

Massachusetts Farmland Partnership Program FY2026 Request for Responses (RFR) Questions and Answers – Round 1

Last updated on 3/27/2025

This document includes responses to questions received by 3/17/2025 at 5pm (Round 1 of questions for the FY2026 Request for Responses).

Some questions may be edited for context or to remove personal information. Some questions may also have been combined.

The following webpages and references are commonly made and do not have individual links every time:

- [Farmland Action Plan Webpage](#), including the plan, implementation matrix and many other resources
- [Farmland Partnership Program Webpage](#), including the RFR, webinar links, and other details

Advice to potential applicants

- Please make sure you have read and reviewed thoroughly the [Farmland Partnership Program RFR](#), including the 4 file attachments, which outline the program, submission instructions, supporting document requirements, etc.
- Please consider reviewing the 3/11 webinar video and attending the webinar on 3/31 at 10am. Information about registering as well as recordings of these webinars are available on the [Farmland Partnership Webpage](#).
- TIP: Utilize the “CTRL+F” Function to search the document by specific keywords. This may help you navigate the document more quickly. Press the “CTRL” and “F” keys at the same time, then type the keyword into the search bar that will pop up.

Follow up questions

- Anticipating some applicants may wish to ask additional questions based on these answers, there is a second round of Q&A, as well as a second webinar.
- If referring to a question and/or answer given in this document, please refer to the alpha-numeric number at the beginning of the question (eg L1, Y4, E9) to aid with referencing. This document contains over 90 questions and answers, some of which are similar but not the same!
- The deadline for all remaining questions related to this RFR is April 11th at 5pm. MDAR will publish answers to these questions by 5pm on April 28th on the [Farmland Partnership Webpage](#).
- Questions must be submitted to Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov or asked during the second webinar on 3/31.
- The second webinar will be held on Monday, March 31st at 10am. Registration information is in the RFR.

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Logistics and contract admin details (L1- L4)

L1. Is there a difference between the content of the 2 webinars?

- Yes. Katharine will not be giving the webinar 1 presentation again – it has been recorded and is posted on the Farmland Partnership webpage for applicants to review on their own time. As explained in Section 7 of the RFR and on the webpage, the second webinar will explain additional details based on round 1 questions from potential applicants, and answer questions.

L2. Do you have specific standards or requirements for subawards that are part of collaborative proposals?

- The Contractor certifies full responsibility for Contract performance, including subcontractors, and that comparable Contract terms will be included in subcontracts, and that the Department will not be required to directly or indirectly manage subcontractors or have any payment obligations to subcontractors.
- For more details, please see the sample contract documents that any selected awardee will need to agree to at www.mass.gov/lists/osd-forms
 - o Commonwealth Terms & Conditions
 - o Standard Contract Form Instructions and Contractor Certifications
 - o Commonwealth of Massachusetts Standard Contract Form

L3. How many awards do you expect to make?

- We do not know. This is a new grant program so there are many unknowns. It also depends on how applicants choose to respond to this grant – there could be a few very large applications which have many partners collaborating on each application, or many small applications single or few partners, or a mix.

L4. What is an RPA?

- An RPA is a Regional Planning Agency. They are public organizations that work with municipalities and others in their region. There are 13 within Massachusetts that serve the entire Commonwealth. For more information visit <https://massmarpa.org/who-we-are/>

Funding (F1- F5)

F1. Is the original source of this funding Federal?

- No, this is not federal funding.

F2. Is the [money] for the implementation grant the same funds for MDAR purchase of land?

- No. MDAR has not purchased any land to date. MDAR does purchase APRs and Farm Viability Covenants. Farmland Partnership Program funding is separate to funding allocated for MDAR's purchase of APRs and Covenants.

F3. What is the total funding available? This would be very helpful for partners to know to better gauge how much to invest in these proposals.

- \$4 million is available through this first round of funding for this RFR.

F4. Are you expecting future rounds of funding? Will this grant be offered next year or after the two year implementation period? When do you anticipate the next round to launch?

- Yes, we are hopeful that MDAR will be able to fund this program again. Future funding, however, depends upon future fiscal conditions.

F5. We recently lost funding to do work related to [xxxx]. Can we use Farmland Partnership grant funds to continue this work?

- As explained in Section 3B of the RFR: This program is not intended to replace existing funding sources and programs that focus on specific needs, including, but not limited to, MDAR programs, EEA grant programs, NRCS programs and privately funded initiatives. Instead, this Program is intended to connect between these distinct programs and foster new initiatives as needed.

Eligibility to apply (A1- A2)

A1. As a farmer could I apply with a group like [entity] to make me eligible?

- Eligible applicants are outlined in Section 1A. If you are interested in being part of an eligible entity's response you and the applicant will need to make sure the proposed participation meets one of the allowable expenses in the RFR (Sections 2 and 3)T The scope of work to be completed must align with task(s) within the Farmland Action Plan, which focuses on providing services to farmers and fostering system changes that benefit agriculture, which may not align with activities farmers wish to pursue on individual farms. For example, these funds are not to be used for new privately-owned infrastructure, purchases of equipment, restoration work, etc. Those types of needs can be addressed through other funding programs that are offered by MDAR. Several of our grant programs are currently accepting applications. For more information on grant programs for individual farmers and farm operations please visit the [MDAR grants page](#).

A2. Can other state agencies can apply for funding? I work for UMass [xxx] and technically we are state funded, but we are also an institution

- State agencies are not listed as eligible applicants in Section 1A of the RFR
- Institutions that receive state funding but are not a state agency may be eligible. Please review Section 1A of the RFR to see if you meet the eligibility requirements.

Partnering, collaboration and collusion (P1- P28)

Note: This section has a sub-section that specifically focuses on questions related to being included in more than one application, so sometimes question numbers are skipped.

P1. I had one question as a starting place in developing a concept that I am wondering if you could answer. Given the goals of the program, do you think it makes sense for [my entity] to apply for this grant as a single [entity], and then use the grant funds to develop more official partnerships with other agencies and farmers? OR Would it be better for [my entity] to find a regional project partner and apply for this grant together, if we are able to coordinate this between organizations? I wasn't sure if the grant is intended to support groups individually in

making mutual connections, or if presenting a proposal together makes a stronger application. Coordinating between [entities] on a shared grant can sometimes pose challenges in billing, logistics etc, but it would also be great to work with other groups in this region more formally on these initiatives. Would each option be considered with equal regard?

