



Land Transfer Navigator Program Supporting Transfer and Access on Agricultural Lands > GRANT GUIDELINES <

PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

As the average age of farmers, ranchers, and agricultural landowners continues to rise, the working land they steward is at a moment of seismic transition. An estimated 40% of agricultural land is projected to change hands by 2035, and this point of ownership transfer is when agricultural land is most vulnerable to development. Farm and ranch transfers are complicated and take specific skills and knowledge to navigate; this is especially true for the increasing number of farm and ranch transfers that are not to family relatives, but to unrelated younger and more diverse producers. Successful land transfers are implemented over time, by building relationships within families and between diverse land seekers and landowners.

Agricultural land trusts, public Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) programs, and other entities can play an important role in helping landowners navigate farm transfer and succession in a way that keeps farmland in farming and creates new land access opportunities for next generation producers. To help build the capacity of agricultural land protection entities to assist landowners in this way, American Farmland Trust (AFT), in partnership with USDA-NRCS, has launched the [Land Transfer Navigator](#) program. To support retiring landowners *and* the next generation of farmers and ranchers, the program will grow the capacity and skills of agricultural land protection professionals (**Navigators**) from across the country to dramatically increase the transfer of farm and ranch lands to the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

In addition to building a cohort of Navigators within the agricultural land protection community, this program will:

- Build regional networks of service providers including attorneys, appraisers, real estate agents, land trusts, financial planners, and lenders to help move the transfer of land forward.
- Provide farmers, ranchers, and landowners microgrants to implement land transfer plans.
- Create an online Farm and Ranch Transfer Resource Hub, a one-stop shop of online resources to help owners transfer their land to new producers, available through the Farmland Information Center.
- Create a national Farm Link Finder with an inventory of existing programs
- Highlight the role of agricultural conservation easements in the transfer process.
- Elevate farm and ranch transfer stories to support people navigating the process.

Beginning in 2024 and concluding in September 2027, AFT will provide Navigators with training, skill development, and peer-to-peer learning along with technical and financial assistance so they may:

- Assist farmers, ranchers, and landowners in planning their future and the future of the land they steward and addressing their specific needs at critical transition points. By providing coaching and technical assistance to those who are considering transfer options or beginning the transfer

process, Navigators can help to mitigate agricultural land loss and keep agricultural land in agriculture.

- Support a diverse, new generation of farmers and ranchers looking to gain access to land by facilitating connections between landowners and land seekers.
- Engage in impact measurement and outreach to evaluate and promote the work.

For the full program timeline see Appendix A.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS & AWARD AMOUNT

AFT seeks applications from land trusts, public PACE programs (state or county), and other entities from across the U.S. that hold easements on land protected through USDA’s Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), the predecessor program to the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE). According to the list of FRPP easement holders provided to us by NRCS, your organization holds at least one FRPP-funded easement.

Entities must be interested in working with landowners and producers to encourage farm and ranch transfers, succession planning, and land access. With input on broader program goals from USDA-NRCS and a National Advisory Committee, AFT has developed Navigator criteria and will select 35 eligible entities to participate. Collectively, entities will represent geographic and demographic diversity.

This is a competitive application process. Priority will be given to applicants that meet one or more of the following criteria as expressed in the [application](#):

- Demonstrated interest in advancing the transfer of agricultural land
- Significant number of easements that protect land supporting an active farm or ranch operation, or significant agricultural acreage (e.g., cropland, pasture, rangeland) under easement
- Experience, or demonstrated interest, in supporting next generation farmers, including historically underserved producers.
- Experience, or demonstrated interest, in supporting landowners plan for transfer or succession
- Commitment to participating in four years of ongoing learning and networking.

If selected, **entities will receive \$25,000 each year for four years (\$100,000 total) for one participating staff** to attend in-person and virtual trainings, provide direct coaching and technical assistance to farmers and landowners, and engage in peer networking. Continuity of staff is strongly preferred over the four-year period, but we understand and will accommodate staff turnover. There will also be opportunities for additional staff to participate in Land Transfer Navigator trainings and networking events.

Selected entities will be allotted an additional travel budget to utilize over the course of the program to offset travel expenses. More details are included in “Disbursement of Funds” below.

REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARDED ENTITY PARTICIPATION

- Organizational commitment to participate in the *Land Transfer Navigator* Program for four years beginning November 2023 and ending October 2027.
- Dedicate participating staff to attend all training and networking activities that include:
 - A 1.5-hour virtual kick-off in November 2023.

- A 2-3-day in-person training held annually. The first is projected for late January 2024. As a national program, the location will move from year to year.
- Up to 10, 2-hour virtual engagements annually for additional training, networking, and peer-to-peer learning.
- Develop a *Land Transfer Navigator* Action Plan describing actions the entity and participating staff will take to promote farm and ranch succession planning and support land access for landowners and farmers, including those who own or manage land on which the organization or agency holds an easement.
- Deliver information, direct technical assistance, or coaching to 120 farmers, ranchers and/or landowners (or 30 per year for four years) in support of the program goal to increase the transfer of farm and ranch land to the next generation of producers. This number can include people the organization is already working with.
- Participate in all program evaluation components. The evaluation will include Action Plan check-ins, pre- and post-training surveys throughout the course of the project, as well as participation in interview sessions with AFT program staff and consultants.

