



Building Local Food Security

How public investment can strengthen farm and food system resilience

MA Food System Forum
November 21, 2025





OUTCOMES

1. **Shared understanding of State farmland and food security goals**
2. **Lessons learned for increasing viability and productivity of public land and infrastructure for new/beginning farmers**
3. **How public investments can support a more sustainable and resilient local food supply chain**
4. **Gaps & opportunities for more local food supply chain coordination and infrastructure needs**

What is the Food System?

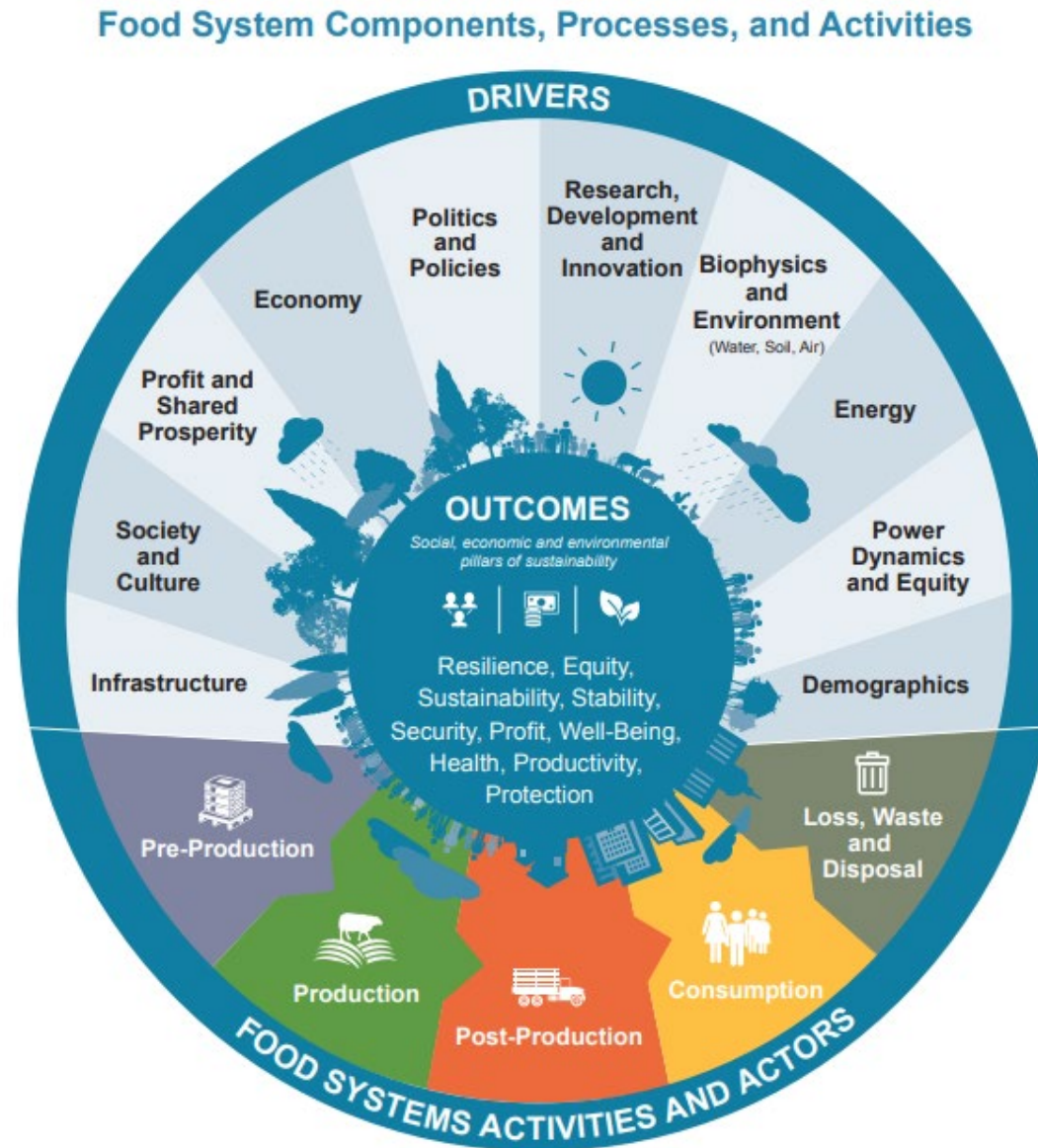


Image source: *Figure – Food system components, processes, and activities*, Niles, M. T., Ahuja, R., Barker, T., Esquivel, J., Gutterman, S., Heller, M. C., ... & Vermeulen, S. (2018). *Climate change mitigation beyond agriculture: a review of food system opportunities and implications*. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, 33(3), 297-308.

Statewide Initiative – Implementing the Farmland Action Plan