- Unfortunately, we can't answer questions that are specific to an applicant or project proposal or that would provide an unfair advantage to anyone looking to submit a response.
- MDAR encourages collaborative applications that involve partnerships among multiple entities/individuals. See Section 3B of the RFR for more detail.
- If possible, partners who intend to work on the same tasks in different parts of the state are strongly encouraged to submit one combined application. See Section 5A-3 of the RFR for more detail.
- For additional details regarding eligibility and potential activities, please refer to the Request for Responses documents and the Program Website. In particular, sections 2 and 3 of the RFR outline what types of activities are encouraged, as well as allowable and non-allowable expenses. Section 4C of the RFR outlines the evaluation criteria.

P2. [I am] interested to connect about activities I would like to do using Farmland Partnership Program funds and applying to the RFP. [...] Can we schedule a call or video call to connect? I hope to understand [...] who else is interested in these pieces.

- Unfortunately, we can't answer questions that are specific to an applicant or project proposal or that would provide an unfair advantage to anyone looking to submit a response. For the same reason we are also unable to connect potential applicants.

P6. Is there a list of organizations that serve Historically Underserved Farmers in MA? And have these organizations been alerted that you have put out an RFR with this requirement?

- MDAR's Environmental Justice Team has been ensuring that Historically Underserved Farmers and the organizations that serve Historically Underserved Farmers are involved in the Farmland Action Plan and aware of this opportunity. These organizations have been included in Farmland Action Plan discussions in 2024 and early 2025. As such they received notification about this RFR alongside other potential partners/ applicants.
- Potential partners/ applicants are expected to establish their own partnerships with organizations that serve Historically Underserved Farmers. This is particularly important for proposals that mention providing services to and working with Historically Underserved Farmers to ensure authentic and sustainable engagement.

P7. If you are an [regional entity], you would be working on the same thing (roughly) in different parts of the state - you are not expecting all [regional entities of the same kind] to submit one application I imagine?

- The goal of the Program, as stated in several parts of the RFR, is to build networks of Partners who work together collaboratively and in coordination.
- If possible, partners who intend to work on the same tasks in different parts of the state are strongly encouraged to submit one combined application. See Section 5A-3 of the RFR for more detail.

P8. Can an organization apply with multiple "lead implementers" as their partner? Or can organizations only in 1 proposal?

- There can only be one person should be identified as the "Lead Partner"/"Lead Applicant" who is responsible for managing all that is proposed in the application. That said, applications can apply to implement several different tasks in one application. Only one partner should be listed as the lead implementer for each task/ sub-activity. If there are multiple tasks in one application, that could mean a

few different lead implementers for the tasks could be identified, depending on who is best suited to lead each task/ sub-activity.

P14. Must all possible consultants be named in the proposal, or can we identify consultants for specific work once the project is underway and specific needs emerge?

- You do not need to identify the specific consultant at the time of application, but you should identify the type of consultant that you will be trying to engage and the maximum amount you will allocate for these services. These consultants should be for specific services rather than at the partner level. Please note, that if awarded, any changes to your project would need to be preapproved by MDAR, and new items or activities not included in your application are not permitted. Please refer to Section 5C of the RFR.

P16. Can you share the names and contact information of participants in the webinar so that we can communicate together after the session and potentially build a new partnership, as desired through this grant

- Information regarding participation in any webinar may be available through a Public Records Request. MDAR's Records Access Officer will review all requests and determine what information must be provided under the Commonwealth's Public Records Law. <https://www.mass.gov/public-records-requests-for-the-department-of-agricultural-resources>

P19. Can partnering applicants be composed entirely of groups listed as the 'Potential Other Implementers' in the implementation matrix? Do any applicants need to be named as a 'Lead Implementer' in the matrix?

- In 2024 and early 2025 many partners reviewed the implementation matrix to suggest who might be the appropriate lead implementer and other potential implementers. These partners included MDAR staff, other state agency staff as well as many external partners.
- Implementers are listed according to how partners function/ the type of organization. This list may not be complete and is open to refinement using the matrix feedback portal on the Farmland Action Plan Webpage. A partner can apply even if their type of organization/ function is not listed in the matrix.
- Lead implementers have been identified where known in the implementation matrix, particularly if an MDAR team may be the lead. There are many places where lead implementers are listed as "unassigned" because they are not yet identified. Some "unassigned" lead implementers are expected to be identified in the coming months – they could be identified when the task is assigned to them because they are awarded a Farmland Partnership Program grant, or because they find other funding to support their work.
- Also see E10.

P21. I have the same question about whether each entity that possibly might get paid needs to be named in the proposal, or whether we can have line items for specific services that we intend to cover with funds

- See P14

P23. If we are listed as a lead or an other implementor in the matrix, do we need to include all of those tasks or only those tasks?

- Please review the RFR, particularly sections 2 and 3.

P26. A number of tasks relate to educating municipal boards and committees on farmland protection tools (Right to Farm bylaws, zoning, Chapter 61A, APR, CPA funds, etc). Some of these tasks identify [entity] as a partner, some of them don't even though [entity] are well positioned to work with municipalities on these topics (e.g. Task 1110). If a state agency is listed as a partner (whether [entity] are listed as partners or not), can a [partner] reach

out to work with a state agency as one of the partners? This feels particularly pertinent to educational and technical assistance tasks.

- Over the last year a list of potential implementers has been added to each task in the implementation matrix, according to how partners function. This list may not be complete and is open to refinement using the matrix feedback portal on the Farmland Action Plan Webpage.
- Lead implementers have been identified where known in the implementation matrix, particularly if an MDAR team or state agency may be the lead.
- It is encouraged for potential partners to connect about specific tasks if there is interest. This could include partners reaching out to state entities.

Being included on more than one application

P3. I am concerned about the limitation to only be engaged in one proposal; we have multiple programs at [entity] and it may make sense to lead on a proposal and be part of another collaborative effort. Why the restriction if they are separate workstreams?

- As stated in Section 3B of the RFR, MDAR encourages collaborative applications that involve partnerships among multiple entities/ individuals, but respondents must ensure that no collusion occurs in the preparation of any proposals submitted under this RFR. Partnership proposals must be submitted as a single application and potential applicants may not work with any other entity or individual if they intend to submit a separate proposal for funding. Each partner may only be included in one submitted proposal and may not be included, or receive a financial benefit from, any other proposal.
- We set a high maximum award amount so that partners apply together with a bundle of several tasks in one application.
- Collusion occurs when individuals or entities work together to prepare procurement proposals to increase their chances of being awarded. For example, two entities work together to put together two separate proposals but when reviewed together increase the odds of receiving funding.

