

Use of Funding Guidelines for Farmers

Updated September 1, 2026 - Subject to change

The Northeast Farmers Fund (NEFF), a project of Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture & the Environment, provides farmers with funding, technical assistance, and soil analysis services to expand market opportunities for regenerative products. The funding for these projects includes USDA funding; data required for grant reporting will be shared with the USDA.

Project Approval Process

Farmers will submit an initial application detailing the project(s) they would like to fund via the NEFF program. Applicants may request up to \$50,000 in total funding, which must cover the entirety of the proposed project(s). Projects can include expenses from multiple funding categories (see below). Please note soil sampling and analysis costs will be budgeted in addition to the project total and are not included in the \$50,000 limit. All applications will be reviewed and graded against a standard evaluation rubric to assess farm and project eligibility and priority.

Applications will be considered on a rolling basis during the open enrollment period until application capacity is met for that same enrollment period. If an application is not accepted during the current enrollment period, the application may be considered in future enrollment periods.

Upon application approval, farmers will work with a Technical Assistance Provider (TAP) to gather required documentation (FSA Farm Number, W-9, quotes, soil maps if applicable) and develop a proposal and corresponding budget detailing how they plan to use program funds. The proposal must:

- Fit within the allowable use categories
- Include cost estimates and/or quotes
- Demonstrate alignment with market development outcomes
- Include a project that can be completed before November 30, 2027

Proposals will be reviewed and approved by program staff prior to contracting to ensure they meet program guidelines.

Funding Structure

Approved projects receive funding in two stages:

- Initial payment (approximately 50%) will be issued after contracts are signed and the USDA reimbursement has been received



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- **This may take up to 90 days**
- Final payment issued after project completion and documentation

Farmers must provide documentation of project completion and expenses, along with final reporting data, to receive final payment.

Eligible Farms (2026)

The Northeast Farmers Fund will prioritize farms that:

- Operate in the Northeast region (ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, NY, CT)
- Small to mid-sized farms (Between \$50,000 and \$2,000,000 annual gross farm income)
- Are working to improve soil health, pasture management, and/or conservation
- Are actively implementing conservation practices (ex. NRCS Practices, Organic Systems Plan, etc.)
- Are interested in, actively pursuing, or currently maintain sustainability-focused production systems certification, such as organic certification
- Are interested in expanding market access for regenerative farm products and/or value-added products
- Farms must have a Farm Service Agency Farm Number (see in Addendum 1)
- Farms participating in another USDA Advancing Markets for Producers grant (Ex. Pasa) may not be eligible for this funding (see in Addendum 2)

Non-Allowable Uses of Funds

- **Projects already receiving federal funding**
- **Activities with NRCS [Conservation Practice Standards](#)** (wells, ponds, irrigation/field drainage work, fencing projects, high tunnels for season extension, etc.)
 - We will not accept your application if you apply for a project containing these, please double check before submission.
- **Activities requiring NRCS environmental evaluation**
- **Activities requiring any kind of permitting to commence (ex. building permit)**
- General farm operating expenses (taxes, utilities, etc.)
- Land purchases, rent, and the cost of conservation easements
- Livestock purchases
- Feed and soil/field amendment/input purchases
- Labor payments to farm owners or staff
- Debt repayment
- Activities unrelated to regenerative farming or market access

Additional restrictions may apply depending on USDA program guidelines.



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Allowable Use of Funds

Funds may be used for activities that directly support expanding regenerative farming and/or market development for regenerative products.

1. Expanded Production of Regenerative Products: Funding may be used for farm or processing equipment and infrastructure required to increase scale or diversify production of regenerative products for market demand.

Examples include:

- Equipment, infrastructure, or tools needed to scale or diversify production
- Infrastructure improvements related to harvest, post-harvest handling, storage, or value-added processing
- This funding **cannot** be used for any activity that has an NRCS [Conservation Practice Standard](#), even if that use would expand market access. Please confirm your project does not include these activities before you submit your application.

These investments are allowable when they are required to increase scale or diversify production for market access.

2. Certification Access: Funding may support expenses required as part of a certification which will allow them to access new markets and increased price premiums.

Examples include:

- Certification fees (Organic*, Regenerative Organic Certified, Grassfed, Certified Humane, REAL Organic, Soil & Climate Initiative, etc)
 - **Organic certification fees not covered by other federal reimbursement programs*
- Certification related consultation or technical support
- Documentation and compliance preparation
- Infrastructure improvements in service of acquiring or maintaining a certification
- Costs associated with a transition period

These investments are allowable when they directly support the ability to market and sell regenerative products.

3. Brand Development: Funding may support investments that help farmers access new or higher-value markets for regenerative products.

Examples include:

- Product development or branding related to regenerative products
- Packaging or labeling improvements
- Costs associated with entering a retail market
- Distribution or logistics improvements that enable market access
- Website and/or marketing improvements



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- Business Planning and Marketing Technical Assistance

These are core marketing investments that improve access to markets and increase sales opportunities.

Soil Sampling and Analysis: Farmers may opt in to receive funding for soil sampling and analysis. This funding is provided in addition to the \$50k project limit. If you are interested in soil sampling and analysis, please indicate this on your application. Depending on your production type and project timing, a TAP may travel to your farm to conduct soil sampling. If accepted, your assigned TAP will provide more details.

Application Best Practices

All applications will be reviewed against a standard rubric to determine farm and project eligibility. The rubric encompasses consideration for the eligibility requirements and the goals of the overall program and has corresponding scores for each application question. Your farm must fit the eligibility criteria and contain an allowed project in order for your application to move forward. Please double check that your project is allowed before you submit your application.

We have made the application short, but please take the time to ensure your answers are complete and comprehensive. We expect this funding to be competitive and in order to be accepted, you must demonstrate a commitment to regenerative agriculture and a project that will meaningfully expand your market access. Since applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis, we encourage all applicants to submit their applications as soon as they are finalized. In FY2026, USDA NRCS included a definition of Regenerative Agriculture in a Frequently Asked Questions document for a new program, which you can find [here](#). Although we do not have our own definition of regenerative agriculture, Wolfe's Neck Center has adopted a systems approach, which you can find [here](#).

Addendum 1: How to Obtain an FSA Farm Number

- Step 1: Find your local FSA office by using the [USDA Service Center Locator](#).
- Step 2: Contact your local office. You can apply in person or complete the process virtually by email.
- Step 3: Request forms to be emailed to you or you can pick them up from your local office and complete them. You can also download the required USDA forms and email them with your documents to your local office.
- Step 4: Receive your permanent farm number, tract number, and field numbers.



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Addendum 2: Guidance for farms enrolling in two USDA “Advancing Markets for Producers” grants

If a farm plans on enrolling in two AMP-funded projects with two different organizations (ex. WNC and Pasa), they must communicate openly with both programs about their dual enrollment. Farmers **MUST** also ensure that both programs are not reporting the same field and commodity for both projects. Failure to do so could result in USDA asking a farmer to return the funds that they have received. Organizations cannot communicate with each other to avoid duplication; the farmer must provide all of the relevant information. WNC will issue official documentation regarding reporting for WNC's NEFF program. If a farm only has one FSA Field ID and/or one commodity, and is already enrolled in another AMP program, they cannot enroll in WNC's NEFF program.