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Connecting farmland to the food system

MA Local Food Action Plan 2015 and MA Farmland Action Plan 2023



Developed by:
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Franklin Regional Council of Governments
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Massachusetts Workforce Alliance

For:
Massachusetts Food Policy Council

December 4, 2015

MA Local Food Action Plan

- **Goal 1: Farmers will be able to sustain economically viable operations on their land.**
- **Goal 2: More farmland and prime farmland soils will be permanently protected.**
 - Including Recommendation 2.1: Develop a formal state farmland action plan
 - And many others
- **Goal 3: More land will be available for agriculture in rural communities, suburbs and cities, and farmers will have more secure and affordable access to that land.**
 - Including Recommendation 3.1: Develop a formal state farmland action plan
 - And many others

Why is the Farmland Action Plan important?

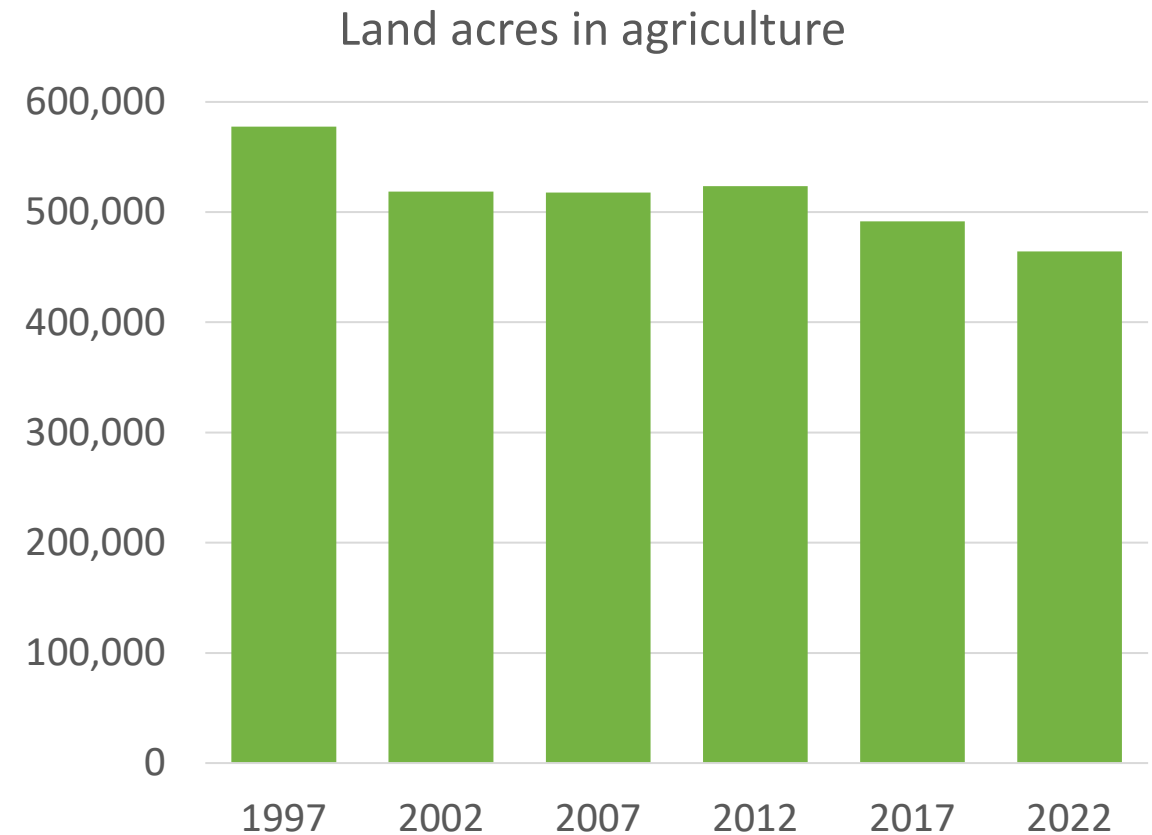
We are losing agricultural land fast!