P4. Regarding involvement, can one entity have a role in one proposal and a different role in another? For example, can an organization be the lead on one proposal and listed as an “other potential implementer” on a different proposal? Ultimately, my question is: Can an organization be part of more than one proposal?

- As stated in Section 3b “Each partner may only be included in one submitted proposal and may not be included, or receive a financial benefit from, any other proposal.”
- See Section 3B for more detail.

P5. Can you please clarify the limitation of organizations being written into multiple proposals/ cannot work together on multiple proposals? This limitation makes partner collaboration on this RFR very tricky.

- Organizations may only be involved in a single proposal.
- Also see P3 and P4.

P9. Can you be a partner in more than one application if you are not seeking any compensation through the grant program?

- No, you may only be named in a single application.

P10. In terms of collusion - what is the difference between discussing with other groups to see if they are going to apply, and if you should partner together, and collusion? We need to have the beginning conversations to determine if we will partner.

- It is the obligation of the applicant to ensure they are not engaging in any engagement or discussions with anyone other than those with whom they will be submitting a proposal to the extent that those discussions are connected to the development of any proposal.

P11. Can you define collusion?

- Collusion occurs when individuals or entities work together to prepare procurement proposals to increase their chances of being awarded. For example, two entities work together to put together two separate proposals but when reviewed together increase the odds of receiving funding.

P12. Can you clarify how best we can work together on proposals when the RFR seems to both encourage and discourage that?

- Please see P3

P13. So any one organization that represents underserved farmers can only participate in one single proposal? Even though there aren't so many such organizations?

- You may only be included in a single application.
- Please see P3

P15. I understand that entities cannot be a partner on more than one proposal under this grant. However, if an entity that is a partner on another funded grant proves to be the best consultant for specific work, such as business planning, in another funded project, could that entity be engaged as a consultant in the second project?

- Please see P14

P17. Unfortunately, Jessica's response [to unknown question] doesn't help us understand how best to partner. We could all use more clarity on this.

- We cannot answer this because the question is unclear.

P18. As [umbrella organization], we'd like to develop a proposal involving the individual [organizations], but I'm concerned that may discourage them from developing their own separate proposals. And then if our proposal is not awarded, they'd be out of luck and would have wished they went it alone.

- Please see P11

P20. How can we be strategic on our proposals statewide without being able to weigh in each other's proposals?

- Please see P11

P22. I am confused by the collaboration part- what if we work with a group but decide not to go forward, would this make us a collaborator on the final grant? Would we then be barred from doing a new grant- even though we did not go forward with the old one.

- Participation decisions should be made prior to the development of any proposal.
- Also see P10

P24. I am confused on collusion- isn't collusion where one partner applies for the same task 2 different ways versus a partner applying for 2 different tasks?

- Please see P11

P25. But how do we coordinate when we're not allowed to collaborate more broadly? I think it would help folks to better understand the collusion law so we don't violate it in our attempt partner as intended...

- See P10 and P11

P27. Can two organizations that share a fiscal sponsor apply in different applications without it being considered "collusion"?

- Yes, if it is clear that the fiscal sponsor is not participating in any drafting of project proposals and will not directly benefit financially from any of them.
- We recognize there may be contextual information that may influence this answer, so please provide additional information if you wish to follow up on this question.

P28. I am uncertain about one key element: whether or not an entity can even partner/collaborate on more than one proposal. A couple of us have interpreted the response to that question, which was raised during the webinar, differently. I thought you explained that you could be included as a participant in multiple proposals, but you could only receive funding through just one proposal. But a colleague thought you confirmed that if you are seeking funding through any proposal, you can only partner/collaborate/participate in that single proposal. And the RFR does seem to suggest they're right: Section 3B says "partnership proposals must be submitted as a single application and potential applicants may not work with any other entity or individual if they intend to submit a separate proposal for funding. Each partner may only be included in one submitted proposal and may not be included, or receive a financial benefit from, any other proposal." I was envisioning [umbrella organization] would seek funding through a proposal that we submit, but we would certainly hope the individual [organizations] would collaborate/participate in our proposed program – and if they did, we would expect that didn't preclude them from seeking funding through a separate/different proposal of their own. Can you clarify further? I dare not communicate with the [individual organizations] until I'm sure which interpretation is correct.

- You may only be included in a single application.
- See P10 and P22

Time commitment (T1- T2)

T1. [I am] hoping to understand more about what is required in terms of time. Unsure if it's 5 hours of time or 250 hours of time over one year or three years. Looking for a broader context. [Am I] just attending a meeting and giving my two cents, or driving across the state to connect with farmers?

- The amount of time needed to implement each task will differ significantly. Each applicant will need to outline what they intend to do and budget the appropriate time needed.
- Applicants will also need to estimate time needed to complete the deliverables and reporting that is common to applicants, as listed in Section 5A of the RFR.

T2 (Also see B2). The budget template highlights planning meetings, training and communications which are essential to successful projects. Are accommodations for language access considered parts of those categories? As they often require more time and consultant/translation efforts.

- There are two ways to interpret this question from a time perspective, resulting in two answers (please see B2 for answers related to budgeting):
 - o Applicants will need to build time and resources into their budget to fulfil these types of requests.

- No additional time will be given to awardees for completing their work, even if facilitating accommodations cause delays. The final contract is subject to successful negotiation of a final scope of services. Modification requests for new items, activities or objectives not included in the original proposal are not permitted. Applicants should be careful to include time in their timelines to make accommodations. This may mean including a longer lead time on preparing for and completing outreach and engagement, as well as other work.
- For more details see section 5C of the RFR

What to submit in the application (S1)

S1. Do letters of support or letters of commitment from partners or legislators help an application?

- Letters of support or letters of commitment are not needed. For information about what is considered for evaluating applications, please see the Evaluation Criteria in Section 4C as well as Section 2 of Attachment A which outlines information to include in the narrative. Section 6A outlines what documents must be included in the proposal.

Budget and Match (B1- B7)

B1. Are there restrictions on personnel or other specific budget categories for the MFAP Farmland Partnership Program? I know some grants will limit the percentage budget on technical assistance or contractors for example. I saw there is a required match for funds of 5%.

- There are no limits on the percentage of the budget for particular categories. Please see Section 3 of the RFR and the budget template for more information about what expenditures are allowed and not-allowed, match requirements as well as how the budget should be categorized and formatted. Also note the narrative requirements to accompany the budget in Attachment A, Section 2 (Project Narrative).

B2 (Also see T2). The budget template highlights planning meetings, training and communications which are essential to successful projects. Are accommodations for language access considered parts of those categories? As they often require more time and consultant/translation efforts.

