RFA 202109151

Maine Farms for the Future Phase 2

Table of Contents

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **RFP Definitions/Acronyms** | **2** |
| **Application Details and Instructions** A. THE PROGRAM  B. ELIGIBILITY TO SUBMIT BIDS  C. APPLICATION MATERIALS AND REQUIRED INFORMATION  D. TITLE AND CHAPTER | **5** |
| **Key Process Events**  A. SUBMITTING QUESTIONS  B. AMENDMENTS TO THE REQUEST FOR APPLICATION  C. SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION | **7** |
| **Application Evaluation and Selection** A. SCORING WEIGHTS  B. SCORING PROCESS | **9** |
| **Application** A. APPLICATION COVER PAGE  B. DEBARMENT, PERFORMANCE and NON-COLLUSION CERTIFICATION  C. APPLICATION | **11** |
| **Current and Future Other Obligations** | **15** |

RFA 202109151

Maine Farms for the Future Phase 2

# RFP Definitions/Acronyms

The following terms and acronyms shall have the meaning indicated below as referenced in this RFP:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Term/Acronym | Definition |
| Department | Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry |
| RFP | Request for Proposal |
| State | State of Maine |
| DACF | Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry |
| Review Panel | A panel appointed by the DACF Commissioner to review applications and make grant funding recommendations to the Commissioner. |
| FFF | Maine Farms for the Future Program |
| The Program | Maine Farms for the Future Program |
| FAME | Finance Authority of Maine |
| Applicant | Farm Owner/Operator that is applying for Phase 2 Investment Support and is a private, for-profit company that is owned by individuals, partners or corporations, that grows or produces agricultural products for commercial sale (excluding marijuana farms, except as permitted under 7MRS Ch.406A, Section 2231) |
| Farm Vitality | An increase in long-term, maintainable, farm profitability and net worth. |
| Business Plan | A document that identifies changes in farm management practices and investments in equipment and property that would increase the profitability and net worth of the farm (vitality). A typical plan identifies ways to increase on-farm income through such methods as improved management practices, direct marketing, and value-added initiatives; and describes current operations and future plans for the business, including but not limited to sections on mission/vision, legal organization, management team, product descriptions, market research, market promotion, customer profiles, financial statements, financial analysis of planned changes in the business and long-term goals for the business. |
| Agricultural Products | Means fresh, or to be processed, food, fiber, or horticultural products grown on the farm, with the intent that the product be sold or otherwise generate income. Agricultural products produced on the farm may include the growing and harvesting of some specialty forest products, such as firewood processing, but may not include the products of a business engaged primarily in the growing, harvesting or processing of trees for the purpose of producing pulp or other materials used in paper manufacturing or wood manufacturing. An agricultural product may also include aquacultural products, so long as they are raised on the farm. |
| Farm Business | Agricultural products grown or produced on the farm are being sold commercially and the farm has documentation of gross and net farm income, expenses, net worth and farm debt. |
| Land in Agricultural Use | Land that is currently being used to grow agricultural, horticultural, and silvicultural products. |
| Idea(s) for Change | Ideas the Applicant proposed to research to improve Farm Vitality |
| Phase 1 Business Plan Development | A grant awarded to conduct research on proposed Idea(s) for Change, that if found to be feasible are developed into a project or projects that are described in a written business plan. |
| Phase 2 Investment Support – Cash Grant: | The cash grant is for an amount not to exceed the lesser of $25,000 or 25% of the total investments identified by the Business Plan. Prior to the disbursement of cash grant funds, the Department may require the grantee to provide documented evidence of a proportionate amount of match equaling 75% of the total investments identified by the Business Plan. The match must be directly related to the implementation of the Business Plan and must have a real market value. Match may include, but is not limited to, in-kind labor and farm resources such as timber, sand, gravel or other natural resource materials used to implement the Business Plan; personal cash resources; loans, including a reduced-interest (2%) loan from the Agricultural Marketing Loan Fund; other grants; and other resources relevant to the Business Plan. |
| Phase 2 Investment Support – AMLF Loan Recommendation  Services Package: | The Review Panel may recommend, and the Department may provide a selected applicant with a recommendation to apply for a reduced-interest (2%) loan from the Agricultural Marketing Loan Fund. If the total cost to implement the Business Plan is less than $100,000 then the reduced-interest loan may be up to 90% of that cost. If the total cost to implement the Business Plan is more than $100,000 then the reduced-interest loan may be up to 75% of that cost. In either case, the total amount of the reduced-interest loan may not exceed $250,000. The reduced- interest loan may be used as match for the cash grant. |
| Selected Farm | A farm that previously applied to and was selected for Phase 1 between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2020. |
| 7-Year Farmland Protection Agreement (FPA): | A written agreement between a farm selected to receive an investment support cash grant and the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, wherein the farm agrees to keep an area of farmland of no less than 5 acres in active agricultural use and to protect that land from non-agricultural development for a period of seven (7) years. |