REPORTING AND IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS

Participation in this program includes reporting and in-kind contribution requirements.

Reporting:

- AFT will provide reporting templates to be completed and returned on a bi-annual basis. Reports will be due on March 15 and September 15 of each year of the program. (2024 – 2027)
 - Reporting will include progress updates on the organization’s *Land Transfer Navigator* Action Plan; Farmer/Rancher/Landowner outreach report; and in-kind contribution report.
- Payment of travel funds will be dependent on proper expense tracking and submission of travel receipts and mileage logs. AFT will provide a template for tracking travel expenses.

In-Kind Match:

Awarded entities must provide documentation of an in-kind match totaling \$52,000 over the course of the four-year program (see schedule in Appendix A). The in-kind match includes activities conducted by the Navigator Organization beyond the annual award or travel reimbursement. Projected eligible activities must be documented in the Action Plan and reviewed annually with AFT.

- *Examples of activities that qualify for the match include but are not limited to:*
 - Staff time on Land Transfer Navigator Program activities
 - Expenses utilized to host a relevant workshop for farmers and landowners, such as printing, mileage, supplies, catering, meeting room rental, etc.
 - Speaker or consultant fees to enlist an outside expert
 - Additional mileage to travel to meetings with farmers and landowners
 - Fees for participation in an event at which project goals as identified in the Action Plan are promoted
 - Additional staff participation in Land Transfer Navigator trainings and networking events
 - Costs associated with the purchase or donation of a conservation easement on agricultural land that is supporting a land transfer (excluding those costs covered through federal funds)

- Federal funding sources DO NOT qualify as part of the in-kind match.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION TIMELINE

- Applications are due by 5:00 p.m. (EDT) on Thursday, August 31, 2023.
- Letters of award for accepted applications will be sent by Friday, September 29, 2023.
- Acceptance paperwork must be completed by October 20, 2023.
- The *Land Transfer Navigator* Program virtual kick-off is scheduled for November 2023
- For the full program timeline see Appendix A.

DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

- Four total payments will be made. \$25,000 will be distributed to awarded entities annually, first upon signature of a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** and subsequently on October 31 of 2024, 2025, and 2026 unless the MOU is terminated.
- Each entity is allotted a travel budget of \$4,200 total **to use during the four years of program participation** for travel-related expenses. Expenses may include travel to the annual in-person training, for Navigator staff to provide direct technical assistance to farmers and landowners or engage with other peer professionals as detailed in the Action Plan. Hotel accommodation and food, once at the annual in-person meeting, will be provided by AFT. Please note, payment of travel funds will be reimbursed to the Navigator organization by AFT, unless otherwise pre-arranged. Reimbursement is dependent on proper expense tracking and submission of receipts.
- Please note, AFT can take up to 90 days to send out checks.

SPECIAL NOTES

- Funding is contingent on the awardee submitting a signed MOU by October 20, 2023.
- A W9 is required to receive awarded funds and will be submitted along with the MOU.
- If the awardee does not provide the required documents within 14 days of notification of the award, AFT may choose to award funds to another applicant.

HOW TO APPLY

To apply, submit a completed Land Transfer Navigators Application electronically through [this link](#).

QUESTIONS

Contact Beth Fraser at bfraser@farmland.org

APPENDIX A

Outline of Navigator's Experience and Expectations (Subject to Change)

Year 1:

- Return signed MOU and W9 (October 2023)
- Name staff to be Navigator contact (October 2023)
- Complete pre-training survey (November 2023)
- Attend virtual kick-off meeting (November 2023)

- Attend in-person training anticipated for 2-3 days (January or February 2024)
- Attend up to 10, two-hour virtual engagement activities, such as training and networking events (November 2023 – October 2024)
- Participate in online community discussions & networking platform (Ongoing)
- Complete program evaluation(s) and provide ongoing feedback
- Submit completed reporting template (March 15, October 15)
- Record and submit travel stipend report (within 30 days after travel)
- Submit annual in-kind match report (October)

Year 2:

- Attend in-person training (January or February 2025)
- Attend up to 10, two-hour virtual engagement activities, such as training and networking events (November 2024 – October 2025)
- Participate in online community discussions & networking platform (Ongoing)
- Complete program evaluation(s) and provide ongoing feedback
- Submit completed reporting template (March 15, October 15)
- Record and submit travel stipend report (within 30 days after travel)
- Submit annual in-kind match report (October)

Year 3:

- Attend in-person training
- Attend up to 10, two-hour virtual engagement activities, such as training and networking events (November 2025 – October 2026)
- Participate in online community discussions & networking platform (Ongoing)
- Complete program evaluation(s) and provide ongoing feedback
- Submit completed reporting template (March 15, October 15)
- Record and submit travel stipend report (within 30 days after travel)
- Submit annual in-kind match report (October)

Year 4:

- Attend in-person training
- Attend up to 10, two-hour virtual engagement activities, such as training and networking events (November 2026 – October 2027)
- Participate in online community discussions & networking platform (Ongoing)
- Complete program evaluation(s) and provide ongoing feedback
- Submit completed reporting template (March 15, October 15)
- Record and submit travel stipend report (within 30 days after travel)
- Submit annual in-kind match report (October)