- There are a few ways to interpret this question from a budget perspective, resulting in the following answers (please see T2 for answers related to time):
 - Paying for translation, interpretation and other accommodation services are an eligible expense. Applicants will need to include these costs in their budget under Sub-Activity 5.1 (General administration)
 - Once negotiated and finalized in the contract, there can be no changes to the scope or budget. Modification requests for new items, activities or objectives not included in the original proposal are not permitted. Applicants should be careful to budget for any anticipated costs for interpretation, translation and other accommodation requests.
- For more details see section 5C of the RFR

B3. Can you further explain the cash match criteria and not allowing 'in-kind' match for staff capacity? Partners often match grant funding with in-kind staff time. It seems like the intended goal is to hire contractors and specifically have partners match the funding to those contracts/contractor invoices...vs. partners matching staff time towards match. Is this an accurate interpretation?

- For this grant, in-kind match using staff time is not permitted. Instead, the cash match has been set at a very low percentage of 5% with some flexibility according to financial need (see Section 3F of the RFR for more details).

- It is up to the partners on the application about how the cash match is met and allocated between partners.
- The intended goal of this program is not to hire contractors to work on tasks in a transactional manner. It is for partners to work together to accomplish the tasks, in collaboration and coordination, in a relational manner. We are hoping that partnerships forged through this program form the foundation for future partnerships and collaborative work to advance the goals of the Farmland Action Plan as well as other initiatives that benefit agriculture in the Commonwealth.

B4. Must the lead agency retain a certain percentage of the budget?

- The RFR does not contain any guidance about how the budget will be allocated between partners
- That said, it is important to note what the RFR outlines about responsibilities and qualifications of the lead partner. Please see the Evaluation Criteria (Section 4C), narrative guidelines (Section 2 of Attachment A) and other parts of the RFR for more information.

B5. I understand that the match must directly related to the proposed project and tasks. As for sources, are both state and federal funds eligible match?

- State and federal funds are eligible match, as long as their requirements do not preclude being matched with these funds (state funds).
- Local and private funds could also be also eligible cash match, including membership dues from members or member entities, private donations, and other sources, as long as their requirements do not preclude being matched with these funds (state funds).

B6. Does staff time funded through other sources count as cash match, or is that ineligible in-kind match?

- This would be ineligible. Staff time funded through other sources is a type of in-kind match.

B7. Does cash match have to be in hand at the time of proposal or promised? How do we prove a match?

- Cash match does not need to be in hand at the time of proposal, but should be detailed in your submission.
- Upon signing the contract, the awardee will be committing to providing the cash match.

Deliverables and expectations (D1- D3)

D1. Can you speak more to what the MDAR staff reviews & meetings with partners would be like? Are all partners required to participate in these reviews?

- MDAR will assign a staff person to be the point of contact for a specific project. MDAR reviews are important to ensure that materials being created align with the intent of the Farmland Action Plan. Ideally, by the time MDAR review occurs, any major issues would already have been flagged by MDAR staff and resolved, so review should be relatively simple – for example through participation of MDAR staff in project meetings, or in the bi-monthly check ins. As stated in Section 5A-5 of the RFR, before any item is presented, printed, published or shared publicly, MDAR must be given a draft for review, with a reasonable turnaround time. MDAR has the right to make changes. Initial concepts and drafts should also be discussed at bi-monthly/ quarterly checks ins, or via interim communication as needed.
- MDAR-partner check in meetings are important for coordination. They will be held online, unless a site visit is needed. As stated in Section 5A-3, it is important that partners coordinate with MDAR staff and partners on any work which is completed as part of this Program contract. For the duration of the contract, the partners shall regularly meet with MDAR staff and host site visits if appropriate to discuss

progress on the contract, emerging issues, areas where assistance may be needed and other relevant information useful for coordination. This shall occur no less than bi-monthly in the first year and quarterly in the subsequent years if partner staffing remains stable. If there is notable change to staffing or there is a contract performance issue emerging, coordination will return to bi-monthly for the first year.

- Meetings with other partners is important. The goal of the program is to build networks of partners who work together collaboratively and in coordination to protect farmland, enhance farm viability, and ensure access to farmland.
 - o As stated in Section 5A-3, partners are strongly encouraged to attend, participate in in events meetings or workshops that have overlap with area(s) of focus of their Program contract. Partners may also be hosting and/or facilitating these events, meetings or workshops. If possible, partners who intend to work on the same tasks in different parts of the state are strongly encouraged to submit one combined application. In no event, however, may applicants work together to submit separate proposals.
 - o Cohort meetings are intended to bring partners from all Farmland Partnership funded projects together. Some cohort meetings will be online and some will be in person – because different goals can be accomplished when online versus in person. As stated in Section 5A-4, all partners – lead applicants and subcontractors - are expected to attend up to four meetings/ events each year that bring together all the partners funded through this program. This is intended to bring together the partners in a way that will develop a cohort partnership network between different expertise's and geographic areas.
- Please see Section 5A of the RFR for more details

D2. Will the meetings be Zoom or hybrid to recognize the great geographic distances and travel times?

- This depends on what type of meetings
 - o MDAR-Partner check in meetings as outlined in Section 5A-3 will be held online, unless a site visit is needed
 - o Cohort meetings will be held either online or in person, because different goals can be accomplished when online versus in person. We understand that travel times can be notable from some parts of the state, but there are some partnership building activities, including relationship and trust building, that is best done in person. We will consider travel logistics when scheduling meetings – including the ratio of travel time to meeting time – when scheduling. As such in-person meetings/ events will likely be all day meetings/ events. Hybrid meetings will likely not be utilized.
 - o Meetings scheduled by partners as part of task implementation can be scheduled online, in person or hybrid. “A clear and reasonable strategy for engagement with participants, including Historically Underserved Farmers” is included as one of the evaluation criteria in Section 4C. Please see the narrative requirements for Geographic location and participation (2J) in Attachment A, Section 2 for more details about expectations for decision-making and explaining strategy for outreach and engagement.

D3. Back to hybrid meetings (D2)- what if one of your staff works out of state remotely?

- It is expected for all partners involved in this project to attend meetings in person in Massachusetts as required, regardless of where their normal regular worksite is located.
- See D2 for more information.

Calendar/ Timeline (C1)

C1. When do you anticipate announcing awards, and how long might it take to execute a contract for the funds?

- As noted in Section 7 of the RFR, the estimated award date is September 2025 and the estimated contracted effective date is November 2025. Please note several steps are subject to external (non-MDAR) review and this timeline is subject to change. Please see section 7 of the RFR for more details.