# Application Details and Instructions

1. **The Program**

The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (Department) is seeking applications for Phase 2 of the Maine Farms for the Future Program.

Applicants that were selected for **Phase 1** were awarded a $6,000 grant to develop a detailed business plan to increase farm vitality; *the long-term, maintainable, farm profitability and net worth*.[[1]](#footnote-2)

Once the Phase 1 business plan has been completed the selected farm may compete for **Phase 2** investment support to implement the project or projects described in the business plan.

## **Eligibility to Submit Bids**

**The applicant must have been selectedfor and awarded the Phase 1 business planning grant between November 2017 and December 2020.**

If the applicant intends to secure the cash grant of no more than $25,000, the following eligibility requirements apply:

* + 1. The applicant has ownership of at least 5 acres of land that is in agricultural use at the time of application; and
    2. The applicant agrees to enter into a 7-year Farmland Protection Agreement with the Department.
    3. If the entirety of the applicant’s owned farmland is already permanently protected by a permanent agricultural conservation easement, then the farm may NOT apply for the cash grant. However, the applicant may apply for the recommendation for the 2% interest rate as described below.

If the applicant is seeking recommendation to receive a 2% interest rate on a loan issued through the Agricultural Marketing Loan Fund (AMLF) program, the applicant will be subject to all AMLF project eligibility and loan application requirements described on the following website : [Agricultural Marketing Loan Fund](http://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/grants/agricultural_marketing.shtml).

## **Application Materials and Required Information**

A successful Phase 2 FFF application includes a complete business plan utilizing the “Business Plan Template for 2021 Phase 2 Applicants” found at this this [webpage](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/business_and_market_development/farms_for_future/index.shtml).

The appendix of the business plan must include all evidence of match accrued to date equaling or exceeding 75% of the total cost of the project(s) described in the business plan. Such evidence of match includes:

1. Bank Statements to show personal cash resources;
2. Promissory Notes or Closing Statements for loans;
3. Award Letters and/or Contracts for other grants;
4. Proof of payment (receipts) for purchased Materials for work on the project(s) that was completed during the Phase 1 contract period. A Purchased Materials Log can be found at <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/business_and_market_development/farms_for_future/index.shtm>;
5. Proof of payment to Hired Labor for any work done on the project(s) during the Phase 1 contract period (invoices or cancelled checks). A Hired Labor Log;
6. Proof of value for In-kind Labor listing dates, tasks, and hours worked at $25/hr for work completed during the Phase 1 contract period. An In-Kind Labor Log can be found on the Maine Farms for the Future webpage: [Maine Farms for the Future](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/business_and_market_development/farms_for_future/index.shtml).
7. Proof of value for In-kind Materials such as timber, lumber, sand, gravel or other natural resource materials that are harvested or mined on the farm valued at the fair market value for a comparable product sawn logs, milled lumber, yards of gravel, etc. An In-kind Materials Log can be found on the Maine Farms for the Future webpage: [Maine Farms for the Future](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/business_and_market_development/farms_for_future/index.shtml).

## **Awards**

No more than **eight (8) Phase 2 Investment Support Grants** will be available in the 2021/2022 cycle.

