AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST

Request for Applications

Grazing Champions

Join AFT's Beef Grazing Network – Grants to advance practices, collaborate, and provide mentorship, to market grazed beef.

Revised draft date: November 12, 2026

1. Opportunity Overview

There are over 800,000 cow/calf and stocker cattle farming and ranching operations in the USA managing almost 90 million cows and calves and accounting for 17% of total cash receipts for agriculture. However, the size and economic impact of the cattle farming and ranching industry often obscures its highly fragmented and segmented nature, and the fact that market share and thus value, disproportionately disadvantages the small family farmer.

Most small beef operations treat their businesses as standalone enterprises rather than collectives or cooperatives. Their size therefore becomes a significant disadvantage in the market and buyers have a significant advantage in setting price and terms of sales. In addition, cow-calf operators, and even stocker operators, are at the beginning of the supply chain, several steps away from the end consumer, giving them less opportunity to control and realize the value of the product (beef) and in turn generate better farm or ranch returns.

American Farmland Trust (AFT) invites applications from experienced beef producers to serve as Grazing Champions in the Beef Grazing Network's Beef Producer Economic Resilience Initiative, part of USDA Advancing Markets for Producers. This initial cohort will pilot a multi-year approach that combines grazing management planning and implementation, producer training, data sharing, market development, and producer-led coordination. The project centers producer-to-producer learning and collaboration because producers often learn most effectively from peers who have successfully implemented similar changes, and who have an operational understanding of the challenges faced during adoption of practices and market access activities.

Grazing Champions are the Beef Grazing Network's advanced graziers and mentors. They practice advanced grazing management and are recognized as producer leaders who pilot farm innovations and then share lessons learned and market opportunities with other producers. Approximately 80 Champions will support a total of 620 producers, or Network Graziers, who will join the network in the following years. Champions will first complete planning, training, implementation, and reporting for their own operations. Champions will then share their practical experience and support other participating beef producers as they develop and implement grazing management plans, adopt eligible practices, and collaboratively explore, support and coordinate network participants into action groups that achieve greater marketing access and value.

The market for sustainably produced beef is relatively small and localized in comparison to conventionally produced beef products, but consumer demand is growing, especially in local, direct, and restaurant and other food service institution markets. There is also significant interest on the part of larger corporate entities AFT has been connecting with, whose leaders are increasingly aware of the need to de-risk their supply chains. In addition, the cost of entry to these markets can be too high for a small-scale or family producer when their option is to enter alone, as they can't provide the value add or volume that the vertically integrated and larger entities supply. That's why AFT will support groups of producers to

join forces to access markets that are otherwise only accessible to larger scale producers, and to thus get a market premium for their beef. Working together, for example, Network producers can set and achieve higher producer-led standards, aggregating their supply of more uniform, age and source verified animals to attract better pricing in the live animal markets, and improve margins by sharing logistics and marketing costs. AFT will further support Network producers to work together to create business models that help spread producer risk, and facilitate direct marketing into higher value grazed beef markets returning more value to the cattle producer.

Program scale

AFT expects to select about 80 Grazing Champions through the initial grant approval and administration. The final number selected may depend on the strength and geographic distribution of applications, available funding, and final program approvals.

2. Program Goals

This program's goals are to improve the economic resilience of beef producers through the Beef Grazing Network by providing funding for implementing grazing and other complementary practices to a common standard, and for coordinating access to markets that value these practices, including producer-led network coordination to achieve those outcomes. The program will:

- Advance grazing management and complementary conservation practice implementation on participating beef operations.
- Build regional networks of producers who can share practical knowledge and coordinate successful grazing implementation.
- Support consistent implementation, documentation, and decision support that can help participating producers keep track of their animal sale inventories and pitch high value product to buyers, meet buyer specifications and volume, and gain access to new or higher-value premium markets.
- Document market opportunities, buyer specifications, verification, and volume needs.
- Develop producer-led approaches to marketing coordination and supply aggregation.
- Compile information for network-wide learning and benefits for producers and society – use participant data and feedback to refine network tools, training, data systems, technical resources, producer benefits, and future application rounds and coordination opportunities.

3. Benefits for Selected Champions

- Strengthened market outcomes for the 700 Beef Grazing Network producers, including laying the groundwork for cooperative marketing structures within the Network that will enable network producers to work together to attract volume and uniformity premiums from buyers, secure better terms of trade, and share logistics and marketing costs.
- Opportunities to utilize the Network's core sustainability practices and standards to drive greater value for beef products.
- A $17,000 basic producer implementation grant for grazing planning and practice implementation and basic data collection on the producer's own operation.
- An additional grant supplement averaging $39,400 (range: $28,200 to $50,600) for the selected Grazing Champion to share more advanced data for network-wide insights, and to implement network activities, that benefit their own operation as well as the broader network of coordinating producers, with the final amount determined by the number of Network Graziers supported by the selected Champion and the approved payment structure.
- Access to AgriWebb's leading ranch management software to simplify program data collection and gain real-time visibility of livestock and pasture data, such as stocking rates, carrying capacity, and weight forecasts. See AgriWebb's library of customer stories for more on the benefits of this platform.