Priorities/ Scoring/ Evaluation Criteria (Y1- Y8)

Y1. Is there a preference for topical applications or geographically focused projects?

- The evaluation criteria values both. Please see Section 4C with the Evaluation Criteria for more details
- For more information on topics, please see Sections 2 and 3 in the RFR for more information on activities that are encourage, as well as allowable and non-allowable expenditures.
- For more information geography, please see Section 5A-3, as well as the Narrative requirements in Section 2 of Attachment A

Y2. Why does the RFR encourage partners who intend to work on the same tasks in different parts of the state to submit one combined application rather than taking a regional approach with partners? Are we being dissuaded from creating a regional proposal with partners across tasks?

- Regional proposals are permitted but will likely not score as high given the scoring criteria and other guidance within the RFR.
- Providing services to and improvements for farmers across the state, regardless of their geographic location is important. We also recognize there are many commonalities that are shared among regions. However, we recognize that there are differences among regions, which may result in a regional application as a more appropriate approach.
- We realize that some initiatives may need to be piloted in a smaller geographic area, but ultimately we would like to encourage all initiatives to be conducted statewide, or at least for a large portion of the state until the service area can be expanded to statewide.
- Regionally based entities can coordinate to provide the same or similar services to their constituents. This could be the same type of regional entity, or a mix of regional entity types adjust their typical service areas so that all gaps are covered.
- It is also important to be efficient with the use of public funds – for example, learning from other examples in other places rather than inventing processes from scratch each time. Coordination and partnership in delivery from the beginning, or when significantly increasing the service area, is therefore important.

Y3. This appears to be an outreach and education funding source. Will MDAR be planning any funding sources for fee or restriction acquisition? Even more importantly, are there plans to provide funding geared towards staffing and capacity for organizations that do farmland protection, not just outreach and education?

- The implementation matrix includes a wide range of tasks that are eligible for this program that are not just focused on outreach and/or education.
- Staffing and capacity building for farmland protection is an allowable expenditure, within certain limits. Please see Sections 2 and 3 of the RFR for more information.
- MDAR is working on a separate RFR to fund protection of farmland through Private APRs, but it is not yet ready.
- Also see E25.

Y4. In response to that last question [unknown reference] for the work of RPAs, it is important for us to strengthen the municipalities in our region, and involves creating connections with a lot of people and orgs who work locally. It is very hard to do that work on a state-wide level - it seems creating regional initiatives would make the strongest impact in our region, especially by working together with regional groups already focused in the same region. Does this mean that if your work by nature is regional [...] you should not apply to do work on your region with partners in your region?

- Please see the answer to Y2 as the beginning of a response to this question.
- In addition, we agree that it is important to strengthen the municipalities across the state. There are several regional entities who can help with this. This RFR is not saying that you cannot focus on a region, but instead encourages regional entities to work together on a coordinated approach.

Y5. To clarify - statewide partnerships are encouraged, but regional partnerships are also eligible?

- That is correct. Please see questions Y2 and Y4 for additional details.

Y6. Following up to Y1, does the scoring criteria prefer geographic or topical partnerships in applications. It might be helpful to explain why (the thinking behind this). It's still unclear.

- Please see answers to Y1 and Y2.

Y7. Do I understand that the review criteria do or do not [have] preference [on] paying additional overhead on grants to have more partnerships and less individual contracts to manage, and to what degree?

- The Evaluation Criteria in Section 3C of the RFR do not consider overhead costs on their own. On a more general level, they do include the feasibility and appropriateness of the budget.
- The Evaluation Criteria do consider the extent to which the proposal includes multiple partners in a single proposal, supporting approaches that provide coordinated outreach, engagement and services across the entire Commonwealth, or significant portion of the Commonwealth (multi-region/multi-county level).

Y8. Please clarify if organizations have known administrative barriers to not partnering when programmatically it might seem logical from the outside, whether they will be dinged in scoring or deprioritized for this. If both orgs prefer to apply individually, and will be covering the entire state with separate, but complementary services, is this just as strong as applying together?

- The evaluation criteria and requirements of the grant do not include a provision to justify why partnering is not feasible. All applications will be scored and evaluated on the same criteria.
- As stated in section 5A-3 "If possible, partners who intend to work on the same tasks in different parts of the state are strongly encouraged to submit one combined application. In no event, however, may applicants work together to submit separate proposals."

Eligibility of proposals and allowable expenses (E1- E33)

E1. Can you please tell me if our proposal could be in line with the goals of the program? We would like to lease land from [landowner] with agricultural easements, to grow [agricultural product].

- Unfortunately, we can't answer questions that are specific to an applicant or project proposal or that would provide an unfair advantage to anyone looking to submit a response.
- For questions regarding eligibility and potential activities, please refer to the Request for Responses document and the Farmland Partnership Webpage. In particular, sections 2 and 3 of the RFR outline what types of activities are encouraged, as well as allowable and non-allowable expenses.
- Please also see the answer to question A1

E2. I guess I'm not really understanding of this program but wondering if our farm which presently helps other farms out by sharing the use of equipment and manpower. [Removed details about services provided.] Is there a print out I might learn more about this grant through?

- You can learn more about this grant through the Request for Responses attachments available in [COMMBUYS](#).
- Unfortunately, we can't answer questions that are specific to an applicant or project proposal or that would provide an unfair advantage to anyone looking to submit a response. All proposed activities should be clearly tied to a specific task(s) in the MA Farmland Action Plan. For additional details regarding eligibility and potential activities, please refer to the Request for Responses documents and the Farmland Partnership Webpage. In particular, sections 2 and 3 of the RFR outline what types of activities are encouraged, as well as allowable and non-allowable expenses.
- Please also see the answer to question A1

E3. Would our activities with schools be eligible?

- Unfortunately, we can't answer questions that are specific to an applicant or project proposal or that would provide an unfair advantage to anyone looking to submit a response. All proposed activities should be clearly tied to a specific task(s) in the MA Farmland Action Plan. For additional details regarding eligibility and potential activities, please refer to the Request for Responses documents and the Farmland Partnership Webpage. In particular, sections 2 and 3 of the RFR outline what types of activities are encouraged, as well as allowable and non-allowable expenses.
- Please also see the answer to question A1

E4. I'm personally working with [partner] and [partner] to purchase a conservation easement on my farm and I'm interested to know if MDAR could be another partner in the purchase?

