American Farmland Trust

Frequently Asked Questions

Beef Grazing Network Grazing Champions Application

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Link to application

Questions about this grant opportunity

1. What is the main role of the Grazing Champions within this project?

As a "Grazing Champion" you will help us pilot the project's approaches in the first year and help steer improvements needed by engaging in the following:

- Conservation planning on your farm
- Advanced training on conservation practices and network building approaches
- Further improving on your grazing management and/or implementing complementary conservation practices on your land
- Exploring market opportunities collaboratively
- Data collection and sharing to generate insights for the network

In the second and third years, you will support and mentor your peer producers to do the same for their own operations. The project is expected to work with about 80 Grazing Champions who will support about 620 producers or "Network Graziers" in improving grazing and complementary practices and exploring market opportunities that enable the network to gain increased marketing access through learning and coordination among producers.

2. What are the financial incentives I can expect if I am awarded this grant?

You can expect a 3-year grant award (range between $45,000 and $67,000) to:

- Implement grazing practices, conduct data collection, and explore market opportunities within your own operation and collaboratively learn and share with the network.
- Support network graziers that join the network later in grazing practice adoption and exploring collaborative market access and premium or discount opportunities (total grant amount will vary depending on the number of producers you support).

You may also see improvements in your soil health, resulting in improved average daily gain and carrying capacity. You may also see economic benefits from marketing through group collaboration, including potentially accessing standard industry premiums or sustainability-linked premiums.

3. Are there additional, non-monetary benefits to participating?

You can expect various other benefits including:

- Access to AgriWebb and FieldVision (farm management software) that will serve to help you measure, document, and gain insights about your grazing practices and opportunities for adjustments that may improve your economic outcomes.
- Access to AFT-provided technical assistance to implement grazing improvements, biochar implementation, soil sampling, and more.
- Enhanced marketing and networking opportunities with fellow producers both in person and through a virtual peer-network platform.
- Discounts on supplies such as fencing and watering from sponsoring industry partners providing discounts to the AFT network of producers

4. When can I apply for this grant and when should I expect to hear back?

The window of application is expected to open on November 12, 2026, and remain open until January 31, 2027. The selection of Grazing Champions will be conducted on a rolling basis, so selection notifications are expected to start in late November 2026 and continue through early February 2027. This is a competitive grant opportunity, and the earlier you apply the better, as the application will close once all Grazing Champion funding has been awarded.

5. If awarded a Grazing Champion Grant, when should I expect to receive payment?

During Year 1 of the program, incentives will be disbursed in three (3) phases, triggered by completion of the required activities in April, June, and September. Payments may take approximately 90 days from completion and approval of necessary activity. For a complete and detailed explanation of deliverables and the payment timetable, please refer to section 10 "Funding and Payment Structure" in the Request for Applications.

6. **What if I experience a technical problem with the application portal?**

For technical issues, use the help feature in SurveyMonkey Apply. Select the information (i) icon in the top-right corner of the application portal, then select “Contact support.” Choose “SurveyMonkey Apply” as the product and select “Get Started.” Describe the problem to the support assistant and follow the prompts for help. Include the error message, the steps you were taking, and screenshots if available. Applications must be submitted through the online portal; emailed or mailed applications will not be accepted. Do not assume that a technical problem extends the application deadline.

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Questions about eligibility

7. Does my farm need to be located in a specific geographic area or state to be eligible to apply?

Yes, any producer engaged in beef cattle production and located in the following states are eligible to apply and participate: Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Inclusion of North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee is pending approval from USDA.

8. What does "pending approval from USDA" mean for me if I am in North Carolina, Kentucky, or Tennessee and am considering applying?

American Farmland Trust has requested approval for these states and anticipates that we will receive approval before we execute grant agreements with chosen applicants. Grant agreements will not be able to be executed with producers from North Carolina, Kentucky, or Tennessee until formal approval is received. If you decide to apply, we will notify you by email once we have received approval from USDA.

9. What are the main eligibility requirements to apply for this grant?

- To be actively engaged in beef cattle production with **advanced grazing experience** located in one of the states listed above.
- Be willing to implement at least one new eligible practice on your land that is not already being funded by another federal program on the same acres.
- Have or obtain FSA farm and field numbers, and submit an FSA subsidiary print and farm data report (See Question No. 10).
- Be willing to complete or update your Grazing Management Plan to reflect any new practice(s) compliant with NRCS practice standards, and document your progress.
- Be willing to share your experience through peer-to-peer mentorship and work collaboratively to identify marketing opportunities.

For a full list of eligibility requirements, please consult the Request for Applications (RFA).

10. How can I obtain Farm Service Agency (FSA) farm and field numbers?

Your farm needs to be registered with FSA to participate in any government funded program. If your farm has not been registered before, make an appointment with your local FSA office (find your office here) and bring a) proof of identity, b) tax identification, c) proof of land ownership or lease agreement and d) any business documents. You will review these documents with FSA staff and fill out a few forms. After this appointment, you will get your farm and field numbers in a few weeks.