- Access to FieldVision, a platform that is advancing a regional soil carbon benchmarking approach so that any FieldVision user will be able to contextualize their soil performance against farms with similar characteristics in their region.
- Access to technical support for grazing improvements, enhanced marketing, networking, and mentorship activities.
- Soil sampling and agronomic support.
- Specialized support and training for biochar application in grazing systems for those interested, including biochar trials for up to three producers with additional soil tests covered by AFT.
- Guidance in identifying and accessing other funding opportunities.
- Group training and virtual support to develop or update the Champion's Grazing Management Plan, meet program standards, and address common grazing and marketing challenges.
- Access to project-supported soil data and regional peer networks.

4. Key Details

RFA release	November 12, 2026
Review approach	Rolling review beginning on November 30, 2026, with RFA open until final applications due January 31, 2027 or until 80 spots are filled
Eligible states	Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. *See Note below for those in North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky.**
Implementation funding with basic data collection support	$17,000
Network advanced data collection and implementation support funding	Average of $39,400; final amount based on number of Network Graziers supported by Grazing Champion
Required in kind match	$16,000 in eligible non-federally funded match; no cash out of pocket expenditures are required, although that is an option (see Section 11)
Timeline	Applications close no later than January 31, 2027, and may close earlier if 80 spots are filled. Grazing Planning and Implementation to be finished by Sept 2027 Network activities to be funded from this source through July 2028; pending NRCS approval, the project may be extended through July 2029.
Source of funding	USDA Advancing Markets for Producers Program, Grant # NR243A750004G002

Questions	BeefGrazingNetwork@farmland.org

*Note: North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee are tentatively eligible states. Eligibility for producers in these states depends on approval from NRCS. Producers in these states may apply, but awards cannot be made unless that approval is received.

5. Terms and Definitions

The terms below are used throughout this RFA to describe participant roles, project requirements, and common grazing-related language.

Term	Definition
Grazing Champion	An experienced grazing beef producer selected to participate in the project via this Request for Applications as both an implementing producer and a peer mentor. Champions complete required planning, training, implementation, and reporting for their own operations, and will also support other participating producers in their region in joining the network, implementing practices and exploring collaborative premium market access opportunities to generate value from these practices and network coordination.
Network Grazier	A beef producer who is supported by a Grazing Champion during a later project stage. Network Graziers must apply to a Request for Applications in 2027 or 2028 and be accepted into the program before receiving project support.
Grazier	A person who manages grazing livestock. In this RFA, “graziers” refers to participating producers or other people involved in grazing management. A "grazer” is an animal that eats forage by grazing, such as cattle.
Grazing Management Plan	A written plan that describes how grazing will be managed on the operation, including fencing/subdivision, pastures, stocking rate, livestock movement, forage species and use, conservation goals, and implementation steps. The applicable program standard will be in compliance with NRCS CPA 110 across all participating states.
Eligible Practice	A conservation or management practice approved for this project and implemented on eligible acres without duplicate payment from another USDA source for the same practice on the same acres. The core priority eligible practice for this program is NRCS 528: Prescribed Grazing/Grazing Management. Conditions for considering other practices are described under Eligible NRCS Conservation Practices in Section 7.
Network Support Funding	Funding expected to be provided to Grazing Champions for advanced network data sharing, cohort participation, training, mentoring, and support of Network Graziers.
Regional Grazing Champion supplement	An additional future funding pool to be made available for approximately 1 Grazing Champion per state who more broadly supports producer engagement, conservation practice implementation, improved market access, and participation in peer-to-peer learning networks, beyond just their assigned Network Graziers.

6. Eligibility Requirements & Qualifications

Requirements

Applicants must meet all requirements below. AFT may request documentation at application, pre-award, or payment review.

- Operate a beef production business in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee, or Mississippi.
    - North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee are tentatively eligible states. Eligibility for producers in these states depends on approval from NRCS. Producers in these states may apply, but awards cannot be made unless that approval is received.
- Have authority to apply for and enter into an agreement on behalf of the participating operation.
- Have FSA farm, tract, and field numbers.
- Complete Form AD-2047, Customer Data Worksheet, to establish or update the participant's Business Partner Record.
    - Be compliant with Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions.
- Certify Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation compliance through Form AD-1026.
- Not be participating to market beef in another USDA Advancing Markets for Producers project. Receiving other USDA funding for marketing other commodities under the USDA Advancing Markets for Producers program does not automatically make an applicant ineligible
- Not receive another USDA payment, including EQIP, for the same practice on the same acres proposed for this project. Receiving other USDA funding for different practices or acres does not automatically make an applicant ineligible.
- Not be any of the following:
    - American Farmland Trust staff member
    - American Farmland Trust board member
    - American Farmland Trust Navigator
    - A substantial contributor to American Farmland Trust (See definition below)
    - A family member of an American Farmland Trust staff member, board member, or substantial contributor (See definition below)

      Family member: defined as any sibling, spouse, parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, or great-grandchild
      Substantial contributor: defined as having given a contribution to American Farmland Trust of $5,000 or more
- Meet the USDA requirement that the participant is not a foreign person, meaning the participant is a U.S. citizen or a lawful alien possessing a valid I-551.

