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**NH Farm**

**Future Fund**

**2023 Request for Proposals**

# Introduction & Summary

The mission of the NH Farm Future Fund is to provide funding for farm viability planning in concert with the conservation of important agricultural soils. This program will leverage the singular opportunity of putting a conservation easement on farmland to also invest in the future viability of the farm business. The goal of this fund is to ensure that farmland is conserved, productive, and available for future generations.

The NH Association of Conservation Districts requests proposals from land trusts who seek funding to work with farms to conserve their land and improve the viability of their farm business. This is an integrated approach to funding farm viability, farmland conservation, and farmland access.

Funding is available to support activities in two broad categories:

### financial assistance to offset costs associated with farmland conservation projects and

### technical assistance to support farm business viability and succession planning.

Applicants should be committed to bringing together experts in land conservation, succession planning, and farm viability to advance the Farm Partner’s stated business goals.

*The Farm Partner is the farmer/landowner of the agricultural resource who has agreed to partner with the land trust to conserve the land and strive to keep it productive and profitable. The Farm Partner is required to be engaged and interested in participating in farm viability and/or land transfer planning. The Farm Partner will work with the land trust, LFG, and the NHCLF to define their interests, goals, and desired outcomes in the application for funding.*

Funds awarded to successful applicants will be used to complete the following types of activities with the following organizations:

**Financial Assistance for the Land Trust – To complete a farmland conservation project**

**(A maximum of $10,000 or no more than 50% of total grant request is allowed to be in the financial assistance category)**

* **Transactional costs** for a conservation project (easement or fee land) - transactional costs may include, but are not to be limited to, those costs associated with the boundary survey, appraisal, legal fees and title expenses of the land trust, recording expenses, baseline documentation, or stewardship fund contribution.

**Technical Assistance for the Farm – To ensure a viable agricultural business on the conservation land.**

**Land Trust applicants are required to hold a Discovery Meeting in advance of application submission. The desired outcome of the Discovery Meeting is to identify Farm Partner goals for conservation, business, and succession planning. These different focus areas can inform each other and will allow a project team to craft an effective strategy for the farm’s success. This Discovery Meeting will also inform the application process. The Discovery Meeting will have the following individuals in attendance: land trust representative, Farm Partner, NH Community Loan Fund representative, and Land For Good representative.**

Technical Assistance funds will be provided to the land trust and they will contract with service providers to meet the Farm Partner Goals.

* **Farm viability planning** - The NH Community Loan Fund (NHCLF)will meet with farmers to identify skill building and business development opportunities (e.g. enterprise analysis, market channels, financial literacy). The NHCLF will utilize a network of independent business coaches or other service providers to work with the farm business on a customized plan or as an advisory board.
* **Land transfer planning** - Land For Good (LFG) will meet with farmers to assist with creating a succession plan or acquisition plan to keep the conservation land in active farming. This will include providing supportive guidance on a menu of eligible items including goal setting, management and asset transfer, land acquisition, retirement planning etc. These are important steps to take at each stage of a farmer’s life to ensure the land stays productive and accessible to the next generation of farmers.
* **Legal assistance** - Attorneys will provide legal assistance specific to the farm needs. This assistance type and timeline will be informed by the technical service providers. An attorney’s legal fees can be used to work on the behalf of the Farm Partner to perform the review/creation of documents related to: conservation easement or fee deed, business planning, and/or land transfer planning. There will be a list of eligible attorneys who have literacy of both land conservation and agriculture. The attorney of the Land Trust you are working with will not be available as it will be a conflict of interest.

Priority will be given to projects that:

* conserve important farmland soils (local, state, and prime) with permanent land protection through the acquisition of a fee interest or a permanent conservation easement,
* have a signed purchase and sales agreement on an agricultural easement or fee owned land,
* have a strong commitment from the partnering farm to engage and seek meaningful results from the technical assistance that will be provided (see section II. B. for farm partner scenarios),
* have conducted a minimum of one joint development Discovery Meeting with the land trust, farm partner, NHCLF, and LFG to identify clear goals for the technical assistance requested, and/or
* have a high imminence of threat (e.g. the farm is under financial duress, the land is highly developable, the owner has contemplated selling to a developer or been approached by developer(s), etc.).

The following will not be funded:

* Farm staff time
* Administrative fees
* Advertising
* Research and feasibility studies
* Efforts that will not lead to increased farm viability
* Projects that did not have a Discovery Meeting with project partners in advance of submitting the application

# Eligible Applicants & Projects

**A. Eligible Applicants**

Nonprofit tax exempt 501(c)(3) organizations that have land conservation as their primary function and are actively working to conserve farmland in the state of New Hampshire.

