

Beginning Farmer and Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmer Grant Programs Annual Report



Department of
Agriculture and Markets

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Introduction and Reporting Requirements

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (the Department) submits the following annual report to the Governor and Honorable Members of the Legislature. This report fulfills requirements of the New York State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024 and 2025 Enacted Budgets. The information contained in this annual report reflects activities that have occurred between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2024.

The New York State Fiscal Year 2023 Enacted Budget included a total of \$5 million for the Beginning Farmers and Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmers Grant Programs, which received \$1 million and \$4 million respectively. Following that, both the SFY 2024 and 2025 Enacted Budgets included \$2 million for these programs, with each program receiving \$1 million. Statute requires the Department to submit an annual report detailing: (a) the total amount of funds committed to each applicant; (b) the location of each applicant; and (c) other information as established in such criteria.

Definitions

The enacted budgets defined parameters that will be used in the grant opportunities.

For the purposes of the Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmer Grant Program:

- "Socially disadvantaged" shall mean individuals who have been subject to discrimination by virtue of their membership of a particular group which may include, but not be limited to, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian or Pacific Islander.
- "Economically disadvantaged" shall mean socially disadvantaged individuals whose ability to enter into farming or whose farm enterprise has been impaired due to diminished capital, credit opportunities, or access to land, among other things, as compared to other similarly situated individuals who are not socially disadvantaged.

Grant Program Administrator Eligibility Criteria

The Department is authorized to enter into agreements with municipalities, public benefit corporations, local development corporations, or not-for-profit organizations that provide financial assistance, including capital assistance, for the administration of these grant programs. Up to fifteen percent of the total appropriation amount may be made available for the services and expenses of such organizations directly related to the administration of the grant programs.

Once selected through a request for proposals (RFP) process, the administrators work

with the Department to develop competitive grant programs for farmers and the application process. Selected administrators release the grant opportunities for farmers. Grants shall not be less than \$5,000 and may not exceed \$250,000 for any single beneficiary. Grants shall be issued with a required match from the recipient of no more than twenty percent (20%) of the grant amount.

Round 1 Farmer Funds (SFY 2023)

RFPs to select administrators for Round 1 of the Beginning Farmers Grant Program (\$1 million) and the Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmers Grant Program (\$4 million) were released in the New York State Contract Reporter on January 26, 2023. The deadline for proposals was April 18, 2023 and program administrators were awarded on May 24, 2023.

New York Farm Viability Institute was selected as the program administrator of the Beginning Farmers Grant Program. The contract with the New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI) was executed on August 9, 2023. NYFVI, with input from the Department, released a competitive RFP on October 25, 2024. The deadline for proposals was January 24, 2025. NYFVI held informational webinars on November 4, 2024, and November 14, 2024. Questions were accepted until January 10, 2025, and answers were posted weekly. Awards are anticipated to be made in June 2025. No funds have yet been committed to farmers.

The Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust (NEFOC) and its fiscal sponsor, Resist Inc., were selected to administer the Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmers Grant Program. The contract with Resist, Inc. was executed on January 10, 2024. NEFOC, with input from the Department, developed a competitive RFP, which opened for applications for the first round of funding, for grants up to \$5,000, on December 30, 2024. The application period closed on February 14, 2025. Awards are anticipated to be made in April 2025. No funds have yet been committed to farmers.

Round 2 & 3 Farmer Funds (SFY 2024 & 2025)

Available Funding

- **Beginning Farmer Funds:** Funding from SFY 2024 and 2025 is being combined into a single funding opportunity to streamline delivery of the funds to farmers. A total of \$2 million is available for this program; \$300,000 (15%) is available for services and expenses of the administrator directly related to administration of the program; \$1,700,000 (85%) is available for grants to farmers. Grants to farmers may be between a minimum of \$5,000 to a maximum of \$250,000 per beneficiary, with a matching requirement of up to 20% of the grant amount.

- **Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmer Funds:** Funding from SFY 2024 and 2025 is being combined for a single funding opportunity to streamline delivery of the funds to farmers. A total of \$2 million is available for this purpose; \$300,000 (15%) is available for services and expenses of the administrator directly related to administration of the program; \$1,700,000 (85%) is available for grants to farmers. Grants to farmers may be between a minimum of \$5,000 to a maximum of \$250,000 per beneficiary, with a matching requirement of up to 20% of the grant amount.

The RFPs for administrators of these combined grant rounds were released on October 16, 2024 and will close on January 24, 2025. The Department hosted two information webinars for potential applicants on October 30, 2024 and December 5, 2024. The release of the grant opportunities for farmers will be determined after the administrators are awarded. No funds have yet been committed to farmers.

Farmer Project Eligibility Criteria

For both grant opportunities, eligible projects may include:

- start up, improvement, or expansion of a farm operation;
- worker or apprenticeship training;
- marketing activities;
- purchase of agricultural land and physical structures;
- purchase of machinery, equipment, or livestock; and
- construction or improvement of physical structures, including semi-permanent structures.

Projects can be conducted on leased land.

Farmer Eligibility Criteria

For both grant opportunities, eligible applicants shall include, but not be limited to, farmers who will materially and substantially participate in operating a farm within a region of the state and may include urban farmers. Additional eligible applicant criteria are as follows:

- **Grants to Beginning Farmers:** Eligible applicants shall be farmers who have not operated a farm for more than ten years.
- **Grants to Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmers:** Eligible applicants shall be socially and economically disadvantaged farmers.

Additional eligibility criteria may be established.