Applicants must commit to the following required activities:

- Be willing and able to participate at an advanced level in grazing, marketing, networking, mentorship, and data sharing.
- Be willing to implement at least one new eligible practice on acreage that is not already being paid for through EQIP, CSP, another USDA Advancing Markets for Producers project, or other federal funding source paying for the same practice on the same acres.
- Be willing to complete or update a Grazing Management Plan for the applicant's beef production business and prepare an implementation plan and budget as part of the program and with support from AFT.
- Be willing to participate in marketing activities, such as identifying market opportunities, sharing lessons learned from their marketing, exploring buyer requirements, and testing new approaches with other producers.
- Be willing to mentor and coordinate with other beef producers on practice implementation and market development.

Applicant certifications and verification

- Upload a current-year FSA Subsidiary Print and Farm Data Report with the application. AFT will use the Subsidiary Print and Farm Data Report to confirm the applicant's name, FSA farm records, AD-1026 certification, Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation compliance, and foreign-person status.
- Provide any other requested eligibility records, including ownership or signing-authority records and documentation of other funding.
- Provide an updated current-year FSA Subsidiary Print and Farm Data Report before payment in each subsequent crop year in which the participant will receive program funds.
- Cooperate with AFT's conflict-of-interest, duplicate-payment, and eligibility review before an award is issued.

Qualifications

Grazing Champions are advanced graziers and producer leaders who pilot implementation approaches and network connection values on their own operations and then share experiences, lessons learned, practical insights, and market opportunities with other producers. This grant program is competitive and selection will therefore consider the following qualifications. A strong applicant will demonstrate several of the following qualifications. Applicants do not need to have identical experience in every area.

- Experience developing and implementing grazing management plans and other advanced grazing management, or soil health-promoting conservation practices and systems.
- Practical knowledge that can be shared with other beef producers implementing grazing practices.
- Experience mentoring, teaching, coordinating, or sharing technical management and/or marketing skills and experience with other producers.
- Existing producer relationships that may support future network expansion for increased regional adoption of grazing practices, and premium marketing expansion.
- Experience exploring beef markets, marketing strategies, buyer requirements, or cooperative approaches.
- Willingness to use data and market-relevant information to improve the applicant's operation and strengthen the broader producer network.
- Willingness to provide feedback on pilot program tools and processes.

7. Expectations for the Grazing Champion's Own Operation

- Complete or update a Grazing Management Plan. AFT will provide templates, training, and support to Grazing Champions as they develop or update their own Grazing Management Plan.
- Develop a project implementation plan and match budget.
- Implement at least one new eligible conservation practice, with a focus on Prescribed Grazing/Grazing Management, NRCS Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) 528, if not already paid by another program to do so on the same acres.
- Work towards marketing sustainably produced beef, such as identifying and evaluating market opportunities.
- Enroll in the project-supported AgriWebb subscription, complete AgriWebb Academy, enter required information (see Section 9. Data, Reporting, and Records), and grant AFT the required data access. Producer cost of $4,200-4,400 is based on the 3-year (one-time) AFT discounted subscription package for enrolled project participants. This cost is covered by this grant and includes an added customer success package from AgriWebb not available through the regular subscription package. The final amount will vary slightly based on herd size.
- Enroll in the FieldVision application provided through The Soil Inventory Project (TSIP), enter required information (see Section 9. Data, Reporting, and Records), and grant AFT the required data access. Producer cost is $500 (one-time) and is covered by this grant.
- Provide required project information by communicated deadlines.
- Complete soil testing on 1-2 higher-performing fields of the producer's choice, and 1-2 lower-performing fields of the producer's choice. Producer cost is covered (reimbursed) by this grant. The producer has the option to collect soil

samples themselves or hire someone to collect. Tests will include pH, texture, SOC, wet aggregate stability, soil respiration, active carbon, and bioavailable nitrogen. If using a CEMA-216 qualified individual, this will contribute to qualifying enrollees for NRCS's Regenerative Pilot Program.
- Document work, required match (see Section 11. Match Requirements), and completed deliverables.
- Collect information required for project learning, program improvement, and USDA reporting.

Eligible NRCS Conservation Practices

All program participants must implement at least one new eligible NRCS conservation practice without duplicate federal payment for the same practice on the same acres. The core practice implemented in this program is expected to be Prescribed Grazing/Grazing Management (528). However, if a producer is already paid by federal programs to implement Prescribed Grazing (528) on all pasture acreage, then additional practices (such as Fence [382], Livestock Pipeline [516], Silvopasture [381], Feed Management [592], and others) can be considered in consultation with AFT staff.

In addition, this program will include training and support for producers looking to implement Soil Carbon Amendment (336) through biochar application, but adopting this practice is not required.