**B. Eligible Projects & Farm Partners**

New Hampshire farmland conservation projects where there is a strong stated commitment from a project Farm Partner. The Farm Partner is the farmer/landowner of the agricultural resource who has agreed to partner with the land trust to conserve the land and strive to keep it productive and profitable. The Farm Partner is required to be engaged and interested in participating in farm viability and/or land transfer planning. The Farm Partner will work with the land trust, LFG, and the NHCLF to define their interests, goals, and desired outcomes in the application for funding. This commitment must be addressed in a Farm Partner Letter as part of the application package. Project Farm Partners could exist in the following scenarios:

* farmer who wishes to continue farming but needs business viability assistance,
* farmer who wishes the transfer the farm to the next generation but needs succession planning assistance, or
* farmland owned by a non-farming landowner who wishes to lease and/or sell the property to a farmer.

# Discovery Meeting Partners

The required discovery meeting in advance of application submission will consist of the land trust representative, Farm Partner, NH Community Loan Fund representative, and Land For Good Representative.

Please contact Amanda Littleton, amanda@cheshireconservation.org or 603-756-2988 x.4 no later than March 20th to schedule a meeting at one of the below timeframes. When contacting Amanda to schedule your meeting, please provide all days and times that will work for you and your farm partner to meet. These meetings will be held in person at the Land Trust office or on site at the farm.

* + - Monday, March 20th: 10:00am-2:00pm
		- Wednesday, March 22nd: 10:00am-2:00pm
		- Monday, March 27th: 10:00am-2:00pm
		- Monday, April 3rd: 10:00am-2:00pm

Farm partners are encouraged to submit their farm financials in advance of the Discovery Meeting so technical service providers from the NH Community Loan Fund can have an informed conversation with the Farm Partner on future goals, challenges, and opportunities.

# Program Funding, Match Requirement, and Project Duration

**A. Funding Availability**

There is $100,000 available in the 2023 funding cycle. Awards no greater than $20,000 will be considered. Program administrators reserve the right to offer funding to selected projects at an amount less/or more than requested in the application budget.

NH Farm Future Fund grants are paid on a reimbursement basis. At project completion the grantee will submit a request for reimbursement along with the final report and budget vs. actual figures. This will be accompanied by an itemized summary invoice and copies of all invoices expected to be reimbursed. Grantees will also be required to submit documentation of completed match. Reimbursements will only be made for eligible expenses and will not exceed the grant award.

B. **Project Match Requirement**

The NH Farm Future Fund has a cash match requirement. **All applicants must demonstrate matching funds equal to at least 25% of the grant award**. Cash match does not include in-kind gifts.

**C. Project Timeframe: Grant Award Funding Decisions and Allocations**

Project must be completed and final report submitted by June 30, 2025. Please contact the program administrator if you need to request a project extension.

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| **Process** | **Approximate Time Frame** |
| 1. RFP is available. | February 15 |
| 2. Proposals are due. | May 31 |
| 3. Discover Meetings | Late March/April (Schedule in March) |
| 4. Proposal review process. Applicants may be contacted for additional information to clarify the project. | May 31-July 15 |
| 5. All Applicants are notified of funding decision.  | July 15 |
| 6. Project ends and report and photos are due. | June 30, 2025 |

# Application Submittal Procedure

The proposal can be submitted digitally or by hard copy in the mail. Applications must be emailed or postmarked by the due date.

1. **A Discovery Meeting must occur with project partners prior to completing the application.**
2. **Proposals Mailed to:**

NH Farm Future Fund

Cheshire County Conservation District

11 Industrial Park Dr

Walpole NH 03608

*Or emailed to:*

Amanda@cheshireconservation.org

**Proposal Due Date: May 31, 2023**

# Grant Funding and Information Required for Funded Applications

## Successful Applicants – Grantees - will be required to submit the following additional information:

### W-9

### Certificate of Insurance, with the “Cheshire County Conservation District” listed as an additional insured. Comprehensive public liability insurance in amounts not less than $1,000,000 for bodily injury or death and $500,000 for property damage, statutory workers' compensation and employees' liability insurance are required. Cost of insurance cannot be a component of the application.

### Signed contract (provided by Cheshire County Conservation District)

# Project Monitoring

## Payment for the project will be made on a reimbursement basis upon the submission of a final report.

## Grantees are required to submit a final project report in a digital format. A template will be provided. The final project report shall document the completion of project tasks and the results attained, include documentation of all expenses, and share a testimonial from the farm owner and/or manager on the benefits the NH Farm Future Fund provided.

# For Further Information

For further information, and to discuss project proposals contact:

Amanda Littleton at (603) 756-2988 ext.4 or amanda@cheshireconservation.org

The Farm Future Fund is a grant program that is privately funded and administered by the Cheshire County Conservation District on behalf of the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts.

Project partners reserve the right to modify this and other application materials in future grant rounds, based on experience gained from administering the program, changes in funding, and/or legal requirements.

*The Cheshire County Conservation District’s mission is to promote the conservation and responsible use of our natural and agricultural resources for the people of Cheshire County by providing technical, financial, and educational assistance. Our goal is to encourage the stewardship of healthy soils, productive ecologically sound farms, diverse wildlife, productive sustainable forests, healthy watersheds, and clean water to ensure those resources are available for future generations.*