

FAQs for Growing Equity Applicants

The Growing Equity Partnership seeks to expand access to business technical assistance (BTA) among underserved farmers and ranchers, including socially disadvantaged, limited resource, LGBTQ+, and veteran farmers, as well as farms that are small and mid-sized, serve local and regional markets, and are in impoverished areas.

The Growing Equity Partnership is funded by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) with funds allocated by the American Rescue Plan Technical Assistance Investment Program (ARPTAIP). All partners will be expected to adhere to the tracking and reporting requirements laid out in the Growing Equity Partnership Agreement.

When is the application due?

- [11:59 PM EDT on August 31, 2023.](#)

How much funding is available for an organization?

- [\\$20,000 per year for two years, with a two-year renewal option at \\$20,000 per year. So potentially \\$80,000 over four years.](#)

What can the funding be used for?

- [The funding can be used for staff and operational expenses involved in providing business technical assistance to underserved farmers and ranchers.](#)

Over what timeframe must the funding be used?

- [October 2023- August 2026](#)

When will the decision be announced about applications?

- [September 31, 2023. Successful applicants will at that time also receive a Growing Equity Partnership Agreement to be signed by the organization to accept the award and partner responsibilities.](#)

How and when will the funding be distributed?

- [The funding will be distributed as follows: The first \\$20,000 will be provided once the partner has completed and signed the Growing Equity Partnership Agreement. The second \\$20,000 payment will be provided the same month of the following year. If the partner's contract is renewed, the third \\$20,000 installment will be sent upon contract renewal, and the fourth payment will be provided the same month of the following year.](#)

Do partners have to reapply for funding each year?

- [No, a Growing Equity Partnership Agreement may be renewed after two years for another two years if amenable to the partner and to AFT.](#)

What happens if an applicant does not fulfill the terms of the Partnership Agreement or elects not to continue?

- If a partner does not fulfill the terms of the agreement, the partner may be asked to reimburse the funding it received. If the failure to fulfill agreement terms occurs in the first two years, the partner will also not receive a renewal. A partner may also choose not to renew its agreement.

What deliverables and reporting will be required of partners?

- Partners will be required to track and report the following basic information with respect to their engagement with underserved producers:
 - Number of producers who received information about USDA programs;
 - Number of producers who received technical assistance to assist them with understanding and, if interested, in applying to USDA programs;
 - Number of producers who received substantive and specialized technical assistance on key topics to increase farm or ranch viability;
 - Demographic information of producers (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, geographic location).
- Partners will also be asked to track and report impact where practical. Partners will have an opportunity to propose specific impact metrics depending on the type of technical assistance the partner provides to producers. Potential metrics may include:
 - Increase in producer gross or net income;
 - Increase in jobs associated with a farm or ranch;
 - Changes in business management skills;
 - Progress toward securing land ownership or resolving heirs' property issues;
 - Changes in USDA program participation, or USDA grants or loans received.

What time commitments are envisioned for partners as part of the peer learning cohort?

- Participating partners will be expected to attend two National Farm Viability Conferences, in 2024 and 2026. Stipends will be made available to cover travel costs and registration fees.
- Partners will also be expected to participate in up to seven networking calls per year. Partners will play a significant role in determining the discussion content for these networking calls.

What is the appropriate job role or experience level for partner staff who might participate?

- Staff appropriate for this role will be those whose role within the partner organization or agency is to provide some type of business technical assistance directly to underserved producers.

What is the definition of underserved farmers for the purposes of this project?

- For the purposes of this project, underserved is defined as: socially disadvantaged, limited resource, LGBTQ+, and veteran farmers, as well as farms that are small and mid-sized, serve local and regional markets, and are located in impoverished areas.

Who can I contact with questions?

- For questions, please contact Dr. Courtney Owens Southeast Regional Director with American Farmland Trust. Phone: (859) 242-7153. Email: cowens@farmland.org