

2024-25 Regenerate Virginia Healthy Soils Grants

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who is eligible to apply?

A: Applicants must be farming or ranching in Virginia. To be eligible, applicants must be able to provide proof of farming/ranching income (or similar if the farm engages in barter, exchange or community supply). It is not the intention of the Regenerate Virginia Healthy Soils Grants Program to support operations producing food only for personal/household consumption. Farms or ranches must be producing food or agricultural products for your community, to barter or exchange, or for sale.

Q: How do we define ‘farmer/rancher’?

A: For this program, we define “farmer/rancher” as an individual, group, or organization who are intentionally cultivating annual or perennial crops or livestock for harvest. While we recognize many producers earn off farm income, this grant intends to prioritize applications from individuals who dedicate a majority of their work time to farming or ranching.

Q: How is “historically underserved” defined under this grant?

A: AFT recognizes that marginalized agricultural producers have long faced barriers to accessing financial support and other resources. See below for some definitions.

- A “beginning farmer or rancher” is one who has farmed for 10 years or less. Visit [this page](#) for more information. (Please note that to be eligible for this grant, applicants must have been farming or ranching for one year.)

- A “socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher” is one who has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudices because of their identity as a member of a socially disadvantaged group without regard to their individual qualities. [Visit this page](#) for more information.

- A farmer or rancher may use the following online determination tool to determine whether one is eligible as “[limited resource](#)”. Limited Resource status is defined as having direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years. [Click here](#) to use the tool.

- A “veteran farmer or rancher” is one who has served in the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including reserves, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.

- Regenerate Virginia’s Healthy Soils Program also considers women as historically underserved applicants.

Q: How much money will be awarded?

A: Applicants may request up to \$30,000 each for individual farmers, \$50,000 for a group of farmers applying together.

Q: What sorts of projects will be funded?

A: Regenerate Virginia Healthy Soils projects should outline how producers will implement innovative practices and systems that address one or more of the principles of soil health to improve long-term farm viability and regenerative management. Projects should either be ineligible for existing cost-share funding or complementary to it. Projects for which there is strong existing cost-share already available will be ranked lower.

Q: I work for a non-profit organization that has a farm supplying food to our local community. Can we apply?

A: Yes, farms associated with non-profit organizations that are producing agricultural products for distribution to their community are eligible to apply.

Q: Is there a match requirement?

A: There is no match requirement. Grants are intended to leverage other resources (either in-kind from the farmer, or other private and public funds).

Q: Do I need to own the land I’m farming to be eligible for this grant?

A: No. Farmers or ranchers leasing land are eligible to apply; however, land tenure for a reasonable time period will be required.

Q: What is the application timeline?

A: Applications will be accepted from 8am ET October 15 through midnight ET November 15, 2024. Applications will be reviewed and awarded in the order they were received and based on eligibility. Funding for this program is limited. As funding remains, awards will be made on an ongoing basis to eligible applicants that fulfill all application requirements and meet selection criteria. The application questions will be made available as a PDF document for viewing/download and posted on our website. We encourage applicants to view the questions ahead of time.

Q: How are applications accepted?

A: Applications must be submitted through our online application portal (Survey Monkey Apply). The link to apply will be available on our website while the application period is live. In order to submit an application online, applicants must have an email address. All grant and application-related communications will be sent to the applicant via email. If an applicant does not have an email address, a designated contact person, such as a friend, family member, neighbor or service provider, may create and submit an application on behalf of the applicant.

Q: Will applications be accepted in languages other than English?

A: The online application will be available in Spanish.

Q: What does the application consist of?

A: The application questions can be viewed here. The application is designed to be simple and straightforward. The main sections are:

- Eligibility Questionnaire (to determine if the applicant is eligible)
- Applicant Contact Information
- Applicant's Farming Situation (farming status, land tenure, products)
- Project Proposal, including Estimated Costs, Project Budget and Project Timeline
- Applicant Demographic Information

Q: Is labor/farm staff time an eligible expense under this grant?

A: Yes, labor and staff time are eligible expenses under this grant and we encourage producers to consider this in creating your budget.

Q: Is equipment an eligible expense under this grant? Our farm needs processing equipment / barn repairs / a new farmstand / packhouse improvements / better cold storage facilities. Are any of these eligible under this grant?

A: In most cases, we will consider requests for funds to purchase equipment and infrastructure if applicants demonstrate that they are essential to the soil health impact of the project. Infrastructure and equipment that are not directly linked to healthy soils outcomes will not be eligible for funding under this grants program.

Q: Can I be awarded for a project our farm has already started working on?

A: This grant will only fund approved expenses that are incurred after award notification. If expenses for an approved project have been paid prior to award notification, we are unable to include those expenses in the award. The grant-funded project timeline begins at the time of award notification.

Q: When will applicants be notified of final decisions?

A: AFT will send notification to those selected for award via email within 60 days of the application period closing.

Q: How and when are the awards paid?

A: The Brighter Future Fund aims to disburse grant award payments within 120 days of grantee submission of the grant award letter via direct deposit to the awardee's bank account. (While AFT is able to mail award payments via check, awardees who cannot receive payment via direct deposit may experience delays in award payment.)

Q: What is the timeline of grant-funded project implementation?

A: The grant-funded project timeline begins when the awardee signs their award letter. All services supported by the grant must be completed by two years from the submission of the grant award letter.

Q: If our farm/ranch is awarded a grant this year, do we need to submit copies of receipts for expenses covered by the grant? What documentation do awardees need to provide?

A: Awardees will be required to provide follow-up information to AFT about their award-funded project. AFT will use this information to verify the permitted use of funds and evaluate the success of the grant program. Within one year of the award date, awardees will be asked to submit a brief report verifying completion of the project via the portal system, including a written paragraph describing the completed project and photos or videos documenting the use of funds. If awarded, recipients should keep receipts pertaining to the proposed use of funds for their own reporting purposes.

Q: I received a "Brighter Future Fund" award from AFT in a prior year. Am I eligible to apply again this year?

A: Yes, prior BFF awardees are eligible to apply for VA Healthy Soils Grants.

Q: I received a Covid-related Farmer Relief Fund award from AFT in a prior year. Am I eligible to apply for this grant?

A: Yes, prior recipients of the Farmer Relief Fund awards are eligible to apply for this grant.

Q: We just started our operation and won't have an income or dollar value of any farm products sold in the last year. Are we eligible to apply?

Q: Are individuals who will soon graduate from a farm apprenticeship program (who have not yet started their own operations) eligible to apply?

A: In many cases, yes. Again, we encourage potential applicants to reach out to us to discuss particular questions pertaining to your unique situation, to assess eligibility.

Q: Who can I reach out to for support with completing the application?

A: Please direct all inquiries to either of the following: acather@farmland.org Phone: 202-378-1244

Q: Are there other grants at AFT that I can apply to? A: We encourage you to visit AFT's grantmaking webpage to learn more about our funding opportunities:

<https://farmland.org/brighterfuture/>