8. Expectations for Network Engagement and Mentorship

- Complete all required technical and mentor training, including recorded and live virtual training and a required two-day in-person event. Travel expenses are covered (reimbursed) by this grant.
- Share future application rounds with the Champion's network of producers to increase the size and success of the Beef Grazing Network to lay groundwork for the network's market opportunities. Network Graziers must apply and be accepted into the program.
- Mentor a minimum of four Network Graziers, with an average of eight graziers supported per champion. The network approach anticipates an average of four Graziers in the first mentoring year (starting in fall of 2027) and an average of four additional Graziers in the second mentoring year (starting in fall of 2028) per Champion. Final minimum, preferred, and maximum cohort sizes will be confirmed once the cohort of Grazing Champion mentors is selected and their self-determined capacities identified.
- Share practical and technical information that helps Network Graziers develop, improve, implement, and document their own grazing management plans and eligible practices.
- Coordinate AgriWebb and FieldVision use and provide appropriate peer support to assigned Network Graziers to ensure standards of practice implementation are met for the network, and to ensure their records meet the standards that buyers may require for premium pricing.
- Support the network generally and their supported Network Graziers in exploring enhanced marketing opportunities and sharing information, ideas, and opportunities for cooperation.
- Participate in the broader Champion cohort, complete ongoing training, and contribute experience to the larger Beef Grazing Network.
- Provide required mentorship and network deliverables (see additional detail in Section 10. Funding and Payment Structure)

Champions are not paid on an hourly basis, however, for planning purposes, AFT estimates that Champions will spend 50-60 hours total per Network Grazier supported on advising Network Graziers and networking. AFT will connect Grazing Champion applicants with Network Graziers in future years based on existing relationships, location, production type, capacity, and other relevant program considerations. Applicants are asked for the minimum, preferred, and maximum number of Graziers they are prepared to support.

9. Data, Reporting, and Records

All selected participants will be required to provide timely information needed for project management and USDA reporting. Data will be submitted via SurveyMonkey Apply, AgriWebb, and FieldVision.

- Farm operation and infrastructure, acreage, herd, forage, and grazing management information, including FSA field numbers where practices are applied.
- Practice implementation and Grazing Management Plan information.
- Marketing activities, animals or products sold, and prices received.
- Soil testing for 1-2 fields that are higher-performing and 1-2 fields that are lower performing. Tests include pH, texture, SOC, wet aggregate stability, soil respiration, active carbon, and bioavailable nitrogen. The producer has the option to collect soil samples themselves or hire someone to collect. If using a CEMA-216 qualified individual, this will contribute to qualifying enrollees for NRCS's Regenerative pilot program. AFT can help connect grantees with qualified individuals.
- Progress and final reports, surveys, and participant feedback.
- Receipts, invoices, photos, supplier letters, payroll or time records, and other documentation required for grant and match verification. Templates will be provided by AFT.

Data will be used for USDA reporting, creating insights useful to producers for future grazing management, and to prepare producers for meeting certain market standards, if desired. AFT will also use data to produce public reports and analyses, but these reports will anonymize or aggregate all individual data. Any producers interested in being featured in success stories, case studies, or similar impact materials will approve final publications in which they are featured.

Participants must agree to share their data with AFT, its pre-defined partners, regional Grazing Champions, and USDA. The project team will have full, non-anonymized access and will protect personally identifiable information by/according to policies and privacy protections described in the producer grant agreement, which will include USDA Section 1619 and partner data use policies. Any sharing of data outside of the above entities will be anonymized unless express permission is given by the producer. Participants will need to agree to AgriWebb and The Soil Inventory Project (TSIP; the developer of FieldVision) data use policies (AgriWebb's data policies can be found in their Customer Agreement; TSIP's data policies can be found in their Data Use Policy). Applicants with questions or concerns about the security of their data in SurveyMonkey Apply can find more information in SurveyMonkey's legal and privacy resources. Regional Grazing Champions will be assigned a group of participants to assist in data collection and must be given access to view both the AgriWebb and FieldVision data to help ensure participant compliance. Finally, participants' soil test results will be automatically entered into FieldVision, which is intended to be a public dataset. Outside of project-specific use, participants may choose to have their FieldVision data anonymized at the county, state, or regional level, or made available at the geolocated (individual farm) level. In return, participants will be able to see their soils benchmarked against other pastures and fields in their region, as well as dedicated analysis and insights provided by FieldVision.

Participants must keep all project records through December 31, 2031, and longer if AFT provides notice of litigation, an audit, an investigation, a claim, corrective action, or an extension of the project or record-retention period.

AFT will protect confidential and personally identifiable information and follow applicable SurveyMonkey Apply, AgriWebb, FieldVision, USDA Section 1619, partner data-use, and privacy requirements. AFT may conduct desk reviews, request additional documentation, or perform site visits.