- Unfortunately, we can't answer questions that are specific to an applicant or project proposal or that would provide an unfair advantage to anyone looking to submit a response. For questions regarding eligibility and potential activities for the Farmland Partnership Program, please refer to the Request for Responses document and the Farmland Partnership Webpage. In particular, sections 2 and 3 of the RFR outline what types of activities are encouraged, as well as allowable and non-allowable expenses.
- For additional questions related to purchasing farmland easements, please speak with an Acquisition staff member in the [Agricultural Preservation Restriction \(APR\) Program](#)
- Please also see the answer to question A1

E5. We [will be meeting to discuss xxx concept on DATE, TIME, LOCATION]. [We] look forward sharing ideas on the role a [concept] can contribute to the implementation of the MA Farmland Action Plan. [Can you or an MDAR representative join this meeting?]

- We cannot attend meetings related specific projects or applications.
- Unfortunately, we can't answer questions that are specific to an applicant or project proposal or that would provide an unfair advantage to anyone looking to submit a response.
- For questions regarding eligibility and potential activities, please refer to the Request for Responses document and the Farmland Partnership Webpage. In particular, sections 2 and 3 of the RFR outline what types of activities are encouraged, as well as allowable and non-allowable expenses.

E6. [I am] interested to connect about activities I would like to do using Farmland Partnership Program funds and applying to the RFP. [...] I have gone through the goals to find a place where my skills fit. [XXX] seems to be my best overarching goal. I reviewed the tasks/actions under Goal X, and the following could be a good place to

start. There were some policy and legislative tasks of interest, but that could be biting off more than I can chew. Can we schedule a call or video call to connect? I hope to understand the time commitment and who else is interested in these pieces.

- Unfortunately, we can't answer questions that are specific to an applicant or project proposal or that would provide an unfair advantage to anyone looking to submit a response. For the same reason we are also unable to connect potential applicants.
- We recommend reviewing the RFR and attending the RFR webinars which should help you to answer some of your questions. You can get the link to the RFR and the link to register for the webinar from the Farmland Partnership Webpage.

E7. I fear I have stumbled upon this program and am not sure I am eligible. Perhaps you can point me to a program that may be more appropriate for me. I have a small parcel of land in [...] MA and want to create a small farm. [...]. I am looking for money to help with the start of this farm. I believe I just heard that there will be grants for that but this is not the case for this grant?

- Unfortunately, we can't answer questions that are specific to an applicant or project proposal or that would provide an unfair advantage to anyone looking to submit a response. For questions regarding eligibility and potential activities for the Farmland Partnership Program, please refer to the Request for Responses document and the Farmland Partnership Webpage. In particular, sections 2 and 3 of the RFR outline what types of activities are encouraged, as well as allowable and non-allowable expenses.
- MDAR has a webpage for Beginner Farmers that you may find helpful - <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/beginning-farmer-resources>
- Please also see the answer to question A1

E8. We currently sell [product]. We are looking to expand to a small farm of [products]. We are currently zoned for agricultural and need funding for land clearing and greenhouses.

- Unfortunately, we can't answer questions that are specific to an applicant or project proposal or that would provide an unfair advantage to anyone looking to submit a response. For questions regarding eligibility and potential activities for the Farmland Partnership Program, please refer to the Request for Responses document and the Farmland Partnership Webpage. In particular, sections 2 and 3 of the RFR outline what types of activities are encouraged, as well as allowable and non-allowable expenses.
- MDAR has collated its agricultural grants and assistance programs in one place - <https://www.mass.gov/guides/agricultural-grants-and-financial-assistance-programs>
- Please also see the answer to question A1

E9. I'm particularly interested in how this grant applies to private APR or CR acquisitions.

- As explained in Section 3C of the RFR, the purchase or protection of land is a non-allowable expenditure.
- MDAR is working on a separate RFR to fund protection of farmland through Private APRs, but it is not yet ready.

E10. Would a task be eligible for this grant if the "lead implementer" and "potential other implementers" [in the matrix] are all state agencies, with no other partners listed?

- No, for the following reasons:
- In 2024 and early 2025 many partners have reviewed the implementation matrix to suggest who might be the appropriate lead implementer and other potential implementers. These partners included MDAR staff, other state agency staff as well as many external partners. This list may not be complete and is

open to refinement using the matrix feedback portal on the Farmland Action Plan Webpage. A partner can apply even if their type of organization/ function is not listed in the matrix.

- That said, lead implementers have been identified where known in the implementation matrix, particularly if state agency may be the lead. If all the partners for both lead and other potentials are state agencies, it is likely that this task is work that needs to be completed by just staff from state agencies. That may include seeking input from interested individuals at some point, but it may also include just internal conversations.
- If you can see a different interpretation of a task that would not include only state agency staff, please make a suggestion via the matrix feedback portal to be considered in future edits to the matrix. It will likely involve discussion about the intent of the task, rather than just adding missing potential partner, hence not being able to resolve this task allocation while the RFR is open.
- Also see response to P19

E11. The grant can't be used for land protection acquisition costs or transaction costs. Can it be used to hire staff to do land protection projects, and/or pay existing staff to do more farmland protection projects?

- No and yes
- Farmland protection, including acquisition or transaction costs, are non-allowable expenses. There are many other tasks within the implementation matrix that support farmland protection (Goal 1/ Activity 1) that may be eligible – see sections 2 and 3 for more information.
- Staff cannot be hired using Farmland Partnership funds. Job advertising, HR costs, managing staff and the many other activities related to hiring new staff are not allowable expenses.
- Farmland Partnership funds are to be used to pay staff on a reimbursement basis for completing specific activities associated with implementing a task. The staff needed to complete these activities may be existing or new. If training is needed to help the staff person to complete their work related to implementing a task, that is eligible if the training is held within the Commonwealth.
- For more information about what work can be done and what are allowable and non-allowable expenses, please see Sections 2 and 3 of the RFR.

E12. Does "Funding to enhance Partner staff capacity to protect farmland" include the ability to hire land trust land protection staff? This is not clear from the RFR because non-allowable expenses excludes "staff time for conservation project management" which is the bulk of what land trust staff do. This increased capacity at land trust is essential to achieve the land protection goals of the plan. Can you please clarify?

- See answer to E11

E13. Would allowable expenses include any small equipment or infrastructure for farmers (that are not already covered by MDAR or NRCS)?

