

MA Farmland Action Plan – Drop-In Session for Potential Partners

Notes from online discussion on 9/17/2025

Context

On Wednesday, September 17, 2025 at 10am Katharine Otto hosted a drop-in session for potential partners (people who may help with implementation of the plan). The meeting had no presentation – instead the content was guided by questions and comments from attendees. While still open to general conversation, through the invitations Katharine encouraged discussion about edits to the matrix at the drop in sessions. The drop in sessions are organized as an easy way to connect in, anticipating that recent discussions and new resources may have sparked additional thoughts. The primary audience was potential partners.

Facilitator – Katharine Otto, Farmland Action Plan Coordinator, MDAR. Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov

The following is a brief summary of the conversation that occurred during the drop-in session.

Some notes regarding the comments and questions:

- Some have been edited or combined.
- Comments have been collated by topics, in no particular order
- These comments are from voluntary participants in open discussion. These comments may or may not align with positions of MDAR or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Discussion notes

The following is a brief summary of some of the conversation that occurred in the chat box during the meeting as well as some of the oral comments. It includes links and resources shared with participants.

Matrix tasks

- What is the most recent version of the matrix?
 - o February 2025. We are seeking input now for the next round of edits.
 - o <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-farmland-action-plan#implementation-matrix>
- Should I just look for my type of organization?
 - o Not always. Some organizations perform several functions/ roles. Since the matrix does not list specific organizations at this time there are organizations where they will have to look at several organization types to get a full picture of what they could get involved with. For example some of the “statewide non-profits” also have “ag policy org” (role in policy and advocacy) and “land trust” (role in protecting land) functions.
- What happens as tasks get completed? What comes next?
 - o List as “Completed” in the status. May add a task that comes next, or something about revisiting topic periodically. Open to suggestions!
- What happens if a task was overlooked? Can it get added?
 - o The matrix is and will always be a working document. Some tasks were added last year and we anticipate additional ones are still missing.
 - o New tasks need to fit within the intent of the released 2023 plan, so not every new suggestion will be added. It is important that they fit under a specific goal, strategy and action in the plan.

We can discuss how it might fit and work out the next step. In some cases the proposed task may better belong with another plan or initiative, rather than the MFAP.

- Please reach out to Katharine with suggestions and we can discuss.
- “Incentivize” used in a few places.
 - What is meant by this? As a starting point, think about the barriers faced and what could help shift practices, not just fiscal incentives, but also other actions that could encourage change. Need more discussion about what this means in context of specific tasks
 - For some tasks it may be appropriate to divide an “incentivize” task into two pieces – with the first step being “encourage” or something along those lines, and the second being “incentivize”.

Farmland of Local Importance (FLI) – Task 1020

- SRPEDD has also been working on this. Two participants at drop in session recommend editing task so not mentioning just one organization.

Buy-Protect-Sell and ROFR

- Where is it in the matrix? Might have some specific thoughts based on recent conversations
- Look up using “sell” as a search term in “item statement” column because that is a more unique word than “protect”.
- Some relevant tasks – 1033, 1043, 1115
- How does Right of First Refusal (ROFR) interact with BPS. Look up “ROFR”. See task 1106 – seems to outline need and have the right organizations listed
- Task 1077 – what does this mean?

Food production assessment

- Tasks 1160 and onward talk about “food production assessment” – what is that?
 - It is under the Action about assessing land for food production – so that can help with understanding
 - Coalescing around a common concept would be a good first step for organizations who want to work in this sphere. There appear to be a variety of perspectives amongst partners.
 - Trustees planning to do some work in this area and would like to connect to others

Land licenses and leases - Task 1191 and others

- Trustees to be working on developing leases and standardizing them. How does that connect with this task? What is meant by “incentivize”?
- Be aware that there are parallels and some differences between the tasks that are oriented toward privately held lands versus publicly held lands. You may find it helpful to look at both actions and their related tasks.

Coordination and partnership

- How do I find out if other organizations are doing overlapping work with me?
 - Reach out to Katharine and she can help connect where she’s aware of work
 - Matrix anticipated to list specific organizations and contacts for some tasks going forward - particularly when Farmland Partnership grants are awarded which work on implementing specific tasks.
- How do leads and potential other implementers work together?
- Try not to double up on work. Coordinate and learn from each other
- Reputations of some organizations not great in certain communities – important for outreach to recognize limitations and barriers, and use organizations that have best chance for success given the intended audience.

RPAs contributing to implementation of the MFAP

- Where do RPAs fit into implementation? See presentations for RPAs for more ideas and context.
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-farmland-action-plan#more-about-the-plan>
- Why aren't RPAs listed in more places? Our RPA does some additional work where RPAs aren't listed as "other potential implementers".
 - o Feel free to suggest additional places where RPAs should be listed. But also keep in mind that if we flag everything, the matrix becomes less helpful.
 - o It is also helpful to look for the organizations who perform particular functions that overlap with RPA expertise – eg ag policy org, municipality. The listed "other potential implementers" is sometimes more about the function the organization provides rather than the specific type – especially since some organizations have several roles.