

# Community Food Growing Assessment Guidelines



Moreland City Council





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# INTRODUCTION

**Moreland City Council supports the communal growing of food across the municipality. The Moreland Food System Strategy recognises that Community Gardens can fulfil a number of Council's environmental and social objectives and provide many community benefits including: a source of healthy fresh food, exercise, improved mental health, social interaction and connectivity, mentoring and skill building.**

Community gardens can be a focal point for diverse members of the community to come together and share their food cultivation and preparation skills and celebrate diverse food cultures. Research has shown that communities who grow, share and celebrate food they have grown themselves report an increase in their fruit and vegetable intake as well as mental and physical health benefits.

Community gardens can be located on private or public land. They involve the collective gardening of a single piece of land by a community group on a not-for-profit basis producing food primarily for the consumption of the gardeners. They range from a collection of garden beds cultivated individually to communal systems including food forests, a layered garden incorporating fruit and nut trees, shrubs, herbs, vines and perennial vegetables.

Other features of a community garden include water tanks and irrigation systems, composting facilities, shelters and communal areas.

This document has been developed to explain the consultation and assessment process for proposals initiated by a community member to grow food communally on Council-owned or Council-managed land. It identifies the different parties and Council departments who are involved in the process, and the steps involved in assessing and approving a new community garden.

Tips and resources are also provided to assist community garden groups to successfully establish a community garden and importantly, ensure it thrives over the long term.



## WHAT ABOUT GROWING FOOD ON NATURE STRIPS OR IN LANEWAYS?

Council has separate Nature Strip Guidelines for planting on the verge or nature strip. Council supports replacing turf on nature strips with alternative plantings, which can foster a sense of ownership within the local community. The use of indigenous plants can enhance biodiversity and provide habitat for local insects and birds. In the case of edibles, the guidelines provide advice on how to manage the health risks from contaminants, as well as ensuring nature-strip gardens meet the requirements for maintaining public safety.

**[moreland.vic.gov.au/nature-strips](https://moreland.vic.gov.au/nature-strips)**

Council's Rights of Way Strategy outlines the conditions for establishing a community garden or planter box in a Right of Way (ROW) or lane way. A garden may be permitted if the ROW is unconstructed and no longer required for public access (vehicle or pedestrian), services and Council purposes.

**[moreland.vic.gov.au/parking-roads/construction-of-unmade-laneways](https://moreland.vic.gov.au/parking-roads/construction-of-unmade-laneways)**

## WHAT IF I AM INTERESTED IN A SITE ON PRIVATE OR NON-COUNCIL LAND?

If you are unsure who owns the site you are interested in for a new community garden, contact Council who can confirm land ownership.

Privately owned site: Council can contact the landowner to see if they are willing to discuss the proposal with the applicant. The terms of use of the land for a community garden will need to be negotiated directly between the applicant and landowner. Council can advise the applicant on how to approach the landowner and assist with obtaining town planning advice, including whether a planning permit is required.

3000acres also provide useful advice on getting a community started on private land.

**[3000acres.org/getting-started](https://3000acres.org/getting-started)**

State Government owned site: Vacant land may be owned by state government departments such as Melbourne Water or VicTrack. Council often has relationships with these departments and can help direct the applicant to the most relevant contact to discuss the proposal and can assist with ongoing negotiations and planning. Melbourne Water is proactively encouraging the activation of their vacant land through the 'Our Space Your Place' program.

**[melbournewater.com.au/community-and-education/use-our-land/land-community-projects](https://melbournewater.com.au/community-and-education/use-our-land/land-community-projects)**





## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Before embarking on a new community garden, it is important to identify the purpose and objective of the project and to understand up front what is involved. Significant resources and community involvement are required to set up a community garden. While Council has a role and responsibility to support and enable the community to grow food communally, it does not run or operate community gardens directly. It is therefore crucial to have enough committed community garden members to sustain the garden through the establishment and ongoing maintenance phases.

Consideration needs to be given to how the garden will be funded. There is the initial expense to build a garden, and then ongoing maintenance costs. It is the responsibility of the applicant to pursue funding through grants programs, either Council's or other's (see Resources and Support, page 17) or through fundraising activities. Securing the required funds can take time and involve a high level of perseverance.

Council needs to ensure that any use of Council-land is in the best interests of and inclusive of the whole community. Local residents not directly involved in the garden may have legitimate concerns about a new community garden being established in their neighbourhood. Council can provide advice on how to maintain the numbers required to sustain the garden and how to engage with local residents and businesses to gain the broad community support necessary for the garden to flourish.

Community gardens attached to or supported by an established neighbourhood house or community centre may have a better chance of long-term success because these centres already have established networks and promotional channels the garden group can leverage.

Community centres can also offer added security and governance support, as well as proximity to a toilet, power and roof from which to harvest and store rain water. There may be opportunities to partner on mutually beneficial educational or social activities such as gardening workshops or community celebrations. Gardening groups may also have a better chance of securing grants from Council or other bodies if they are a program of a neighbourhood house or partner with a house to apply, demonstrating multiple benefits to a wider group of users.

