

Protecting the Great Lakes Through a Farm Navigator Network

2022 Navigator Guidelines

Contacts

PROJECT LEAD

Ashley Brucker
614-696-6623
abrucker@farmland.org

NEW YORK

Molly Johnston-Heck
315-565-1538
mjohnston-heck@farmland.org

MICHIGAN/OHIO

Julie Platz
614-721-1631
jplatz@farmland.org

WISCONSIN

Angie Doucette
414-285-3623
adoucette@farmland.org



OVERVIEW

Protecting the Great Lakes Through a Farm Navigator Network, a project of American Farmland Trust (AFT), seeks to support the ecological health of the Great Lakes while sustaining a viable agricultural economy and communities. To achieve this, AFT is organizing a three-year training and networking program for organizations with service providers in Great Lakes Watershed counties in New York, Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin that are working with farmers and farmland owners on accessing or transferring farmland and adopting conservation practices.

These organizations will serve as Navigators, devoting staff capacity to operate as “case managers” for farmers and farmland owners and offering tailored support through an innovative, holistic approach to help transform farm-based stewardship and protection as farmland transitions from one generation to the next. Ultimately, this project will improve Great Lakes water quality by bringing hundreds of new farmers and landowners onto the land who will be deeply committed to conservation and regenerative farming systems. In addition, the project will simultaneously ensure longevity through planned farm transfers from aging farmland owners to new and next generation, beginning, and underserved farmers interested in implementing high-impact, long-term conservation practices.

Thanks to support from the Great Lakes Protection Fund, *Protecting the Great Lakes Through a Farm Navigator Network* will organize and train up to 30 professionals Navigators to advise, train, and support:

- *Women farmers and landowners* to access land and develop and implement conservation or farm transfer plans.
- *Senior farmers and landowners* to implement conservation options, such as agricultural conservation easements, within their farm transfer planning.
- *Beginning farmers*, particularly those underserved, to secure land with an articulated land ethic, or commitment to conservation, tied to their personal and business goals.

Too often individuals in these groups are faced with complex problems and don't know the best places to look for help. Navigators can support these audiences in identifying their goals, assessing options, and connecting them with programs, resources, or technical experts to accomplish their goals.

Protecting the Great Lakes Through a Farm Navigator Network is made possible through the generous support of the Great Lakes Protection Fund.

NAVIGATOR PROGRAM BENEFITS AND EXPECTATIONS

Over the course of three years, selected Navigators will receive group training and individual coaching on approaches and tools that have proven effective in addressing land access for farmers, farm transfers from senior to beginning farmers, empowering women farmers and landowners, and growing adoption of conservation practices.

Navigators will participate in peer-to-peer learning with other participants through an annual in-person navigator meeting and bi-monthly virtual networking calls. These continuing education opportunities will address topics such as best practices for working with farmers and

landowners, including those that are underserved. As possible, Navigators will also be showcased in mainstream and social media.

Navigators will receive \$7,500 per year for three years (\$22,500 total) for 75 hours per year (225 hours total) of activities that include participation in the aforementioned trainings, delivery of related support services to farmers and landowners, and completion of evaluation components.

Payment will be dependent on the completion of a Memorandum of Understanding by the 501(c)3 grant recipient, government entity or fiscal sponsor. No funds will be delivered without a signed MOU.

Navigators are expected to complete the following evaluation activities:

- Interim Check-in (Spring 2023 and 2024): Participate in a conversation with an AFT staff member to check in on progress and address any challenges.
- Annual Report (December 2023 and 2024): Provide a short, written report on progress, challenges, and needs to be successful as well as impact metrics including:
 - Number of farmers and landowners that received training or one-on-one support from Navigator.
 - Number of farmers transferred with support from Navigator.
 - Number of transferred acres committed to conservation practices.
 - Type of conservation practices adopted by farmers and landowners.
- Final Report (January 2026): Provide a final written report documenting activities that engage with land seekers and farmland owners directly connected to this program, including the metrics described above.

WHO SHOULD APPLY

Prospective Navigators must be a 501(c)3 non-profit organization or have a fiscal sponsor.

Applicants should engage in activities within the Great Lakes watershed that:

- Support, expand, or improve services to help farmers access and landowners transfer farmland;
- Support, expand, or improve services to help farmers implement water quality and ag stewardship practices; and/or
- Improve the organization's capacity to increase the likelihood, ability and numbers of women and people of color accessing resources to support long-term land ownership and/or conservation practice implementation.

Services provided to new and beginning farmers and senior farmers and landowners to support these activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Direct technical assistance on personal and business goals and financial readiness to secure access to or transfer farmland;
- Support efforts that reduce language barriers, legal obstacles, and ingrained systems of oppression for Black, Indigenous and farmers of color;
- Connect farmers and/or farmland owners with soil health specialists, attorneys, lenders, business consultants or other professional service providers;

- Advise farmers and landowners on topics such as farm leasing, determining farm rental rates, preparing to secure farm financing, using conservation practices, and farm transfer planning;
- Support farmers and non-farming landowners in evaluating properties and their appropriateness for different agricultural enterprises and conservation practices;
- Support the building of relationships and interpersonal networks between land seekers and landowners through activities such as facilitating in-person meetings and gatherings;
- Offer in-person or virtual trainings on aforementioned and/or similar topics for farmers and landowners.

Applicants must operate in at least one county within the Great Lakes Watershed. For a full list of applicable counties, please see Attachment A.

TIMELINE

2022: October 26 – November 23: Navigator Applications Open
December: Accepted Applicants Announced

2023: January: Virtual Kick-Off Meeting
January: Navigator MOUs Due and First Payment Submitted
February: In-Person Training (Tentative: Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
March – December: Bi-Monthly (5) Virtual Trainings

2024: January: Second Payment
February: In-person Training February
March – December: Bi-Monthly (5) Virtual Trainings

2025: January: Third and Final Payment
February: In-person Training
March – December: Bi-monthly (5) Virtual Trainings
Final Grant report due January 2026

*Applications must be received by 5pm on **Wednesday, November 23**. Please submit applications electronically at www.surveymonkey.com/r/GLPFNavigatorApplication.*

ATTACHMENT A

Qualifying States	Qualifying Counties		
Michigan	All Counties		
New York	Allegany Cattaraugus Cayuga Chautauqua Chemung Clinton Cortland Erie Essex Franklin Genesee	Hamilton Herkimer Jefferson Lewis Livingston Madison Monroe Niagara Oneida Onondaga	Ontario Orleans Oswego Schuyler Steuben St. Lawrence Tompkins Wayne Wyoming Yates
Ohio	Allen Ashland Ashtabula Auglaize Crawford Cuyahoga Defiance Erie Fulton Geauga Hancock Hardin	Henry Huron Lake Lorain Lucas Marion Medina Mercer Ottawa Paulding Portage Putnam	Richland Sandusky Seneca Shelby Stark Summit Trumbull Van Wert Williams Wood Wyandot
Wisconsin	Adams Ashland Bayfield Brown Calumet Columbia Dodge Door Douglas Florence Fond du Lac Forest Green Lake	Iron Kenosha Kewaunee Langlade Manitowoc Marathon Marinette Marquette Menominee Milwaukee Oconto Oneida	Outagamie Ozaukee Portage Racine Shawano Sheboygan Vilas Washington Waukesha Waupaca Waushara Winnebago