Between 1997 and 2022 Massachusetts lost 113,000 acres

- 3.7 times the size of the land area of Boston
- 1.8 times the size of Martha's Vineyard
- 12.4 acres per day

We are expected to lose another 50,000 – 89,000 acres of farmland before 2040

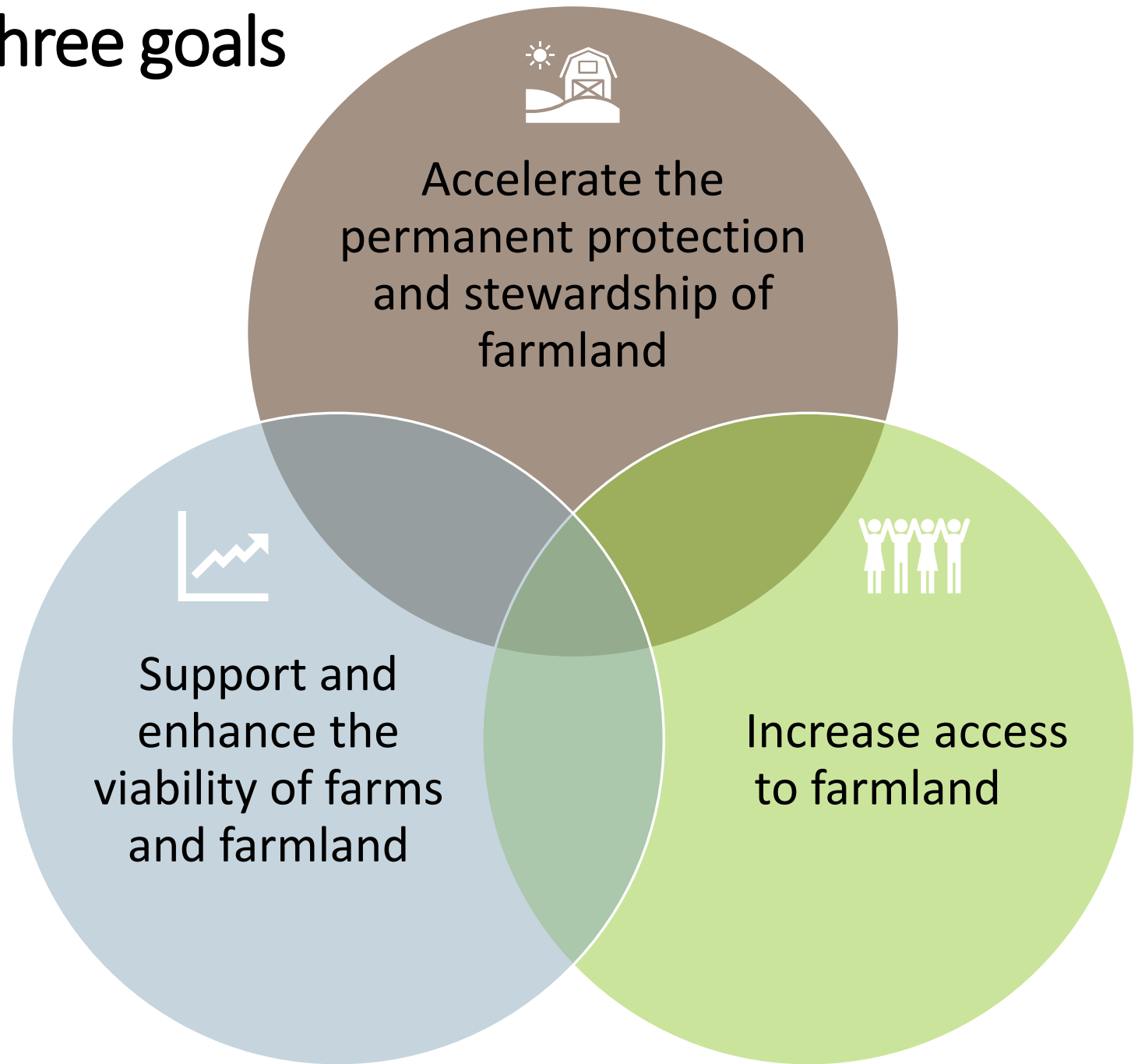
- 1.6 – 2.9 times the size of the land area of Boston