**If you are interested in or planning a community garden, contact Moreland Customer Service on 9240 1111 or via [urbanagriculture@moreland.vic.gov.au](mailto:urbanagriculture@moreland.vic.gov.au)**

To help Council respond to your enquiry, prepare some answers to the following:

- What do I want to achieve by setting up a new community garden?
- How many people are interested in being involved and is there enough interest and commitment to sustain the garden over the long term?
- Would joining an established community garden be a better way to achieve my aims, while supporting and strengthening that existing garden?
- Is my group prepared to incorporate, or have we identified an incorporated association who could auspice the garden?
- Is a community garden the most effective way to address my community's needs? Could another type of community group or activity meet those needs eg. joining or setting up a gardening group or other regular gathering at a local community centre/neighbourhood house?



## MORELAND COMMUNITY GARDENING INC (MCG) IS A VOLUNTEER-RUN, NOT-FOR-PROFIT GROUP THAT RUNS SEVERAL COMMUNITY FOOD GROWING SITES AROUND MORELAND

They support community gardens with their know-how, connections, experience and capabilities as well as providing policies, processes and systems that relieve garden committees of some of their administration burden and encourage good governance. People in Moreland from existing community gardens or looking to start a community garden who need advice or support can find useful information and contact details on their website:

**[morelandcommunitygardening.org](http://morelandcommunitygardening.org)**

To find and contact existing community gardens in Moreland, refer to the community gardens page on the **Moreland Food Gardens Network** website:

**[morelandfoodgardensnetwork.org](http://morelandfoodgardensnetwork.org)**

## COMMUNITY GARDEN APPLICATION PROCESS

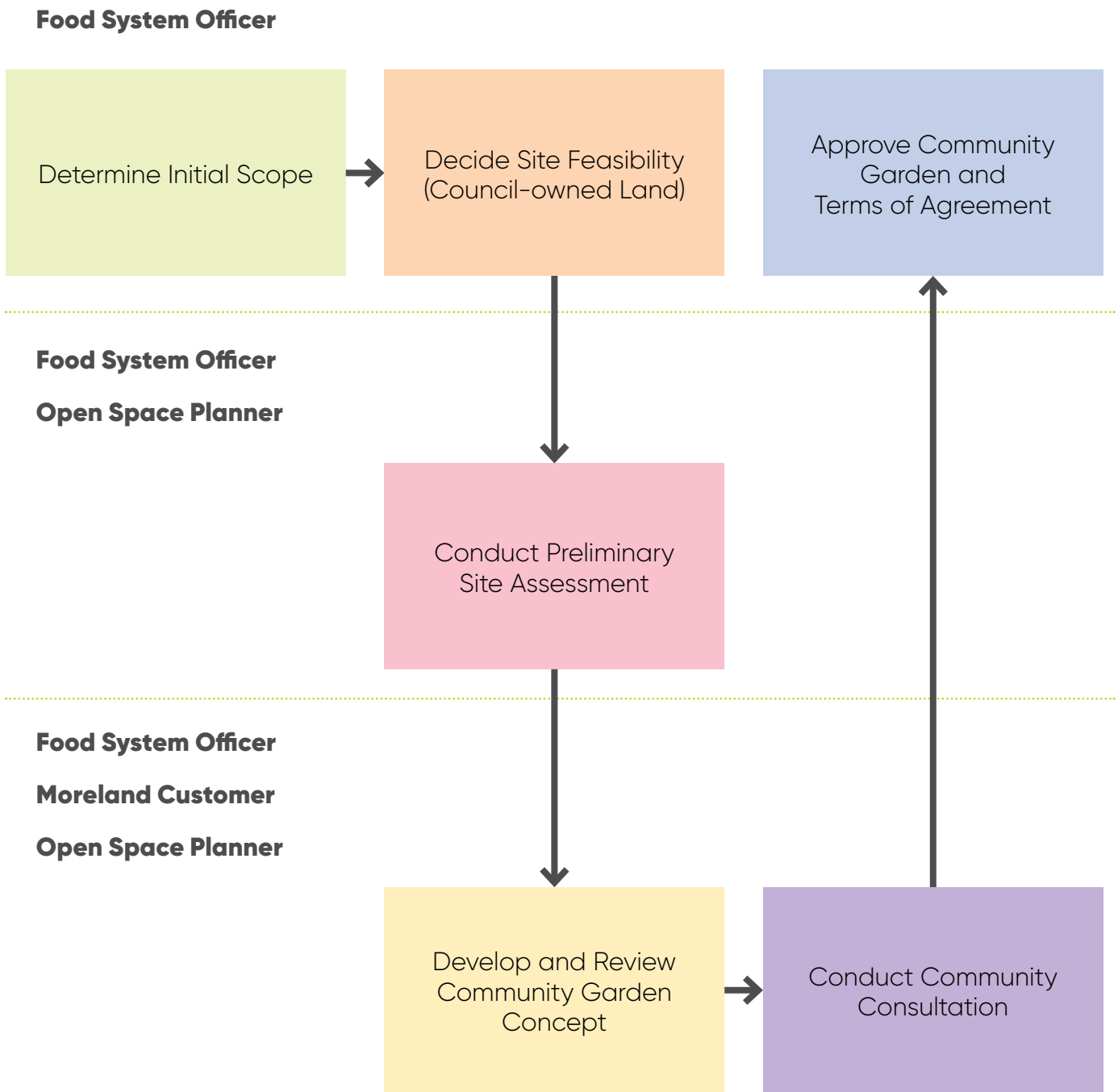
There are a number of Council urban development or renewal processes which allow for the establishment of community gardens. In 2018, Gowanbrae Community garden was established as part of the Gowanbrae Open Space Development and Management Plan and the Fawkner Food Bowls was recognised in the Charles Mutton Precinct Plan.