Any person aggrieved by the award decision that results from this Request for Applications may appeal the decision to the Director of the Bureau of General Services in the manner prescribed in 5 MRSA § 1825-E and 18-554 Code of Maine Rules, Chapter 120 (found here: [Chapter 120](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/policies-procedures/chapter-120)).  The appeal must be in writing and filed with the Director of the Bureau of General Services, 9 State House Station, Augusta, Maine, 04333-0009 within 15 calendar days of receipt of notification of contract award.

## **Title and Chapter**

The Program statute can be found here: [Title 7, Chapter 10-B](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/7/title7ch10-Bsec0.html); and the Program rules can be found here: [Chapter](https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/01/001/001c036.doc) 36 listed as 01-001 Chapter 36.

RFA 202109151

Maine Farms for the Future Phase 2

# KEY PROCESS EVENTS

## **Submitting Questions about the Request for Applications**

Any questions must be submitted by e-mail to the Grant Coordinator identified on the [Grant RFPs and RFAs webpage](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/grants) by **December 3rd, 2021** at 11:59 p.m. local time. Submitted Questions must include the subject line: “RFA# 202109151 Questions”. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete/on time e-mail transmission and receipt.

Question & Answer Summary: Responses to all questions will be compiled in writing and posted on the following website: [Grant RFPs and RFAs](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/grants). It is the responsibility of all interested parties to go to this website to obtain a copy of the Question & Answer Summary. Only those answers issued in writing on this website will be considered binding.

## **Amendments to the Request for Applications**

All amendments (if any) released in regard to this Request for Applications will be posted on the following website: [Grant RFPs and RFAs](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/grants). It is the responsibility of all interested parties to go to this website to obtain amendments. Only those amendments posted on this website are considered binding.

## **Submitting your Application**

Applications are to be submitted to the State of Maine Division of Procurement Services, via email, to [Proposals@maine.gov](mailto:Proposals@maine.gov). Applications must be received by **January 10, 2022** at 11:59 p.m. local time. Applications received after the 11:59 p.m. deadline will be ineligible for award consideration for that annual application enrollment period.

Only applications received by email will be considered. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete e-mail transmission and receipt.

Applicants are to insert the following into the subject line of their email submission: **“RFA# 202109151 Application Submission – [Applicant’s Farm Name]”**

Applicant’s proposal submissions are to be broken down into two files, with each file named as it is titled in bold below, and include:

* **File 1 [Applicant’s Farm Name] – Application**

*PDF format required*

Application Cover Page, Page 11

Debarment, Performance, and Non-Collusion Certification, Page 12

Application, Pages 13-15

* **File 2 [Applicant’s Farm Name] – Business Plan**

*PDF format required*

Completed business plan as outlined in the “Application Materials and Required Information, Part C” section of this RFA and all relevant appendices.

RFA 202109151

Maine Farms for the Future Phase 2

# APPLICATION EVALUATION AND SELECTION

## **Scoring Weights and Process**

The score will be based on a 100-point scale and will measure the degree to which the application and business plan meet the following criteria.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Phase 2 Scoring Criteria** | **Maximum Points Available** |
| **Completeness of the Business Plan** | 5 |
| **Character and Management Capacity**  The application and business plan demonstrate applicant’s knowledge, experience and capacity to successfully plan, implement and manage the proposed changes to the farm business. | 20 |
| **Financial Capacity and Debt Management**  The changes proposed in the business plan will improve the cash flow, and management of debt load needed to pay any new debt associated with the proposed changes to the farm business. | 10 |
| **Collateral and Asset Base**  The application and business plan demonstrate that the farm will improve the productivity of the land (soil quality, fertility, water holding capacity), the physical condition of the buildings and equipment, and maintain any newly acquired assets to increase the overall sustainability of the farm business. | 20 |
| **Farm Vitality & Development of New Capital**  The Business Plan demonstrates, through better strategies, marketing, production efficiencies and upgrading of facilities and equipment, an increase in profitability and overall net worth that will improve the overall sustainability of the Farm Business. | 30 |
| **Other Conditions**  (**A**) The Business Plan identifies how the current or proposed farm operations will accomplish broader conservation objectives such as protecting water quality, improving wildlife habitat, or maintaining open space and local scenic and cultural amenities as long as such practices enhance or maintain the profitability of the farm. (5 points)  (**B**) The percentage of the farmland owned by the applicant that is to be protected under the Farmland Protection Agreement. (5 points)  (**C**) The degree to which the change in the business is new and different to the business. (5 points) | 15 |
| **Total Points** | **100** |