10. Funding and Payment Structure

Program incentive payments will occur for implementation of practices on the Grazing Champion's own operation, advanced data collection and entry, and network support of Network Graziers to build a pool of beef produced to common premium marketable standards. Payments will be made when payment conditions have been met as laid out

below and may take approximately 90 days from completion and approval of necessary activity. Please note the timeline is based on a three-year plan which is pending approval from NRCS. Subject to change:

Payment #	Amount	Category	Payment condition	Expected timeline
1	$11,000	Implementation ($5,000) & advanced data collection ($6,000)	Completion of: AgriWebb Academy and purchase of AgriWebb subscription ($4,200-4,400 3-year discounted AFT package) FieldVision registration and purchase of FieldVision subscription ($500 one time) Initial data entry into AgriWebb, USDA-required data entry into FieldVision, and soil sampling Grazing Management Plan (training provided) Implementation plan and budget (template provided)* Inputs to a CPA-52 and brief report/survey	By April 2027
2	$9,000	Network support	Completion of: Online and in person Grazing Champion training Engagement in the online peer network platform Network development planning and feedback Market opportunity exploration Brief report/survey including feedback and expertise to inform AFT of barriers to success and recommend refinements to program design and data systems Provide leadership and contributions in preparation for establishing the producer-led marketing and grazing management networks that future participants will rely on for group-dependent economic benefits.	By June 2027
3	$9,000	Implementation	Implementation of approved plans, engagement with the project, and required USDA reporting.	By Sept 2027
4	$5,000	Implementation ($3,000) & advanced data collection ($2,000)	Documentation of all required deliverables, including a final implementation report, final implementation survey, final budget and required match documentation. Final data entry into FieldVision and AgriWebb.	As soon as Dec 2027, by June 2029
5	$1,000 per Network Grazier supported to enter the network	Network support	Network Grazier supported in joining and engaging with network (Round 1 onboarding: August – Dec 2027 and Round 2: August – Dec 2028). Grazier has enrolled, completed initial data entry, and engaged in virtual network and/or other activities of the network.	Rolling deadline every 6 months, starting in Dec 2027

			Grazing Champion network participation in and/or leadership of regular virtual meetings.	
6	$900 per Network Grazier supported to implement new practices	Network support	Network Grazier supported (Round 1 implementation: August 2027 – June 2028, and Round 2: August 2028 – June 2029) in GMP and other practice planning and implementation activities, and exploration of marketing premium beef, such as attending events and meetings about strategic aggregation, meeting new standards, or meeting buyer specifications, documenting and evaluating buyer options, demands and offerings, and developing and pursuing opportunities collaboratively. Grazier has completed a mid-way online check in form. Grazing Champion network participation in and/or leadership of regular virtual and selected in person meetings.	Rolling deadline every 6 months, starting in June 2028
7	$900 per Network Grazier that has finished program	Network support	Network Grazier has completed program requirements including final documentation of practice adoption and successes. Grazing Champion network participation in and/or leadership of regular virtual and selected in person meetings, and documentation of outcomes, lessons, and success stories via brief report/survey.	Rolling deadline every 6 months, starting in Dec 2028
Total	**$45,200-$67,600**	**Completion of all deliverables including advanced implementation and data sharing on own operation, mentoring 4-12 network graziers (2-6 added per year, total of $2,800/network grazier supported) and participating in the broader network on practice adoption and premium market access activities.**		

*The approved budget may include eligible labor and infrastructure, pasture improvements, forage seed, other conservation practices, equipment, management tools, software, planning or implementation services, training or certification fees, approved travel, soil testing, demonstrations, field activities, costs of hosting field days, marketing, market access, and other approved whole-farm viability activities.

Payment timing is subject to change. Those selected for the grant will be notified should timing of payments change significantly.

All program components are expected to be completed in the order listed (i.e. this is *not* an a la carte list of payments but rather the full, sequential set of expectations for all Grazing Champions). Assuming a Grazing Champion supports 8 Network Graziers, the total program compensation would be $56,400.

Approved Scope and Funding Restrictions

A cost or activity is eligible only when it is included in the AFT-approved scope and budget, occurs within the authorized performance period, and is supported by required documentation.

- Costs must be reasonable, necessary, allocable to the approved project, consistently treated, and adequately documented.
- The same cost may not be charged to more than one source or counted as both a grant expense and match.
- Grant and match costs must follow all applicable program, federal, procurement, travel, labor, equipment, and documentation requirements communicated by AFT.

Award and Payment Administration

- Participants must submit payment requests through the method specified by AFT and respond to requests for clarification or correction.
- Before issuing a payment, AFT will confirm that the participant has established FSA farm, tract, and field records; completed Form AD-2047; certified compliance through Form AD-1026; certified that they are not a foreign person or entity; and provided the current-year FSA Subsidiary Print and Farm Data Report required for that crop year.
- Selection does not guarantee payment of the maximum potential award or network-support amount. Own-operation implementation and basic data milestones total $17,000; additional network-support payments depend on the number of Network Graziers supported, collection of advanced data including soil samples, and completion of the applicable deliverables.

Tax reporting and Form 1099

Program payments may be taxable income to the participant. AFT will issue an IRS Form 1099 to any participant whose total reportable payments from AFT in a calendar year meet the applicable federal reporting threshold. Each participant is responsible for consulting their own tax advisor about the federal, state, and local tax treatment of program payments; AFT cannot provide tax advice.

Advance notice of future funding pools

Network Graziers (future pool)

AFT will select approximately 620 network graziers over two years, starting in the summer of 2027 to join the network, adopt grazing and other complementary practices, share data, and collaborate on market access activities. Awards are expected to range from $17,000-$25,000 per network grazier, depending on level of data sharing and reporting.

