# A green silhouette of a farm  Description automatically generated

American Farmland Trust’s New England Farmer Microgrants Program (NEFMP)

2023-24 Funding Opportunity:

Western New England Regenerative Livestock Farming (RLF) Grant

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: 5:00pm Tuesday, November 21, 2023**

# APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS:

# All applicants are required to complete both Part 1 “Eligibility Screening” and Part 2 “Farm Information and Proposal” to be considered for funding. If you have any questions about the eligibility screening questions, please contact our program staff, Kristen Irvin, at kirvin@farmland.org or 413-419-0023 to discuss your eligibility.

# When you’ve completed the application, you may submit it via email or mail. (See bottom of application for address instructions.) All emailed applications must be submitted by 5:00pm on November 21st, 2023. Any email submissions received after the deadline will not be considered.

# All mailed applications must be postmarked no later than November 21st. Any mailed applications postmarked after November 21st will not be considered.



# Part 1 of 2: Eligibility Screening

*If you need assistance filling out this form, please contact our program administrator, Kristen Irvin, at*

*kirvin@farmland.org* *or 413-419-0023 Mon-Fri.*

##  Purpose

American Farmland Trust's New England regional office, as part of our Western New England Regenerative Agriculture Regional Conservation Partnership Project, is once again offering grants to farmers in ***select counties*** for projects that improve the resiliency of **livestock operations** through soil health or other regenerative agriculture practices. This funding opportunity provides grants of **up to $10,000 to livestock producers in the following counties** for projects that improve soil health through the adoption of regenerative farming practices.

**Connecticut**: Fairfield, Hartford, Litchfield, Middlesex, New Haven, New London, Tolland, Windham

**Massachusetts**: Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, Worcester

**New Hampshire**: Cheshire, Coos, Grafton, Sullivan

**Vermont**: Bennington, Caledonia, Essex, Orange, Windham, Windsor

Some examples of eligible projects include: Soil health improvements through the purchase of cover crop seed, soil amendments, or reduced tillage equipment. Equipment to facilitate grazing such as fencing, a well, pipeline, or livestock watering facilities. The purchase of seeds/seedlings for a riparian/stream buffer, pollinator habitat, windbreak or pasture development. The prevention of erosion or nutrient runoff through the development of a nutrient management plan or the purchase of roof runoff structures, livestock shelter, heavy use area development, animal waste storage or composting equipment.

New for the 2023-24 funding cycle, we are now able to accept applications from prior New England Farmer Microgrants Program ("NEFMP") awardees. Please note however that we may prioritize applicants who have not been awarded a NEFMP grant in the past.

##  Eligibility Screening Questions

Please read and answer the following questions to see if you meet our eligibility criteria.

##  1. In which county is the applicant's farm located? *Circle or highlight your county*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| CT-Litchfield | MA-Berkshire | NH-Cheshire | VT-Bennington |
| CT-Fairfield | MA-Franklin | NH-Coos | VT-Caledonia |
| CT-Hartford | MA-Hampden | NH-Grafton | VT-Essex |
| CT-New Haven | MA-Hampshire | NH-Sullivan | VT-Orange |
| CT-Tolland | MA-Worcester |  | VT-Windham |
| CT-Middlesex |  |  | VT-Windsor |
| CT-Windham |  |  |  |
| CT-New London |  |  |  |

* None of the above

##  2. Are you any of the following?

* American Farmland Trust staff member
* American Farmland Trust board member
* 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*

* Yes
* No

##  3. How we define "Farmer":

* For this program, we define “farmer” as an individual, group, or organization who are intentionally cultivating annual or perennial crops or animals for harvest. A project may involve one or more of the following: an individual farmer, a farm family, a group of farmers with a cooperative business, or a nonprofit entity.
* Eligible farms must be able to provide proof of income (or similar if farm engages in barter, exchange or community supply). This program does not intend to fund applicants who grow or raise products primarily for home, personal or family use.
* While agriculture in New England is broad, this funding is intended to support terrestrial, soils-based agricultural production, and we are unable to consider applications from aquaculture or forestry operations.
* This program recognizes the following as "livestock": beef or dairy cattle, bison, hogs, poultry, bees, goats, sheep, camelids, emus, waterfowl.

Please note: for the purposes of this program, equine operations are not eligible for funding.

This funding opportunity can only provide funds to existing livestock operations.