**Scoring Process:** The Maine Farms for the Future Review Panel appointed by the Commissioner of DACF a consensus approach to evaluate and score all Phase 2 sections listed above. Members of the Review Panel will not score those sections individually but, instead, will arrive at a consensus as to assignment of points for each of those sections.

RFA 202109151

Maine Farms for the Future Phase 2

APPLICATION COVER PAGE

**Handwritten Applications Will Not Be Accepted**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Farmland Owner’s Name** | | Click or tap here to enter text. | | | |
| **Farm Business Name:** | | Click or tap here to enter text. | | | |
| **Tel:** | Click or tap here to enter text. | | **E-mail:** | Click or tap here to enter text. | |
| **Physical Address** | | Click or tap here to enter text. | | | |
| **City/State/Zip** | | Click or tap here to enter text. | | | |
| **Physical Address** | | Click or tap here to enter text. | | | |
| **City/State/Zip** | | Click or tap here to enter text. | | | |
| **Year Selected for and Awarded Phase 1 Grant** | | | | | Choose an item. |

* No personnel currently employed by the Department or any other State agency participated, either directly or indirectly, in any activities relating to the preparation of the Applicant’s application.
* No attempt has been made, or will be made, by the Applicant to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit an application.
* The above-named organization is the legal entity entering into the resulting agreement with the Department should they be awarded a contract.
* The undersigned is authorized to enter contractual obligations on behalf of the above-named organization.

To the best of my knowledge, all information provided in the enclosed application, both programmatic and financial, is complete and accurate at the time of submission.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name (Print):** Click or tap here to enter text. | **Title:** Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Authorized Signature:** | **Date:** Click or tap here to enter text. |

RFA 202109151

Maine Farms for the Future Phase 2

DEBARMENT, PERFORMANCE and NON-COLLUSION CERTIFICATION

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Applicant’s Farm Name:** | Click or tap here to enter text. |

*By signing this document, I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the aforementioned organization, its principals and any subcontractors named in this application:*

1. *Are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, and declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from bidding or working on contracts issued by any governmental agency.*
2. *Have not within three years of submitting the application for this contract been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for:*
   1. *Fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a federal, state or local government transaction or contract.*
   2. *Violating Federal or State antitrust statutes or committing embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property;*
   3. *Are not presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State or Local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated in paragraph (b) of this certification; and*
   4. *Have not within a three (3) year period preceding this application had one or more federal, state or local government transactions terminated for cause or default*.
3. *Have not entered into a prior understanding, agreement, or connection with any corporation, firm, or person submitting a response for the same materials, supplies, equipment, or services and this application is in all respects fair and without collusion or fraud. The above-mentioned entities understand and agree that collusive bidding is a violation of state and federal law and can result in fines, prison sentences, and civil damage awards.*

**Failure to provide this certification may result in the disqualification of the Applicant’s application, at the discretion of the Department.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name (Print):** Click or tap here to enter text. | **Title:** Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Authorized Signature:** | **Date:** Click or tap here to enter text. |

RFA 202109151

Maine Farms for the Future Phase 2

APPLICATION

The Applicant is asked to be brief and concise in providing written information required in the application.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Brief description of Farm Business and planned Phase 2 Project**  Provide in 40 words or less | |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | |
| **Duration of Project** | |
| Start Date: Start Date | End Date: End Date |
| **Brief Statement of Need – Why do you need to undertake this (these) Phase 2 Project(s)?** | |
| *over homeless program eligibility and best interest placement decisions.* | |
| Click or tap here to enter text. |  |
| **Investment Support Options:** Please review the following three options for financial assistance and indicate your preference in the drop-down menu below: | |
|  | |

***Option 1 – the Cash Grant***

A grant for up to 25% of Project Cost by no greater than $25,000. Requires a match of 75% or more of the project cost. A farm selected to receive the cash grant must enter into a 7-year Farmland Protection Agreement with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry - Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources.