Regional Grazing Champion Supplement (future pool)

AFT intends to select approximately one Grazing Champion per state after September 2027 to serve as a Regional Grazing Champion. Regional Grazing Champions serve as trusted producer leaders who support producer engagement, conservation practice implementation to build a potential beef pool that meets documented common network standards, market opportunity documentation and evaluation across network, improved market access, and participation in peer-to-peer learning networks, beyond just their assigned Network Graziers. Through relationship building, coordination, and communication, Regional Grazing Champions will help Network Graziers throughout their state successfully adopt grazing management practices while strengthening regional grazing networks and market access, potentially in collaboration with other states' Regional Grazing Champions. Producers that have successfully delivered on their first year as Grazing Champions may apply to serve as a Regional Grazing Champion within their state and receive an anticipated annual supplemental payment of $10,000 in years 2 and 3 ($20,000 total) for fulfilling these expanded leadership, coordination, and network development responsibilities, which include:

1. Helping producers navigate project opportunities and connect with available technical and financial resources needed for successful conservation practice implementation.
2. Supporting technical information access and connectivity and highlighting implementation needs with Regional Leads and Technical Service Providers to assist the network's success.

3. Maintaining regular communication with grazing champions and network graziers in that Champion's state to foster network engagement, support high-quality practice implementation and documentation across the network, and advance market development opportunities.
4. Encouraging producers within that Champion's state to share feedback and recommendations with AFT regarding program design, data systems, implementation process, and emerging needs.
5. Supporting the development of effective producer networks that create long-term, group-based economic benefits for current and future network participants.
6. Helping producers in that Champion's state understand the project's data systems and ensure that practice and performance data are recorded to agreed-upon standards, positioning the network to meet buyer requirements and specifications.
7. Hosting, leading, or collaborating on field days, demonstrations, peer-learning exchanges in person and virtually, including on the Champion's own farm operation.

Marketing Network Supplement (future pool)

A future funding pool of approximately $500,000 will be made available competitively to both Grazing Champions and Network Graziers successfully engaging in the network to lead follow-up and development collaborations specifically built on identified market opportunities. This could include opportunity evaluation, and specific development, access coordination, implementation, and other marketing activities that promise to benefit the broader network's ability to sell premium beef and/or ecosystem services. The total awarded per producer and/or marketing group will depend on the scope of engagement and the number of potentially collaborating producers.

11. Match Requirement

Each participant is required to document or collaborate with AFT to document $16,000 in eligible non-federally funded match over the project performance period. Participants are not expected to be required to spend cash out of pocket to meet the match requirement, although that is an option. There are many individual and network-collaboration options for documenting match. This match provision is separate from the software purchases, travel expenses, soil testing, implementation expenses, and other costs required as part of the payment schedule under Section 10.

Eligible match categories:

- **Labor** including documented producer or operation staff time for project relevant activities such as training, planning, practice implementation, marketing, communication, coordination activities, and data and financial documentation. Labor is valued at $50 per hour.
- **Hired services** such as technical service providers, marketing consultants, trainers and similar costs associated with project-related planning, implementation, communication, marketing, and documentation of activities.
- **Operational costs** such as infrastructure (e.g. fencing/livestock water), pasture improvements, forage seed, equipment, management tools, software, processing, packaging, printing, labeling, whole-farm viability planning, and similar practice implementation and marketing related expenses.
- **Supplier or corporate discounts, buyer premiums** on sold beef, and other approved non-federal contributions connected to practice implementation or beef marketing activities. For corporate partners brought in by the producer, AFT will need to seek documentation of match at the source. AFT also expects to connect producers with pre-approved vendors that can provide match-eligible discounts.
- **Travel expenses and fees** to attend relevant trainings, field days, or conferences, beyond the 2-day in person training required by this program.
- **Additional soil sampling** beyond the baseline soil tests required by this program.
- **Expenses associated with hosting demonstrations, trials, field days, or sharing successes**

More about match guidance:

- Expenses are not eligible match if they were paid for by a federal source (e.g. this or another grant program).
    - Producers will create a simple budget (template provided) for both grant funding and match. Expenses will count only towards grant funding OR match. For example, a producer may plan to spend 400 hours total, but split this across grant funding and match funding.
- Submit a match plan and budget identifying the source, value, timing, and documentation method for each contribution, using AFT templates and approval procedures.
- Match funding is held to all of the same requirements as federal funding under this grant. For example, practice implementation documented as match must meet all NRCS practice standard requirements.
- Enrolled producers will report grant expenses and match requirements met and provide documentation using SurveyMonkey Apply.
- AFT will provide guidance, templates and forms, and consultation on eligible sources, valuation methods, and documentation requirements to enrolled producers.
- AFT will provide match approval letter templates and will assist in documentation processes with USDA for corporate-sourced match.
- Obtain advance approval for corporate contributions, supplier discounts, buyer premiums, third-party services, or other contributions that require USDA review.
- AFT may reject unsupported or ineligible match and may require a revised plan or other corrective action.

