Beginning Farmer and Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmer Grant Programs 2025 Annual Report

NEW YORK STATE | 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 Governor Kathy Hochul and Honorable Members of the Legislature. This report fulfills requirements of the New York State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2025 and 2026 Enacted Budgets. The information contained in this report reflects activities that have occurred between January 1, 2022, and December 31, 2025.

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 outlining the programs' progress.

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 in consultation with the Department to develop requests for proposals to solicit applications from eligible applicants through a competitive process and award grants for implementation of approved projects. Selected administrators are responsible for developing funding agreements with the awardees that include performance and expenditure reporting requirements approved by the Department.

Farmer Grant Requirements

Grants to farmers 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.

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 may 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. This 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.

Round 1 Farmer Funds (SFY 2023)

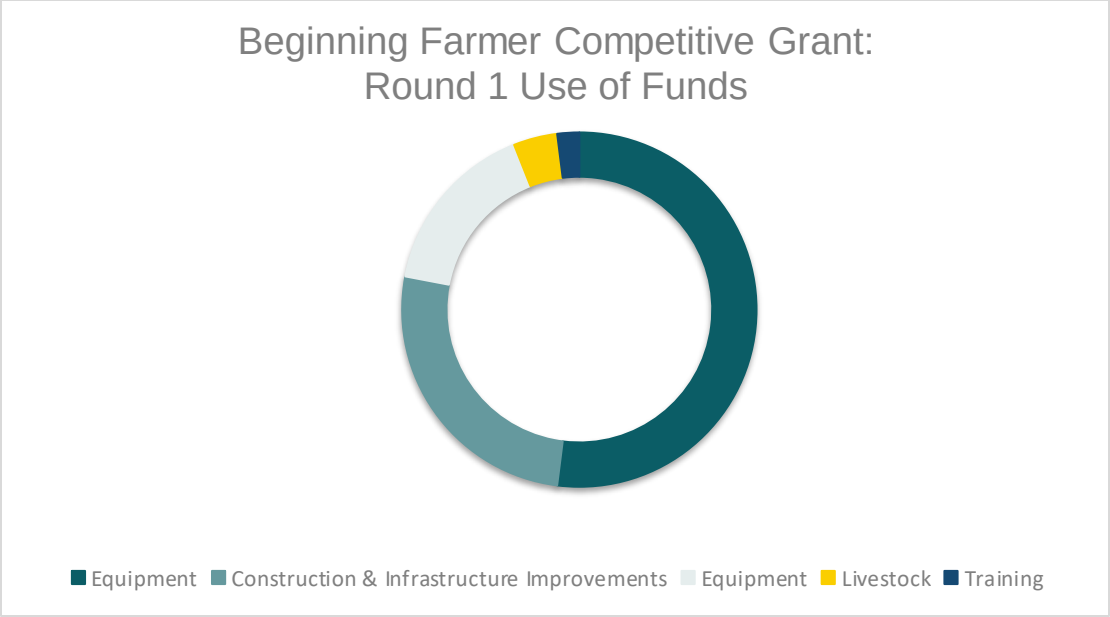
Requests for proposals (RFPs) to select administrators for Round 1 of the Beginning Farmers Grant Program ($1 million) and the Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmers Grant Program ($4 million) were released in the New York State Contract Reporter on January 26, 2023. The deadline for proposals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

Beginning Farmer Funds

The New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI) was selected as the program administrator of the Beginning Farmers Grant Program. The contract with 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.

NYFVI received 296 applications totaling over $21 million in requested funds. Awards were made to 19 farmers totaling $850,000. The 19 projects that received funding included farms in a diverse array of industries: livestock, aquaculture, apples, wine grapes, craft beverages, poultry, vegetables, sheep, dairy, nursery, cut flowers, and diversified operations. Of the $850,000 grant funds available:

- fifty-two percent (52%) will be used for the purchase of machinery and equipment;
- twenty percent (26%) will be used for construction and infrastructure improvements;
- sixteen percent (16%) will be used for other expenses related to the purchase and installation of equipment;
- four percent (4%) will be used for the purchase of livestock; and
- two percent (2%) will be used for staff training.