What is the Farmland Action Plan?

- State funded
- State coordinated
- Long range strategic initiative – 2023 through 2050
- Statewide, not just for state government
- www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

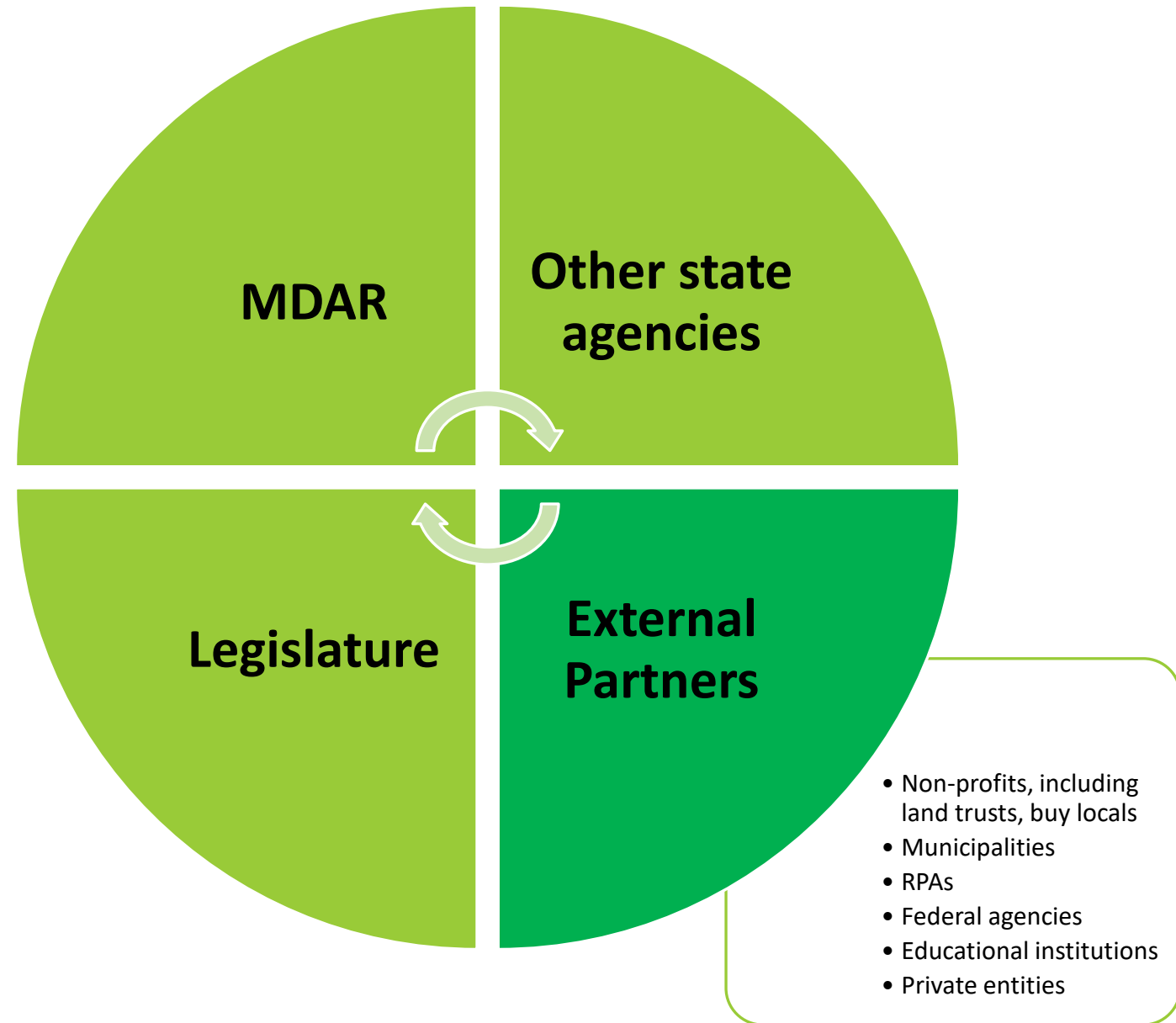
Three goals



Who will implement the Plan?

This is a plan for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

MDAR is promoting, monitoring and facilitating implementation of the Plan, building momentum from existing programs and initiatives.

