

Massachusetts Farmland Partnership Program FY2026

Request for Responses (RFR) Questions and Answers – Round 2.1

Last updated on 3/27/2025

This document includes responses to questions received by 3/25/2025 at 9am, the first part of the Round 2 questions for the FY2026 Request for Response. All remaining questions and answers received by 4/11/2025 at 5pm will be included in the final Q&A document (Round 2.2).

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](#).
- Before reviewing this document, we recommend reviewing the answers to the Round 1 questions on the [Farmland Partnership Webpage](#)
- Questions and answers have an alpha-numeric number at the beginning of the question (eg L1, Y4, E9) to aid with referencing. This document and the round 1 document contain over 100 questions and answers, some of which are similar but not the same!
- 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. There are over 90 questions and answers so far, 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.
- *No further questions will be answered for this RFR after April 11th before the May 19th deadline for submitting applications.*

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Partnering, collaboration and collusion (P29)

For P1 thru P28, see Round 1 Q&A Document

P29. If an [entity] is not listed as a ‘potential other implementer’ or a ‘lead implementer’ for a specific task, and yet the [entity] could lead an initiative within their [service area], or implement the specific task within the [entity service area] in partnership with other local groups, would an [entity] be considered an applicant for grant funds for this task or this initiative? For example, task XXXX - an [entity] could do this for their [service area], and it would be very helpful for municipalities to prioritize farm preservation and take actions. However, in this task [our entity type] are not listed as ‘potential other implementers’. If an [entity] included this task in the proposal, would this weaken the grant proposal and/or would the [entity] not be considered for funds under this task because the [entity] is not listed as a ‘potential other implementer’?

- Please see answers P19 and E10
- Unfortunately we cannot answer questions related to interpretation of particular tasks while the RFR is open - 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.

Budget and Match (B8 - B11)

For B1 thru B7, see Round 1 Q&A Document

B8. Is there an indirect cost rate limitation for this proposal? I did not see one referenced in the RFR.

- For each partner organization/entity in the budget, provide the Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate if the organization/entity has one. If not, please provide justification for the selected indirect rate for each organization/entity.

B9. Is there an organizational budget requirement for the reduced cash match request? We anticipate some of our partners not being able to contribute cash matching funds and would like more guidance on how to request the waiver or reduction of required match.

- The RFR section Section 3F states: “A cash match is required. At least 5% match is recommended for all activities. Lower match is acceptable with justification related to financial need. Adequate match will be considered as part of the evaluation process.”

B10. Will MDAR allow pre-award cash match spending to be used toward this project if it helps advance the goals of the proposed project? E.g., we have a donor willing to contribute funding for a [person to do work this summer that] may continue into the fall and will support the goals and objectives of our proposal. Can we use the cash match for this “pre-work” as a contributor to the overall project budget of the full proposal even if the spending falls outside the project period but contributes to the overall project budget?

- No. Pre-award cash match spending is not allowed.
- As stated in Section 3F, Costs incurred prior to execution of the contract, including application preparation costs, will not be considered as part of the match requirement. Work being completed by someone is in-kind match, not cash match

B11. What is acceptable justification to waive the cash match requirement for limited resource organizations?

- In Section 3F of the RFR the following advice is given regarding cash match: “A cash match is required. At least 5% match is recommended for all activities. Lower match is acceptable with justification related to financial need. Adequate match will be considered as part of the evaluation process.”

Deliverables and expectations (D4 - D6)

For D1 thru D3, see Round 1 Q&A Document

D4. In MFAP ID Task 1018 and 1021, the task is to ‘incentivize’ municipalities and RPAs to ‘develop local farmland protection plans reflecting local farming opportunities and priorities’ and to ‘develop mechanisms to incentivize municipalities to classify farmland of local importance’ - what types of incentivization are considered for this task? [Examples/ scenarios given]

- Unfortunately we cannot answer questions related to interpretation of particular tasks while the RFR is open - 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.

D5. How is 1029 different from 1030? Is it just the implementers that are different?

- Unfortunately we cannot answer questions related to interpretation of particular tasks while the RFR is open - 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.

D6. Task 1057 is geared towards the promotion of EEA Planning Assistance Grants, as a [partner type] we can both encourage/support our municipalities in applying for these to support agriculture, or we can apply for them and then support agriculture. [Our partner type] are not listed as a ‘potential other implementer’ on this line, yet we could use FPP funds to support municipalities in applying for these grants, or in applying for the grant on a regional basis – is this task not intended for [partner] implementation though? Is there another task you would recommend we could apply to do this work through?