The Community Garden Application Process has been developed to assess community-initiated requests for community gardens which are not captured or accounted for in existing Council plans. These guidelines detail the process for determining if a Council-owned or managed site nominated by a community member is suitable for a community garden or not, and to provide a clear response and rationale for the decision.

**Figure 1** Process Summary Map for Community Garden requests and applications shows the 6 processes involved in assessing a community garden request.

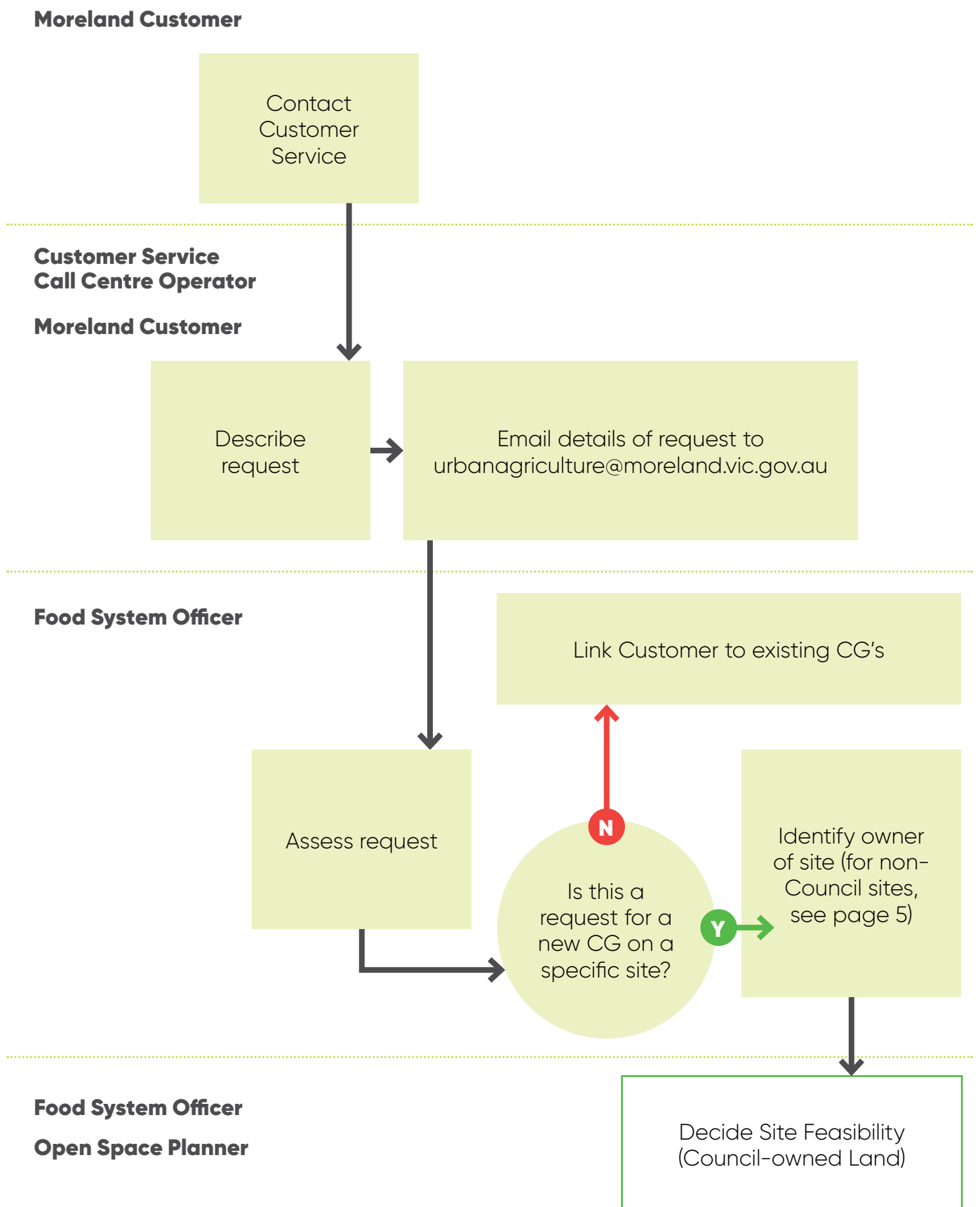
Each of these 6 processes is also mapped (**Figure 2-7**) to show the activities carried out in each by the Council officers involved at each stage of the assessment.

