up to date. We still have projects upcoming this year and next. Additionally, we meet as a core group as needed to ensure we are addressing any barriers ahead of time.

**What limitations or obstacles might be expected if others wished to replicate this initiative? (300 words max; 50 points available)**

A limitation of this project is that great partners must be found. Cocke County was lucky to have so many organizations who are willing to be a part of it. Another obstacle is that gardens require significant and constant work. You must have a leader who is willing to put in the effort to make sure it works. Former Cocke County Health Educator Airika Actouka has been a community champion of the garden even though she is no longer employed by the Cocke County Health Department. She works on it nearly every day no matter the weather. If a community garden such as this is to be replicated, you must have a champion like Airika Actouka.

**Is this initiative sustainable without the resources of the local health department being involved? (250 words max; 20 points available)**

Yes, this project is sustainable without the resources of the local health department. While the Cocke County Health Department oversees the project, it really is a collaborative effort between partners across the County. Partners

include Tennessee Extension for Cocke County, Cocke County Cradle to Career Coalition, WestCare, Keep Cocke County Beautiful, Newport Housing Authority, and East Tennessee ArtsScapes. While funding was originally from the Project Diabetes grant, no additional funding is required to continue the project going.