**Does the applicant meet our definition of "farmer"?**

* Yes
* No

##  4. Eligible Projects

**Projects must improve soil health, water quality, or pollinator habitat.**

Examples include:

* Cover crop seed
* Pollinator habitat planting
* Irrigation infrastructure
* Livestock watering systems
* Pasture establishment/reseeding
* Mobile livestock shelters
* Fencing infrastructure
* Reduced tillage equipment
* Composting equipment
* Soil amendments and application

**Examples of ineligible projects:**

* Fencing for the purpose of excluding predators
* Rock removal
* Clear cutting, or large brush clearing projects

*(Not sure if your proposed project is eligible? We encourage you to ask our Program Coordinator any questions related to project or applicant eligibility before applying. Contact Kristen Irvin at* *kirvin@farmland.org* *or 413-419-0023.)*

**To the best of your knowledge, does the proposed project aim to improve soil health, water quality, or pollinator habitat as described above?**

* Yes
* No

##  5. Service Provider Relationship and Letter of Support

This grant application requires the applicant to submit a Letter of Support from a service provider along with the application form.

**A strong letter of support will:** Describe the service provider’s relationship to the farmer. Describe the service provider’s understanding of the farmer’s goals and the circumstances that are relevant to the grant application. Briefly describe the service provider’s knowledge and credentials, either formal or informal, and how the services provided are related to the proposed project. Describe how the service provider feels the proposed project will aid in the farmer’s success. Include the service provider’s name, title, organization/business affiliation, address, email address, date, and signature. Keep to one page, please. You will be asked in the application form whether or not you are currently working with a service provider.

For those applicants actively working with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), we will accept a copy of a conservation plan that is relevant to your proposed project, or a communication from NRCS that describes your engagement with them to meet the “letter of support” requirement in the grant application.

**AFT encourages farmers to connect with farm service providers in our region.** Visit our [online Resource](https://farmland.org/new-england-resource-directory-for-farmers/) [Directory](https://farmland.org/new-england-resource-directory-for-farmers/) to see service providers in New England. Please mark that you understand our letter of support requirements.

 \_\_\_\_ I understand.

 **6. Prior NEFMP awardees are eligible to apply for this funding opportunity. However, we are unable to accept applications from anyone who has received a prior grant award from AFT's Brighter Future Fund.**

**Have you received an award from American Farmland Trust's "Brighter Future Fund"?**

* Yes
* No

##  7. Award Payment Structure

New for this funding cycle: If selected for an award, 2023-24 Regenerative Livestock Farming Grant awardees will receive 80% of the award amount up-front, and the remainder of the award upon successful completion of the project and submission of a brief final report, including documentation of project completion (for example: photographs, receipts, copies of paid invoices, etc.) Awardees have one year from the date of award to complete their projects.

FarmStart Loans: For those awardees who lack sufficient funds to implement their projects even with 80% of the funding received upfront, Farm Credit East's FarmStart program offers low-interest loan advances to qualifying awardees (a separate application is required). Reach out to our staff to learn more.

**Please mark that you understand our award payment structure.**

\_\_\_\_ I understand.



## >> If you do not meet the eligibility criteria above, you may not move forward to the application form.

##  If you have any questions about the eligibility criteria, please contact our program staff, Kristen Irvin, at kirvin@farmland.org or 413-419-0023.

##  >>IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY:

## You may proceed to the Farm Information and Proposal application form on the next page.



# Part 2 of 2: Farm Information and Proposal

*Questions while completing this form? You may contact our program staff Monday through Friday at*

*kirvin@farmland.org* *or call 413-419-0023.*

**APPLICANT INFORMATION**

##  1. Please indicate who is filling out this application:

* Farmer Applicant (or a designated contact person such as a family member)
* Service Provider on behalf of the applicant (please provide your name, affiliation, and email)

 Service provider contact info (if selected above):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name |  |
| Affiliation/Business |  |
| Email  |  |
| Phone Number |  |

##  2. Best way to reach applicant:

* Email
* Phone
* Through my designated contact person (please provide contact info)

##  3. Farmer Applicant Contact Information (Mailing address)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Full Name |  |
| Street Address |  |
| Town/City |  |
| State |  |
| Zip |  |
| Email  |  |
| Phone Number |  |

 About the Farm Business Owner(s)

## Please answer the following questions to help us understand the diversity of farms and farmers we are reaching. Select all options that apply to the owner(s) of your farm business.

 **4. Do any farm business owners meet the definition of a historically underserved farmer?**

[Click here to see definitions.](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers) (<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers>)

* Yes
* No

##  5. Age

* Under 18
* 18-24
* 25-34
* 35-44
* 45-54
* 55-64
* 65 or Above
* Prefer Not to Answer

##  6. Race/Ethnic Categories

* American Indian or Alaska Native
* Asian
* Black or African American
* Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin
* Middle Eastern or North African
* Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
* White or European

##  7. Sex/gender

* Female/woman
* Male/man
* Not listed above
* Prefer not to answer

##  8. How many years have you been involved in operating a farm?

* Not yet farming / No farming experience
* 1 - 3 years
* 4 - 9 years
* 10 - 19 years
* 20 years or more

##  9. Are you applying on behalf of a non-profit organization's farm?

* No
* Yes (please provide name of organization)

##  10. Have you been awarded a grant under AFT's New England Farmer Microgrants Program ("NEFMP") in any prior year?

Please note that while we are accepting applications from prior NEFMP awardees, depending on the number of applications we receive we may prioritize applicants who have not been awarded a NEFMP grant in the past.