Final eligible sources, valuation methods, forms, and documentation requirements will be included as guidance during the budgeting exercise prior to Payment #1.

Match examples:

- **Example using labor for the entire match:** 320 hours total at $50/hour spent on grazing system implementation, marketing, coordination, and sharing successes with other producers. This is equivalent to about 3 hours per week over two years.
- **Example of grant implementation time and supplier discounts:** A producer could satisfy the match requirement with $3,000 in supplier discounts for a 20% discount on 60 virtual fence collars at a MSRP of $250 each plus $10,000 in time managing the grazing system and $3,000 in time marketing sustainably grazed beef valued at the rate of $50/hour.
- **Example of grant implementation time and supplier discounts and premium price:** A producer could satisfy the match requirement with $3,000 in supplier discounts for forage seed, movable watering and temporary fencing, $6,000 in premium price paid by buyers (for example $75/head x 40 head x 2 years) plus $7,000 in time managing the grazing system and marketing sustainably grazed beef valued at the rate of $50/hour.

12. Application, Selection, and Implementation Process

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis after an initial review start date of 11/30/26, with a firm final cutoff of 1/31/27. This enables the selected cohort of Grazing Champions to do key portions of onboarding together.

Application and Eligibility Screening

The applicant will need to provide the following information in their application:

- Applicant and farm or ranch business information.
- Location, FSA farm and field number status, and Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation compliance. Applicant will be required to obtain and upload a Subsidiary Print and Farm Data Report from their FSA office.
- Beef operation, production system, and grazing management experience.
- Experience with grazing management plans and eligible advanced practices.

- Existing USDA, EQIP, cost-share, or AMP participation, including funded practices and acres. This will be used for assessing eligibility and qualifications, ensuring that proposed practices are additional and that we can document that there is no duplicate payment. It is not required that producers have enrolled in any of these programs to be eligible. Participation in certain programs (such as marketing beef with another AMP project) may make the producer ineligible for this program.
- Marketing, coordination, training, and mentorship experience.
- Existing producer networks and potential reach.
- Minimum, preferred, and maximum number of Network Graziers the applicant is prepared to support.
- Readiness to participate in training, software use, data sharing, soil testing, reporting, and required meetings.

How to Apply

To apply to become a Grazing Champion, applicants will need to:

1. Review this RFA and confirm that they can meet the eligibility and participation requirements.
2. Gather the information listed in the Application Checklist (see below).
3. Submit the application through AFT's online application management portal, SurveyMonkey Apply. Click here to go to the application. The application can be started and completed later. For information about how SurveyMonkey Apply protects your data, see SurveyMonkey's legal and privacy resources.
4. Submit application as soon it is completed. Applicants are encouraged to submit earlier than the final deadline of 11:59pm ET January 31, 2027, as applications will be reviewed and awarded on a rolling basis.
5. Respond promptly if AFT requests clarification or schedules a phone conversation.
6. If selected for the award, complete the required training, planning, and documentation stages by the communicated deadlines.

Application platform	SurveyMonkey Apply
Review stage	November 30, 2026 through January 31, 2027
Final cutoff date	January 31, 2027
Questions deadline	Questions asked after January 15, 2027 are not guaranteed to be answered by the application deadline
Contact email	BeefGrazingNetwork@farmland.org

Application Checklist

☐ Farm or ranch business and contact information.

☐ Project location map and FSA farm and field number ("Subsidiary Print" and "Farm Data Report" obtained from Farm Service Agency office)

☐ Beef operation and grazing system quantitative numbers

- Annual head of cattle, acres grazed, level of subdivision (number of paddocks/fields), average herd movement frequency, length of grazing season (number of days in the year animals are using grazed forage as part or all of their diet).

☐ Narrative descriptions (suggested word count in parentheses) of:

- Beef operation and grazing system (250-500 words).
- Grazing management and conservation practice experience (250-500 words).
- Mentorship, training, coordination, marketing, and producer-network experience (150-350 words).

- Plan for supporting Network Graziers (150-350 words).
- Existing producer relationships and regional reach (up to 400 words).
- Current marketing approach (up to 400 words).
- Experience exploring premium, direct, wholesale, cooperative, aggregated, or other market opportunities (up to 500 words).
- Opportunities the applicant sees for enabling collaboration for improved market access (up to 500 words).

☐ Existing grazing management plan, conservation plan, or maps, if available.

☐ Current, approved, pending, or prior USDA, EQIP, AMP, or other cost-share funding by practice and acre.

☐ Minimum, preferred, and maximum number of Network Graziers the applicant is prepared to support.

☐ Readiness to participate in training, software, data sharing, soil testing, reporting, and match documentation.

Review and Selection

AFT expects to review applications for eligibility, completeness, and qualifications across pre-determined criteria. AFT may conduct a phone conversation with an applicant before making a selection decision. After baseline eligibility and competitiveness is established, competitive applications will be scored using the criteria below, which reflect AFT's current review plan. AFT may adjust the criteria, for example to ensure the cohort has the geographic and production-system balance the project needs. If a material change is made, AFT will update this RFA and post the revised criteria and weights before applying them to applications under review.