**FIGURE 1** Process Summary Map for Community Garden requests and applications

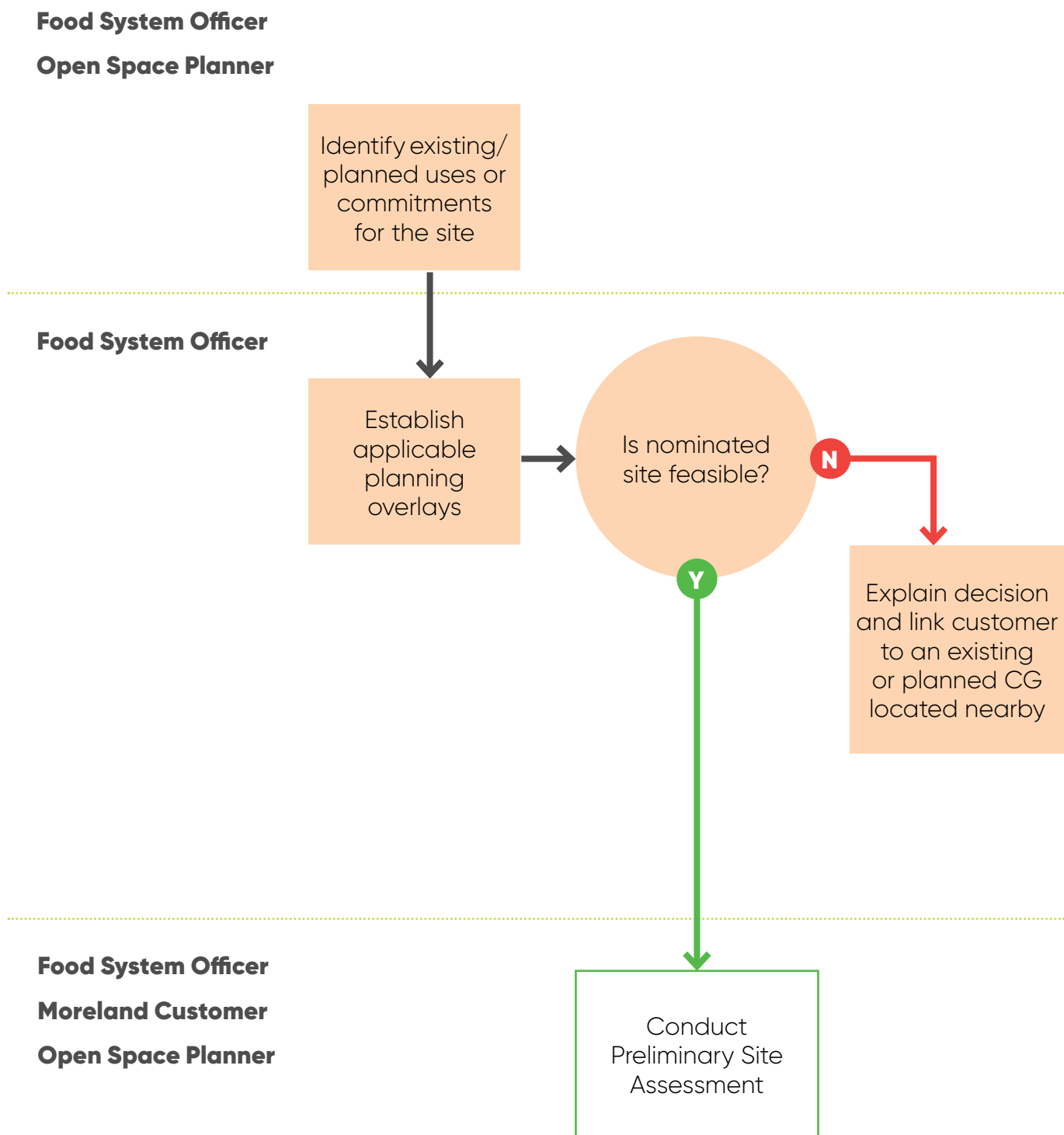




**FIGURE 2** Process Map: Determine Initial Scope

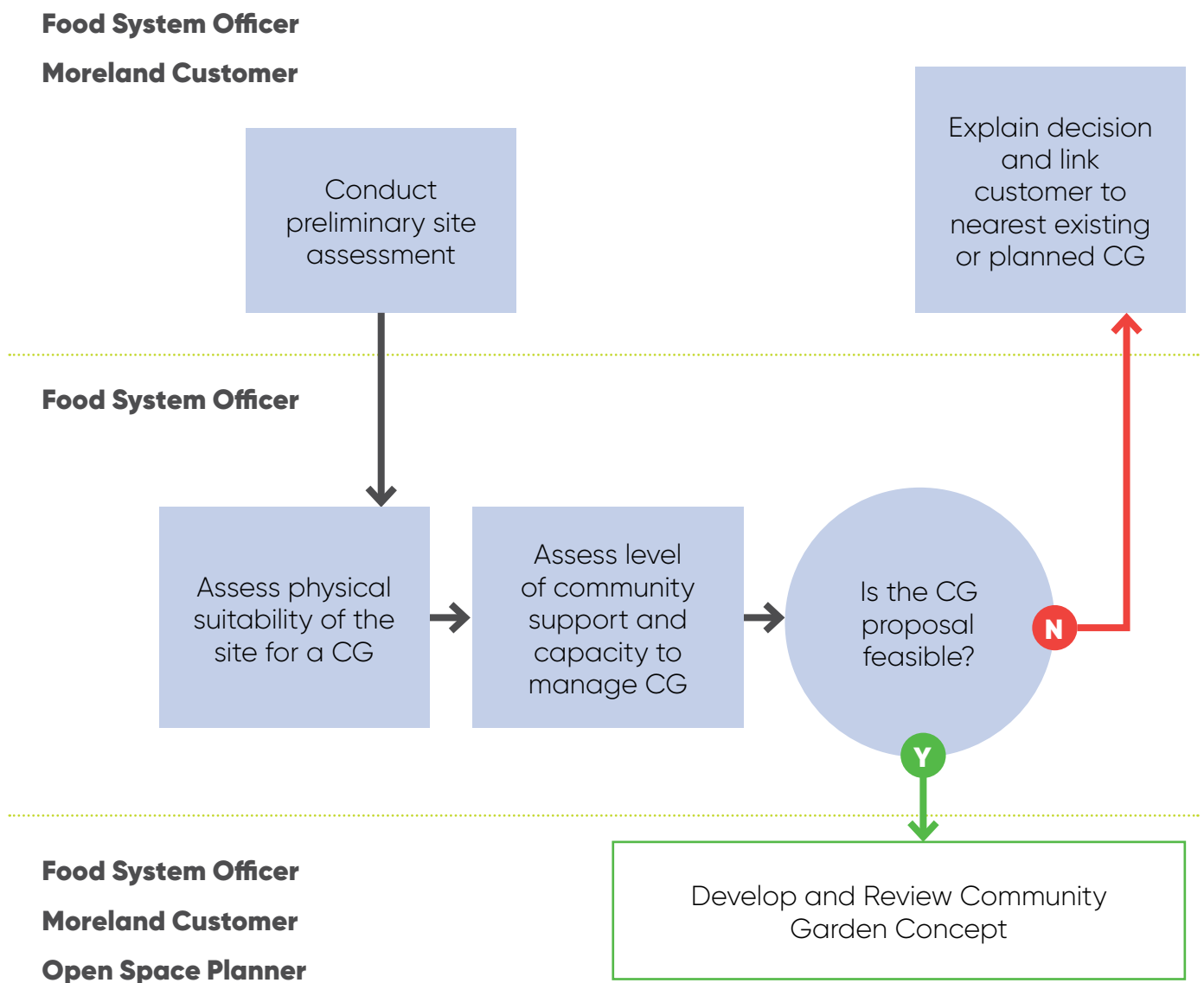


**FIGURE 3** Process Map: Decide Site Feasibility (Council-owned Land)

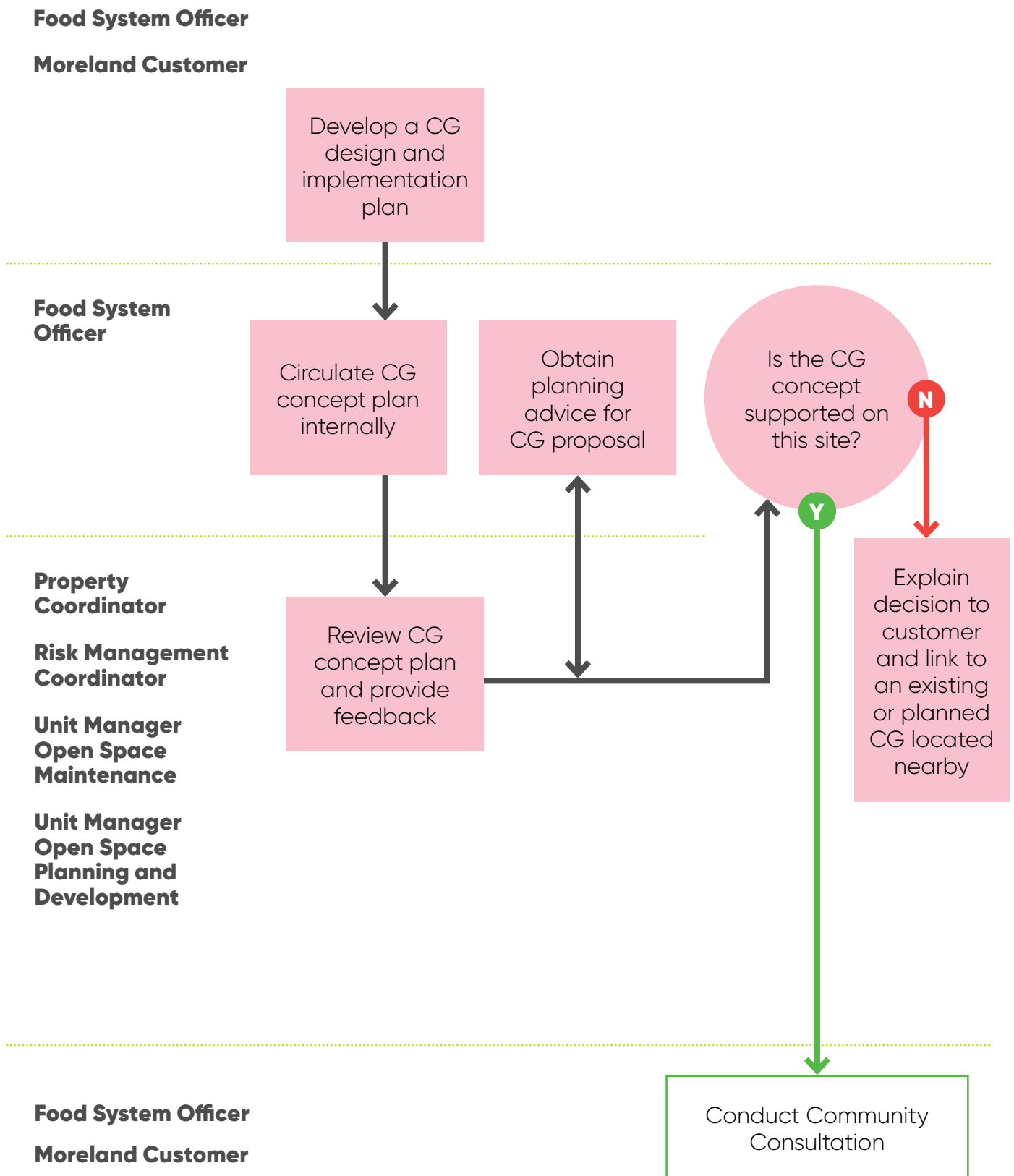




**FIGURE 4** Process Map: Conduct Preliminary Site Assessment

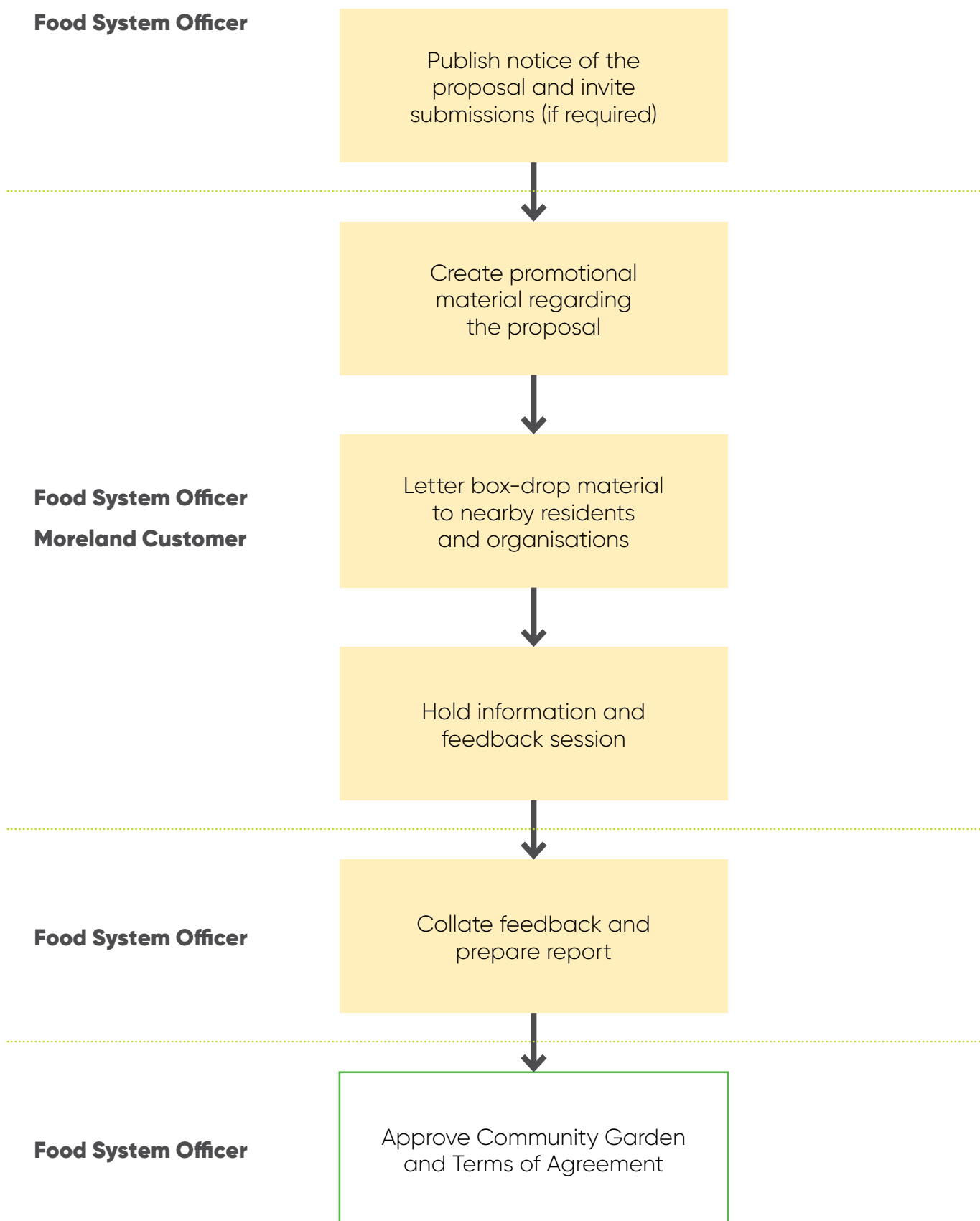