* Yes
* No



 **FARM INFORMATION**

##  11. FARM NAME: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 **12. Farm Location**

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Town/City \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

State Connecticut

 Massachusetts

New Hampshire

Vermont

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

##  13. Farm website/social media links (if applicable):

 **14. Do you own or lease your farmland? Check any that apply.**

Note: For those applicants who do not meet our definition of current farmer but have a proposal that would serve a lessee who meets our definition, you must supply a copy of the lease or other written agreement to be considered.

* Own
* Lease
* Do not own, but operate family land
* Other (explain below)

 If you selected "Other" for Question 14 above, please briefly describe your situation:

**15. If you are a nonfarming landowner applying on behalf of a lessee who is managing a livestock farming operation on your land, please attach a copy of a current lease and/or other agreement indicating the terms of the arrangement. You may use this space to explain the arrangement but a copy of a lease or agreement must be included via email or mail to be considered.**

##  16. Size of farm (total acreage of the farm)

* Under 1 acre
* 1 - 4 acres
* 5 - 9 acres
* 10 - 19 acres
* 20 - 49 acres
* 50 - 99 acres
* 100 acres or more

##  17. Number of acres in agricultural production

* Under 1 acre
* 1 - 4 acres
* 5 - 9 acres
* 10 - 19 acres
* 20 - 49 acres
* 50 - 99 acres
* 100 acres or more

##  18. Which classification best describes the location of your farm?

* Urban
* Peri-urban
* Suburban
* Rural

##  19. What was your farm’s primary enterprise (the enterprise that provided the largest proportion of the farm’s income) in 2023?

If you had more than one enterprise with relatively equal contribution to the farm’s income, then select up to your TOP THREE enterprises:

* Hay (or other forage crop)
* Corn, silage
* Corn, grain
* Dairy (cows, goats, other)
* Livestock, non-dairy (meat, eggs)
* Livestock, other (fiber, breeding stock, etc.)
* Grain (excluding corn)
* Vining Fruit
* Small fruit/berries (excluding cranberries)
* Cranberries
* Tree products: orchard fruit, Christmas trees, tree forage
* Maple
* Vegetable, various and/or diversified: 1-3 crops
* Vegetable, various and/or diversified: 4-10 crops
* Vegetable, various and/or diversified: more than 10 crops
* Bees/honey
* Cut flowers
* Greenhouse/nursery crops
* No production in 2023

 **20. What was your farm's primary livestock enterprise (livestock that provided the largest proportion of the farm's income) in 2023?** If you had more than one livestock enterprise with relatively equal contribution to the farm's income, then select up to your TOP THREE enterprises:

* Dairy (cows, goats, and/or other milking animals)
* Beef cattle
* Hogs
* Sheep/lamb
* Poultry (broilers)
* Eggs
* Meat goats
* Bees/honey
* Alpacas/other camelids
* Emus
* Waterfowl
* Other, please specify...

 **21. How do you market your products?** (Select all that apply)

* CSA
* Farmers market
* Farmstand
* Restaurants
* Other retailers
* Website/social media
* Other (please specify)



 **PROPOSAL FOR USE OF FUNDS:** PROJECT DETAILS, COSTS, AND TIMELINE

##  22. Which of these best describes the primary objective of your proposed project?

* Converting degraded cropland to pasture
* Improving grazing systems, or incorporating more intensive rotational grazing management
* Reducing tillage
* Improving pollinator habitat on your farm
* Incorporating/improving/expanding cover cropping
* Improving water access for livestock
* Reducing chemical inputs/improving soil fertility
* Developing a soil health management plan

 If your proposed project includes another objective, you may select one additional: (not required)

* Converting degraded cropland to pasture
* Improving grazing systems, or incorporating more intensive rotational grazing management
* Reducing tillage
* Improving pollinator habitat on your farm
* Incorporating/improving/expanding cover cropping
* Improving water access for livestock
* Reducing chemical inputs/improving soil fertility
* Developing a soil health management plan

 **23. Please tell us a bit about yourself!**

**Describe your farming background and experience. Please describe your current farm operation and your land tenure situation (full-time/part-time, lease/ownership etc.)** (max 500 words)

 **24. Please share a brief summary of the barriers you face in adopting soil health and regenerative farming practices on your livestock operation.** (max 500 words)