Scoring Criteria
Depth and relevance of grazing management and conservation practice experience.
Ability to complete planning, training, data sharing, reporting, and implementation requirements.
Relevant experience supporting other producers informed by their interest and needs
Strength of producer relationships and ability to contribute to a regional network.
Marketing knowledge/experience and willingness to explore market opportunities.
Proposed number of Network Graziers and realistic capacity to support them. Supporting 8 or more Network Graziers (4 in each year) is preferred.
Geographic and production-system representation needed for the project.

Onboarding, Planning, Training, and Project Documentation

Selection is conditional until the participant completes AFT's award setup and receives an executed agreement and written authorization to proceed.

Selected Grazing Champions must complete the following award setup and onboarding requirements:

- Complete required award agreement and submit requested identification verification and payment documentation, including W-9 and vendor registration.
- Maintain a bank account in the award recipient's name. The account may be a farm, business, or personal account, but the recipient name must be consistent across the application, award agreement, FSA paperwork, IRS Form W-9, bank account documentation, and all other payment records.
- Complete the requirements of Payment #1 (see Section 10).
- Complete any additional forms required before implementation may begin.

Approval, Implementation, and Final Confirmation

For the implementation of practices funded by the Grazing Champion's grant, the following are required:

- Receive written approval to proceed after required USDA and program documentation is complete.
- Confirm that the final practices, acres, budget, and timeline match the approved project.
- Request approval and document the reason for any material change before proceeding.
- Notify AFT promptly of delays, changes in eligibility, other funding, ownership or control changes, or circumstances that may affect performance.
- Implement approved activities and maintain required records.
- Submit photos, receipts, supplier documentation, match records, software updates, soil sampling information, and other required evidence and/or required surveys and progress narratives prior to each incentive payment allocation.
- Complete reporting, survey, and deliverable documentation prior to each incentive payment allocation.
- Resolve questioned costs, missing records, or incomplete deliverables before final payment.

Anticipated Timeline*

Milestone	Anticipated timing
RFA opens	Mid November, 2026
First-round reviews	November 30, 2026 through Application cutoff
Application cutoff	January 31, 2027
Selection notifications	December 2026 through February 2027
Virtual Champion training	March-April; Eight weekly 2-hour training events
Planning and onboarding materials due	April 2027
In-person regional training	Early summer 2027
Approval to implement	After required project and USDA review, including CPA-52 where applicable, anticipated June 2027
Year 1 implementation complete	September 2027
Network Grazier Request for Applications and integration into Network	Network Grazier Round 1 onboarding and implementation: August 2027 – June 2028 Network Grazier Round 2 onboarding and implementation: August 2028 – June 2029.

***This timeline may change pending NRCS approval of the project amendment. Applicants will be notified of any significant changes.**

13. Additional Terms

- Submitting an application does not guarantee selection or funding.
- AFT may request clarification, supporting documentation, or a phone conversation.
- AFT may negotiate project scope, budget, deliverables, schedule, number of Network Graziers, or other award terms before issuing an agreement.
- Applicants must provide complete and accurate information and disclose other funding connected to proposed practices and acres.
- No applicant may receive duplicate federal payment for the same practice on the same acres.
- Applicants may not begin grant-funded work or incur costs in expectation of payment until written authorization is provided.
- Final obligations will be governed by the award agreement and applicable USDA and project requirements.
- AFT may revise, postpone, or cancel this opportunity based on approvals, available funding, or program needs.

Corrective action, withholding, termination, and repayment

If AFT identifies missing documentation, work outside the approved scope, a missed deliverable, an ineligible cost, or another compliance problem, AFT will provide written notice describing the issue, the required correction, and the deadline.

- Participants will generally have 30 days to correct a problem. AFT may extend the period when the participant is making a good-faith effort.
- AFT may hold payments while an issue is being corrected and resume payments after confirming that the issue is resolved.
- If an issue is not corrected, AFT may disallow costs, reduce or withhold payments, revise the approved scope or budget, or end the award.
- AFT may end an award without a correction period if a participant provides false or misleading information, receives prohibited duplicate federal payment, or no longer meets eligibility requirements.
- If USDA reduces, suspends, or ends project funding, AFT may reduce or end awards. Participants may keep payments already earned for completed and documented deliverables.
- A participant may withdraw by notifying AFT in writing. When an award ends early, payments earned for completed and documented deliverables may be retained; funds paid for incomplete deliverables must be returned unless AFT agrees otherwise in writing.
- AFT may require repayment for unallowable or unsupported costs, work not completed as documented, or duplicate federal payments. Repayment obligations continue after the award ends and through later AFT or USDA review or audit.
- A participant may request written review of an AFT decision within 15 days of the notice. The award agreement will contain the controlling remedy, repayment, and termination terms.

14. Questions and Accessibility

Questions may be sent to beefgrazingnetwork@farmland.org. Applicants who need reasonable accommodation, such as translation support, may contact beefgrazingnetwork@farmland.org with their request. The grants and program team monitors this inbox and will route messages to the appropriate AFT staff member when needed. Applicants may therefore receive a response from another @farmland.org email address.

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