You will need to submit proof of this process to AFT via **a subsidiary print and farm data report,** which you can request from your FSA office. More detailed information can be found in this document: Getting Started with the USDA FSA.

11. What qualifies as advanced grazing experience?

After complying with all basic requirements, Grazing Champions will be selected based on:

- Experience with implementing grazing management plans or other soil health related practices
- Experience providing mentorship or technical assistance to other producers
- Leadership and strong relationships among their fellow producers
- Experience identifying and pursuing new marketing opportunities

12. Can I apply for a Grazing Champion Grant if I am already participating in another USDA Advancing Markets for Producers project?

Possibly – it depends on some important caveats.

- You cannot participate in two USDA AMP grants for marketing beef.
- You cannot be paid by multiple AMP grants (or other federal sources, see below) to implement the same practice on the same acres.

But, you could, for example, sign up with this program for grazing and marketing beef, and sign up with a different program for cover crops and marketing corn grain or vegetables or for implementing agroforestry plantings and marketing agroforestry-based commodities other than beef that might be produced from silvopasture forage. If you have specific scenario questions, please get in touch.

13. What if I receive other federal funding from programs such as USDA – EQIP?

You could still be eligible for this program, as long as the funding you receive **is not for the same practice on the same acres of land**. In other words, if you are implementing a different practice with this grant on the same land, you are eligible. Or, if you are implementing the same practice but in a different piece of land, you are eligible.

14. Which conservation practices are eligible?

The core conservation practice implemented in this program is expected to be **Prescribed Grazing/Grazing Management (528)**. In consultation with AFT staff, alternative eligible practices may be funded only if the producer already applies Prescribed Grazing/Grazing Management (528) on all pasture acres. These other practices include Fence (382), Livestock Pipeline (516), Silvopasture (381), Feed Management (592) or others. This project will also include training and support for Soil Carbon Amendment or Biochar (336).

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Further questions about your role as a Grazing Champion

15. What are the expected responsibilities of a Grazing Champion within one's own operation?

- Complete or update a **Grazing Management Plan** (See Question No. 15), implement NRCS 528 or another eligible practice, along with a project implementation plan and **match requirement** (See Question No. 19).
- Enroll in AgriWebb and FieldVision applications, and complete the required training. See Question 20 for more information on these applications.
- Complete the required soil testing at your farm.
- Document all your work and practices, and submit updates and necessary reports to AFT via SurveyMonkey portal by set deadlines.

16. What are the expected responsibilities of a Grazing Champion in regard to other producers?

- Complete all required training provided by AFT, including (1) 2-day in-person event plus virtual trainings throughout the first year.
- Share information about this program with your producer networks.
- Mentor a minimum of four producers or "Network Graziers" on their own grazing management plans and implementation. This includes supporting producers' engagement in network, data entry and sharing, documentation and reporting. AFT estimates that you may spend approximately 50-60 hours supporting each of your Network Graziers. The first mentoring year is expected to start in the fall 2027, and the second year in fall 2028.
- Provide support to your group of Network Graziers on the use of AgriWebb and FieldVision.
- Support your network by exploring marketing opportunities to achieve network deliverables.
- Participate in a network of other Grazing Champions to share best practices.
- Complete all required reporting via SurveyMonkey portal by set deadlines.

17. What is a Grazing Management Plan?

It is 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.

18. What are the market coordination and marketing expectations of a Grazing Champion?

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 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.

Each producer will work towards marketing sustainably produced beef, such as identifying and evaluating market opportunities and maintaining records that would facilitate market premiums. Producers are not required to enter into a certification, although that is an option. In addition, Grazing Champions will support their supported Network Graziers in exploring enhanced marketing opportunities and sharing information, ideas, and opportunities for cooperation.

19. What is the match requirement and how do I fulfill it?

Each Grazing Champion is required to document $16,000 in non-federally funded match. You are **not** required to spend money to fulfill this requirement. You can fulfill this requirement through various in-kind contributions as well. Match can be contributed from sources such as the following:

- Labor that you or your staff put into the project activities, calculated at $50 per hour
- Operational costs you incur for the project such as equipment use, infrastructure (like fencing, livestock water), pasture improvements, software and management tools, processing, packaging, labeling and other related expenses
- Supplier or corporate discounts, buyer premiums on sold beef (in collaboration with AFT, these will need approval with USDA)
- Expenses associated with hosting or attending project related farm demonstrations, field days, trainings, workshops, or conferences, or with hosting trials
- Any hired services associated with the project implementation, additional soil sampling
- Travel expenses and fees related to the project

For a more detailed explanation of match requirements and examples, please see the full Request for Applications.

20. Who covers the costs of AgriWebb and FieldVision applications?

Grazing Champions will cover the use of these applications through their incentive payments, but you won't have to pay for these upfront or out of pocket. AFT has negotiated a deferred invoicing for Grazing Champions that will allow you to use the platforms to enter data upon completion of the necessary training. Champions will have received their first incentive payment prior to the deferred invoice date to cover these costs. The costs are approximately $4,200-4,400 for AgriWebb and $500 for FieldVision.

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