- No. Small equipment and infrastructure are not an allowable expense. As explained in answers to questions A1 and others, these funds are not to be used for new privately-owned infrastructure, purchases of food, etc. The scope of work to be completed must align with task(s) within the Farmland Action Plan, which focuses on providing services to farmers and fostering system changes that benefit agriculture, which may not align with activities farmers wish to pursue on individual farms. MDAR offers a wide range of funding programs that are intended to address the specific needs of farmers. For more information on grant programs for individual farmers and farm operations please visit the [MDAR grants page](#).

E14. Are activities allowed in other states (e.g., NH) so long as the audience is Massachusetts farmers? I understand travel and training aren't, but what about a non-training activity?

- Activities are not allowed in other states, even if the audience is Massachusetts farmers. We realize there are commonalities between farming in many states in the northeast, but given the limited funds available, we need to focus awards on efforts that will benefit Massachusetts farms, farmers and communities. As stated in the RFR goal, the Massachusetts Farmland Partnership Program is a grant project to help implement the Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan at the local, regional or statewide level.

E15. Task 1080 says: "Incentivize farmers and landowners who have conserved their land to act as ambassadors to their peers to educate and encourage them to do the same." But non-allowable expenses include: "Costs associated with land already protected for any purpose under Article 97 or a Conservation Restriction (CR), an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), or a Watershed Preservation Restriction (WPR)." How is this type of non-eligible expense defined for the purpose of this grant?

- For the purpose of this grant, the non-allowable expense item is referring to ongoing costs related to specific protected lands, such as surveys, stewardship endowments, issues requiring legal input and similar activities.
- The focus of Task 1080 is about sharing good practices with other farmers, rather than about specific properties.
- Work to support protection of more land is an eligible expense for the Farmland Partnership Program

E16. Many tasks describe "developing programs"-- does this include implementation as well as the development of programs?

- Yes it may. You could create programs, but not grant programs.
- All tasks within the Implementation Matrix are eligible activities, as long as they meet what is outlined in Sections 2 and 3 of the RFR.
- That said, it may be premature to rush to implementation on some tasks before evaluating what should be implemented. Achieving both developing and implementing programs fully within the 2 year contract may not be feasible.
- In some cases the implementation task may not yet be identified – it awaits more information from the foundational stages.
- The implementation matrix is open to task refinement and additional tasks when there is not an open RFR. Suggestions for revisions and additions to the matrix via the matrix feedback portal on the Farmland Action Plan webpage can be made at any time, but will not be considered and changed until after the RFR deadline.
- That said, Farmland Partnership funds cannot be used for creating new grant programs/ sub-awards to other entities or businesses.

E17. Can you clarify what kinds of admin costs can be covered?

- Section 3B of the RFR says "Reasonable costs and expenses borne by the applicant for activities directly associated with the development and administration of the Farmland Partnership Program as identified in Section 2 above" and then gives some examples.
- Section 3C explains what costs are not allowable
- Section 3E and the budget template (particularly the "Important Info" tab) give additional examples as relate to the budget and budget categories/ breakdown.

E18. Some Actions in the matrix don't have any tasks associated (e.g., 1240, 1241, 1242). Are those ineligible because there is no task associated?

- As stated in Section 2 of the RFR, all proposed activities, including deliverables and services, must be clearly tied to a specific task(s) in the MFAP. [...] The proposed activity cannot just be inspired by a strategy or action – it must be aligned with a specific task, which includes following the intent of the specific action and strategy under which the task is listed.
- As such, actions without tasks would be ineligible for this round of the RFR. After the RFR deadline has passed, tasks could be added to the matrix as steps to implement actions, thereby making tasks that could be considered in any potential future rounds. Suggestions for revisions and additions to the matrix via the matrix feedback portal on the Farmland Action Plan webpage can be made at any time, but will not be considered and changed until after the RFR deadline.

E19. I see how money gets to others but how does it actually get to a farmer?

- During the creation of the Farmland Action Plan and its first year of implementation many partners expressed willingness and expertise to implement tasks from the plan, but expressed a need for funding to enable them to do some of this work, beyond what activities they already have funding for. For the Farmland Partnership Program we focused on addressing that need.
- The scope of work to be completed must align with task(s) within the Farmland Action Plan, which focuses on providing services to farmers and fostering system changes that benefit agriculture, which may not align with activities farmers wish to pursue on individual farms. MDAR offers a wide range of funding programs that are intended to address the specific needs of farmers. For more information on grant programs for individual farmers and farm operations please visit the [MDAR grants page](#).

E20. Can funds be used for capital expenditures (not land acquisition)?

- Capital expenditures are likely not eligible, but we need additional information additional information/ examples to be able to answer this question
- What we can say is that the scope of work to be completed must align with task(s) within the Farmland Action Plan, which focuses on providing services and fostering system changes that benefit agriculture.
- Please review Section 3 for examples of allowable and non-allowable expenses.

E21. Disappointed to hear that response [to unknown question, maybe E11 and E12]. How can you build capacity for land protection to achieve the plan without more land trust staff to do land protection?

- Please see answers for E11 and E12
- In addition, the Farmland Action Plan, its implementation matrix and the Farmland Partnership Program Grant focus on “preserving and expanding farmland—a nonrenewable resource—and securing a sustainable agricultural sector for future generations” (Page 4 of the Farmland Action Plan). To achieve this there are three goals – farmland protection, access and viability – which “are highly dependent on each other and successful strategies must address the needs of and strengthen linkages among all three” (Page 3 of the Plan). Protecting Massachusetts’ farmland is not just about adding an easement or covenant to protect land. You can also protect farmland by facilitating access to farmland for the next generation and by helping the farmland and farm business stay viable. You do not need all three elements on the same farm at the same time – protection, access and viability – to “protect” the farm and farmland for the current and next generation.

E22. Could a proposal include a plan to offer small grants to build capacity for farmland protection — for example among [partner type]? i.e. where the specific grant recipients are not yet known?

- No. Farmland Partnership funds cannot be used to create new grant programs

E23. Can a group of seasoned farmers get together to work on estate planning, farm transfer as a group. Would they have to get a separate EIN for their group?

- Unfortunately, we can't answer questions that are specific to an applicant or project proposal or that would provide an unfair advantage to anyone looking to submit a response. All proposed activities should be clearly tied to a specific task(s) in the MA Farmland Action Plan. For additional details regarding eligibility and potential activities, please refer to the Request for Responses documents and the Farmland Partnership Webpage. In particular, sections 2 and 3 of the RFR outline what types of activities are encouraged, as well as allowable and non-allowable expenses.
- Please note that some proposed activities may require partners to have particular expertise, license, and/or credentials under Massachusetts law.

E24. Can you please clarify what's meant by "Costs associated with land already protected for any purpose"...most farmers who will be seeking land access will be doing so on protected or public-owned land.