**FIGURE 5** Process Map: Develop and Review Community Garden Concept

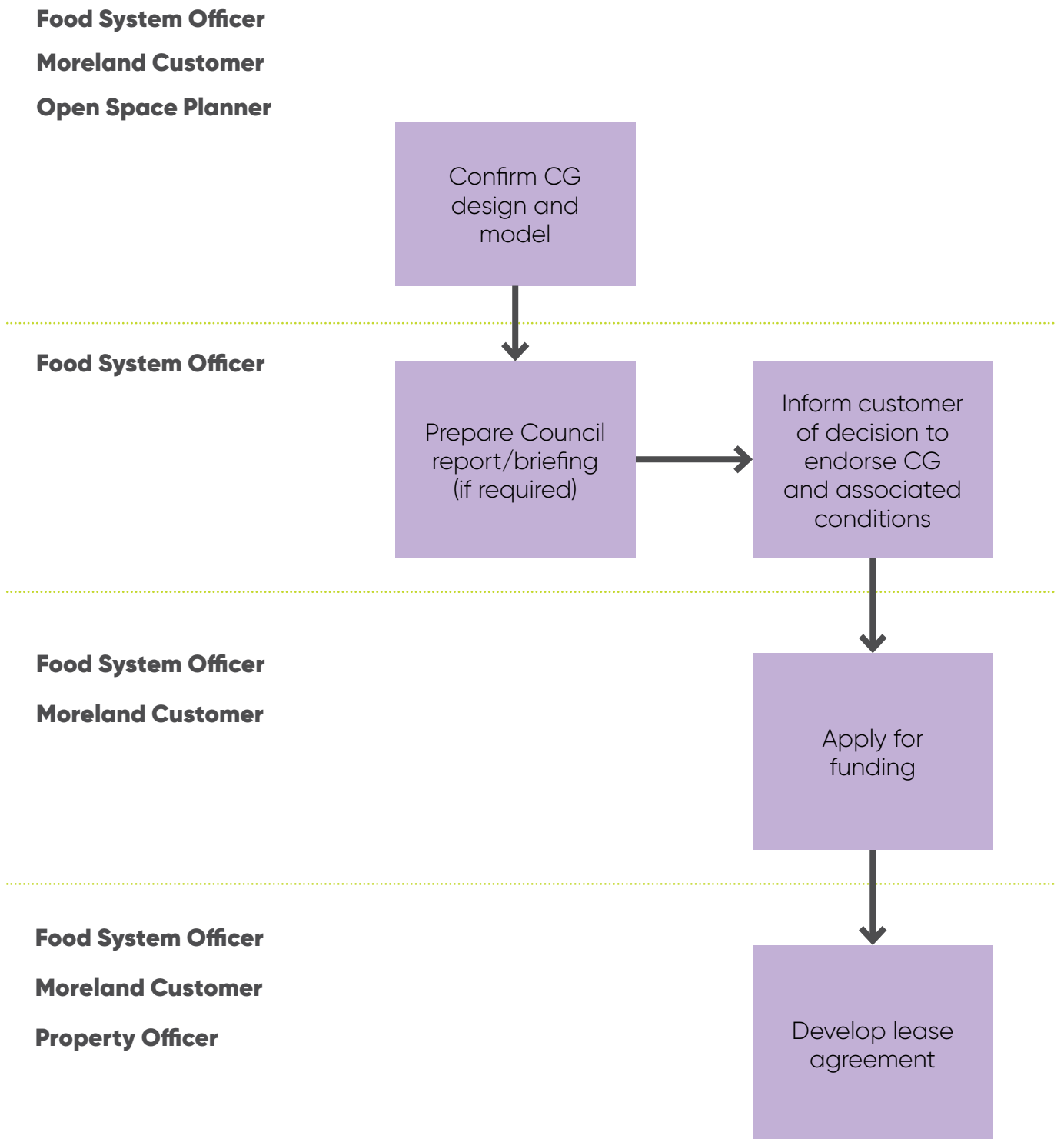




**FIGURE 6** Process Map: Conduct Community Consultation



**FIGURE 7** Process Map: Approve Community Garden and Terms of Agreement





# THE COMMUNAL FOOD GARDEN SITE ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST CAN BE DOWNLOADED FROM [MORELAND.VIC.GOV.AU/COMMUNITY-GARDENS](http://MORELAND.VIC.GOV.AU/COMMUNITY-GARDENS)

**It lists the key criteria Council will consider in assessing a site for a community garden. The planning section of the Community Gardens Manual, developed by Sustainable Gardening Australia (see Resources and Support page 17), has a useful Site Assessment Planner as well as advice on choosing a suitable location.**

## Community Garden Site Criteria

### 1. Location

- » Suitable sites include land which is underutilised and designated for communal use or adjacent to community facilities such as a sports ground, play space, community centre or other council building. Priority would also be given to sites close to a relatively high residential base, and to community centres which will support the community garden and have the capacity to engage those from low socio-economic or disadvantaged backgrounds.
- » Natural conservation areas, creek corridors, sporting ovals, dog parks and formal heritage parks are not appropriate due to the conflicting use and access issues that would likely arise.
- » Sites close to an already established and viable community garden would not be prioritised.