- Please see answers P19 and E10
- Unfortunately we cannot answer questions related to interpretation of particular tasks while the RFR is open - 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.

Priorities/ Scoring/ Evaluation Criteria (Y9)

For Y1 thru Y8, see Round 1 Q&A Document

Y9. Will proposals for regional efforts be considered as strongly as statewide efforts and/or be competitive? For example, where partnering statewide isn’t feasible or where the case is made for how a particular initiative is tailored to a sub-region of the state, could this be a viable proposal? In the case of [regional entity type], if [one regional entity] does not wish to apply for funds, [regional entity type] would not be able to increase their capacity to support ag in the region, if regional initiatives are not considered applicable for this grant. Would a

strong regional application, including multiple regional partners working together on ag initiatives in their mutual region, be considered competitive for this grant application

- Please see answers to P7, Y2, Y4, Y5, Y6

Eligibility of proposals and allowable expenses (E34 – E37)

For E1 thru E33, see Round 1 Q&A Document

E34. How to do you draw the line between “Consultations with and outreach to farmers and farm owners on needs related to farmland protection” and assisting landowners in the processing of applying for the APR Program? One role I often take on is meeting with farmers and explaining a suite of conservation options. If APR is a good fit, I arrange a meeting with [an MDAR APR Planner]. If [they] like the project, I assist the farmer in preparing an APR application and [...] serve as an “interpreter” for the program [...]. Would these kinds of activities be allowed under this RFR?

- See E11 and E12
- Section 2 in the RFR states the following task is encouraged: “Consultations with and outreach to farmers and farm owners on needs related to farmland protection, referring to available workshops, trainings, and services from MDAR and other service providers.
- Section 3C of the RFR includes the following examples of non-allowable expenditures
 - o Purchase or protection of land.
 - o Costs of appraisal, survey, title search, title insurance, recording fees, site specific plans, maps, site restoration, soil testing, soil studies and environmental assessments, resource planning, and engineering.
 - o Staff time for conservation project management.
- As explained in some previous questions (A1 and others), the scope of work to be completed using Farmland Partnership funds 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.
- As such, there is a limit to how much you can focus on specific properties when working with Farmland Partnership funds. When the work becomes too focused on specific farms and farm properties – whether project management for protecting the farmland, creating individual farm transfer plans, funding capital improvements on farms, and other similar activities – the work is no longer eligible under Farmland Partnership. The program is looking to foster larger system change that can benefit many, not just individuals. This includes outreach, education, cultivating (but not executing) projects, and many other activities. Note: for many of these activities which are focused on individual farms, there are already existing funding sources to support this work.
- With this in mind, as related to this specific question about assisting landowners with protecting their farmland, work to support a landowner with protection up to the point when due diligence starts is eligible to be funded under Activity 1 of the Farmland Partnership program. Once due diligence activities begin, the project has a narrower focus and details are being researched and negotiated – hence being viewed as project management, which is not eligible to be funded by the Farmland Partnership program. Due diligence includes, but is not limited to, appraisals, survey, title search, title insurance, recording fees, site specific plans, maps, site restoration, soil testing, soil studies and environmental assessments, resource planning, and engineering.
- The following applies this to specific farmland protection types:

- APR – A partner can use Farmland Partnership funds to help a landowner to submit an application. Once the APR application is submitted to MDAR, the MDAR APR Planner assumes the role of project management when they work on due diligence. At this point the work of the partner is no longer eligible to be funded using Farmland Partnership funds, even if supporting the farmer in addition to the MDAR staff person.
- Private APR – A partner can use Farmland Partnership funds to educate landowners and cultivate landowner interest for pursuing a Private APR. Any work beyond this is not eligible for Farmland Partnership funding.

E35. Do you know if this grant allows for capital expenditures? I saw that land acquisition is not eligible, but I am wondering about other kinds of capital expenditures such as growing infrastructure.

- This grant does not allow for capital expenditures. See E13 for more information.

E36. What does “... and others” mean in Section 2 of the RFR?

- Section 2 of the RFR encourages particular tasks in bulleted lists by Activity. The list of tasks includes some, but not all, the potential task numbers associated with what is list. “And others” just means the example list is incomplete.

E37. Can this be used to restore [...] agricultural site/building and be used to provide year-round educational events on agricultural topics [...] at] that site ?

- 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.