



NEW ENGLAND FARMER MICROGRANTS PROGRAM

Guidelines

PURPOSE

American Farmland Trust (AFT) is excited to announce the **New England Farmer Microgrants Program (NEFMP)** to assist farmers in New England with financial barriers to land access, expanding onto new land, and farm succession planning. The goal of NEFMP is to fund farmers in two primary categories: professional services and infrastructure costs related to assuring agricultural land is in production.

The allowable use of funds is broad, assuring that grants cover items likely not funded through other programs. Grants are intended to leverage other resources (either in-kind from the farmer, or other private and public funds) and make a real difference for farmers to access land, improve land security, or expand production.

AWARD AMOUNT & ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Grants will be awarded in amounts between **\$500 and \$5,000 per project**.

A project may involve one or more of the following: an individual farmer, a farm family, a group of farmers with a cooperative business, or a non-profit entity. Applicants seeking access to farmland, expanding production on new land, or developing a farm succession plan for the purposes of farming will be given primary consideration.

Eligible applicants and proposed projects must be located in one of the following New England states: Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, Connecticut, or Rhode Island

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS (include but are not limited to):

Professional Services-

➤ Hiring an attorney to develop a farm lease, provide legal representation for a farm transfer or purchase, develop an estate plan to support a farm transfer.

- Hiring a business, financial or estate planning consultant to assist with a farm transfer plan, business plan, or finance/loan plan.
- Hiring a service provider to support business planning and other services necessary for farmland access or expansion such as:
 - land search planning
 - property assessment
 - facilitation and coaching
 - crafting agreements
 - land use planning
 - mediation
- Paying transaction costs associated with securing land to farm. Such as costs associated with purchasing a farm, negotiating a lease agreement, or developing an agricultural conservation easement (e.g., survey, appraisal, etc.).

Infrastructure and tools-

**Applicant must demonstrate how they will bring more land into production through this proposal and support their application with a letter of support from a service provider.*

- Paying capital costs* associated with direct expansion of farm production., For example:
 - irrigation,
 - fencing,
 - soil mitigation or improvements that would allow for increased production capacity
- Purchasing implements such as a brush hog, tillage equipment, walk behind tractor that would allow the farmer to open up new land for production.

**For projects that involve on-the-ground improvements to farmland, control of the land (ownership, a lease, license, or other written agreement) for a reasonable time period will be required. If tenure is less than 5-years, please be prepared to demonstrate in the application how the tenure is sufficient in relationship to the improvements being made.*

AWARD PROCESS

If approved, AFT will send written notification in the form of a **Letter of Award** to the applicant within 45 days. The Letter of Award will detail the approved timeline and process for payment based on the individual project.

Terms for all applications:

- Upon completion of services (unless agreed upon in writing), AFT will pay the invoice directly to the service provider or business supplying infrastructure.
- For funds paid directly to the farmer, funds may be a reimbursement (such as farmer labor cost after the project is complete).
- AFT must receive an invoice from the applicant or service provider, detailing the services provided and the cost per service. The applicant must also provide reasonable documentation to demonstrate satisfactory completion of the proposed project.
- Applicants will not receive any awarded funds directly (unless the approved work is to be carried out by the applicant(s) themselves, as described in their application).
- AFT will pay for all approved expenses directly within 60 days of receiving a satisfactory invoice.
- AFT shall have no obligation to disburse amounts in excess of the approved grant, for services not completed, or services not approved by AFT. Any expenses that exceed the grant maximum amount are the responsibility of the applicant.
- Expenses incurred prior to receiving written notification of approval will not be reimbursable by the grant.
- Any unspent grant funds may be dedicated towards further services for the applicant, pending written AFT approval.

TIMELINE

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, beginning March 1, 2020. Applications will be batched for review and awarded by the end of each month in the order the applications were received. AFT will continue to receive applications and make awards until available funds are expended. All services supported by the grant must be completed within one year of the date of the Letter of Award (extensions may be granted upon request). For grants funding long-range succession and transfer planning services, reports showing progress/milestones may be requested.

HOW TO APPLY

To apply, farmers should submit a completed New England Farmer Microgrants Application to AFT (see application check list below).

Applications may be submitted electronically through this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TLPB8WL>

or mailed to:

American Farmland Trust, c/o Jamie Pottern
One Short Street, Suite 2
Northampton, MA 01060

QUESTIONS

Contact Jamie Pottern at (413) 240-4621 or jpottern@farmland.org

See our **Resource Directory** to learn more about regional service providers.

http://farmland.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/New-England-Resource-Page_Service-Providers-Funding-Opportunities.pdf

APPLICATION CHECK LIST (to ensure a complete application packet):

- A brief summary of your farming background;
- A brief summary of your barriers to securing land, expanding farm production, or transferring your farm;
- A detailed description of the work the financial assistance is for;
- An accurate estimate of costs with supporting materials (such as a quote from a contractor or service provider);
- A clear timeline for completion of the project (the work must be completed within one year of the date of the award letter; extensions may be granted upon request. For grants funding long-range succession and transfer planning services, reports showing progress/milestones may be requested.);
- A letter of support from a service provider or mentor with knowledge of the specific type of project or service being pursued that articulates a high likelihood of success for the project as planned. If you do not have an

identified advisor, please give us a call for support or see our [Resource Directory](#) to find one near you;

- A statement agreeing to complete a brief final report and interview by AFT upon completion of the project. AFT will compile and share stories with the program funder. For farmers who opt in, we will share selected projects via social media and in promotional materials. While sharing stories is a priority for AFT, we understand there may be reason for discretion and will honor those instances. Participation in public-facing stories will not affect the applicant's receipt of funding.