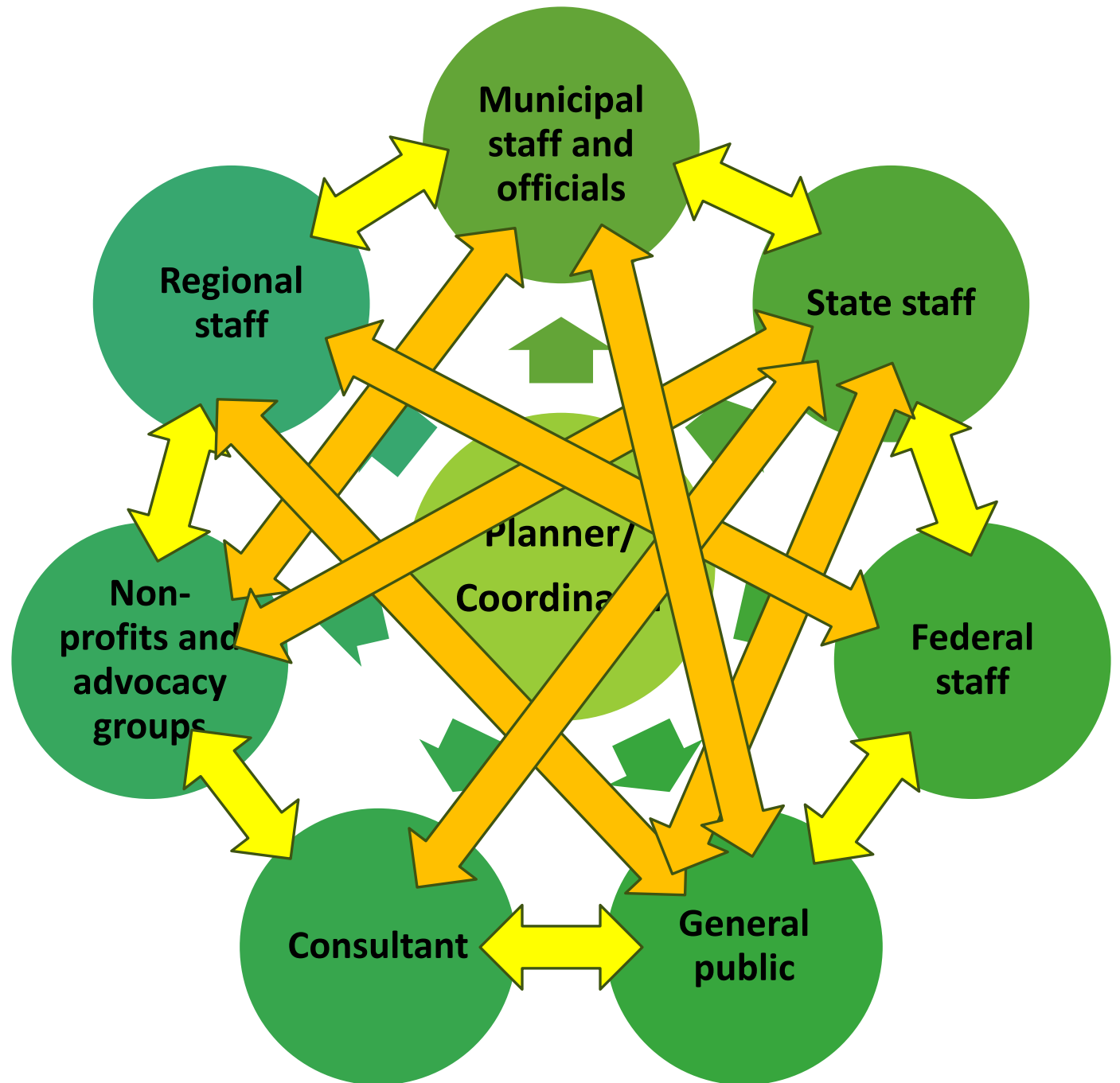


Role of a planner/ coordinator

- Connecting people & resources
- Help with coordination
- Seek and foster opportunities

“Sometimes the role of government is not to solve problems directly, but rather to play conductor to the orchestra of solution chasers around the country”

Priya Parker - The Art of Gathering.
How we meet and why it matters.



Important features for implementation

Building partnerships and collaboration

Reducing silos and building shared understanding

Farmland Partnership Program

Evolving approach

Look to the future while learning from the past and other programs

Implementation Matrix - rooted in the Plan, but adjusts as needed

Engagement

MFAP newsletter

Drop-In Sessions

Events and meetings focus on specific tasks

Webpage resources

Get connected!

www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

MFAP Newsletter

- Approximately monthly
- Celebrate work done and share opportunities to get involved.
- Sign up on webpage

Drop In Sessions

- Approximately monthly
- Ask questions, share comments and make suggestions
- Dates and registration in MFAP newsletter and on webpage

Progress Reports

- First released December 2024
- Second anticipated December 2025
- Shares more about what has happened so far
- Highlights – Work in progress or starting soon

Other Resources by Topic

- Created for meetings with potential partners – Presentations, meeting notes and other resources
- Short video introductions added in May 2025

New Farmland Partnership Program

Grant program to help implement the Farmland Action Plan at the local, regional or statewide level.

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.

Focuses on implementing tasks from MFAP Implementation Matrix

