



## Brighter Future Fund

### Grant Guidelines

#### **PURPOSE**

American Farmland Trust (AFT) is excited to announce the Brighter Future Fund (BFF) to assist farmers in successfully launching, growing, and sustaining farms in the face of forces impacting the food and agricultural system, including the COVID-19 pandemic, changing markets, severe weather, and climate change. AFT seeks to uplift, support, and amplify the work of a wide range of farmers through this program.

Funding will be allocated to two primary categories: professional services and equipment or infrastructure costs. Grants are intended to leverage other resources (either in-kind from the farmer, or other private and public funds) and make a difference for farmers to 1) improve farm viability, 2) access, transfer or permanently protect farmland, or 3) adopt regenerative farming practices and increase resilience to climate change.

#### **AWARD AMOUNT & ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

Grants will be awarded in amounts up to \$5,000 per project. A project may involve one or more individual farmers or farm families. Only one grant can be awarded per farmer/farm family.

Funding for this program is limited. As funding remains, awards will be made on an ongoing basis to eligible applicants that fulfill all application requirements and meet selection criteria.

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

Farmers will receive direct payment of funds from American Farmland Trust but can request special consideration for payment to a service provider. See additional requirements about Professional Services in the 'Eligible Projects' section and supporting information in the 'Timeline' section.

#### **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, or navigate heirs property issues.
- 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, succession planning, or crafting agreements.
- Paying transaction costs associated with securing land to farm. These may include costs associated with purchasing a farm, negotiating a lease agreement, or developing an agricultural conservation easement (e.g., survey, appraisal, etc.).

### *Infrastructure and Equipment -*

- Paying capital costs associated with improving soil health and enhancing land for farm production. Examples include: irrigation, fencing, or soil improvements.
- Purchasing farm equipment or implements that would allow farmers to improve soil health, increase productivity, or enhance crop quality.
- Acquiring new equipment or making improvements to increase marketing and sales of farm products.
- Replacing infrastructure or equipment lost or compromised from natural disasters.

### **A COMMITMENT TO UNDERSERVED FARMERS**

AFT seeks to support farmers across America through the Brighter Future Fund. We also recognize that social and racial injustices are entrenched in the history of our nation and our agricultural system. Our past informs inequities that persist today, and that marginalized agricultural producers have been denied equal opportunity to prosper, facing challenges such as loan discrimination, barriers to accessing federal and private programs, exploitative labor practices, intimidation, and theft and appropriation of land.

In recognition of the need for greater equity and inclusion for all groups who have been, and still are, marginalized, we aim to support these producers through the Brighter Future Fund. For 2021, we are focused on providing resources to farmers who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), women, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+).

Additional information that will be taken into consideration when making funding decisions include:

- Priority for individuals who dedicate a majority of their worktime to farming or ranching;
- Need-based consideration of projects;
- Diversity in farms as determined by the dollar value of farm products sold, acres in farming and farm products grown, raised or produced.

### **AWARD PROCESS**

If approved, AFT will send written notification in the form of a Letter of Award to the applicant within 60 days. The Letter of Award will detail the approved timeline and process for payment based on the individual project.

Terms for all applications:

- AFT will pay invoices directly to an applicant who is purchasing equipment or infrastructure. Payment to a service provider that is providing requested services or business supplying infrastructure or equipment can be considered.
- Within one year of the award date, applicants will be asked to submit: all receipts showing how the funds were spent, a written paragraph describing the project, and photos documenting how award funds were used.
- AFT anticipates paying approved expenses directly within 60 days of receiving a satisfactory invoice.
- For funds paid directly to the farmer, funds may be a reimbursement.
- AFT shall have no obligation to disburse amounts in excess of the approved grant, for services not completed, or goods 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 available by the end of November 2021. Applications will be reviewed and awarded in the order the applications were received based on eligibility.

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 but AFT encourages early spend-down). For grants funding long-range succession and transfer planning services, written statements showing progress/milestones may be requested.

## SPECIAL NOTES:

- *Funding is contingent on the awardee completing a Grant Award Form and submitting it within 14 days.*
- *Grants of this kind are motivated by AFT's charitable intent and are effectively gifts to the farmer and, therefore excluded from income (non-taxable). The individual or entity to receive awarded funds will not need to supply a W9 form (including a SSN or ITIN number) in order to receive funding but will be expected to provide details for record keeping*
- *If a farmer awardee wishes to receive grant funds directly, the awardee will be expected to provide basic record keeping surrounding the use of the funds.*
- *If the awardee will be hiring a service provider and wants the service provider to be paid directly, a W-9 form from the service provider will be required along with an invoice.*
- *If the awardee doesn't provide required documents within 14 days of notification of award, AFT may choose to award funds to another applicant.*

## HOW TO APPLY

To apply, farmers should submit a completed Brighter Future Microgrant Application to AFT. Applications must be submitted electronically through the link located on our webpage:

<https://farmland.org/brighter-future/>

## QUESTIONS

If you have questions or need additional assistance completing your application, please contact us at [brighterfuture@farmland.org](mailto:brighterfuture@farmland.org).

## APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- ✓ Completion of the grant application;
- ✓ An accurate estimate of costs with supporting materials (such as a quote from a contractor or equipment dealer);

## AWARD FORM CHECKLIST (to ensure a complete application packet)

- ✓ Current photo representing yourself and your farm
- ✓ A brief summary regarding planned use of the funds and results you expect to achieve with the assistance of the funds.

- ✓ A statement agreeing to complete a brief final report and interview by AFT upon completion of the project. 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.

*Note on Language*

We encourage you to be thoughtful and diligent in completing your application, but we will not evaluate applications by grammar or writing style. Complete the questions to the best of your ability and take advantage of the narrative questions to describe your farm, your personal and professional goals, and the challenges you face in reaching them. Feel free to write in whatever style or language feels truest and most comfortable to you.