Beginning Farmer Regional Distribution:

Region	Number of Awards	Award Amounts
Capital Region	3	$157,876.19
Central New York	1	$25,000
Finger Lakes	2	$43,716.43
Long Island	2	$309,431.37
Mid-Hudson	4	$87,370.75
North Country	2	$35,375.24
Southern Tier	2	$101,589.11
Western New York	3	$89,651.31
TOTALS	**19**	**$850,010.40**

Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmer Funds

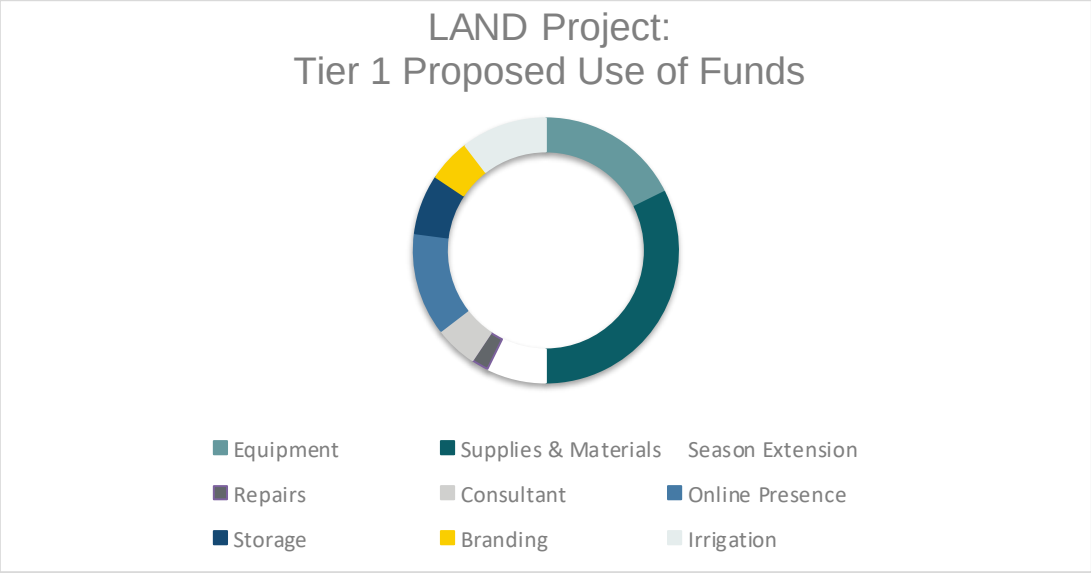
The Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust (NEFOC) and its fiscal sponsor, Resist Inc., were selected to administer the Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmers Grant Program which will be released as the “Landing Access: Novel Directions (LAND) Project.” The contract with Resist, Inc. was executed on January 10, 2024. With input

from the Department, NEFOC developed a competitive RFP, which opened for applications for the first round of funding on December 30, 2024. The first tier of funding supported projects up to $5,000 to be used for start-up operational and marketing expenses. The application period closed on February 14, 2025.

NEFOC received 113 applications totaling $565,000 in requested funds. Awards were made to 30 farmers totaling $150,000. The 30 projects that received funding supported a range of operations including livestock, orchards, vineyards, poultry, vegetables, fiber, mushrooms, teas, grains, kimchi, bees, and medicinal and culinary herbs and spices. Of the 30 grantees:

- thirty-one percent (31%) used funds to purchase start-up supplies and materials for production, processing and marketing;
- seventeen percent (17%) purchased equipment;
- twelve percent (12%) created or expanded an online presence;
- ten percent (10%) purchased irrigation materials or upgraded irrigation;
- seven percent (7%) increased season extension capabilities;
- seven percent (7%) increased storage space including dry and cold storage;
- five percent (5%) hired consultants for marketing or production; and
- five percent (5%) identified product branding or rebranding.

LAND Project Tier 1 Regional Distribution:



Region	Number of Awards	Award Amounts
Capital District	6	$30,000
Finger Lakes	2	$10,000
Long Island	1	$5,000
Mid-Hudson	12	$60,000
North Country	1	$5,000
Southern Tier	3	$15,000
Western New York	5	$25,000
TOTALS	**30**	**$150,000**

Three additional tiers of funding will be released in the first quarter of 2026 for:

- Small Infrastructure Improvements, Utilities and Small Upgrades, projects between $10,000 - $50,000;
- Large Infrastructure Improvements and Large Upgrades, projects between $20,000 - $100,000; and
- Securing/Purchasing Land, projects between $50,000 - $250,000.

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

RFPs to select administrators for Round 2 and 3 of the Beginning Farmers Grant Program ($2 million combined) and the Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmers Grant Program ($2 million combined) were released in the New York State Contract Reporter on October 16, 2024. The deadline for proposals was January 24, 2025, and program administrators were awarded on February 26, 2025.

NYFVI was selected as the program administrator of the Beginning Farmers Grant Program. The contract with NYFVI was executed on September 15, 2025. Since then, NYFVI, with input from the Department, has been working on developing a competitive RFP. The opportunity for Beginning Farmers is anticipated to be released in in the first quarter of 2026.

The Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust (NEFOC) and its fiscal sponsor, Resist Inc., were selected to administer Round 2 and 3 funding for the Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmers Grant Program. The Department and NEFOC are currently finalizing RFPs for Rounds 2 and 3, which will be combined with remaining Round 1 funds. These opportunities are anticipated to be released in the first quarter of 2026.