Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture (MEGA) PROGRAM - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Please note: these FAQs are not intended to be a substitute for a careful reading of the MEGA Request for Responses (RFR).

I live in Massachusetts but my farmland is just across the border in CT. Am I eligible to apply?
No. To apply, your farm must be located in Massachusetts.

Must I have a certain number of acres to apply?
There is no minimum acreage required to apply to the MEGA Program. However, it is the objective of the Program to assist farmers in developing commercially viable operations. If you are farming on very small acreage, you may wish to explain why size will not be a deterrent to viability.

I rent my farmland. Am I eligible to apply?
You do not need to own your farmland to apply. However, you do need to have "secure access" to the land. That means you should have a written lease agreement with a term long enough to complete your proposed project and see a return on the investment. You will need to provide a copy of your lease if you are accepted into the Program.

I need money to start my farm business. Am I eligible to apply?
No. To apply you must have already started your business and at least be in your first year of producing and selling agricultural products.

I have been farming as a hobby for a few years but plan to farm as a business this year. Am I eligible to apply?
To apply you must have been engaged in active commercial agriculture for no more than five years. If this is your first year as a business you may apply, but if you are accepted into the program you will need to show that your farm did indeed produce income during the first season, and that you are on track to meet your income projections for the year. If your farm produced income last year as a hobby, be sure to include that information in your application.

I have been farming for 10 years and want to start a new business on my farm. Can I apply for a MEGA grant for the new business?
No. The MEGA Program is for farmers who are in their 1st to 5th year of operating their own commercial farm business. It is not for new enterprises on existing (more than 5 years) farms.

Our farm is operated as a non-profit organization. Are we able to apply?
No. Non-profit farms and organizations are not eligible to apply to MEGA.

We own 20 acres and have been in business for 4 years. Should we apply to MEGA or Farm Viability?
Farmers who own more than 5 acres of agricultural land and have operated for three years or more are encouraged to consider applying to the Farm Viability Program. Should you choose to apply to MEGA and are awarded a grant, you will not be able to apply to Farm Viability for a period of 3 years. If your farm income/sales have been very modest, MEGA may be a better choice than Farm Viability.

My family received a Farm Viability grant a few years ago and I now want to start a new business on their farm. Can I apply for a MEGA grant?
If your family's farm has participated in the Farm Viability Program previously, you are not eligible to now apply for a MEGA grant.

What can a MEGA grant be used for?
Both MEGA grant funds and your matching funds may only be used for fixed capital improvements (e.g., barns, sheds, greenhouses, farm stands, irrigation systems) and equipment (e.g., tractors, field equipment, fencing, farm vehicles) that will help improve or ensure your farm's viability. Grant and matching funds may not be used to purchase land, purchase livestock, pay off debt, or be used for normal operating or overhead expenses.

What can I use as matching funds?
Matching funds must be in the form of cash and may come from personal resources such as savings, other (non-Department of Agriculture) grants or loans. Matching funds may not be in the form of "sweat equity" (i.e., labor), assets you already have, prior expenditures, or anticipated future income.

Do I have to have matching funds when I apply to the Program?
You need to show that you have matching funds in hand before a contract for the grant is written. Since that will not occur until after the business planning and technical assistance phase of the Program, you do not need to have the matching funds when you apply. However, you are asked in the application form where you think matching funds would come from (e.g., reinvestment of this year's farm income, other personal cash resources, another grant that you are applying for, a loan, etc.).

Do I have to attend a course to write a business plan?
No. Business planning assistance is provided on a one-to-one basis and is an additional Program benefit over and above the grant funds.

I know exactly what I want a grant for and I have matching funds now. Why would I have to go through a business planning process before I could get the money?
The business planning and technical assistance offered as part of the MEGA Program is critical to ensure that your investment and the Department's will be put to the best use on your farm to strengthen or grow your business. While the application form does ask for your proposed use of the funds, the final determination can only be made through the business planning process.

If accepted into the Program, how long will I have to wait until I receive the grant funds and when can I start spending my matching funds?
Applicants nominated to participate in the Program will receive notification about mid-September. Program orientation will be held in October. Typically, business planning and technical assistance will be provided, and plans developed, between November and March. Contracts for the grant funds will be written between March and May. Grant payments are normally issued 4-6 weeks after the contract start date. Matching funds can be spent beginning on the contract start date.

What happens if I am accepted and I already have a business plan?
The business planning process for Program participants who already have a written business plan will include at minimum a review of the existing plan and an update to include the planned improvements and their impact on the farm's future finances. If a participant has a recent, comprehensive plan, the process may be shorter than for one who has no plan.