Learn more at www.mass.gov/info-details/farmland-partnership-program and get updates through the MFAP newsletter

Applications received (May 2025)

- 14 applications requesting \$7.4 million
- Proposed 393 projects to implement specific tasks in the MFAP matrix.

What comes next?

- Awards to be announced soon.
- Work expected to start early 2026.

Sneak Peak from the 2025 Progress Report!

Some of the progress
stories!

Sign up for the MFAP
newsletter to get the
Progress Report when it is
released and opportunities
to get involved!

Highlight 4 – Build capacity of entities to protect land

- Creating a Buy-Protect-Sell Program at MDAR

Highlight 5 – Build awareness and capacity of municipalities to protect land

- Supporting AgComs
- Planning for Farmland document

Highlight 6 – Increase awareness of protection programs

- Encouraging more Private APRs with new guidance

Another Sneak Peak from the 2025 Progress Report!

Highlight 9 – Build state land licensing program

and

Highlight 10 – Increase use of public lands by Historically Underserved Farmers

What part of the Farmland Action Plan does it contribute to?

Goal II: Increase access to farmland.

- **Strategy II.A: Make more land available for agriculture.**
 - Action II.A.2: Strengthen the State land licensing program
 - Several tasks!
- **Strategy II.C: Prioritize increased access for BIPOC and historically underserved farmers in all farmland access programs and policies.**
 - Action II.C.2 – Increase access to public lands for agriculture, while prioritizing Historically Underserved Farmers
 - Several tasks!

Followed by presentations:

Public Lands for Farming: Strengthening the State Farmland Licensing Program

Ryan Burke, Land Licensing Coordinator

Statewide Initiative: Building Local Food Security

Juli Stelmaszyk, Director for Division of Food Security