- This guidance from the RFR is not referring to work on farmland access. Tasks that address farmer access to protected farmland are eligible. Please see answer for E15 for additional context.

E25. This appears to be an outreach and education funding source. [...] Also, do you have a specific example of partnership and its deliverable that are envisioned by the RFP?

- The implementation matrix includes a wide range of tasks that are eligible for this program that are not just focused on outreach and/or education. Please see Sections 2 and 3 of the RFR for more information.
- We cannot provide a specific example of partnership and its deliverable. There are a very wide range of options enabled through this RFR, and we are looking forward to hearing what partners would like to propose. Many partners in Massachusetts have significant expertise and ideas for addressing the challenges they identified during the creation of the Farmland Action Plan and contributed to the initial steps for refining the implementation matrix.
- Also see Y3.

E26. Are you interested in "pilot project proposals" with specific efficacy data collection and replication opportunities?

- As stated in the RFR, all proposed activities, including deliverables and services, must be clearly tied to a specific task(s) in the MFAP. [...] The proposed activity cannot just be inspired by a strategy or action – it must be aligned with a specific task, which includes following the intent of the specific action and strategy under which the task is listed.
- Please refer to Sections 2 and 3 of the RFR for more information

E27. Since an answer given today [E19] said that the program is not intended to benefit any particular farmer, perhaps the question about how the funds are getting to farmers is related to that. As in how is this going to help farmers and farms on the ground? Especially if an application can't include helping a specific farm or farms?

- Please see answer to E19.

E28. Can this grant be used to support the viability of land used for growing native plants (native plant nurseries) that are used on farms?

- Unfortunately, we can't answer questions that are specific to an applicant or project proposal or that would provide an unfair advantage to anyone looking to submit a response. All proposed activities should be clearly tied to a specific task(s) in the MA Farmland Action Plan. For additional details regarding eligibility and potential activities, please refer to the Request for Responses documents and

the Farmland Partnership Webpage. In particular, sections 2 and 3 of the RFR outline what types of activities are encouraged, as well as allowable and non-allowable expenses.

- Please also see the answer to question A1

E29. Can we hire a new person to coordinate and expand activities? Meaning we might list "to be hired" in the proposal and budget

- See answer to question E11
- Please also see section 2F in Attachment A (Project Narrative)

E30. Could a region develop a model that could be used state-wide?

- As stated in the RFR, all proposed activities, including deliverables and services, must be clearly tied to a specific task(s) in the MFAP. [...] The proposed activity cannot just be inspired by a strategy or action – it must be aligned with a specific task, which includes following the intent of the specific action and strategy under which the task is listed.
- Please see sections 2 and 3 of the RFR for more information.

E31 [...] I have a question about one of the items listed as non-allowable costs – “Costs associated with land already protected for any purpose under Article 97 or a Conservation Restriction (CR), an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), or a Watershed Preservation Restriction (WPR)”. Can you clarify what is meant by "costs associated with" - does that mean program activities cannot take place on spaces with a CR? Or something larger, like costs associated with acquiring this land?

- Program activities not related to land protection/ stewardship can take place on land protected by APRs, CRs, Private APRs and Covenants.
- Please see answers to E15 and E24 for additional details

E32. Related to the following item in Non-Allowable Expenditures, “Costs associated with land already protected for any purpose under Article 97 or a Conservation Restriction (CR), an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), or a Watershed Preservation Restriction (WPR).”, I think you mean the non-allowable expenditure to be specific to the Farmland Protection Activity, and not the other Activities, however, I will ask some hypotheticals to explain what implications I am getting at.

- A. Is this about parcel specific tasks, or about farmers who own, or may access, transfer or finance those parcels in activities under the plan?*
- B. Should I understand this non-allowable expense to mean that only farmers on unconserved land are eligible for farm viability services funded by this grant?*
- C. Should I understand this non-allowable expense to mean that for the items we identified for [...] business advisor professional development training roles in the Plan, we can only use this grant, (and should only assume the Plan applies to) training advisors to work in situations that involve unprotected land?*
- D. Should I understand this non-allowable expense to mean that for any financing tasks/solutions supported by the grant, farmers on conserved farms would not be eligible for the financing programs involved?*

All farmers need farm viability services; a vibrant sector requires UNIFORM and accessible land access and transfer services across conserved AND UNCONSERVED farms; making programmatic distinctions about eligibility based on conservation status within our land access, transfer, financing and business advising services is both confusing for farmers, would require complicated matching funds administration to maintain equal access to services for all farmers.

- Please see answers to E15, E24 and E31
- For your scenario B, your interpretation is incorrect. Farmers are eligible for farm viability services funded by this grant regardless of whether the farmland is protected or not.

- For your scenarios C and D, both within the context of this Farmland Partnership Program and the Farmland Action Plan, you should assume that services are provided to farmers regardless of whether their land is protected or not, unless there is specific language to indicate a specific audience (for example at least one task talks about encouraging farmers with short-term covenants (a type of protection) to consider long-term protection).

E33. Related to the following item in Non-Allowable Expenditures, “Costs associated with land already protected for any purpose under Article 97 or a Conservation Restriction (CR), an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), or a Watershed Preservation Restriction (WPR)”, should I understand the Plan, Matrix and Grant as a strategy for unprotected land getting protected? Or should I understand it as a working lands strategy for maintaining farm viability and agricultural sector viability on conserved and unconserved farms? Or something else? I understand the Plan, as well as [Massachusetts’s partner work on] farm viability work as working lands strategies for maintaining farm viability and agricultural sector viability on conserved AND UNCONSERVED farms. I understand that conserving land is part of the task at hand, but that conserved farms are not meaningful if farms are not viable, so viability is the base of the functional strategy and program design pyramid.

- The Farmland Action Plan, its implementation matrix and the Farmland Partnership Program Grant focus on “preserving and expanding farmland—a nonrenewable resource—and securing a sustainable agricultural sector for future generations” (Page 4 of the Farmland Action Plan). To achieve this there are three goals – farmland protection, access and viability – which “are highly dependent on each other and successful strategies must address the needs of and strengthen linkages among all three” (Page 3 of the Plan). Protecting Massachusetts’ farmland is not just about adding an easement or covenant to protect land. You can also protect farmland by facilitating access to farmland for the next generation and by helping the farmland and farm business stay viable. You do not need all three elements on the same farm at the same time – protection, access and viability – to “protect” the farm and farmland for the current and next generation.
- Answers to E15, E24 and E31 may also be helpful.