



## **American Farmland Trust and Virginia Soil Health Coalition Regenerate Virginia Healthy Soils Grants Program**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Healthy Soils Grant Program (the Program) is to make the pursuit of soil health more accessible for producers and land managers across the commonwealth of Virginia. The Program encourages partners and producers to pilot innovative and impactful ideas— at the field level, the classroom level, or the market level. The Program is designed to support the ongoing efforts of producers and partners while fostering innovation and enhanced education and outreach.

Taking a “complete, not compete” partnership-based approach, the Program seeks to fund ideas via grants up to \$30,000 for an individual farmer or up to \$50,000 for a group of farmers, that innovatively fill gaps and address barriers to adoption of soil health-building systems. Simultaneously, incentivizing the adoption of practices and transformation of systems that go above and beyond current standards. It aims to support farmers and ideas that are ineligible for other programs.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

The following are eligible applicants:

- Individual farmers operating in Virginia, including nonprofit or for-profit farms
- Groups of farmers, including producer associations
- Eligible costs include farmer labor; equipment purchase or rental; farm inputs and operating costs, including insurance; payments to technical service providers, consultants, or advisors; infrastructure; purchase of livestock, seeds, or plants; etc.

Projects must:

- Be entirely located in Virginia
- Address one or more of the principles of soil health, ideally through an innovative or holistic systems approach (see examples below for inspiration)
- Include an educational/outreach component (e.g. field day, case study, social media output, etc.)
- Include a description of the way soil health will be assessed
- Have a project completion date of no more than 2 years from the time of receipt of funds.
- Be willing to share findings and results, including possibly collaborating with AFT or Virginia Soil Health Coalition partners to collect and analyze relevant data.

Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- The viability of their concept
- The degree to which the project addresses the principles of soil health
- The communications and outreach plan
- Evidence of farmer commitment (examples could include a history of experimenting with soil health practices; previous participation in soil health educational trainings, field days, or opportunities; matching funds in the form of cash or labor outlays committed to the project by the farmer(s); description of how the project will be sustained long-term; or discussion of the way this healthy soils project meets the overall goals of the farm business)

❖ Note: Farm size is not a consideration for project selection. There are no minimum or maximum acreage requirements

### **A COMMITMENT TO UNDERSERVED FARMERS**

AFT is committed to supporting greater equity and opportunities for all in agriculture. For more information on AFT's commitment to increased opportunity, please see [AFT's DEIJ statement](#).

The Program will prioritize support to farmers who have experienced barriers to capital and other resources. We encourage Virginia farmers from all backgrounds to apply, including those from the following groups:

- Beginning farmers
- Women farmers
- Veteran farmers
- BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, or People of Color) farmers
- LGBTQIA+ farmers
- Low-income or limited resource farmers (self-determination tool [here](#))

Priority funding will be allocated to proposals that:

- Are managed by or engage [historically underserved producers](#) in implementation and/or outreach and education
- Include a system of practices that work in combination to achieve synergistic outcomes
- Go beyond practices that are eligible for traditional cost-share opportunities, either because they are more experimental or innovative or because they take a holistic approach that combines several practices
- Engage local conservation practitioners including Soil and Water Conservation District staff, extension agents, NRCS practitioners, nonprofit partners, etc. either in implementation or outreach and education

### **ALLOWABLE use of funds includes but is not limited to:**

- A silvopasture system for pastured livestock
- Cover crop and nutrient reduction trials

- Hedgerows or riparian buffers that incorporate income-generating crops
- Innovative crop rotation to improve soil health, including adding a new crop into an established rotation
- Mulching or cut and carry systems
- Building soil health on an urban farm through the addition of compost
- Integrating perennial crops into annual cropping systems
- Integrating livestock into an annual cropping system
- Building soil health as a climate resilience strategy
- Agroforestry

## **HOW TO APPLY**

To apply, farmers should submit a completed Regenerate Virginia Healthy Soils Grant Application. Applications must be submitted electronically through the link located on our webpage available on October 15th:

## **TIMELINE & AWARD PROCESS**

Applications will be accepted October 15th through November 15th, 2024. Grant recipients will be notified in early 2025.

- Grant recipients will receive written notification in the form of a Letter of Award via email. The Letter of Award will detail the approved timeline and process for payment based on the individual project.
- Funding is contingent on the awardee completing a Grant Award Form and submitting it within 14 days after notification of the award. Notification of awards and other communication will be conducted via email and online platforms. Failure to respond by the stated deadline could result in loss of award funds.
- Healthy Soils Grants will generally be awarded according to the following schedule, which may be modified by special arrangement:
  - 40% at approximately 120 days of Grant Award Form submission
  - 40% after a six-month check-in with AFT and/or VASHC staff
  - 20% upon completion of reporting requirements
- AFT will require the awardee to provide its SSN/EIN/TIN in order to fulfill AFT's obligation to report grant activities on its annual report to the IRS. The name on your application should match the name on the SSN/EIN/TIN number that you intend to provide.

## **AWARD FORM CHECKLIST**

**If chosen to receive an award, we will require:**

- Current photo representing yourself and your farm
- A brief summary regarding the planned use of the funds and results you expect to achieve with the assistance of the funds.

- A statement agreeing to complete a brief final report and interview by AFT upon completion of the project. For farmers who opt-in, we will share selected projects via social media and in promotional materials. While sharing stories is a priority for AFT, we understand there may be reason for discretion and will honor those instances. Participation in public-facing stories will not affect the applicant's receipt of funding.

## **REPORTING**

- Reporting requirements will include semi-annual check-ins by phone or email with Program staff as well as a one-page final report.
- Communications and outreach efforts will also serve as project reporting.
- Additional reporting requirements may be requested for specific types of projects (e.g. on-farm research).

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- The Regenerate Virginia Healthy Soils Grants have been established by AFT to provide support to awardees who need financial assistance to undertake proposed activities that further AFT's charitable purposes. These grants are motivated by charitable intent. AFT however does not make any representation as to the tax consequences of any award, if any.
- AFT shall have no obligation to disburse amounts in excess of the approved grant, for services not completed, or goods or services not approved by AFT. Any expenses that exceed the grant maximum amount are the responsibility of the awardee.
- Expenses incurred prior to receiving a fully executed grant award agreement will not be reimbursable by the grant.
- Any unspent grant funds may be dedicated towards further services for the applicant, pending written AFT approval.

### ***A Note on Language***

We encourage you to be thoughtful and diligent in completing your application, but we will not evaluate applications by grammar or writing style. Complete the questions to the best of your ability and take advantage of the narrative questions to describe your farm, your personal and professional goals, and the challenges you face in reaching them. Feel free to write in whatever style or language feels truest and most comfortable to you.

If desired, assistance in identifying the appropriate consultant for your individual needs, and drafting a budget, can be provided. Please note in your application if this would be beneficial to you.

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