### 2. Multi-use and integration with existing or neighbouring site uses

- » The most suitable sites can accommodate a community garden without adversely impacting other existing or neighbouring land uses and can be used for passive recreation, events, educational workshops as well as gardening. Council will look favourably at sites which maximise community participation and interaction, such as those associated with a community centre or neighbourhood house.

### 3. Community interest and support

- » Council will look for evidence that there is a core group of committed local residents with the interest and capacity to support the garden over the long term. You should also be able to demonstrate that you have approached households and businesses surrounding the proposed site to gauge the level of support for your proposal.
- » A significant majority of the local community should be in favour of the garden. Include in your application a plan to address any concerns that have been raised.

### 4. Accessibility and services

- » Sites close to public transport, and accessible to a range of user groups will be prioritised. Access to electricity and public toilets are also important.

### 5. Safety and Security

- » The site should have a high-profile location, be easily observed by nearby houses, shopping areas and businesses and be well lit at night. The risk of weed, pollutants, noise or other contamination from neighbouring sites should be considered as well as whether the site is in a high crime zone.



## 6. Soil quality and topography

- » It is important to research the history of a potential site before choosing it to understand the level and type of soil contamination it is likely to have. It is safe to assume most urban sites have some level of contamination and it is not necessarily obvious by simply looking at it. Council can help identify the previous use of the site and the associated potential degree of contamination. Soil testing and remediation can be prohibitively expensive. Macquarie University in NSW offer a low-cost soil testing service (see VegeSafe Program). To manage contamination risks, Council recommends growing food in raised garden beds filled with clean soil from a trusted source.
- » There should be good drainage on site but also the slope and contour should not cause excess run-off.

## 7. Water and Solar Access

- » Community gardens need at least six hours of full sunlight per day, so avoid sites overshadowed by tall buildings or dense tree canopy. Ready access to water is critical – either a town water source and ideally close proximity to a suitable sized building from which rainwater can be harvested.

**The applicant will be assisted by Council to complete the checklist as part of the Preliminary Site Assessment process (Figure 4) before proceeding to develop a detailed concept and design (Figure 5).**

**VegeSafe** is a soil metal testing program run by Environmental Science staff at Macquarie University. For a donation of \$20, soil samples can be sent from all Australian states and territories. Sampling instructions are provided.

Participants receive a formal report with their soil results and are provided with links to information and advice about 'what to do next' in the event of soils containing elevated concentrations of metals and metalloids.

**[research.science.mq.edu.au/vegesafe](https://research.science.mq.edu.au/vegesafe)**



# RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

**For a complete list of resources, go to [moreland.vic.gov.au/community-gardens](https://moreland.vic.gov.au/community-gardens)**

## **Moreland Community Grants Program**

The Moreland Community Grants Program supports groups, organisations and individuals to implement initiatives that benefit the Moreland community. Community gardens may be eligible for funding to help establish a new or support an existing community garden.

**[moreland.vic.gov.au/community-grants](https://moreland.vic.gov.au/community-grants)**

**The Community Grants Hub** administers community-based grants on behalf of Australian Government departments, agencies and organisations.

**[communitygrants.gov.au](https://communitygrants.gov.au)**

**The Grants Hub** is a grants search website covering a broad range of funding providers.

**[thegrantshub.com.au](https://thegrantshub.com.au)**

**Moreland Community Gardening Inc** are a volunteer-run, not-for-profit organisation who manage community gardens and can provide support and advice.

**[morelandcommunitygardening.org](https://morelandcommunitygardening.org)**

**Moreland Food Gardens Network** is a network of people in Moreland who share information and collaborate in a variety of ways to improve food access and urban agriculture in the area. Their website contains a range of useful information relating to urban food growing.

**[morelandfoodgardensnetwork.org](https://morelandfoodgardensnetwork.org)**

**3000acres** provide advice and resources to help start a community garden, including tips for unlocking private undeveloped land for community gardening.

**[3000acres.org](https://3000acres.org)**

**Sustainable Gardening Australia** has produced a community gardens manual which Council recommends using as it provides detailed advice and sample templates to guide groups through every stage of a community garden process – from planning, design/building, through to operation/governance.

**[sgaonline.org.au/community-resources/community-gardens-manual](https://sgaonline.org.au/community-resources/community-gardens-manual)**

**Melbourne Water** has created the 'Our Space Your Place' program to streamline the process of finding land and expressing interest in using it for community benefit.

**[melbournewater.com.au/community-and-education/use-our-land/land-community-projects](https://melbournewater.com.au/community-and-education/use-our-land/land-community-projects)**

## **Moreland Food System Strategy 2017-2020**

**[moreland.vic.gov.au/food-systems](https://moreland.vic.gov.au/food-systems)**



Moreland City Council

**For further information,  
contact Moreland City Council by:**

Phone: 9240 1111

Website: [moreland.vic.gov.au](http://moreland.vic.gov.au)

**Moreland Language Link**

有關摩爾蘭德市政廳 的詳情請致電	9280 1910	要进一步了解Moreland 市政府的信息，请拨打	9280 0750
Per informazioni sul Comune di Moreland telefonare a	9280 1911	ਮੋਰਲੈਂਡ ਸਿਟੀ ਕੌਮਲ ਬਾਰੇ ਵਧੇਰੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲਈ ਫ਼ੋਨਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ	9280 0751
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