***Option 2 – the 2% interest rate if approved for AMLF Loan***

The AMLF loan program requires owner’s equity for 10% of total project cost for projects less than $100,000 or owner’s equity of 25% if the total project cost is greater than $100,000 up to the loan cap of $250,000.

See <http://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/grants/agricultural_marketing.shtml> and <https://www.famemaine.com/business/programs/agriculture-loans/agricultural-marketing-loan-fund/>

***Option 3 – the Cash Grant AND the 2% interest rate if approved for AMLF Loan***

All of the above applies.

Option 1 - Cash Grant

|  |
| --- |
| **Budget for Project(s)** |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **TOTAL PROJECT COST** | $ | | **CASH GRANT** *25% of total project cost and capped at $25,000* | $ | | **TOTAL MATCH** *at least 75% of total project cost* | $ | |
| **Summary of Match** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| PERSONAL FUNDS | $ |
| LOAN 1 Lender name: | $ |
| LOAN 2 Lender name: | $ |
| OTHER GRANT 1 (i.e. USDA NRCS cost-sharing, SARE, REAP, etc.) | $ |
| OTHER GRANT 2 | $ |
| IN-KIND LABOR - total to date | $ |
| IN-KIND MATERIALS - total to date | $ |
| **TOTAL MATCH** | $ |

|  |
| --- |
| **OFF-FARM INCOME - describe any off-farm income from other employment or services that might be used to fund the implementation of the project(s) described in the business plan.** |

Click or tap here to enter text.

|  |
| --- |
| **Impact – Acres of Farmland to be Protected** |

If awarded the cash grant you must sign a 7-year Farmland Protection Agreement with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. Though this Agreement is not recorded in the Registry of Deeds it is binding between you/your business and the Department.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **If awarded the grant, I/we will protect** | **# acres**  Click or tap here to enter text. | **by signing the 7-year non-development agreement.** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Impact – Number of Jobs** |

Upon completion of the project I/we anticipate that there will be:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **#** | Family members working full-time for the farm business |
| **#** | Family members working part-time for the farm business |
| **#** | Non-family employees working full-time for the farm business |
| **#** | Non-family members working part-time for the farm business |

|  |
| --- |
| **Impacts – Environmental Benefits** |

Briefly describe any positive impacts your plan and resulting project(s) will have on soil, water, and air quality and/or plant/animal habitat.

Click or tap here to enter text.

|  |
| --- |
| **Impacts – Other Agricultural Sector Benefits** |

Briefly describe *how the plan contributes to local or regional agricultural infrastructure.*

Click or tap here to enter text.

|  |
| --- |
| **Current and Future Program Obligations** |

***If you are awarded OPTION 1 (cash grant) or OPTION 3 (grant and recommended for the 2% interest rate) you will be required to:***

* Sign the 7-year Farmland Protection Agreement for the acres for the years 2022 through 2029.
* Provide annual data regarding farm business income, production, land, jobs, environmental and ag sector impacts for 2022, 2023 and 2024. Due: May 1, 2023, 2024, 2025. \*

***If you are recommended for the 2% interest rate (OPTION 2) you will be required to****:*

* Provide annual data regarding farm business income, production, land, jobs, environmental and ag sector impacts for 2022, 2023 and 2024. Due: May 1, 2023, 2024, 2025.

*\*The Department will keep all such individual information confidential. It will aggregated to track Program efficacy and to share program reports to the Administration & Legislature.*

**By signing below, you acknowledge that you understand and agree to these requirements and verify that the information presented in this application and farm business plan is true.**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signature of Company Owner(s) Date**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signature of Company Owner (s) Date**

1. [Chapter 36: Rules for Governing the Maine Farms for the Future Program, Section 1. Definitions.](https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/01/001/001c036.doc) Pg 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)