 Ineligible Expenses

**Please note, we are not able to fund the following:**

-The purchase of livestock animals (including beehives)

-Wildlife exclusion fencing

-Forest clearing

-Breeding panels

-Farm staff time/labor

-Cold storage facilities

-Processing equipment/supplies

-Barns, washrooms, packhouses, sheds, or farm stands

-Website development

-Classes or trainings

-Proposals from aquaculture, equine or forestry operations

-Proposals for funding to support growing or raising products primarily for home, personal, or family use

**-Any expenses incurred prior to notification of award**

##  25. Proposed amount of funds requested: ($10,000 maximum): $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

##  26. Please share what specifically you are proposing to use these funds for, how it will address the barriers you described, and how your project will improve soil health, pollinator habitat, or water quality.

Your response should:

Provide specific details about the equipment/infrastructure or services you are seeking funding for and how they address a challenge or barrier to implement soil health or regenerative farming practices on your livestock operation. Clearly and strongly demonstrate how the requested items/services will directly enhance/improve soil health, pollinator habitat, and/or water quality. (max 500 words)

##  27. Cost of proposed project:

Please provide an accurate estimate of the costs. **You are required to include copies of supporting documentation**.

**You may use this space to list a breakdown of costs:**

**28.** Please provide supporting materials/documentation related to your project costs. These could include a quote from a contractor or other service provider you plan to work with, and/or a detailed budget with justification for the work (this may include work you will perform yourself).

**Please include as attachments if emailing your submission, or print and include copies with this form if mailing your submission.**

##  29. If additional funds are required beyond the amount of this grant request, please include the source of those other funds. (Not required)

 **30. Do you have a current or recent Conservation Plan with NRCS and/or your local Conservation District?**

(We're just curious! Having a conservation plan is not required to be considered for funding.)

* Yes, we have a current/active conservation plan.
* We don't have a current/active conservation plan, but we had one recently (in the last 5 years).
* I'm on the waiting list to meet with a conservation planner.
* No, we have not had a conservation plan and we are not working to implement a conservation plan anytime soon.
* I'm not sure.
* I'm not sure, and I'd welcome AFT's assistance with getting connected with conservation staff and resources.

##  31. What is your level of need with this project?

* The project will occur with or without NEFMP assistance.
* The project could occur without NEFMP assistance but these funds would significantly help.
* The project would not be possible without NEFMP assistance.

##  32. All purchases/work supported by the grant must be completed within one year of the date of your signed award letter (approximately between January 2024 and January 2025).

Please provide the month/year you expect to complete the project. If the project cannot be completed within one year, please explain why below.

* January - March 2024
* April - June 2024
* July - September 2024
* October 2024 - January 2025
* Later than January 2025
* I have no idea.

##  33. Please share a clear timeline for the completion of your proposed project. If the project cannot be completed within one year, please explain why.

**34. Please attach your Letter of Support from a service provider or other advisor who can speak to the project you described above.** **THIS IS A REQUIREMENT TO BE CONSIDERED FOR FUNDING.**

The service provider writing your letter of support should have skills and working experience matching your project.

## A strong letter of support will: Describe the service provider’s relationship to the farmer. Describe the service provider’s understanding of the farmer’s goals and the circumstances that are relevant to the grant application. Briefly describe the service provider’s knowledge and credentials, either formal or informal, and how the services provided are related to the proposed project. Describe how the service provider feels the proposed project will aid in the farmer’s success. Include the service provider’s name, title, organization/business affiliation, address, email address, date, and signature. Keep to one page, please.

 **35. Please enter the name and contact information of the individual providing your letter of support.**

First and Last Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Business Name/Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**36. If you would like to include any additional supporting materials, such as a conservation plan, business plan, or other documents related to your proposed project, you are welcome to upload them here.** (Not required)

 **37. If you would like to share any additional comments, please do so here.** (Not required)

 **STEPS TO COMPLETE & SUBMIT APPLICATION:**

**Final Application Checklist**

You have reached the end of the application. Please review your responses and ensure that you have completed and compiled the following:

*You must submit each of these items to be considered for funding*

1. Eligibility Screening section
2. Farm Information and Proposal section
3. Supporting documentation for project costs/budget (for example, copies of cost estimates)
4. Letter of support

Submit all items via email or mail at either of the following addresses:

EMAIL:

Email to: **kirvin@farmland.org**

If emailing your submission, please use the subject line “NEFMP RLF Application”.

Emailed submissions must be received by 5:00pm EST on November 21, 2023.

**- or –**

MAIL:

Mail to:

Kristen Irvin/NEFMP

American Farmland Trust

1 Short St. Suite 2

Northampton, MA 01060

If mailing your submission, applications must be postmarked no later than November 21st.

**Applicants will be notified of their status in January 2024.**

**Thank you for applying!**